

# The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices

# Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies

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VOLUME 103

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# The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices

*Selected Papers from the Conference  
“The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices”  
in Berlin, 20–22 July 2018*

*Edited by*

Dylan M. Burns  
Matthew Goff



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#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Dead Sea Scrolls and The Nag Hammadi Codices (Conference) (2018 : Berlin, Germany) | Burns, Dylan M., editor. | Goff, Matthew J., editor.

Title: The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices : selected papers from the conference "The Dead Sea Scrolls and The Nag Hammadi Codices" in Berlin, 20–22 July 2018 / edited by Dylan M. Burns, Matthew J. Goff.

Description: Leiden ; Boston : Brill, 2022. | Series: Nag Hammadi and Manichaean studies, 0929–2470 ; volume 103 | Includes index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2022020514 (print) | LCCN 2022020515 (ebook) | ISBN 9789004513020 (hardback) | ISBN 9789004517561 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Nag Hammadi codices—Congresses. | Dead Sea scrolls—Congresses.

Classification: LCC BT1391 .D43 2018 (print) | LCC BT1391 (ebook) | DDC 296.1/55—dc23/eng/20220705

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2022020514>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2022020515>

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: "Brill". See and download: [brill.com/brill-typeface](http://brill.com/brill-typeface).

ISSN 0929-2470

ISBN 978-90-04-51302-0 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-51756-1 (e-book)

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הבל בני אדם בגויתם אך שם חסד ללא יכרת

*Human beings in terms of their bodies are mere vapor.  
But the name of a kind, loving person shall never be destroyed.*

Ben Sira 41:11 (Masada III:13; reconstructed with MS B 11r 3).  
For Lucas Brandon.

[ε]ΤΒΕ παῖ δειρ̄ φωρπ̄ ἡ̄χ̄ο[ο]ς [ανο]κ̄ ζω̄ δε  
πασον̄ δ̄γω̄ παωβη[ρ]  
εβ̄ολ̄ δε̄ ανοκ̄ ογ̄ωβηρ̄ ἡ̄ω̄μ̄μο̄ ζω̄  
ἡ̄πεκρητε̄

*... For this reason did I [myself] also just say  
“my brother and my friend,”  
for I am also a fellow stranger,  
like you.*

*The Acts of Peter and the Twelve* NHC VI 3,8–11.  
For Tracy Lemos and Matthew Neujahr.

∴



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## Acknowledgments

Nearly all of the papers published in this volume are revisions of talks presented at the conference “The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices.” The conference was held in Berlin, July 20–22, 2018, and hosted at the Faculty of Theology at Humboldt Universität zu Berlin. The event would not have been possible without the generosity and support of many individuals, to whom the editors of this volume here wish to express thanks. Above all, we offer our gratitude to the Fritz Thyssen-Stiftung, which provided ample financial support for the conference. The Open Access publication of this volume was also supported by the Fritz Thyssen-Stiftung, as well as Devin Soper and the Office of Digital Research and Scholarship at Florida State University. We thank Professor Jens Schröter (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin) for facilitating the venue of the Faculty of Theology at Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, directly opposite the magnificent *Museeninsel* on three hot, but beautiful, days in July. Professor Tonio Sebastian Richter (Freie Universität Berlin) lent substantial logistical support from his *Lehrstuhl* that was crucial to a seamless implementation of the conference’s schedule. Jason BeDuhn astutely oversaw peer review of the volume; our anonymous reviewers offered terrific advice for putting the finishing touches on it. We also thank Florence Egbeyale, Nienke Groskamp, Janik Petersdorff, Philip Scharfenberger, and Alana Zimath for their excellent assistance with proofreading and the compilation of the indices.

Finally, we would like to dedicate this volume to three individuals who have shown us through their words, work, and actions what interdisciplinary collaboration, particularly between scholars of ancient Judaism and early Christianity, can be: Tracy Lemos, Matthew Neujahr, and Lucas Brandon<sup>†</sup>.

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# Abbreviations

Below is offered a key for the abbreviations most commonly used in this volume's notes and bibliographies. Additional abbreviations may be found in the *SBL Handbook of Style* (2nd ed., 2014), upon whose list of abbreviations the below list is based.

<i>1 Apoc. Jas.</i>	<i>First Apocalypse of James</i>
<i>1 En.</i>	<i>1 Enoch</i>
<i>1Ke</i>	The Berlin <i>Kephalaia of the Teacher</i> (Polotsky, Böhlig, Funk)
<i>2 Bar.</i>	<i>2 Baruch</i>
<i>2 En.</i>	<i>2 Enoch</i>
AB	Anchor Bible
ABG	Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
<i>AcOr</i>	<i>Acta Orientalia</i>
<i>Acts Pet. 12 Apost.</i>	<i>Acts of Peter and the 12 Apostles</i>
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
ADAIK.KR	Abhandlungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo, Koptische Reihe
AGSU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AJEC	Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity
<i>ALD</i>	<i>Aramaic Levi Document</i>
<i>ANF</i>	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
AOSS	Anecdota Oxoniensia, Semitic Series
<i>Ap. John</i>	<i>Apocryphon of John</i>
<i>Apoc. Adam</i>	<i>Apocalypse of Adam</i>
<i>Apoc. Paul</i>	<i>Apocalypse of Paul</i>
<i>Apoc. Pet.</i>	<i>Apocalypse of Peter</i>
<i>APOT</i>	<i>The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament.</i> Edited by Robert Henry Charles. 2 vols. Oxford, 1913
ArBib	The Aramaic Bible
ASAE	<i>Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte</i>
BC	Bibliotheca Chaldaica
BCNH.É	Bibliothèque Copte de Nag Hammadi, "Études"
BCNH.T	Bibliothèque Copte de Nag Hammadi, "Textes"
BDB	Brown, Francis, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium

BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BG	Papyrus Berolinensis 8502
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BLDR	<i>Biblioteka Literaturny Drevnei Rusi</i> [Библиотека Литературы Древней Руси]
BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
BSOR	<i>Bulletin for the Study of Religion</i>
BThS	Biblich-theologische Studien
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBP	Cahiers de Biblia Patristica
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CEJL	Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature
CGL	Coptic Gnostic Library
ChIOIDR	<i>Chtenia v Imperatorskom obshchestve istorii i drevnostei Rossiiskikh pri Moskovskom universitete</i> [Чтения в Императорском Обществе Истории и Древностей Российских при Московском Университете]
CHJ	<i>The Cambridge History of Judaism</i>
CMC	Cologne Mani Codex
CRINT	Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
<i>Dial. Sav.</i>	<i>Dialogue of the Savior</i>
<i>Disc. Seth.</i>	<i>Second Discourse of The Great Seth</i>
DJD	Discoveries in the Judean Desert
DSD	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
ÉBib	Études bibliques
EC	<i>Early Christianity</i>
ECCA	Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity
EJL	Early Judaism and Its Literature
<i>Ep. Pet. Phil.</i>	<i>Letter of Peter to Philip</i>
<i>Eug.</i>	<i>Eugnostos the Blessed</i>
Euseb.	Eusebius of Caesarea
<i>Hist. eccl.</i>	<i>Historia ecclesiastica</i>
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments

GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderten
<i>Gnosis</i>	<i>Gnosis: Journal of Gnostic Studies</i>
<i>Gos. Phil.</i>	<i>Gospel of Philip</i>
<i>Gos. Thom.</i>	<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>
<i>Great. Pow.</i>	<i>Concept of Our Great Power</i>
<i>HeBAI</i>	<i>Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel</i>
<i>Hen</i>	<i>Enoch</i>
<i>Holy Book</i>	<i>Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HTS</i>	Harvard Theological Studies
<i>HUCM</i>	Monographs of the Hebrew Union College
<i>Interp. Know.</i>	<i>Interpretation of Knowledge</i>
<i>JAC</i>	<i>Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum</i>
<i>JAJSup</i>	Supplements to <i>Journal of Ancient Judaism</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JcoptS</i>	<i>Journal of Coptic Studies</i>
<i>JEA</i>	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i>
<i>JECS</i>	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
<i>Jos.</i>	Josephus
<i>A.J.</i>	<i>Antiquitates judaicae</i>
<i>B.J.</i>	<i>Bellum judaicum</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period</i>
<i>JSJSup</i>	Supplements to <i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSOTSup</i>	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
<i>JSP</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
<i>JSPSup</i>	Supplements to <i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>LCL</i>	Loeb Classical Library
<i>LHBOTS</i>	The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
<i>LNTS</i>	The Library of New Testament Studies
<i>MT</i>	Masoretic Text
<i>Mus</i>	<i>Le Muséon</i>
<i>Nat. Rulers</i>	<i>On the Nature of the Rulers</i>
<i>NHC</i>	Nag Hammadi Codices (codex number followed by treatise number)

NHMS (formerly NHS)	Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies (formerly Nag Hammadi Studies)
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum Supplement Series
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
NTTS	New Testament Tools and Studies
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OECT	Oxford Early Christian Texts
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
<i>Orig. World</i>	<i>On the Origin of the World</i>
OTP	<i>Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> (ed. James Charlesworth. New York: Doubleday, 1985)
PSt	Pauline Studies
PatSt	Patristic Studies
<i>Perf. Disc.</i>	<i>Perfect Discourse (Asclepius)</i>
<i>Pr. Thanks.</i>	<i>Prayer of Thanksgiving</i>
PTA	Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen
PW	<i>Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> . New edition by Georg Wissowa and Wilhelm Kroll. 50 vols. in 84 parts. Stuttgart: Metzler and Druckenmüller, 1894–1980
RAC	<i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i>
RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
RelSoc	Religion and Society
RevQ	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
RILP	Roehampton Institute London Papers
RSLR	<i>Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa</i>
RSR	<i>Recherches de science religieuse</i>
SAC	Studies in Antiquity and Christianity
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SC	Sources chrétiennes
ScCo	Scriptores Coptici
SCL	Sather Classical Lectures
SDSSRL	Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
<i>Sent. Sext.</i>	<i>Sentences of Sextus</i>
SHR	Studies in the History of Religions (supplements to <i>Numen</i> )
<i>Sib. Or.</i>	<i>Sibylline Oracles</i>
SPhiloM	Studia Philonica Monograph Series
SRHB	Studies in the Reception History of the Bible



ST	<i>Studia Theologica</i>
STAC	Studies and Texts in Antiquity and Christianity (Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum)
StC	<i>Studia Ceranea</i>
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
StPatr	Studia Patristica
SVTG	Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum
SUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
TANZ	Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter
<i>Teach. Silv.</i>	<i>Teachings of Silvanus</i>
TEG	Traditio Exegetica Graeca
TENTS	Texts and Editions for New Testament Study
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
<i>Three Forms</i>	<i>Three Forms of First Thought</i>
<i>Thund.</i>	<i>Thunder: Perfect Mind</i>
<i>T. Lev.</i>	<i>Testament of Levi</i>
TLZ	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
<i>Tri. Trac.</i>	<i>Tripartite Tractate</i>
TRE	<i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie</i>
<i>Tru</i>	<i>Theologische Rundschau</i>
TSAJ	Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism (Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum)
TU	Theologische Untersuchungen
TUGAL	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
<i>Val. Exp.</i>	<i>A Valentinian Exposition</i>
vc	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
VCSup	Vigiliae Christianae Supplement Series
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
<i>Wis. Jes. Chr.</i>	<i>Wisdom of Jesus Christ</i>
WLAW	Wisdom Literature from the Ancient World
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAC	<i>Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum</i>
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>
<i>Zost.</i>	<i>Zostrianos</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

## Notes on Contributors

### *Harold W. Attridge*

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**PART 1**

*Introduction*





# The Dead Sea Scrolls, the Nag Hammadi Codices, and the Joys of Weak Comparison

*Dylan M. Burns and Matthew Goff*

The two most important textual discoveries of the twentieth century for the study of ancient Judaism and early Christianity occurred at roughly the same time—the codices found near Nag Hammadi (Upper Egypt) in 1945, and the Dead Sea Scrolls, in the waning days of the British Mandate, uncovered near Qumran in 1947.<sup>1</sup> The emergence of these texts sparked a great deal of interest among scholars and the public at large. But despite the chronological proximity of the Qumran and Nag Hammadi discoveries, and the importance of both finds, there has been relatively little scholarship that examines these corpora in relation to one another. There are good reasons for this. Firstly, the artifacts are of very different provenance, with the Qumran scrolls produced between the third century BCE and the first century CE, and the Nag Hammadi Codices made in late antiquity, probably in the fourth century.<sup>2</sup> The evidence also takes differing material forms: Jewish scrolls against Christian codices. Third, the core languages needed to work with them at the appropriate philological level are different (Aramaic and Hebrew, versus Greek and Coptic). Moreover, the cultural, intellectual, and religious milieux in which these texts were written are strikingly different. For instance, the view espoused in many Nag Hammadi texts, that the God of the Septuagint who created the world is in fact an evil or ambivalent demiurge, would have been unthinkable for members of the Dead Sea sect.

But the fact that texts have stark differences does not mean they should not be compared. It is a common issue in the comparative enterprise: diversity within a data set is a feature, not a bug. Despite all the notable differences between the Qumran and Nag Hammadi texts, there is a wealth of reasons to compare them. Each corpus constitutes a rare example of ancient texts for which the vast bulk of material evidence is actually ancient. This is atypical in

<sup>1</sup> See the essay in the present volume by Markschie.

<sup>2</sup> On the manufacture of the Nag Hammadi Codices in the fourth century or possibly later, see Emmel, “Coptic Gnostic Texts”; now Lundhaug, “Dating and Contextualising.” For the dating of the Qumran scrolls, see VanderKam and Flint, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 20–33.

the study of early Judaism and ancient Christianity, disciplines which so often rely on medieval copies of much older texts. Moreover, both sets of texts engage a common scriptural tradition, allowing a context for comparison regarding a range of issues such as biblical exegesis, genre, and scribal culture. In addition, there are a range of themes and issues that come up in both corpora. Altogether, while it is important to be sensitive to the development of traditions, it is also true that it can be valuable to compare texts and communities even if one does not posit some sort of direct, historical continuity between them. As Jonathan Z. Smith has stressed, one can, by emphasizing not only similarity but also difference, appreciate what sorts of new questions, perspectives, and insights can be generated when two things are compared together.<sup>3</sup>

Earlier in the history of scholarship of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi corpora there was some recognition of and initial exploration into the possibilities of such comparative scholarship. The proceedings of the famous 1966 Messina conference on the origins of Gnosticism includes a section on “Lo Gnosticismo e Qumrân,” which contains three articles.<sup>4</sup> But over the last fifty years or so there has been very little scholarship bringing these two corpora together.<sup>5</sup> The present volume contains the proceedings of the first conference devoted to an interdisciplinary, comparative exploration of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices. Funded by the Fritz Thyssen-Stiftung, the meeting was held in Berlin, July 20–22, 2018, hosted at the Faculty of Theology at Humboldt Universität zu Berlin. The fact that no such collaborative project took place until over seventy years following the initial discovery of the manuscripts in question is itself in need of some reflection, a task that may usefully situate this volume in its scholarly context.

3 “Comparison requires the acceptance of difference as the grounds of its being interesting, and a methodical manipulation of that difference to achieve some stated cognitive end. The questions of comparison are questions of judgment with respect to difference: What differences are to be maintained in the interests of comparative inquiry? What differences can be defensibly relaxed and relativized in light of the intellectual task?” (Smith, *To Take Place*, 14). See also idem, “In Comparison A Magic Dwells,” 21; Altieri, “Close Encounters,” 66. Note also Patton and Ray, *A Magic Still Dwells*.

4 Bianchi, *Le Origini dello Gnosticismo*, 370–410. The three essays are by Ringgren, Mansoor, and Philonenko (see the bibliography below).

5 For survey of additional discussion of the Dead Sea Scrolls as related to the Nag Hammadi Codices, see Lahe, *Gnosis und Judentum*, 128–34. Further examples can be found in Franzmann, “Use of the Terms”; Scopello, “Apocalypse of Zostrianos,” 380–81; Trompf, “Jewish Background,” 84–85. An important investigation making use of both corpora presents itself in Pearson’s work on the figure of Melchizedek, who is portrayed as an eschatological holy warrior in 11Q13 and NHC IX,1 alike. See Pearson, “Introduction,” 33.



Today it is common for scholars of the Qumran scrolls to know relatively little about the Nag Hammadi texts, and vice-versa. This been the case for over a generation of scholarship. This is a consequence, it seems, of how the significance of these texts was conceptualized in early research. The Nag Hammadi texts sparked intense scholarly interest in Gnosticism, which had been a major topic of academic discussion prior to their discovery. When the codices came to light it was common to understand Gnosticism as a form of religion that was distinct and perhaps even older than Christianity.<sup>6</sup> An important aspect of this perspective was making an association between Gnosticism and Judaism. The notion of Jewish Gnosticism (*jüdische Gnosis*), for example, was important for Gershom Scholem in his construction of the history of Jewish mysticism.<sup>7</sup> Even up to the previous generation of scholarship, leading Nag Hammadi experts such as Birger Pearson argued that Gnosticism began as a type of pre-Christian heterodox Judaism in philosophical circles in Alexandria.<sup>8</sup> The Nag Hammadi Codices were regarded as significant because they were thought to provide material confirmation for the existence of Gnosticism, as a discrete intellectual and theological system that was often held to be older than Christianity and thus a crucial context for understanding Christian origins.<sup>9</sup> Even though the Nag Hammadi texts were produced in late antiquity, it was common to interpret them in the context of their putative authorship, as preserving Jewish Gnostic documents from the first century CE, as for example Pearson argued

6 See above all Jonas, *Gnostic Religion*. On scholarship about Gnosticism prior to the Nag Hammadi discovery, see e.g. King, *What is Gnosticism?*, 55–148; Burns, “Gnosticism,” 9–10. On the question of ‘pre-Christian’ Gnosticism, see the recent survey of Smith, “Ancient Pre-Christian ‘Gnosticisms’”

7 See Scholem’s influential *Jewish Gnosticism*. On ‘Jewish Gnosticism,’ see Burns, “Gnosticism,” 16. On Nag Hammadi and the history of Jewish mysticism, see *idem*, “Import.”

8 A *Leitmotiv* of Pearson’s collection of pioneering, influential essays, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity*, particularly “Friedländer Revisited” and “Jewish Elements.” This view is still vital in scholarship (see e.g. Lahe, *Gnosis und Judentum*). Gilles Quispel also argued vigorously and influentially, on many occasions, in favor of the pre-Christian, Jewish origins of Gnosticism (see e.g., “Judaism and Gnosis,” 556–64). For a recent *Forschungsbericht* on the alleged Jewish origins of Gnosticism, see Trompf, “Jewish Background.” For a different hypothesis on the emergence of ‘the Gnostic religion’ that sees Judaism as only one of a set of factors in a pre-Christian syncretism, see Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 275–94.

9 See e.g. Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 51–52. Cf. also Arthur Darby Nock’s remarks (“Coptic Library” [pub. 1958]), on the significance of the Nag Hammadi discovery: “The historical importance of this discovery may fairly be set on a level with that of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The latter throws new light on intertestamental Judaism and on Christian beginnings; the former does something comparable for subsequent Christian development.” Notably, Nock found the notion of pre-Christian, Jewish origins of Gnosticism (as argued by Quispel) to be unlikely (*ibid.*, 322).

with regard to the *Apocryphon of John*.<sup>10</sup> So understood, the value of the Nag Hammadi Codices was that they furnish a window into earliest Christianity's encounter with the pre-Christian Gnosticism, and thus offer invaluable data on the background of the struggle with Christian strains of Gnosticism such as Valentinianism. The extensive efforts to relate Gnosticism to Judaism dominated an earlier generation of scholarship, when scholars such as Hans Jonas and Mircea Eliade loomed large, and an overriding interest in the Nag Hammadi texts was to develop overarching theological constructs and the creation of systems of belief and doctrine. Such grand theories became naturalized in twentieth-century scholarship and were a typical part of the intellectual landscape in the study of antiquity.

These perspectives had implications with regard to historical understanding of the social identities that lay behind the production of these newly-discovered sources. If one presumes the existence of a distinct system of theological beliefs called Gnosticism, it is an easy step to imagine communities of people who held these beliefs—the Gnostics. There was similar excitement about the Dead Sea Scrolls. Since the earliest days of the Qumran discoveries the conviction that the scrolls are the products of an Essene sect of Judaism animated interest in the material.<sup>11</sup> The sense of the value of both corpora was increased by the supposition that they are textual discoveries from heterodox sectarian groups that were different from and opposed to mainstream, normative Judaism and Christianity.<sup>12</sup> As DeConick's essay in the present volume discusses, the production of this sort of scholarly knowledge was not simply an objective assessment of new data but also involved the usage of key terms, Gnostic and Essene, both of which have an important intellectual history as

10 Pearson, "Gnosticism as a Religion," 217–18. Cf. further Pearson's discussion of ostensibly 'pre-Christian, Jewish Gnostic' sources that may be discerned prior to their "Christianizing" redaction extant in the Nag Hammadi Codices ("Jewish Sources").

11 Collins, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 33–66.

12 Cf. the comparison suggested by Kurt Rudolph in his classic monograph on Gnosticism, first published in 1977: "it is interesting to observe that these two discoveries show certain parallels. Both belong to communities which stand at the fringe and took a critical view of the official religion, the Qumran community (the Essenes) over against the Judaism of Jerusalem, the Gnostics over against the orthodox church. Both collections of manuscripts were evidently concealed in times of crisis and under external pressure. In their ideology, also, despite all the clear differences, there are certain points of agreement: both communities cherish a dualistic way of thinking and stand in hostility over against the world, they hope for a redemption either through an eschatological and apocalyptic victory of the 'sons of light' over darkness or through the liberation of the soul, the divine spark, to the kingdom of light beyond this world" (*Gnosis*, 35 [Eng. tr. pub. 1987]; cf. also Nock, "Coptic Library" 321).

ciphers for communities that preserve lost or forbidden but legitimate esoteric knowledge; this heritage was mapped onto and shaped the early study of both the Qumran and Nag Hammadi writings.<sup>13</sup>

The scholarly postures towards both terms—"Gnostic" and "Essene"—have changed a great deal since those heady days of early research into the new discoveries. It used to be the case that to be considered a legitimate Qumran scholar one had to show adherence to the Essene hypothesis, the view that the scrolls were written by an Essene sect. This position is based on valid parallels between the Dead Sea Scrolls and classical accounts of the Essenes in Josephus, Philo and Pliny; alternative hypotheses, like those offered by Norman Golb in the 1990s, were regarded as iconoclastic and obtuse.<sup>14</sup> The tension between these two alternatives—one orthodox, the other heterodox—was never formally resolved. Rather, Qumran scholarship has expanded and become more diversified in ways that move beyond a simplistic binary opposition regarding the nature of "the Qumran community." The full publication of the scrolls roughly fifteen years ago has complicated and enriched our understanding of the varieties of community organization attested in the scrolls in ways that do not always map neatly onto the classical accounts of the Essenes, opening up many lines of inquiry for which the Greek descriptions of the Essenes are of little or no value.<sup>15</sup>

The shift in scholarly evaluation of the word "Gnostic" and related terminology, above all their application to the Nag Hammadi Codices, has been much more profound. Gnosticism as a category of academic analysis began to come under serious critique in the 1990s. Michael Allen Williams articulated a substantial case against the view that Gnosticism denoted a single religious tradition or social entity from antiquity, and sounded a clarion call for abandoning use of the term.<sup>16</sup> Karen King argued in the 2000s quite successfully that scholars of Gnosticism such as Hans Jonas were not recovering the lost testimony of a forgotten religion but rather reinscribing as objective academic knowledge the project of early Christian heresiologists, who described and condemned "Gnostics."<sup>17</sup> Even though a case can be made that "Gnostic" still has value as a term that describes a certain philosophical perspective that involves a

13 For an exploration of popular reception of the 'Essene hypothesis' in conversation with Gnostic sources in one New Religious Movement, see Kreps, "Reading History."

14 Golb, *Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls?*

15 Collins, *Beyond the Qumran Community*. Some of these modes of research for which the old Essene Hypothesis is not particularly important involve the conceptions of textuality and authorship preserved in the scrolls, as discussed below.

16 Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism."* See now also idem, "On Ancient 'Gnosticism'."

17 King, *What is Gnosticism?*

devaluation of the created, material world and a corresponding emphasis on transcendent realities that are the true home of human beings—a perspective that seems to have been espoused by ancient thinkers who called themselves *gnōstikoi*—the old-fashioned, grand narrative of “the Gnostic religion” that helped frame the initial interest and scholarship on the Nag Hammadi discoveries is no longer viable.<sup>18</sup> To compound matters, the 1990s also witnessed heavy and successful interrogation of the very notion of origins in the history of religions,<sup>19</sup> rendering moot the search for the “origins of Gnosticism,” within Judaism or otherwise.

These intellectual developments help explain the relative absence of comparative scholarship on the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices. Once the “grand narrative” of Gnosticism and the search for its origins collapsed, so did the main conceptual framework scholars had employed to relate the Nag Hammadi texts to Judaism. One unexpected consequence of this shift, it seems, was a decline in appealing to Jewish texts or traditions when interpreting Nag Hammadi literature. While more recent years have witnessed a burst of Nag Hammadi scholarship focusing more on the texts themselves and less on scholarly reconstructions of Gnostic beliefs or practices, this new scholarship, despite its high quality, often includes relatively little comparative work vis-à-vis ancient Judaism or, for that matter, the contemporary Judaism of late antiquity.<sup>20</sup>

At the same time, in recent years the study of ancient Judaism has blossomed. The field has progressed and become richly diversified. A major defining feature of the last thirty or so years of scholarship has also been the development of Second Temple Judaism as an independent field of study in its own right. The Dead Sea Scrolls and the completion of the publication of the full corpus in the 2000s play a crucial role in this story. Over time the view became prominent that the corpus of Qumran scrolls was significant not simply for providing insight into a particular sect, but that the scrolls open up a larger window into the Judaism of the late Second Temple period. Milik's important 1976 volume, *The Books of Enoch from Qumran*, demonstrated that the Dead Sea Scrolls include manuscripts of Enochic texts that were produced

18 Burns, “Providence, Creation, and Gnosticism.”

19 Per the critique of Masuzawa, *In Search of Dreamtime*.

20 To take up two recent collections of essays—Lundhaug and Jenott, eds., *Nag Hammadi Codices*; Crégheur, Painchaud, and Rasimus, eds., *Nag Hammadi à 70 ans*—not a single contribution engages ancient Judaism in a sustained way. These volumes are literally ‘state-of-the-art,’ in both senses of the phrase: they are exemplary in terms of scholarly quality, and they also reflect how far the trajectory of Nag Hammadi studies has traveled away from the Judaisms of Roman and late antiquity.

in the third century BCE, helping trigger the rise of scholarship on Jewish apocalypses and apocalypticism that has been and remains a major scholarly concern. This, as have the scrolls in general, helped usher in a strong interest, among scholars and a broader readership, in ancient Jewish texts that are not in the biblical canons of Western Christianity or Judaism, such as, for example, *Jubilees* or the *Temple Scroll*. At the same time, these new sources do more than provide new information about ancient Judaism. With every new piece of data that emerges from the ancient world, the challenge is to discern not only how this increases our knowledge of the ancient world, which is based on very incomplete evidence, but also how it challenges and forces us to revise our understanding of antiquity. The evidence of the scrolls for example has in recent years, as exemplified in the work of Najman and Mroczek, prompted scholars to re-examine their conceptions of textuality or authorship that they bring to bear on the study of ancient texts.<sup>21</sup>

But despite the current richness and intellectual vibrancy of the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls, there is a ringing silence when it comes to the Nag Hammadi corpus. One sign of the growth and development of the study of Second Temple Judaism is that scholars of this literature have focused not only on understanding texts from this time period in their own contexts. There is also great interest in the transmission and reception of Second Temple themes, texts and genres in later historical periods, bringing Qumran texts in conversation with a range of Jewish and early Christian texts. This is part of a broader generational shift away from the study of origins of texts to their reception. An interest in the origins of the Bible or of the Jesus movement do not serve as driving catalysts of scholarly interest in the Qumran scrolls in the way that they used to. There is a great deal of interest in showing how the evidence of the scrolls improve our understanding of later texts and traditions. One of the best examples of this type of scholarship is Annette Reed's 2005 volume which traces the use of Enochic literature in later Judaism and Christianity.<sup>22</sup> But in such scholarship engagement with Nag Hammadi literature is on the whole noticeably absent.

There are several reasons as to why Nag Hammadi is in general not on the maps of scholars working on the reception of ancient Jewish sources in early Christianity and late antiquity. Firstly, the situation may be a vestige and consequence of earlier scholarship that relies on an implicit construction of Christianity, despite a spate of current scholarship that problematizes the "parting of the ways" between Judaism and Christianity and its reification of

21 Najman, *Seconding Sinai*; Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination*.

22 Reed, *Fallen Angels*.

both as ontological wholes. There is an unexamined assumption that, however one defines Christianity, it does not include the Nag Hammadi texts. This may be, as DeConick suggests in this volume, a form of implicit continuity with older scholarship on Gnosticism and its reinscription of efforts by early Christian heresiologists to identify Gnostics and their beliefs as heretical and not authentically Christian. A second reason has already been mentioned in the above: earlier scholarship on Gnosticism, Nag Hammadi, and Judaism tended to focus on the question of “Gnostic origins” vis-à-vis Second Temple Judaism. These lines of enquiry ultimately did not establish themselves as scholarly consensus, and as questions of “origins” went out of fashion in religious studies in general, the complex “Nag Hammadi-ancient Judaism” fell by the wayside as well. A third, no less significant factor is that the current flowering of scholarship on Second Temple Judaism is taking place after Gnosticism had already become a disputed category, as discussed above.

All three of these issues are evident, for example, in Reed’s excellent scholarship. She, along with John Reeves, has in recent years pushed scholars of ancient Judaism to think beyond conventional definitions of our fields of inquiry and encouraged them to explore other traditions and examine trajectories of traditions evident in the scrolls beyond antiquity into not only Judaism and Christianity but also Islam and Manichaeism.<sup>23</sup> But despite her laudable promotion of new lines of inquiry and intellectual boundary crossing, a lack of engagement with the Nag Hammadi material is noticeable. Her groundbreaking study of the reception of Enochic literature in Judaism and Christianity only brings up Nag Hammadi texts at the very end, even though they include significant iterations of the watchers myth. Rather than engage the Coptic texts on their own terms as receptions of the watchers myth, her analysis of them is geared towards disputing the validity of Gnosticism as a category.<sup>24</sup> For scholars of ancient Judaism, the critique of the category championed by scholars such as Williams or King did not lead to a new orientation

23 Reeves and Reed, *Enoch*.

24 Reed, *Fallen Angels*, 276. She expresses skepticism about the influence of Enochic literature on “Gnosticism,” using scare quotes. She encourages future scholarship to examine the lack of engagement in the Nag Hammadi texts with regard to the figure of Enoch and the watchers myth (cf. also Trompf, “Jewish Background,” 87). The absence of Enoch in this corpus is indeed a valid subject of inquiry. But the watchers myth is attested in important ways in the Nag Hammadi Codices, as the essays in this volume by Goff and Losekam discuss.

towards the Nag Hammadi texts but rather the opposite—keeping them on the periphery, consigned to oblivion.<sup>25</sup>

All this helps explain the relative lack of comparative scholarship, in recent years and in the history of scholarship, on the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices. Articulating this absence in turn provides an impression of the value of our 2018 conference in Berlin and thus also the present volume. This book is not about “Gnosticism and Judaism”; nor it is about “the Gnostics and the Essenes”; and above all, it is not about “the Jewish origins of Gnosticism”! Its focus is the comparative, interdisciplinary investigation of two textual corpora, the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices. The current state of affairs regarding the study of ancient Judaism, with its renewed interest in later texts and traditions, should more robustly take the Nag Hammadi texts into consideration, which has heretofore essentially not been the case. As for scholars of the Nag Hammadi literature, the time is ripe for them to take a renewed look at ancient Judaism, the scholarly understanding of which has changed so dramatically since the days of Jewish Gnosticism. The study of ancient Judaism has viability for these scholars not simply because the textual dataset of late Second Temple literature has been expanded by the full publication of the Qumran scrolls but also because of the renewed critical scrutiny going on in this field with regard to established topics that are also relevant for Nag Hammadi specialists, such as scripture, exegesis, and the study of texts as material artifacts produced by scribal cultures. Our 2018 Berlin conference was borne out of the conviction that the comparative study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices, a project in which there was some interest when both corpora were initially discovered, is in genuine need of a reboot.

## 1 The Present Volume: Initial Forays

However one explains the lack of comparative studies on these corpora, this lacuna offers for scholars today a very interesting opportunity—to explore the relatively unexplored significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls for specialists of the Nag Hammadi texts and likewise the value of the Nag Hammadi Codices for scholars of Second Temple Judaism. There is a need for this type of research, grounded in the critical spirit of our own moment of scholarship,

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25 To be fair, as noted above, the earlier scholarship on Gnosticism vis-à-vis Judaism did not actually produce much direct study of Nag Hammadi vis-à-vis Qumran literature either, perhaps because of its emphasis on overarching theological systems of belief—an unproductive line of comparison for these two corpora.

which continues a long-standing interest in textual study but with a renewed focus on issues of theory and method. The latter point is critical for the comparative study of texts, and Bruce Lincoln's work on this subject is particularly helpful.<sup>26</sup> The goal of the present volume is to bring texts from the two corpora together not in terms of what Bruce Lincoln calls "strong comparison"—the pursuit of broad, universalist constructs (à la Mircea Eliade) but rather "weak comparison"—comparison focused on discrete texts that is context-driven and sensitive to the constructed nature of our categories of analysis. Weak comparison prioritizes the texts themselves, not their contribution to overarching constructs. Lincoln's mode of weak comparison encourages the comparative study of texts from very different cultural and historical contexts, as he illustrates with an examination of the Middle Persian *Bundahišn* of Zoroastrianism and the Anglo-Saxon epic *Beowulf*.<sup>27</sup> The value of comparing them, he suggests, is not to articulate their common Indo-European background or better understand the diffusion of traditions across vast distances and historical periods. Rather, comparing them helps illustrate that they engage similar themes which address inequities in their respective societies which the constructions of reality in each text seek to legitimate.<sup>28</sup> By comparing them in relation to one another one can get a new angle or perspective on them both.

Lincoln's call for "weak comparison" offers a model for scholars of the ancient Mediterranean world and the Near East. Comparison should not be restricted to issues of similarity or the articulation of direct lines of influence or dependence. Comparing texts of different provenances has the potential to be mutually illuminating. Studying texts from different contexts in relation to one another can produce new insights whether one delineates some sort of genetic relationship between them or not.

The interest among scholars of ancient Judaism in the reception of texts and traditions should no longer exclude the Nag Hammadi texts. Conversely, scholars of these Coptic codices can benefit from more appreciation as to how the Qumran scrolls have enriched and complicated our understanding of ancient Judaism and scripture. There are also other corpora that scholars of both the Qumran and Nag Hammadi texts turn to, such as the writings of Philo and Paul. One of the overarching rationales for this volume is the realization that scholars in both fields are asking similar questions about different texts

26 See, for example, his *Apples and Oranges*, 11, 25–27. The starting point for reflection of this sort in our own times has often been Smith, "In Comparison a Magic Dwells"; see also idem, *Drudgery Divine*, esp. 36–53. Note also now Gil, *The Proper Study of Religion*.

27 Lincoln, *Apples and Oranges*, 27–33.

28 Ibid., 32–33.



and contexts and that it is of mutual benefit to ask them together. It is our hope that the present volume serves as an initial foray of a kind of comparative scholarship that will lead to new studies on both corpora that will achieve better and more refined results.

If the present volume is a first step of interdisciplinary scholarship on the Qumran scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices, what kind of first step is it? What do the essays of this volume accomplish? They illustrate that there is a range of topics germane to both corpora that are worth exploring in relation to one another—revelation, scriptural exegesis, heavenly journeys, and the ancient material production of texts. The essays of this volume, to invoke the language of Lincoln, offer specific examples of successful “weak comparison” between texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices.

The first part of the volume after this essay (part 2), “New Antiquities: Initial Receptions of the Qumran and Nag Hammadi Corpora,” includes three essays that in different ways engage the issue of previously unknown ancient texts coming to light in the modern world. “Artifact Migration and the Transport of Ancient Knowledge into Modernity: The Role of Human Cognition in the Process of Immigration,” by April D. DeConick, investigates the impact of discoveries of ancient texts on contemporary culture. She theorizes the phenomenon of artifact migration, or the transfer of knowledge from antiquity to modernity. She emphasizes that this is not a simple or objective process but involves understanding how the brain responds to new knowledge, which includes mapping the discovered material onto existing cognitive templates, which essentially transforms the new knowledge from however it was mentally processed in antiquity. DeConick robustly takes the “cognitive turn” and successfully shows how a cognitive science approach complicates histories of reception that rely upon notions of a neat, stable tradition or trajectory and its journey throughout history. The article helpfully shows that how scholars and the general public understood and were excited about the Qumran and Nag Hammadi discoveries was modulated by established scripts and templates in our social and cultural memory that involve Christianity and traditions established earlier in the modern West regarding how the Essenes and the Gnostics were associated with speculation about esoteric knowledge and the preservation of ancient wisdom.

Jörg Frey, in “The Impact of the Qumran and Nag Hammadi Discoveries on New Testament Scholarship: Dualism in John and Jesus’s Eschatology as Paradigms,” makes an important contribution to this volume by focusing on the study of the New Testament. Both corpora have significantly impacted New Testament studies, and so this discipline has a distinctive history of prolonged orientation towards them both. The Dead Sea Scrolls forced a reevaluation

of the Jewish cultural milieu out of which the earliest Christian movement emerges and the Nag Hammadi texts offer crucial information about the early reception of New Testament texts and may, as scholarship on the Gospel of Thomas has stressed, contain texts that are older than the canonical gospels and would thus be critical for research on the historical Jesus. Frey offers an insightful review of the study of the New Testament in the middle of the twentieth century, when the field was dominated by Rudolph Bultmann. For Bultmann, Gnosticism—more than Judaism—constituted a crucial background for understanding New Testament texts, particularly with regard to the Gospel of John and its prominent dualism, a topic for which now the Dead Sea Scrolls are more important. Frey argues that the Qumran scrolls have made a more extensive impact on the study of the New Testament than the Nag Hammadi texts because of their chronological priority. In different ways, he stresses, the impact of both corpora on the study of the New Testament reflects the philosophical or theological interests of the scholars carrying out the research.

Christopher Marksches, in his “Finding Stories: A Literary Critique of Certain Themes in the Story of the Discovery of the Nag Hammadi Codices and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” compares the origin myths of the Qumran and Nag Hammadi texts. The historicity of commonly told stories of how both corpora were discovered has been questioned in recent years, and Marksches asks how they function as “legends” aside from the issue of how they were actually discovered. In both cases the theme of local Arabs who do not properly understand the finds is prominent, and that they found them through chance rather than skill or knowledge of the local terrain (the Bedouin, fellah-*heen*). In both stories a local priest, of a religious tradition differing from that of the Arab discoverers, plays an important mediating role (Mar Samuel, al-Qummu Basilyus ‘Abd al-Masih). In both contexts the quasi-legal antiquities trade also is important, and scholars in these legends play an almost mythic role of salvation, rescuing the texts from danger and oblivion by acquiring and preserving them.

Part 3, entitled “Texts, Manuscripts, and Canons: Scripture, Scribes, and Exegesis at Qumran and Nag Hammadi,” includes three essays that explore ways both corpora contribute to our understanding of scripture and exegesis. The article by Hugo Lundhaug, “Material Philology and the Nag Hammadi Codices,” illustrates the value of the Nag Hammadi texts as late antique material objects. While the *Tendenz* of scholars has been to read these manuscripts as a pure window into their putative original context in which the texts they contain were written (often the first or second century CE), this intellectual act often ignores the potential for extensive textual change in the gap between a

text's original context and the time in which the manuscript in which it is found was produced. Changing the focus to the time of production centralizes rather than ignores a context for which we have actual evidence, as advocated by a material philology approach. Lundhaug extensively investigates paratextual features of the Nag Hammadi texts, such as the tricolon or the *paragraphus*, scribal corrections of texts, and glosses. Appreciation of the physical details of the manuscripts allows us to better understand the late antique reception of the Nag Hammadi texts and for such work, Lundhaug advocates, "Gnostic" as a descriptor is less valuable than "monastic." This approach opens up a new range of productive investigations for understanding the Nag Hammadi texts in the context of late antique Egyptian monasticism, a key issue long ignored in the study of these documents.

Matthew Goff responds to Lundhaug in "Jewish Scrolls, Monastic Codices, and Material Philology," highlighting useful comparisons between materially oriented philological approaches to the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices. While such approaches to both corpora share a healthy interest in scribal practices and the construction of the textual artifacts themselves, they also differ with regards to practice in significant ways: perhaps most importantly, the scrolls are preserved in a more fragmentary state, while the Coptic texts that are preserved enjoy a certain stability and clarity, relative to the scrolls. On the other hand, the scrolls offer many cases of texts preserved in many copies, attesting to comparable modes of textual fluidity highlighted by Lundhaug in the Nag Hammadi Codices, and study of scribal practices such as punctuation has been conducted on both corpora with reference to the greater study of ancient Mediterranean scribal cultures.

Jens Schröter, in his "The Biblical Canons after Qumran and Nag Hammadi: Some Preliminary Observations," lays out the contribution of both sets of texts to our understanding of the formation of the Jewish and Christian Bibles. Each corpus of texts, he emphasizes, illuminates in its own way the social and religious contexts in which scripture was conceptualized in antiquity. Despite the significant differences between the two groups of texts, the Qumran and Nag Hammadi literatures have points in common. Both for example engage scripture in ways that reflect an apocalyptic worldview and show an interest in redeemer figures.

Part 4 is devoted to "Portrayals of Patriarchs in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices." George J. Brooke, "From Adam to the Patriarchs: Some Biblical Figures in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Library," compares how biblical figures are utilized in each corpus. Figures such as Adam, Noah, and Abraham are examined. In the Dead Sea Scrolls there are some hints that Adam has some sort of cosmic or eschatological significance,

whereas in the Nag Hammadi material Adam frequently has a prominent role in complex metaphysical scenarios. With regard to Noah, comparison with the Nag Hammadi material makes it easier to discern key issues regarding his portrayal at Qumran. Comparison highlights that interest in Noah in the scrolls can relate to the pre-Aaronic foundation of the priesthood, and that Noah is associated with the theme of proper occupation of the land, since this theme is not prominent in the Nag Hammadi texts. The Dead Sea Scrolls also appeal to the patriarchs as ethical models to be emulated; the Nag Hammadi texts, by contrast, are more likely to legitimate claims based on their ability to offer corrections and supplements to scripture (and offer what the truth 'really' is) rather than claim they are following it.

The transmission and appropriation of Enochic traditions, as mentioned above, is a vibrant topic of contemporary scholarship. While the figure of Enoch is not a prominent figure in the Nag Hammadi corpus, the watchers myth is adapted and reformulated in several texts of this find.<sup>29</sup> While this issue has been explored by Nag Hammadi specialists, it has by and large not been touched on by scholars of ancient Judaism, despite all the current interest in the reception of Enochic traditions. Three articles in this part explore this issue in various ways. In "Celestial Landscapes and Heavenly Ascents: The Slavonic *Book of the Holy Secrets of Enoch the Just*," Florentina Badalanova Geller analyzes the Slavonic *Book of the Holy Secrets of Enoch the Just* (2 *Enoch*) against the background of data encountered by scholars prior and after the discoveries of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Library. She critiques the peripheral status traditionally assigned to 2 *Enoch* in the study of ancient Judaism, which she attributes to the views of scholars such as Józef Milik.<sup>30</sup> The author endorses the earlier scholarship of Madeleine Scopello, who examined several intriguing parallels between 2 *Enoch* and the Sethian apocalypse *Zostrianos* (NHC VIII,1), and, on the basis of those affinities, suggested that a Greek *Vorlage* of 2 *Enoch* was utilized in the composition of *Zostrianos*. In Badalanova Geller's view, engagement with Nag Hammadi literature should prod us to transform our understanding of 2 *Enoch*. She passionately

29 The comprehensive treatment here remains Losekam, *Die Sünde der Engel*.

30 This is one thread in a complex scholarly landscape. R.H. Charles argued that 2 *Enoch* was produced in the first century CE by a Hellenized Jew, probably from Alexandria, and that the text likely influenced several early texts, including the gospel of Matthew, the *Epistle of Barnabas*, and the *Ascension of Isaiah*. See Morfill and Charles, *Book of the Secrets of Enoch*, xxi–xxii, xxvi. Some more recent scholarship has also argued for the antiquity of at least portions of 2 *Enoch*. Böttrich, for example, contends that 2 *Enoch* 69 predates the destruction of the temple in the first century CE. See his "The Book of the Secrets of Enoch," 56.

contends that it should not be regarded as a late or derivative Enochic composition but that it rather contains extensive ancient and authentic material and should be reconceptualized as an important and primary text of ancient Judaism.

In “It Didn’t Happen the Way Moses Said It Did: Exegesis, Creativity, and Enochic Traditions in the *Apocryphon of John*,” Matthew Goff examines the incorporation of the watchers myth into the *Apocryphon of John*, a major text of the Nag Hammadi corpus. The essay also explores why this text presumably utilizes some form of the *Book of the Watchers* but never cites it or invokes Enoch as an authoritative figure. This issue affords an opportunity to examine how the *Apocryphon of John* regards its source material and assess the reception of Enoch in late antique Egypt. The composition exhibits a loose and creative style of exegesis in which material is freely adapted into its elaborate cosmogonic scenario. That is more important in this document than appealing to textual sources. Also Enoch in the era when the Nag Hammadi manuscripts were produced was revered as an eschatological scribe, associated with the final judgement. In that sense it is understandable that the *Apocryphon of John* does not invoke him as a source of authority since the emphasis of the composition is not on the end of history but the origins of the cosmos.

Claudia Losekam in her “Enochic Literature in Nag Hammadi Texts: The Enochic Myth of Angelic Descent as Interpretative Pattern?” offers an extensive survey of the reception of the watchers myth in the Nag Hammadi corpus. She focuses on three Coptic texts, the *Secret Book of John* (the *Apocryphon of John*), the *Nature of the Rulers*, and *On the Origin of the World*. In various ways these texts, and others, reformulate the first chapters of Genesis in ways that include elements of the watchers myth. The *Secret Book of John*, for example, adapts this Enochic myth to depict the archons as lustful and having sex with women (so too *A Valentinian Exposition*), and *On the Origin of the World* and *Pistis Sophia* (from Codex Askewensis) adapt the motif of the watchers giving illicit knowledge to humankind, including sorcery and idolatry. Losekam argues that the core structural patterns in the adaptation of the watchers myth in the Nag Hammadi corpus include: a thematic affinity between the Enochic watchers and the archons, the adaptation of the trope of the watchers’ having sex with women to represent a form of oppression against the elect, and that the theme of forbidden knowledge serves as a tool of control over humankind by distracting them. These elements of the watchers myth contribute to an overarching theme in the Nag Hammadi corpus, that evil cosmic powers are constantly striving to keep humans from understanding their true nature.

Tuomas Rasimus, in his “Blenders of the Lost Arks: Noah’s Ark and the Ark of the Covenant as One in Gnostic and Other Judeo-Christian Literature” (in

the editors' opinion, the best title in the volume), argues that the unusual iterations of the story of Noah's flood in the *Nature of the Rulers* and the *Apocalypse of Adam*, which include (in *Nat. Rulers*) the burning of the ark by a woman named Norea, become intelligible by positing that both texts have 'blended' Noah's ark with the ark of the covenant. This terminology, as does Rasimus's article as a whole, draws extensively from the study of metaphors from a cognitive science perspective, not unlike the essay in this volume by DeConick. From this perspective the semantic work of a metaphor, understanding one thing in terms of another, is a process in which one conceptual domain is mapped onto another. This cognitive act can create a new, blended image. This is a generative, creative process and the production of the new images can often incorporate other factors beyond the two things being connected in a metaphor. Rasimus illustrates that the blending of the two arks is a surprisingly common phenomenon in ancient Jewish and Christian literature and he situates this theme in Nag Hammadi literature in that broader context.

The final part of the volume, "Weak Comparison' in Praxis: Interdisciplinary Investigations of Themes in the Qumran and Nag Hammadi Literatures," offers a selection of specific studies on particular themes in the two corpora. Each can be understood as a particularly clear example of the kind of scholarship suggested by Lincoln's model of "weak comparison." Harold W. Attridge, in his "Revealers and Revelation from Qumran to Nag Hammadi," investigates the various ways both sets of texts articulate a concern for "revealed truth" and have a set of traditions that help them articulate how access is provided to it. His study surveys broadly the various ways this issue is present across both corpora. In the scrolls for example dream visions and their mediating figures are important, and Attridge devotes particular attention to the *raz nihyeh* ("the mystery that is to be" or "the mystery of existence"), the study of which is central to the acquisition of revealed knowledge in 4QInstruction. As for the Nag Hammadi texts, there is an emphasis on a divine first principle that is removed from ordinary human experience, generally without an emphasis on the patriarchs as mediating figures, in contrast to the Dead Sea Scrolls (the *Apocalypse of Adam* is an exception). The codices also include their own rich array of figures who reveal knowledge, including angels, such as Eleleth in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* or Derdekeas in the *Paraphrase of Shem*, or Christ, as in the *Second Discourse of the Great Seth*. The Nag Hammadi texts often exhibit more complex models of revelation than the Qumran scrolls. Sometimes the revealer can be polymorphic and his appearance can change, as in the *Apocryphon of John* or the *Gospel of Philip*, adding levels of complexity to the issue of the physical form of the revealer of heavenly knowledge. Motifs

from the New Testament can be integrated in this material with metaphysical and epistemological thought, as in for example the Valentinian *Gospel of Truth*, to a degree that is not attested in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Dylan M. Burns, in “There is No Soul in a Sect, Only Spirit and Flesh: Soteriological Determinism in the *Tripartite Tractate* (NHC I,5) and the ‘Vision of Hagu’ (4QInstruction),” offers a focused text study that nicely illustrates the value of comparing the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices. He offers a close study of the Valentinian *Tripartite Tractate* that investigates how to understand its anthropology. The work divides humankind into three “races,” spiritual, animate, and material, but Irenaeus suggests that this mode of thought, in an eschatological context, has instead a bipartite anthropology, those who will receive postmortem rewards and those who will not. Burns argues that the animate category does not play a role in Valentinian eschatology, and that we can discern a shift from a tripartite anthropology, which is important in this world, to a bipartite model, which dominates the next. Why this is the case, he suggests, is better illuminated through comparison with 4QInstruction, in particular its “Vision of Hagu” passage which divides humankind into fleshly and spiritual types. The Valentinian anthropological category which is the most ambiguous (the animate) has no counterpart in the Hagu passage. He reasonably suggests that the anthropological reflection evident in 4QInstruction was shaped by its sectarian context. The sectarian mindset fostered an insider/outside dichotomy and this yielded a more consistently bipartite anthropology, operative in the current world and the next alike. The *Tripartite Tractate* by contrast was not produced by a sect with the same sort of dynamics; the absence of such a dualizing sectarian mentality helps explain why the anthropology of the *Treatise* is tripartite and has more ambiguity than that of 4QInstruction.

Kelley Coblentz Bautch, in her “The Visionary’s View: Otherworldly Motifs and Their Use/Reuse in Texts of Qumran and Nag Hammadi,” examines otherworldly topoi in both corpora. Motifs such as visionary travels and interpreting angels occur for example in the book of Ezekiel and the Enochic *Book of the Watchers*. Coblentz Bautch suggests that such material in both the Qumran and Nag Hammadi literatures were influenced by a broad set of early Jewish traditions. This may be a context for understanding the trope of a visionary experiencing an otherworldly journey evident in the Nag Hammadi text *Zostrianos*. It may incorporate this tradition about vision journeys into a very different thought-world that disparages the material cosmos, thus making the seer experience a more “contemplative ascent” into an idealized Platonic realm, as opposed to a physical heavenly ascent.

Andrew B. Perrin, in his “Expressions of Pseudepigraphy in the Qumran Aramaic Fragments and First Impressions of the Nag Hammadi Codices,” offers an instructive exploration of the theme of pseudepigraphy, or the attribution of authorship to someone else, often to an important figure from the past. Pseudepigraphy and pseudepigrapha are topics that have been much critiqued in recent years, particularly the use of the latter as a basis of categorizing texts. Perrin, an established authority on the Aramaic texts from Qumran, examines the theme of authorship in this material. It is common in this literature to attribute texts to important figures from the pre-Sinai past. *Genesis Apocryphon* for example presents iterations of Genesis stories involving figures such as Noah and Abraham, putting them in the first person, effectively making the composition a kind of “pseudepigraphic anthology,” as Perrin argues. He also emphasizes the attribution of Aramaic texts to priestly figures such as Levi or Qahat. Perrin examines strategies of pseudepigraphic attribution in the *Apocryphon of John*, addressing several authorization techniques evident in the composition, such as the use of the first person, not unlike the Qumran Aramaic texts, apostolic attribution, or the assertion that figures who disclose information have preserved their knowledge in a book (the Book of Zoroaster). Declining to attribute influence of the Dead Sea Scrolls on the Nag Hammadi Codices, he suggests that the situation is better characterized as a set of common or similar scribal-authorial strategies evident in both corpora.

## 2 Directions for Future Scholarship

This proceedings volume was not designed to comprehensively examine all the intersections and possible comparisons between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices. Rather it is hoped that this volume can encourage further scholarship and collaboration between these two fields. To this end we briefly examine here (in alphabetical order) some possible directions for future scholarship in which the two corpora of texts can be mutually enlightening which are not taken up substantively in the present volume.

### 2.1 *Apocalypses*

Since the 1970s, with the publication of *Semeia 14* and the Aramaic Enoch texts from Qumran, the study of apocalyptic literature has blossomed, with regard to Jewish and Christian texts alike. *Semeia 14* even included a section on “Gnostic apocalypses.”<sup>31</sup> A great many Nag Hammadi texts—nearly half of the entire corpus!—accord with the leading definition of an apocalypse developed

31 Fallon, “The Gnostic Apocalypses.”



in *Semeia* 14.<sup>32</sup> Scholars of the Nag Hammadi literature such as Madeleine Scopello and Dylan Burns have started to situate these texts in the broader context of apocalyptic literature.<sup>33</sup> Among specialists of ancient Jewish apocalyptic texts there is increasingly more willingness to examine the genre comparatively and analyze apocalypses from late antiquity, as evident for example in the scholarship of Lorenzo DiTommaso, but this perspective has by and large not been extended to the Nag Hammadi apocalypses. There are ample opportunities to examine these writings and assess their contribution to our understanding of ancient Jewish and early Christian apocalypticism.

## 2.2 *Demonology*

There is a wealth of scholarship on demonology in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the importance of the Qumran corpus for understanding the development of traditions regarding diabolism, Satanology, and demons more generally in ancient Judaism and earliest Christianity.<sup>34</sup> The array of demons, authorities, powers, and above all archons at Nag Hammadi is generally much less well-understood.<sup>35</sup> Comparison of demonological traditions in Qumran and Nag Hammadi would undoubtedly yield fruitful and unexpected results. Such investigation can also prove to be useful in understanding Manichaean sources, and Badalanova Geller reminds us how important Gnostic and Manichaean sources can be for understanding the portrayal of the Watchers in pseudepigrapha such as *2 Enoch*.

## 2.3 *Philosophy*

A striking insight that came up on multiple occasions at the 2018 Berlin conference—in papers and discussion alike—is the gulf between the Nag Hammadi and Qumran texts as regards the Greek philosophical tradition. The importance of the Nag Hammadi texts for the history not just of ancient religion, but of ancient philosophy, is well-known and has become a more vigorous trajectory of investigation than ever.<sup>36</sup> As several papers in this volume (e.g., Schröter, Attridge, Burns, Coblenz Bautch) emphasize, the vocabulary,

32 For this reckoning, see Burns, “From the Gnostic Dialogues,” 345–46.

33 See e.g., Scopello, “Youel et Barbélo”; eadem, “Apocalypse of Zostrianos”; eadem, “Contes apocalyptiques et apocalypses philosophiques”; more recently, Burns, *Apocalypse of the Alien God*; idem, “From the Gnostic Dialogues”; see further the contribution of Badalanova Geller, in this volume.

34 See recently e.g., Keith and Stuckenbruck, eds., *Evil*; Reed, *Demons*; Stokes, *The Satan*.

35 For an early and still instructive effort, see Pagels, “The Demiurge”; see further Kaiser, *Hypostase*, 138–41.

36 Primary remains the magnum opus of Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*; see also Burns, *Apocalypse*. More recently, see Miroshnikov, *Gospel of Thomas*; Linjamaa, *Ethics*.

concerns, and exegetical intertexts and prooftexts of Greek and especially Platonic thought are commonplace and important in the Nag Hammadi collection, but for the most part without analogue in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Recent scholarship on the Qumran texts has tried to read some of them as engaging, or at least usefully comparable to, Greek philosophical ideas.<sup>37</sup> A question we were left with at the end of our conference—and one which the papers in this volume pose—is if the Nag Hammadi texts, with their effusive Platonizing, show us the limits of weak comparison between the Dead Sea Scrolls and Greek philosophical literature.

#### 2.4 *Pseudepigraphy*

Related but distinct to the question of the Nag Hammadi texts and the study of apocalypses and apocalypticism is the study of these Coptic manuscripts with respect to the greater history of biblical pseudepigrapha. Remarkably, in the flagship collection of *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (ed. Charlesworth, 1983–1985), a single, lonely Nag Hammadi text—the *Apocalypse of Adam* (NHC v,5)—is included. As the essays in this volume by Schröter and Perrin make clear, pseudepigraphy is a practice that is widespread across the Nag Hammadi corpus, but that has only begun to undergo evaluation in terms of the study of biblical pseudepigrapha. Conversely, the contributions by Goff, Losekam, and Badalanova Geller all show that even the relatively well-known case of the reception of the watchers myth in Gnostic literature still has many insights to yield under careful investigation. Further research along these lines is also invited by recent efforts to read the Nag Hammadi texts not simply in terms of the history of Gnosticism, but the history of Christian (especially Coptic) apocryphal literature.<sup>38</sup>

#### 2.5 *Redeemer Figures*

Redeemer figures are a central topic in the Nag Hammadi literature. Christ plays a central role in the corpus, as do figures that are not obviously identified with the person of Jesus but may be related to him in some capacity (such as the female redeemers of the long version of *Apocryphon of John* and *First Thought in Three Forms*) or who may be avatars or incarnations of biblical

37 Two careful explorations of this direction can be found in Popović, “Apocalyptic Determinism,” 263–67; Najman, “Jewish Wisdom.” For an early suggestion of this trajectory (with respect to Nag Hammadi), see Nock, “Coptic Library,” 320.

38 See e.g. Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 7, 265–66, passim; Burns, “From the Gnostic Dialogues,” 369–75. Cf. now the ERC-funded project at the University of Oslo, *Storyworlds in Transition: Coptic Apocrypha in Changing Contexts in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Periods* (APOCRYPHA).

figures (such as Seth).<sup>39</sup> Thanks to the Dead Sea Scrolls, we now have important new evidence concerning the ancient Jewish context out of which arose the messianism that is central to Christianity. Messianic expectation plays a role, although not necessarily a central one, in the sect associated with the Dead Sea. The *Community Rule* for example expresses the expectation for two messiahs, the messiah of Aaron and the messiah of Israel, a dual office in which two distinct figures, one priestly, one Davidic, are combined together as a pair (1QS IX, 11). The scrolls also illustrate that angels could play a messianic role in helping implement the eschatological salvation of the righteous. The archangel Michael, as the head of the heavenly host that destroys the forces of Belial, in the War Scroll is called “the Prince of all the Congregation” (1QM v, 1) which is clearly a messianic title elsewhere in the scrolls (4Q285 5 4), and Melchizedek destroys the lot of Belial according to 11QMelchizedek. Scholars now have a fuller sense of ancient Jewish messianism, its chief concerns and its variety. This can provide new context for understanding the utilization of these traditions in Nag Hammadi texts with regard to how they articulate the motif of redemption.

## 2.6 *Wisdom and Pedagogy*

While the wisdom genre has come under attack in recent years, it still has value as an etic category and moreover there are instructional and didactic texts from antiquity.<sup>40</sup> The Dead Sea Scrolls include instructional texts that have been classified as wisdom texts, such as 4QInstruction, and this has in part prompted the re-evaluation of the genre.<sup>41</sup> There are also Nag Hammadi texts that have been usefully classified as sapiential, such as the *Teachings of Silvanus*. The composition encourages the addressed to study and be guided by reason. In keeping with the didactic spirit of the composition, *Silvanus* explicitly quotes the Wisdom of Solomon, showing engagement with an explicitly didactic text that was part of the scriptural tradition it inherited. As the essay by Lundhaug in this volume discusses, one new fruitful direction of scholarship examines *Silvanus* and other related texts such as the *Sentences of Sextus* as instructional writings within the context of Egyptian monasticism.<sup>42</sup> The extensive evidence that is available for pedagogy and the cultural status

39 On the female savior-figures Pronoia and Protennoia in *Ap. John* and *First Thought*, see the contribution of Attridge in this volume. For Seth and his avatars in the Nag Hammadi and related texts, see Attridge's contribution, as well as Burns, *Apocalypse*, 78–86.

40 Kynes, *An Obituary*. See the rebuttal by Collins, “Wisdom as Genre.”

41 Goff, *Discerning Wisdom*.

42 On sapiential literature at Nag Hammadi in general, see also Burns, “Jewish Sapiential Traditions,” 413–20.

and roles of teachers and students, and the composition of texts specifically intended to promote learning, in late antiquity is extensive and this is by and large an under-utilized resource for scholars of Second Temple Judaism interested in these topics.

The personification of wisdom as a woman is an important trope in the Nag Hammadi corpus. This is an established motif in ancient Israelite and Jewish literature, perhaps best known from the book of Proverbs, where wisdom, reconfigured as a woman, urges people to love her and embrace a life characterized by study, ethics and righteousness. Proverbs 8 also depicts the figure of wisdom as giving eye-witness testimony to the divine creation of the natural order. This articulates the idea that God made the world with wisdom, as a way to understand the world as intelligible and having a coherent structure (Prov 3:19). This tradition is extensively appropriated and reconfigured in Nag Hammadi literature, with Sophia (wisdom) playing an important role in the cosmogonic teachings that are prevalent in this corpus.<sup>43</sup> She experiences a type of fall and is construed as the mother of the demiurge, giving a decidedly negative interpretation to the older association evident in Proverbs between personified wisdom and the cosmic order. The ancient Jewish testimony for the personification of wisdom as a woman, however, is not limited to Proverbs. There are extensive adaptations of this trope in Ben Sira and the Wisdom of Solomon. While not extensive, some new evidence for this tradition is now available in the Dead Sea Scrolls, in particular 4QBeatitudes.<sup>44</sup> This evidence opens up new opportunities to understand a Jewish tradition that Nag Hammadi texts clearly draw upon.

## 2.7 *Mysticism*

Before concluding one brief comment on mysticism is in order. While comparative scholarship that looks at issues pertaining to mysticism, such as heavenly ascents, remains a subject with much potential, there is of course already ongoing, important work on ancient Jewish and early Christian mysticism, some of which engages both the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices.<sup>45</sup> At the same time, much of this work is consumed with the key task of debating the contours and viability of the category of mysticism altogether. The study of ancient Jewish and Christian mysticisms, and the relationships between them,

43 The classic treatment remains MacRae, "Jewish Background." For an update, see Burns, "Jewish Sapiential Traditions," 420–25.

44 Goff, *Discerning Wisdom*, 198–229.

45 See, for example, DeConick, ed., *Paradise Now*; Davila, *Descenders to the Chariot*; Reed, "Categorization."

is vital and should continue, but we, the editors, preferred to set it aside at the conference out of which the current volume emerged, because a primary aim of the symposium was to explore new and different avenues of comparison.

The papers collected here will, we hope, stimulate further comparative work on both the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices, with respect to a wide variety of topics—including those that, as we have noted here, the present volume does not treat directly. For there are ample directions for comparativist scholarship that can make substantive contributions to the study of both of these very fascinating, and very ancient, corpora of texts.

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**PART 2**

*New Antiquities: Initial Receptions of the Qumran  
and Nag Hammadi Corpora*





# Artifact Migration and the Transport of Ancient Knowledge into Modernity: The Role of Human Cognition in the Process of Immigration

*April D. DeConick*

How does ancient Gnostic spirituality transform American culture and religion? This is a complex question that has captured my attention and imagination. As I have studied this question, I have come to recognize the centrality of artifacts—the tomes, stones, and bones studied by academic specialists and scholars—and their migration into modern culture by academics, religious leaders, journalists, and other producers of media. Artifact migration is a dynamic process that occurs when artifacts like texts or art objects that have been produced in another time and place are transported into a foreign culture.

In modernity, we have witnessed the migration of previously unknown religious artifacts along two pathways. One is the consequence of globalization, when locally familiar religious texts migrate to a new culture, such as occurred with the Asian explosion in the Long Sixties.<sup>1</sup> The other is the rediscovery of ancient religious texts like the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices, texts that were lost and dropped from everyday use and erased from social and historical memory. In both cases, we are challenged to understand how the artifact's new knowledge is transported into a foreign context and impacts religion in that cultural location. How might we begin to theorize the dynamics of artifact migration, the transport of knowledge from antiquity into modernity, and its intersection with contemporary religious discourse, identity, and practice?

## 1 A Problem for Reception Studies

We might consider the migration of new cultural artifacts a problem for reception studies which focuses on the uptake of well-known traditions such as the Bible and classical legacies in contexts beyond the authorial or intended audience. Reception history is a well-trod discipline in both biblical and classical

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<sup>1</sup> Paglia, "Cults and Cosmic Consciousness."

studies, mostly tasked with archiving and describing the accumulation of biblical and classical traditions in art, literature, and even pop culture.<sup>2</sup> Reception studies are given the back seat in the biblical and classical guilds to historical studies which, through their emphases on philology and comparative knowledge of antique cultures, aim to recover the primary (i.e. true) meaning of ancient texts which can only be known by studying their original language and contexts. To do the work of reception is to do ancillary work on secondary meanings, often depicted as the degradation and warping of the original meanings known to the academic expert who serves as a doppelganger of the ancient author.<sup>3</sup>

This historical enterprise, however, is in the throes of a theoretical crisis, challenged by post-modern literary approaches which destabilize the author and challenge our notion of readers and hermeneutics such as formulated by Gadamer, Iser, Jauss and Ricoeur. Reception history is at the center of this crisis, given the formulation of an aesthetics of reception that emphasizes the role of readers in determining the meanings of texts derived from texts that are, in fact, themselves multivalent.<sup>4</sup> This has led to a new understanding of the reception project in terms of focusing on the impact of the artifact on the readers and their religion, politics, aesthetics, and other aspects of their society and culture.<sup>5</sup>

This revisioning encourages the reception historian to identify readers as the makers of meaning (since texts without readers have no meaning). While it is important to describe different readers' hermeneutics (what do they think the text means?), it is more important now for reception historians to unpack how various readers came to their interpretations. This necessitates critical evaluations of their presuppositions, background, and pertinent personal experiences. Reception historians are curious to understand how and why particular texts originated and survived, how and why they migrate to multiple places from their origins to today. Reception historians question how and why people feel the need to engage certain texts. They wonder how these engagements create dialogues between the present and the past.

While reception historians emphasize the impact of texts on different cultures, perhaps more interesting is learning what the uptake of certain texts in different cultures might tell us about those cultures. Another interesting

2 Furey et al. *Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Kallendorf, *Companion*.

3 Gillingham, "Biblical Studies"; Harding, "Reception History"; Morgan, "Visitors."

4 Avalos, *The End*; Aichele, Miscall, and Walsh, "Elephant in the Room"; Lyons, "Hope for a Troubled Discipline"; Beal, "Reception History"; Moore and Sherwood, *Invention*; Crossley, "Immodest Proposal"; Hurtado, "On Diversity."

5 Hardwick and Stray, *Companion to Classical Receptions*; Burns and Renger, *New Antiquities*.

shift is to see beyond the history of interpretation that texts create and ask how texts become products of their own history of interpretation. Beyond this, reception historians attempt to explain what it is about certain texts that made their reception possible along the trajectories they took, and what is it that determined these multiple configurations and their effects. When the configurations and effects are harmful, reception historians have a responsibility to try to understand what it is about certain texts and the way they have been received by particular readers that supports either the invention, maintenance, or justification of discrimination, injustice, and violence.

This reformulation of what reception historians do upends the traditional approach in biblical studies which has understood texts and their original meanings to be received by later people who edit, redact, adjust, pervert, and corrupt them. Reception historians now understand that meaning is not transmitted as we have traditionally understood this process, nor are some interpretations “secondary” to a “primary” interpretation that scholars reconstruct. Importantly, we are seeing that the interpretations that scholars make of texts are part of their reception history more than they are exegeses of authorial intent.

## 2 A Cognitive Turn

My own work on lost Gnostic tomes that have been rediscovered in modernity has led me to think deeply about the uptake of Gnostic texts in modern Western cultures. I have come to understand that these lost texts do not just wander around new cultures like nomads.<sup>6</sup> They go through immigration. The migration of newly discovered artifacts is not as simple as experts positing, attesting to, or verifying the socio-historical context and meaning of the artifact. Artifact migration is an active process of meaning construction, which includes both knowledge transport and innovation. Because of this, the migration of artifacts is not only heavily dependent upon cultural locations, but also the embodied cognitive processes of the human mind, something that reception studies has yet to theorize.

Over the last two decades, cognitive studies has been fostering an interdisciplinary approach germane to the humanities.<sup>7</sup> This approach focuses on how human thought is produced, how meaning is produced, and how thought and meaning are then reproduced within cultural settings. From such a

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Breed, *Nomadic Text*.

<sup>7</sup> Slingerland, *What Science Offers*.

perspective, how and why the artifact is taken up in a particular cultural context and spun in specific directions—particularly by journalists, religious leaders, and scholars—can be explained more precisely than historical and social models alone are able to do. The cognitive turn focuses on how human mental processes might affect, limit, and even determine the ways in which artifacts are migrated conceptually into new cultural contexts. In other words, the ways in which cognition is enabled and disabled affects how artifacts migrate into new cultural contexts as new knowledge, especially given that our mental processes rely heavily on cultural biases and generalized knowledge.<sup>8</sup>

In this regard, the work by Mark Turner and Gilles Fauconnier is particularly useful, giving us a language to talk about cognitive frames, ideal structures, domains of knowledge, cognitive blending, and emergent structures.<sup>9</sup> Also helpful is David Eagleman and Anthony Brandt's presentation of creativity as brain processes (automatic and intentional) that either bend, blend, or break old knowledge structures to create new knowledge.<sup>10</sup> This information is a basic starting point for a more robust cognitive-historical model of artifact migration that tries to explain how objects and texts move in and out of different cultural locations and impact knowledge.

### 3 Framing Fragments

At the start of my professional career, I was enraptured with the lost *Gospel of Thomas*. I had, in fact, discovered it for myself in 1982 when I ran across Ron Cameron's volume, *The Other Gospels*.<sup>11</sup> I was keen to try to get a grip on the meaning and significance of the *Gospel of Thomas* and found myself floundering in scholarship divided on its importance and interpretation. There was nothing to be done, I thought at the time, other than for me to learn the ancient languages and study early Christianity more formally. That is how I landed in a Ph.D. program in Biblical Studies. At the end of my graduate study, I defended my dissertation on the *Gospel of Thomas* as a Syrian Christian text promoting a program of Christian mysticism.<sup>12</sup> Gilles Quispel was one of my judges. After the defense, he and I had a chance to talk privately. I was burning to ask one

8 Fauconnier, *Mental Spaces*; idem, *Mappings in Thought*; Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*; Evans and Green, *Cognitive Linguistics*, cf. Balkin, *Cultural Software*, 274.

9 Fauconnier, *Mental Spaces*; idem, *Mappings in Thought*; Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*.

10 Eagleman and Brandt, *Runaway Species*.

11 Cameron, *Other Gospels*.

12 DeConick, *Seek To See Him*.



question, “What was it like to be one of the first people to hold the *Gospel of Thomas* and read it in 2000 years?” He responded immediately, “Imagine April, we didn’t know what we had. It took us time to understand what it was, what it meant.”

At that time, I did not know that I would get the chance to be among the first to read another text that had disappeared in antiquity and was migrated into modernity in 2006: the *Gospel of Judas*. I remember working through the Coptic carefully, trying to establish the text and wondering at its unusualness, with Jesus laughing at the disciples and Judas: on the one hand revealing secrets to his betrayer while on the other hand calling him the thirteenth demon and insisting that Judas would never enter the place of the elect. I had the same reaction that Professor Quispel had had with the *Gospel of Thomas*. I kept asking myself, “What is going on here?” The text felt out-of-place to me—even out-of-joint—because it did not fit what I thought I already knew about the *Gospel of Judas* from Irenaeus and Epiphanius. This artifact felt unfamiliar and unknown.

When artifacts are migrated into unintended and new cultural locations, they first emerge as fragments with little to no known context. Eleazar Lipa Sukenik, one of the first scholars to read a Dead Sea Scroll, talked about this moment of fragmentation: “My hands shook as I started to unwrap one of them. I read a few sentences. It was written in beautiful biblical Hebrew. The language was like that of the Psalms, but the text was unknown to me. I looked and looked, and I suddenly had the feeling that I was privileged by destiny to gaze upon a Hebrew Scroll which had not been read for more than 2,000 years.”<sup>13</sup>

Artifacts start as fragments. They survive in a state of fragmentation, torn from their previous contexts, perhaps even physically damaged. As artifacts are migrated, the fragments quite literally are framed in order to archive them. For instance, to preserve fragile manuscript pages, it has been standard practice for each leaf to be placed carefully between glass plates and secured around the edges with tape. Some manuscripts, like the *Gospel of Judas*, have additional silhouette matting done, so that each page appears as an individual object of art (Figure 2.1).

Museums further curate the fragments, setting them in exhibition spaces that can provide significant new meaning and signal value. The Dead Sea Scrolls, for instance, are curated within a dedicated shrine built to house the first seven scrolls discovered at Qumran in 1947. The roof is shaped to represent the top of the jars in which the scrolls were buried and the display inside

13 [https://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/learn-about-the-scrolls/discovery-and-publication?locale=en\\_US](https://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/learn-about-the-scrolls/discovery-and-publication?locale=en_US).

wraps the manuscripts around an enormous scroll. In this way, visitors are presented with the fragments as sacred found objects of a lost Jewish history. The national importance of the scrolls is signaled by the fact that the shrine is situated next to the Israeli Parliament. By contrast, the Nag Hammadi Codices, also discovered in the 1940s, remain sequestered in a wooden box in the back of the Coptic Museum in Cairo. Occasionally a page from one of the codices is on display among other Coptic artifacts, but their “heretical” status is emphasized rather than their value to the history of early Christianity.<sup>14</sup> This framing is highly significant because it reflects not only how the culture values the artifact, but how scholars do as well. This difference in framing the Dead Sea Scrolls as valuable objects of a lost Jewish history versus the Nag Hammadi Codices as lost objects of heretics goes a long way to explain why the Dead Sea Scrolls have had enormous impact on reconfiguring our understanding of early Judaism and Christianity, while the Nag Hammadi Codices have not.

Framing, however, extends far beyond the physical curation of the artifact. Significantly, framing is a cognitive operation in and of itself. Charles Fillmore explains that a frame is a category or system of concepts that are related in a holistic sense.<sup>15</sup> When we experience something new or unusual like a previously unknown artifact, our working memory recruits frame structures and other knowledge otherwise located in long-term memory in order to make sense of the new thing.<sup>16</sup> Seanna Coulson explains that cognition involves linguistic cues that prompt us to recruit a referential structure or frame in which we fit relevant information about each of the entities of discourse.<sup>17</sup>

How does this work in terms of emergent structure or new ideas? Analogy is what enables the mapping of partial frame structures from two or more domains of knowledge in order to produce new meaning. These frame structures are mappable because of their similarity with each other. The frames can be envisioned as schema with specific slots. These slots are filled with elements particular to each domain. When one domain maps onto another, structure is projected from the domains, often partially. Innovations are created when the newly constructed or target domain is expanded by extending the input structures further, creating new structure in the target domain, or reinterpreting the old structure in the target domain. This ability to extend the mental structure is the most crucial component of innovative thinking.<sup>18</sup> In the case

14 Cf. <http://www.coptic-cairo.com/museum/selection/manuscript/manuscript.html>.

15 Fillmore, “Frame Semantics,” 373.

16 Fauconnier, *Mappings in Thought*, 22–23; Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 40.

17 Coulson, *Semantic Leaps*, 21.

18 Fauconnier, *Mappings in Thought*, 103–104.



FIGURE 2.1 A page of the Gospel of Judas, Bodmer Library  
PHOTO COURTESY OF APRIL D. DECONICK

of previously unknown artifacts, this means that the artifact is taken from its state of fragmentation and framed mentally in ways that provide meaning and control knowledge. While the process of *framing* as an ongoing cognitive operation determines the migration of artifacts, it is not willy-nilly, but is a process that is constrained or limited by cognition's own evolved and largely automatic mental processes.

#### 4 The Recursion Constraint

The first of these automatic mental processes is the *recursion constraint*. Human cognition is recursive because it relies heavily on schematization and analogical activities.<sup>19</sup> In other words, we are not able to think without categorizing or framing concepts, nor are we able to think without relying on knowledge of preexisting concepts that serve as kinds of analogical templates.<sup>20</sup> So when we think, recursive knowledge in the form of cognitive frames is always

19 Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors*; Johnson, *Body in the Mind*; Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*; Fauconnier, *Mental Spaces*; idem, *Mappings in Thought*; Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*.

20 Trites, *Literary Conceptualizations*, 3.

in play. The embedding of new knowledge in old knowledge structures means that our cognitive processes are recursive. The way in which old knowledge is already structured determines how the new cultural knowledge will be structured. The old recursive categories or frames influence the structuring of new experiences and information, thus perpetually re-embedding the old knowledge structures, whether partial or wholly.

We build frames and use them to understand a concept holistically and generally, so we do not have to store details of every concept or every event we experience and can make quick automatic judgments when our life depends on it (such as distinguishing predators from prey).<sup>21</sup> Frames are knowledge structures that we regard as ideal, not in the sense of identifying prescriptive defining properties of a concept like CHAIR, but in the sense of recognizing distinguishing features of CHAIR that differentiate chairs from another pieces of furniture like couches. When we understand categories as distinguishing rather than prescriptive, we see that categories are flexible and can accommodate new experiences and situations.<sup>22</sup> We recruit these frames when we are confronted with new knowledge and situations, and use them to map information analogically, so that we superimpose and compare the new experience with our previous knowledge structures.<sup>23</sup> Such metaphor-mapping can result in cognitive blending and frame shifting, so that newly emergent structures form, representing innovative even creative knowledge.<sup>24</sup>

Rather than a regressive process, we might think of the recursive structure of frames as a ratcheting up of our knowledge, since previous knowledge becomes a repeatable structure upon which new knowledge depends and develops. I call this recursive process *cognitive ratcheting*.<sup>25</sup> This ratcheting model helps to explain the recursive nature of cognition as well as its complexity. Human cognition involves more complex reflective and deliberative thinking, but only as it builds upon automatic schematization, analogic processes, and other intuitive default processes.<sup>26</sup>

21 Fillmore, "Frame Semantics," 373.

22 Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, 68–76; Coulson, *Semantic Leaps*.

23 Coulson, *Semantic Leaps*, 21.

24 Coulson, *Semantic Leaps*; Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*.

25 DeConick, "Soul Flights," 87–89. This model was inspired by Michael Tomasello's (*Cultural Origins*, 5) description of the "ratchet effect," which is the process of cumulative cultural evolution. Tomasello explains that inventions and their later improvements occur as they are modified incrementally over time. Each time the new and improved tool, for instance, is modified, it preserves somewhat faithfully its previous form. The process works like a ratchet to innovate and move forward while preventing slippage backwards.

26 Automatic intuitive thinking depends on folk assumptions we make about physics, biology, sociology, and psychology (DeConick, "Soul Flights," 95–96). In terms of religion,

While we might think that the way in which we migrate artifacts into new cultural locations represents reasoned and deliberate arguments, what is running beneath the surface are all the automatic frames and assumptions we share. Because of this, recursion regulates the migration of artifacts into new cultural locations in ways that cannot be overemphasized. Interpretations of the artifacts are never made out-of-the-box. Instead the artifacts are routinely fitted or integrated into pre-existing conceptual boxes such as we see for example with the migration of Nag Hammadi materials into the pre-existing categories we share for GOSPEL and BIBLE (Figure 2.2). When this type of migration is made, the inferences from our GOSPEL or BIBLE frames are linked to the new artifacts. In this way, ideas of scriptural authority and canonicity, for instance, structure our perceptions of the artifacts without a second thought (or argument).

The recursive propensity of cognition coincides with what Hans-Georg Gadamer calls our preconceptions and prejudices, which he says are necessary for us to understand anything.<sup>27</sup> Erving Goffman understood this recursive tendency of cognition to be so significant that it shapes what we believe is happening now and informs how we perceive reality.<sup>28</sup> Cognitive recursion may be related to Pierre Bourdieu's idea of "habitus," that the knowledge we have as a society is self-reinforcing and self-sustaining. Bourdieu understood that current practices and knowledge structures are shaped by past events and the ways in which our thoughts and feelings have been structured as propensities and dispositions.<sup>29</sup>

Cognition, however, is not simply a matter of reiteration. Human thought can be idiosyncratic, innovative, and highly imaginative. So cognition is often a matter of integrating important information and inferences from recursive domains of knowledge in order to construct new meaning. There are times when cognition is so innovative that it results in the formation of a new knowledge domain or emergent structure. Emergent structures are not in themselves present in the recursive domains, but innovations of them. One of these creative mental operations is *creolization*. Creolization is the mixing of discrete elements from the artifact with recursive knowledge, leading to innovative consequences. In the creolization process, aspects of the artifact are blended with domains of knowledge recruited to make sense of it. The result is not the

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these intuitive beliefs include (but are not restricted to) conventions about gods and other supernatural agents, souls, mind-body dualism, out-of-body journeys, invisible realms, and afterlives (Bloom, *Descartes' Baby*; Pyysiäinen, *Supernatural Agents*).

27 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 238–40.

28 Goffman, *Frame Analysis*.

29 Bourdieu, *Theory of Practice*.

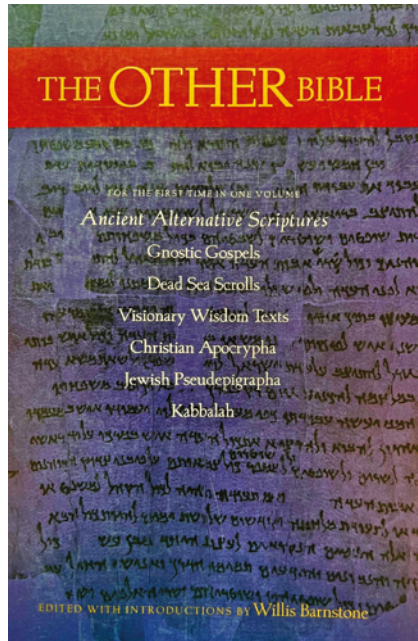
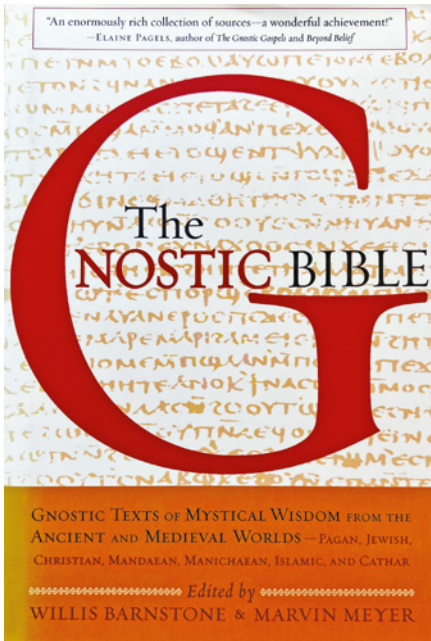
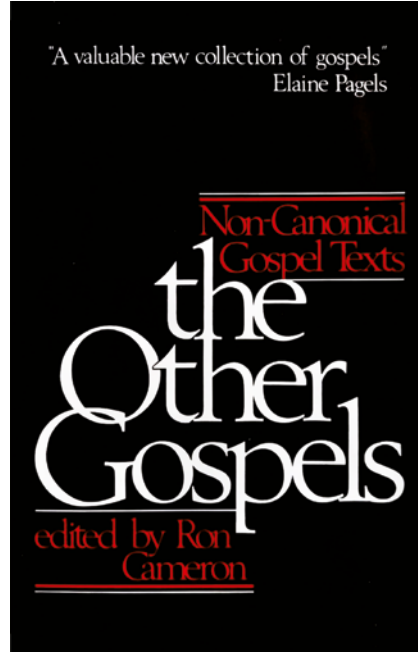
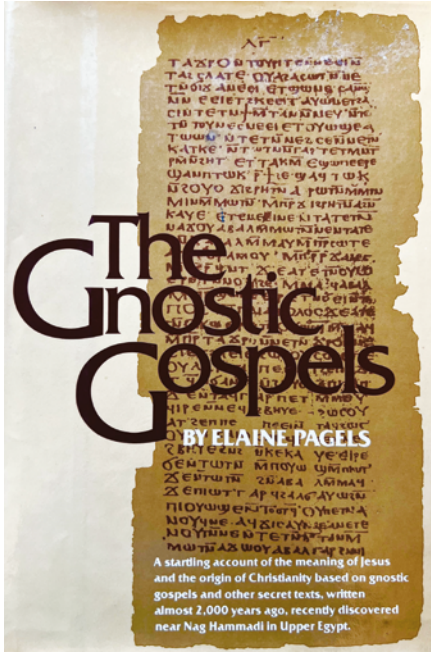


FIGURE 2.2 Popular book covers demonstrating migration of artifacts into pre-existing conceptual categories like GOSPEL and BIBLE

sum of the parts, but a new emergent structure, a novel understanding of the artifact. *Contravention*, another creative mental operation, occurs when recursive knowledge is recruited but violated in order to make meaning. In these cases, the artifact is “read” transgressively and an innovative understanding of it emerges.

Both creolization and contravention were operating when scholars and journalists first began migrating the Dead Sea Scrolls into the CHRISTIANITY frame. While the texts themselves said nothing about Jesus or the early Christians, discrete elements within the texts (i.e. Teacher of Righteousness, Messianic language, and the Teacher’s death) were associated with Jesus and early Christianity so that the Scrolls became a testimony of early Christianity rather than a peculiar Jewish sect.<sup>30</sup>

This is traditionally traced back to the work of André Dupont-Sommer who suggested that the Teacher of Righteousness the unnamed founder of the Essenes was a proto-Jesus, a Messiah-like figure who suffered at the hands of a persecutor.<sup>31</sup> Dupont-Sommer had been persuaded by Ernest Renan that the Jewish pseudepigrapha had certain, characteristically Christian features, so he treated the Dead Sea Scrolls likewise. Renan also understood Christianity as a successful Essene movement, so this linkage is in the shadows of Dupont-Sommer’s work, which presents Christianity not as Essenism but as “an Essenism.” For Dupont-Sommer, the Essenes were a monastic group that led an intense spiritual and mystic life. He argued that other “quasi-Essene” groups existed with this mystic orientation including the groups that sprouted around John the Baptist and Jesus. According to Dupont-Sommer, their preaching of repentance, confession of sins, imminence of the messianic era, baptism, and the centrality of Isaiah all smack of communities very close ideologically and practically to Essenism at Qumran.<sup>32</sup>

Dupont-Sommer, however, realizes that this comparison between the writings of a Jewish sect with early Christian documents is methodologically problematic. So he says, it is “out of scruples regarding method” that he refrained from making the comparison between Essenism and Christianity until the final chapter of his book, and only did so because of the numerous obvious resemblances between the organization, rites, and dogmas mentioned in the

30 Beginning with Dupont-Sommer, *Aperçus préliminaires*; Wilson, “Scrolls From the Dead Sea.”

31 Dupont-Sommer, *Jewish Sect of Qumran*, 150.

32 Dupont-Sommer, *Jewish Sect of Qumran*, 148–51.

Dead Sea Scrolls and in early Christian literature.<sup>33</sup> Even a person untrained in the Christian literature can see these resemblances, he remarks.<sup>34</sup>

It is clear from his rhetoric that Dupont-Sommer has academic reservations about his thesis, yet he feels compelled to offer it nonetheless. A few lines later, he tells us why, an explanation that is entangled in Christian biases. He felt that the connection between the Essenes of Qumran and early Christianity afforded the Dead Sea Scrolls “an importance which is truly unsurpassed.”<sup>35</sup> In this statement, it is clear that Dupont-Sommer understood the legitimizing power that the Christian frame gave to ancient Hebrew artifacts as they were being migrated into modernity. He is less open about the other side of this framing, that the ancient Hebrew artifacts had the power to authorize a certain narrative about Christian messianism. Yet Dupont-Sommer makes the comparison anyway, lobbying for a quasi-Essene identity for early Christianity to deflect some of the methodological uncertainties. His investment in the power of legitimacy that the artifacts afford appears to have overridden his concern for historical method and academic scruples.

Dupont-Sommer’s thesis was popularized in 1955 by the journalist Edmund Wilson, who wrote one of the most publicly influential pieces on the Dead Sea Scrolls, first published in *The New Yorker* magazine and then in a small book called *The Scrolls From the Dead Sea*. His writing clearly exposes the desire to use the ancient Dead Sea artifacts as a way to authorize early Christianity as a movement that ultimately transcends Judaism with a gospel of light and purity consecrated by the Essenes. For Wilson, Qumran has become the cradle of Christianity:

If, in any case, we look now at Jesus in the perspective supplied by the scrolls, we can trace a new continuity and, at last, get some sense of the drama that culminated in Christianity. We can see how the movement represented by the Essenes stood up for perhaps two centuries to the coercion of the Greeks and the Romans, and how it resisted not merely the methods of Rome but also the Roman ideals. We can guess how, about a half century before its refuge was burned together with the Temple of the Jewish God, this movement had inspired a leader [Jesus] who was to transcend both Judaism and Essenism, and whose followers would found a church that was to outlive the Roman Empire and ultimately be identified with Rome herself. Under the goading of these agonizing centuries,

33 Dupont-Sommer, *Jewish Sect of Qumran*, 150.

34 Dupont-Sommer, *Jewish Sect of Qumran*, 150.

35 Dupont-Sommer, *Jewish Sect of Qumran*, 151.



the spirit of the Essene brotherhood ... had already thus made itself free to range through the whole ancient world, touching souls with that gospel of purity and light to which the brotherhood had consecrated itself ... The monastery ... is perhaps, more than Bethlehem and Nazareth, the cradle of Christianity.<sup>36</sup>

It was not long before several scholars followed suit, linking John the Baptist into the Essene Hypothesis, given that his ministry was proximate to the Dead Sea site.<sup>37</sup> And with John the Baptist came Jesus and Christian origins, argued now with all the weight that the historical-critical method could muster.<sup>38</sup> This trend to read the Scrolls in relation to Essenism *and* early Christianity—the Christian-Essene Hypothesis—was developed most dramatically by John Allegro, Barbara Thiering, and Robert Eisenman.<sup>39</sup> While Allegro, Thiering, and Eisenman represent extreme views that no longer hold traction in scholarship, in some arenas, the Christian connection remains operational.<sup>40</sup>

This contravention has been extremely long-lived.<sup>41</sup> Lawrence Schiffman comments, “It is hard to believe that this approach prevailed for so long. Even the most casual reader of the scrolls can see that they are clearly Jewish texts. Yet that self-evident fact has not stopped scholars from producing an entire genre of materials describing and analyzing the texts as though they were precursors of Christianity.”<sup>42</sup> Even though scholars have shaken off this view, the public remains confused. I cannot count the times when I have been asked in social settings what I do and study. When I mention that I work on lost early Christian gospels, the immediate reaction I get is, “Oh, yeah, the Dead Sea Scrolls. I know about them.” When I explain that, no, I do not work on Jewish texts but on Christian texts from the Nag Hammadi collection, I am met with confusing stares that reveal my interlocutors have no idea what I am talking about.

36 Wilson, *Scrolls From the Dead Sea*, 97–98.

37 Brownlee, “Comparison;” idem, “John the Baptist”; Robinson, “Baptism of John.”

38 Black, *Scrolls and Christian Origins*; Charlesworth, *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*.

39 Allegro, *Dead Sea Scrolls*; idem, *Dead Sea Scrolls and the Christian Myth*; Thiering, *Redating the Teacher*; idem, *Qumran Origins*; idem, *Jesus and the Riddle*.

40 I.e. Joseph, *Jesus, Q, and the Dead Sea Scrolls* and *Jesus, the Essenes, and Christian Origins*, argued based on comparison of messianic expectations.

41 Cf. Eisenman, *Dead Sea Scrolls and the First Christians*.

42 Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 17.

## 5 The Coherence Constraint

Framing is a natural cognitive process that relies on both automatic brain processes and reflective brain processes. A number of cognitive constraints limit and shape the way we come to frame and interpret artifacts. One of the most important cognitive constraints affecting artifact migration is the coherence bias, the fact that cognition pushes toward coherence. We make sense of events we experience, or as Frederic Bartlett put it, human thought is the “effort after meaning.”<sup>43</sup> This may explain why *teleology* is a cognitive operation. We think in teleological directions, explaining our experiences as purposeful, as relevant beyond random chance (whether or not they are).<sup>44</sup>

This way of thinking is not only automatic for humans but is further trained into scholars whose job it is to make sense of new artifacts and place them coherently within the knowledge we already have. So, above all else, the migration of artifacts is fundamentally teleological, providing them with specific purpose and power. This is illustrated visually (Figure 2.3), for example, by the cover of John Allegro’s book *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, which gives the story of the discovery of the Scrolls’ coherence, meaning, and power by referencing “their momentous significance for students of the Bible” or Jean Doresse’s 1960 cover for *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics* with its declaration to be “the first full account of the spectacular recent finds in Egypt of forty-four third-century manuscripts which have thrown important new light on early Christianity.” A cover blurb reads that they are “comparable in importance to the Dead Sea Scrolls and of even greater significance to students of the New Testament.”<sup>45</sup> Similar teleological declarations are commonplace among other scholars who migrated the Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices.

Several mental operations are related to the coherence constraint. For instance, the coherence constraint explains why we tend to be more tolerant of memory inaccuracy than we are of incoherence.<sup>46</sup> We prefer to reduce cognitive dissonance, even if this means rationalizations of irrational thoughts and behaviors.<sup>47</sup> When it comes to the migration of new artifacts into our culture, this suggests that anything dissonant about the artifact has the potential to be rationalized (even emended!), so that the artifacts are made to fit and support the knowledge we already have about related subjects. If the artifacts are too

43 Bartlett, *Remembering*.

44 Tremlin, *Minds and Gods*.

45 Allegro, *Dead Sea Scrolls*; Doresse, *Secret Books*.

46 Anastasio, Ehrenberger, Watson, and Zhang, *Individual and Collective Memory*, 167–68.

47 Festinger, *Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*.



FIGURE 2.3 Popular book covers demonstrating how teleology, a cognitive operation that assigns specific power and purpose to our experiences, affects the migration of artifacts

dissonant, revision of previous knowledge is possible, but this does not come without entrenchment among scholars first and intense debate afterward. Rationalization is fundamentally a product of cognitive *refraction*. Refraction occurs when we bend, adjust, or distort the artifact through knowledge we already have, so that the artifact is made to fit what we already know to be true.

As an example, I refer here to the initial migration of the *Gospel of Judas*, when the text was literally emended and translated to conform to the information we already had about the *Gospel of Judas* from Irenaeus and Epiphanius (Figure 2.4).<sup>48</sup> Intense entrenchment and debate followed the publication of counter-narratives like my own that called into question the original Coptic transcription by the National Geographic team and their positivistic reading of an heroic Judas as support for the heresiologists' opinions.<sup>49</sup> There is no evidence that the team considered the possibility that the actual *Gospel of Judas*,

48 Kasser, Meyer and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*; Robinson, *Secrets of Judas*; Ehrman, *Lost Gospel of Judas*; Pagels and King, *Reading Judas*.

49 DeConick, *Thirteenth Apostle*.

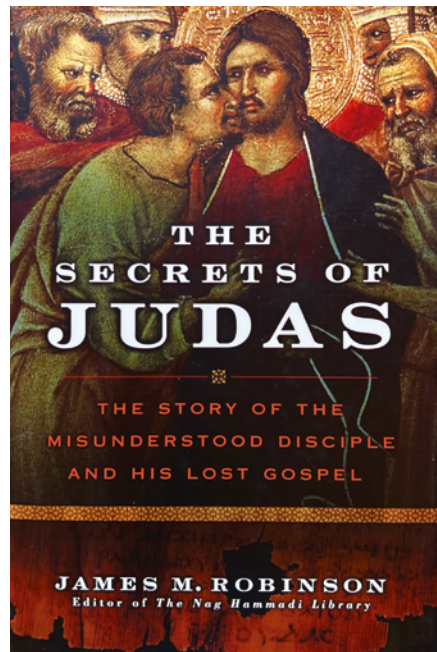
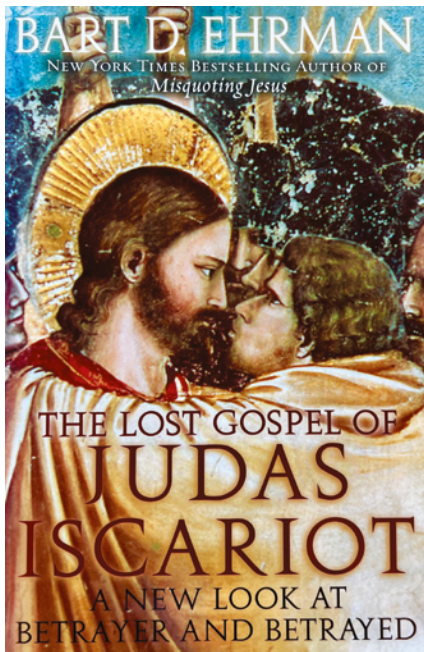
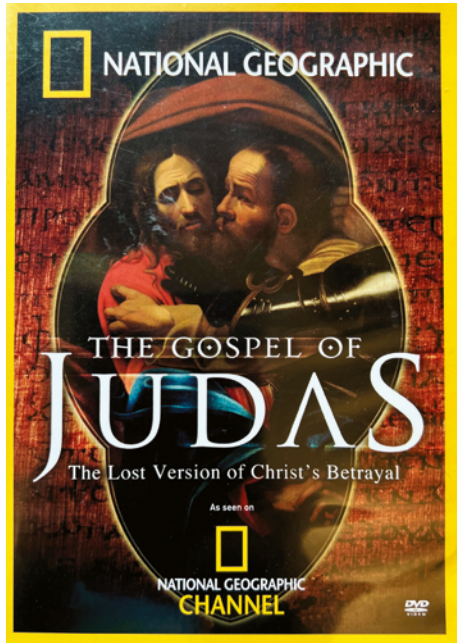
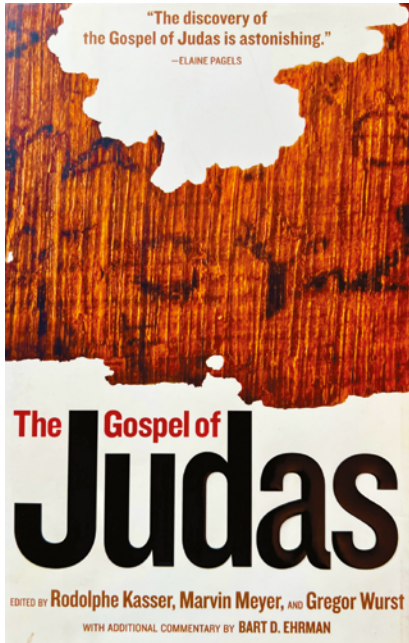


FIGURE 2.4 Popular book covers demonstrating how cognition works to reduce cognitive dissonance via refraction which affected the initial migration of the *Gospel of Judas*

when recovered, might be incoherent, by which I mean, that it would not fit what we assumed we knew about the *Gospel of Judas* from the heresiologists.

Sometimes, the artifact is made coherent by literally identifying the artifact with something else. The cognitive operation *syncretism* is our tendency to compare and match the meaning of two different items. This results in the artifact taking on inferences that are linked to the other item. Syncretism is a very prevalent operation in artifact migration, such as when ancient Gnosis is described as Buddhism. This particular identification is so powerful that many have even tried to make a historical argument to legitimize it. H.P. Blavatsky is well-known for promoting this idea.<sup>50</sup> She thought that Gnosticism incorporated Buddhism, where gnosis is *vidya*, the secret knowledge of the Brahman from India that had been transmitted to Egypt when missionaries sent out by King Asoka (268–232 BCE) from India to Greece, Asia, Syria and Egypt. This secret wisdom influences first non-Christian Gnostics, whom Blavatsky identifies as the Essenes, Therapeutae, Nazarenes, and Hermetics. From there, the secret wisdom is transmitted to the Christian Gnostics.<sup>51</sup>

This was not a new idea that Blavatsky had invented. She was popularizing the opinion of Charles William King, who earlier had migrated a hoard of ancient amulets from his own collection into a Buddhist-Gnostic narrative that glorified Gnosticism.<sup>52</sup> King likely did not originate this idea either. It had been floated in scholarship at least as early as 1828 by Isaac Jacob Schmidt, who wrote a booklet called *Über die Verwandtschaft der gnostisch-theosophischen Lehren mit den Religionssystemen des Orients, vorzüglich dem Buddhismus*.<sup>53</sup> Once Gnosis was identified with Buddhism, a network of modern inferences came into play including the contemporary Western understanding of Buddhism as a non-institutional spiritual path more than a “churched” religion. This inference found immense purchase in *The Gnostic Gospels* by Elaine Pagels, which presents Gnosticism as non-institutional, or, at least, in contrast to the institutional church established by Irenaeus and others, as a movement that has affinities with Buddhist ideas that might be traced to the missionary work of the apostle Thomas in India.<sup>54</sup>

50 Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*; eadem, *Secret Doctrine*.

51 Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, 2:143, 158, 2:169.

52 King, *Gnostics and Their Remains*.

53 Schmidt, *Über die Verwandtschaft*.

54 Pagels, *Gnostic Gospels*, xx–xxiii.

## 6 The Compression Constraint

We are cognitively inclined to compress and decompress information. The propensity of our thought processes is to bring big knowledge down to human scale, to capture global insight in the smallest bits possible. This process is comparable to creating a zip drive by reducing information into strings of binaries clustered into eight bits or a byte. Decompression is the opposite mental inclination. When knowledge is recruited, it is decompressed like the opening of a zip drive. When this happens, the scaled down structure of knowledge is opened back into the bigger mental network of related concepts, inferences, and elaborations that remained linked to the structure even when it was in its compressed state.

Two cognitive operations are byproducts of the compression constraint. *Generalization* is the mental operation that reduces the details of the artifact into a global and generalized whole. Consequently important details are ignored or eliminated in favor of a big picture interpretation. We prefer to make sense of the artifact holistically, as a part of a bigger picture, rather than as a fragment on its own. This tendency toward generalization of knowledge can be so reductive that it results in oversimplification and useless information about the artifact. Related to generalization is *condensation*, when we compact the meaning of the artifact into a smaller package, usually a word or phrase. When this word or phrase is used in relation to the artifact, it decompresses larger networks of meaning that then become attached to the artifact and force inferential information on its interpretation. Both of these cognitive operations are at play when we refer to the Nag Hammadi Codices as **GNOSTIC** and the Dead Sea Scrolls as **ESSENE**, or connect both finds to the concept of a **LIBRARY**.

These operations network the artifact in very specific ways. *Networking* occurs when artifacts are linked into a network of related ideas. The related ideas and inferential information about them are brought to bear on the interpretation of the artifact, interpretations that are more the consequence of the network than of the artifact itself. In other words, to say that the Nag Hammadi Codices are Gnostic brings to bear our definitions of Gnosticism on texts like the *Gospel of Thomas*, the fragment of Plato's *Republic*, and the *Sentences of Sextus*, which may or may not have anything to do with Gnosticism. The same is true of the Dead Sea Scrolls and their linkage into the network of our knowledge about Essenes.

To identify either of these finds with a library (whether they were or not) means that concepts of intentional (even precious) collections, institutions, and archives, as well as activities such as preserving, systematizing, cataloguing, and accessing texts is automatic inferential knowledge that has significant

impact on the artifact's migration. In other words, when the Dead Sea Scrolls are called a library, certain inferences are assumed. It is taken for granted that the library belonged to someone who produced it and preserved it. So it is not surprising that right from the start, the first scholars assumed that there was a nearby residential community of scribes and a scriptorium to produce, preserve, monitor, guard, and deposit the scrolls in the caves.<sup>55</sup> Early interpretations also linked the Essenes with this on-site residential community and the Jewish Revolt with the precipitating event for secreting the Scrolls away in the caves.<sup>56</sup> Decompressing the Dead Sea Scrolls within the mental network of a LIBRARY made it difficult for other options to be considered. Other options only came later in the interpretative process after much deliberation. The site may have been a fortress for the Hasmoneans or settlement for other Jewish dissidents, for instance.<sup>57</sup> Or perhaps Qumran was the site of a wealthy villa or part of an estate independent of the scrolls.<sup>58</sup> Even with the rise of these options that challenge the original narrative, the definition of a library continues to dominate scholarly speculations about the Scrolls. It has become increasingly popular to follow Rengstorf's opinion that the Scrolls did not originate from a residential community, but from a library which originated from another Jewish library or libraries in Jerusalem which was hidden in the caves as dissident Jews from Jerusalem fled the city ahead of the Roman invasion.<sup>59</sup>

The same is true regarding the Nag Hammadi Codices. Once the codices were framed as a library, decompression led to the Nag Hammadi Codices being linked into a network of ideas that made it sound plausible that the books were preserved and owned by monks in the nearby Pachomian monastery and deposited under political duress in nearby caves for safekeeping.<sup>60</sup> Even though some scholars like Rodolphe Kasser and Martin Krause expressed reservations about this story, evidence to the contrary was actively ignored.<sup>61</sup> This included the fact that the area in which the codices were buried is a cemetery (Muhammad claims to have been digging for *sabakh* which is soil dug from the remains of cemeteries or decayed buildings) and an early witness reported that there was a skeleton lying next to the jar.<sup>62</sup> This contrary evidence points

55 Milik, *Ten Years of Discovery*; Vaux, *Archaeology*.

56 Milik, *Ten Years of Discovery*; Vaux, *Archaeology*.

57 Rengstorf, *Hirbet Qumran*; Golb, *Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls*; Cargill, *Qumran through (Real) Time*.

58 Donceel and Donceel-Voûte, "Les ruines de Qumran"; Stacey, "Archaeological Observations."

59 Rengstorf, *Hirbet Qumran*.

60 Beginning with Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Library in English*, 21–25.

61 For Kasser and Krause's disclaimer, see Robinson, *Facsimile Edition*, 3.

62 Doresse, *Secret Books*, 133; Robinson, "Discovery."

to a burial provenance, that is, the books were grave goods that belonged to the deceased rather than the secret contents of a Pachomian library, a case made most recently by Nicola Denzey Lewis and Justine Ariel Blount.<sup>63</sup>

While Brent Nongbri has criticized Lewis and Blount for having “overstated their case,” the fact remains that a burial provenance within the vicinity of a reported skeleton and a mortuary cliff was almost entirely ignored in the scholarship until relatively recently. When I met with Robinson in 2008, I asked him point-blank about the presence of the skeleton in the report and what he made of it. He told me to stop worrying about the skeleton, that the skeleton was not important, because no evidence of it was found at the site.

To me, the fact that the skeleton was not found at the site does not mean that there was no skeleton, but that the site Robinson identified as “the” site likely was not it. The fact that the report of the skeleton was not important to Robinson made a difference in the way he conducted the interviews and wrote about them. Indeed, Robinson’s version of the origin story uncritically accepted the narratives of shifting and conflicting stories about the location of the find, none of which could be verified, stories which were highly suspect to begin with, especially given the blood revenge story (whether a report of criminal activity or a tale to dramatize the events). For me, the reported skeleton is highly significant because it connects the dots in an otherwise hard-to-explain story. That the codices were found while digging for *sabakh* in the vicinity of a mortuary cliff and a skeleton is more than suggestive that the Nag Hammadi Codices were grave goods. For me, this is as conclusive as it gets. Yet in spite of this contrary evidence, the inferences of a monastic library continue to captivate scholarly imagination about the provenance of the Nag Hammadi Codices.<sup>64</sup>

## 7 The Contemporaneity Constraint

Also significant for artifact migration is the fact that our cognitive and memory processes are oriented contemporaneously, in the direction of applicability to the present situation, so that the needs of the present—both personal and communal—affect and remodel the old knowledge that we recruit to deal with the new knowledge.<sup>65</sup> Alignment, as a function of personal and social

63 Denzey Lewis, “Death on the Nile”; Denzey Lewis and Blount, “Rethinking the Origins.” However, cf. the discussion of Nongbri, “Finding Early Christian Books.”

64 Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*.

65 Anastasio, Ehrenberger, Watson, and Zhang, *Individual and Collective Memory*.



memory, occurs when we align the artifact with our contemporaneous needs, making it relevant to modern communities of people with modern concerns. Aligning concepts to manage present issues generally takes the shape of a story of progress and betterment.<sup>66</sup> New knowledge is linked to old knowledge as if it were always part of the story. The linkage of old knowledge to new knowledge ensures relevance, as well as continuity with the past. Older knowledge also authenticates and authorizes the new.

What happens then when artifacts produced within specific historical contexts are taken up by audiences in very different cultural locations, audiences with their own pasts and presents and futures? The constraint of contemporaneity means that the memories and needs of people within the new cultural location determine the relevance of the artifacts for the contemporaneous population and control their interpretation accordingly. Marvin Meyer perhaps says it best in the opening to his book, *The Gnostic Discoveries*. He intends to tell the story about “texts unearthed in the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library” in order “to suggest the extent to which a new understanding of that ancient world may impact our modern world.”<sup>67</sup>

While this certainly means that the artifacts and their interpretations are dislocated and distanced substantially from the environments of the intended users, it also means that the social groups controlling the interpretation of the artifacts are advantaged to use the artifacts to confirm or reinforce particular metanarratives and hegemonies that are presently in play. In terms of both the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices, what most controls their migration is the hegemony of Christianity, so that the Dead Sea Scrolls garnered worth because they reveal to us something new about Jesus and the origins of Christianity and the Nag Hammadi texts because they revealed an “unchurched” early Christianity that is more appealing to disenfranchised modern Christians.

## 8 Scripting Knowledge

When groups interact with complex cultural knowledge over long periods of time, cognitive scripts are generated.<sup>68</sup> These scripts represent stereotypical cultural knowledge that is instantly at our disposal and linked into a bigger

66 Anastasio, Ehrenberger, Watson, and Zhang, *Individual and Collective Memory*, 167–68.

67 Meyer, *Gnostic Discoveries*, 1.

68 On intuitive cognition, see Tremlin, *Minds and Gods*, 179–81.

network of metaphors, schemas, and societal knowledge.<sup>69</sup> Cognitive scripts represent stereotypical and routinized knowledge about specific subjects. They develop as a matter of efficiency, so that we do not have to store details of every concept or every event we experience.<sup>70</sup> They are so immediate for us that we do not consciously realize they are running while we are thinking. These scripts form the basis for human understanding within complex cultural settings.<sup>71</sup> Cultures, in fact, privilege particular scripts.<sup>72</sup> These scripts shape our identity, giving rise to the normal, the canonical, and the appropriate in particular cultural locations.<sup>73</sup> They also define for us deviance and legitimacy, also within these cultural locations.<sup>74</sup>

Cognitive scripts impact the presentation and understanding of artifacts being migrated into new cultural locations. For instance, when we are studying religious artifacts like the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices, our scripts about religious knowledge are particularly relevant to their migration. Because these cognitive scripts represent the assumptions we share in our society about religion and religious knowledge, we default to running these scripts without realizing it whenever we analyze or evaluate new religious texts. Our scripts about religion automatically run in our minds as we judge and authorize new religious artifacts like the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices. These scripts are responsible for our assumptions that the best and most authoritative religion is religion that is old, uncorrupted by secondary influences, and preserved by insiders, by which we usually mean the insiders of whatever religion we consider our own.

What are some of these default scripts that have come to define the normative? We assume that the pure form of a religion is reflected in its original state. But this state, we assume, was not maintained. Instead, we suppose that the original state of the religion has been corrupted over time, especially as the religion was institutionalized or experienced schisms. Another default script identifies the best religion as ancestral, traditional, and old. Old religious knowledge is considered more trustworthy than new religious knowledge. Religious innovation and new revelation are suspect. To be authorized, religions must be associated with antiquity and the ancestors. Since we assume that religions become corrupted with time, we also assume that the genuine form of a religion may be lost or kept secret by an elite body of insiders. When

69 Cf. Trites, *Literary Conceptualizations*, 37, 53; Stephens, "Schemas and Scripts," 14.

70 Herman, *Story Logic*, 89; idem, "Storytelling," 306.

71 Schank and Abelson, "Scripts"; Oziewicz, "Restorative Justice Scripts," 35.

72 Trites, *Literary Conceptualizations*, 39.

73 Balkin, *Cultural Software*, 210–11.

74 Balkin, *Cultural Software*, 191, 210.

we run this script, we assume that religious knowledge that has been protected and preserved from outsider influences did not undergo change or alteration. So secret knowledge is scripted as authentic knowledge. There is also running in our society the default script that oriental religious knowledge is superior to occidental religious knowledge. This script runs because it is built upon our association of antiquity with religious truth. For many people in our society, Asian religions like Hinduism and Buddhism have an allure of antiquity because they predate the rise of rabbinic Judaism and Christianity. Another important default script is the perennial religion script, which assumes that similarities in different religions must reflect the same revelation of truth.

## 9 Stocking Up on Stories

These automatic default scripts function as frames that allow for knowledge to be ratcheted up further when they are run in particular instances, forming the baseline structure for more extensive and targeted narratives. These narratives reflect deliberate thinking, at least in their initial formation, but, with enough time and repetition, they can turn into stock stories, and even take on mythic status.<sup>75</sup> The more these narratives are retold, reworked, and reoriented, the more they become part of the fabric of our social memory and are used as canonical benchmarks for comparison and as general indices through which we come to understand what is happening to our culture and society.<sup>76</sup> In this way, repeated narratives structured on cognitive scripts can turn into stock stories that help us organize our experiences and understand our society's reaction to these experiences.<sup>77</sup> What is so powerful about stock stories is their ability to "make themselves true" through their persistent use.<sup>78</sup> As certain concepts and scripts are narrativized repeatedly into stock stories, constructing and confirming our mental biases over and over again, culture self-replicates these ideas as true.<sup>79</sup> Stock stories become one of the most influential sources of personal and social power because we tend to render our experiences of our world into confirmations of them.<sup>80</sup> Because the stock stories resonate with us at the most basic level (since they confirm our default scripts), they are both powerful and versatile. Artifacts are migrated into them with ease.

75 Balkin, *Cultural Software*, 203.

76 Balkin, *Cultural Software*, 203.

77 Balkin, *Cultural Software*, 204.

78 Balkin, *Cultural Software*, 213.

79 Trites, *Literary Conceptualizations*, 147.

80 Balkin, *Cultural Software*, 213.

If we return to the discussion of the migration of the Dead Sea Scrolls into the CHRISTIAN frame, we might wonder like Schiffman why this was so easily done.<sup>81</sup> It was accomplished almost effortlessly because a very popular stock story about the Essenes had been operating for centuries among esoteric groups and scholars.<sup>82</sup> The story had its roots in claims by the Catholic Church that the Essenes were a Jewish monastic order that served to legitimate Catholic monasticism by providing monasticism with a precedent from Jesus' time. During the Reformation, Protestants rejected this claim, and instead said that the Essenes were a non-Christian and non-biblical monastic order. Some Catholics countered with their own story that the Carmelites were connected to the Therapeutae in Egypt, who were for all intents and purposes Essenes.<sup>83</sup> This meant, they said, that Carmelites and Essenes were the same and that Jesus and his apostles were members of the Essenes. This story was based on their understanding of Eusebius's description of the Therapeutae.<sup>84</sup> They read his testimony so that they understood the Therapeutae to be representatives of the first 'Hebrew' Christians in Egypt who led a Christian monastic life, studying the Gospels, Paul's letters, and other Christian literature. In this way, the story of the Therapeutae and the Essenes were used by some Catholics to fight Protestants who opposed monasticism. This contestation led to Catholics making Jesus, Mary, John the Baptist, and the apostles into Essenes, and this story has never vanished.<sup>85</sup>

Not only hasn't the story vanished, but it was popularized in scholarship and fiction as a way for people during the Enlightenment to confront the problem that Christianity always had been a revealed religion and Jesus was believed to have gained his knowledge from a supernatural source.<sup>86</sup> The idea that Jesus belonged to the Essene order was used as a way to explain that he received special training from the Essenes to do the astounding things he could do. This was first floated by Johann Georg Wachter in *De primordiis Christianae* (1713), which inspired Karl Friedrich Bahrdt to write two well-circulated and popular novels giving rationalistic explanations to Jesus' life and death, *Briefe über die Bibel im Volkston* (1782–1783) and *Ausführung des Plans und Zweckes Jesu* (1783–1785).<sup>87</sup> In these novels, the Essenes were a secret order that taught and groomed Jesus to be a special messiah who healed the sick by using secret

81 Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 17.

82 Hanegraaff, *Esotericism*, 213–15; Hammer and Snoek, "Essenes," 340b–43b.

83 Jotischky, *Carmelites and Antiquity*, 219.

84 Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 2.17.

85 Hanegraaff, *Esotericism*, 213–15.

86 Kranenborg, "Presentation of Essenes."

87 Kranenborg, "Presentation of Essenes."

medicines and techniques from Persia. He was opposed to the sacrificial cult operating at the Jerusalem temple. Even his death was faked by the Essenes who gave Jesus drugs on the sly so that he could convincingly die and resurrect by leaving his tomb and walking up a mountain into low clouds so that onlookers would think he had ascended into heaven. Bahrdt appears to have started an avalanche of literature with comparable story lines and even forgeries of Essene documents.<sup>88</sup>

At the same time, in reaction to the growing insistence on rationalistic explanations for religion, an esoteric turn took place.<sup>89</sup> The idea was bandied around that true religion had been kept secret, with the ancient mystery religions as prime exemplars. The Essenes were conjured to be an ancient esoteric order with roots going back to Pythagoras and Zoroaster. This lineage of secret universal religious truth was linked to esoteric groups like the Freemasons who modified Bahrdt to support and legitimate their own origin stories. Bahrdt's account even made its way into scholarship, so that the link between Jesus and the Essenes became a real intellectual fad for a time.<sup>90</sup>

H.P. Blavatsky's writings most widely distributed the Christian-Essene story into the twentieth century.<sup>91</sup> According to Blavatsky, true religious wisdom originates with an esoteric form of Buddhism prior to Christianity. The Buddhist emperor Asoka sent missionaries to Egypt and Greece. In Egypt, they founded the Therapeutae as a hermetic fraternity. Later the Therapeutae became known as the Essenes. According to Blavatsky's rendition of the Christian-Essene story, the Essenes were a monastic order, which prayed in seclusion and performed

88 For instance, Kranenborg, "The Presentation of Essenes," 253–54, lists his influence on Freemasons: Andreas Riem, *Christus und die Vernunft* (1792); Carl Friedrich Staudlin, *Geschichte der Sittenlehre Jesu* (1799); Ignaz Aurelius Fessler, *Versuch einer kritischen Geschichte der Freymaurerey und der Freymaurer Bruderschaft von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf das Jahr 1802* (1803) Karl Heinrich Georg Venturini (1800–1802), *Natürliche Geschichte des grossen Propheten von Nazareth* (1800–1802).

89 Elukin, "New Essenism."

90 Elukin, "New Essenism." For example, Elukin points out that in 1838 the French-Jewish scholar Joseph Salvador in *Jésus-Christ et sa doctrine* asserts that Jesus was influenced by Essene doctrines of mysticism and by the ascetic habits of the Essenes. In *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (1870), Heinrich Graetz constructs a narrative of Jewish history that imbedded mysticism deep within the Jewish past, finding its origins in a group of first-century Essenes. He argued that the Essenes were the first to articulate a firm belief in the coming of a Messiah. He said that John the Baptist was an Essene who lived near the Dead Sea and that Jesus taught Essene principles such as chastity, suffering, humility, and self-denial. The early Christians were really Essenes who changed their names to Nazarenes. This historical narrative was used by Graetz to suggest that Christianity was a derivation of Judaism, so that Judaism is the essential religion.

91 Particularly Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*.

a ritual called “the remission of sins.” They read scriptures for their hidden meanings and had extensive knowledge of herbs and medical therapies. They believed that the immortal soul descended from the ether only to be incarcerated within the body. Blavatsky wrote that the Nazarenes were an old order within the Essenes, dating back to Moses and to the ancient Persian religion of Zoroaster. The members of this group called themselves Nazarenes. John the Baptist and Jesus were counted among them, although Jesus broke away from John’s group because he felt that the Nazarenes had lost sight of the original message. So Jesus’ aim was to restore the old Buddhist doctrine forgotten by the Nazarenes.<sup>92</sup>

Blavatsky’s Christian-Essene story became the basis for successive esoteric writers and groups to assume its veracity and legitimating power. Edmond Bordeaux Szekely (1905–1979) composed forgeries in a series of book publications he called the *Essene Gospel of Peace*. His forgeries showcase the Essenes as forerunners of holistic health and natural foods.<sup>93</sup> Many Essene revival movements in the twentieth century view Szekely’s discovery (forgeries) as foundational for their movements. It should come as no surprise that all modern Essene revival movements are Christian.<sup>94</sup>

Given this Christian-Essene stock story, scholars who worked to migrate the Dead Sea Scrolls into modernity did not formulate the Christian-Essene Hypothesis through historical critical investigation. The Christian-Essene story was already so familiar in Western culture, it was running on autopilot, so much so that the stock story was “made true” through the historical critical enterprise that migrated the Dead Sea Scrolls into the modern world.

Consider the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Codices as well. How easily they were migrated into the stock story about early Christianity, a religion that started as a pure religion and became corrupted over time with secondary deviations and erroneous thought. This story is so old it goes back at least to Irenaeus. While there are many modern scholars who have called into question this stock story, the story is powerful and entrenched in our culture. Because of it, the Nag Hammadi literature remains irrelevant to our scholarly narratives about early Christian history which continue to privilege New Testament literature with an occasional nod to Jewish pseudepigrapha or the Dead Sea Scrolls. Even though we know otherwise—that early Christianity was not homogenous in its origins but regionally diverse and rife with independent

92 For a collection of Blavatsky’s statements about the Essenes, Therapeutae, and Nazarenes, see Spierenburg, *H.P. Blavatsky*, 40–74.

93 Kreps, “Reading History,” 154.

94 Kreps, “Reading History.”

operators like Paul—New Testament texts are considered to reflect more original (pure) Christian thought and Nag Hammadi literature is characterized as late secondary perversions of this original Christian truth. This stock story about early Christianity is one that reinscribes our own orthodoxy. It is not based on a critical investigation of Christianity's pluriformity, which if done, would rewrite the dating of New Testament texts and the privileging of orthodox readings as primary and authorial. The person who would emerge as the "originator" of Christianity would likely be Marcion.

The marginalization of the Nag Hammadi literature is not an intellectual debate, but a power struggle that supports canonical hegemony by devaluing scholarship and scholars who study this material. It is hard to get hired when you study Gnostic literature. So what student will take seriously its study? This is a vicious circle of devaluation and marginalization. With the discovery of the Jewish pseudepigrapha and the Dead Sea Scrolls, studies in early Judaism have recognized that early Judaism is not defined by Rabbinics and Jewish sectarianism is not heresy. The Dead Sea Scrolls and the pseudepigrapha have been incorporated authentically into the academic discourse about Judaism in a way that the Nag Hammadi texts have not been incorporated within the scholarly investigation of Christianity.

For the Nag Hammadi Codices, this stock story is maintained I think because of its versatility and the fact that it has been leveraged to great advantage throughout Christian history. It has been used by the Protestants (who consider themselves the reformers of original pure Christianity) to argue against the Catholics (whom they consider heretics for corrupting the truth with their doctrinal and sacramental traditions). It has been used by the Catholics (who consider themselves the representatives of the original form of Christianity started by Peter) to argue against the Protestants (whom they consider to be late heretics who modified the religion).<sup>95</sup> It has been used by Blavatsky, who migrated artifacts like the *Pistis Sophia* and other texts that became available in the nineteenth century into the narrative that the Gnostic artifacts preserved the original pure Christianity and that the Catholics and the Protestants are the heretics who corrupted it with their doctrines. Blavatsky's treatment is not so far removed from scholars who authorize Gnostic artifacts as recovering some lost truth that demonstrated how damaging the Catholics or the development of Catholicism was to Christianity's original pluralism. Like Irenaeus's narrative, all of these narratives are variations of the same stock story. Artifacts are migrated into this narrative so effortlessly because their migration validates our default scripts.

95 Williams, "Gnosticism Emergent," 9.

## 10 Immigration

Artifact migration is a complex problem that has yet to be theorized sufficiently to be able to do work beyond cataloguing and describing cultural movements of artifacts as if they were nomads on a journey. Much more needs to be done to understand their immigration, including detailed work on scholars and other individuals like Blavatsky, Jung, and Mead, who migrated lost artifacts into modern contexts. But in order to make these analyses, we need a theoretical basis as a starting point, one that recognizes the immense role that the constraints and operations of human cognition play.

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# The Impact of the Qumran and Nag Hammadi Discoveries on New Testament Scholarship: Dualism in John and Jesus's Eschatology as Paradigms

*Jörg Frey*

In the aftermath of World War II, two textual discoveries were made which can aptly be considered, even more than 70 years later, the most important textual discoveries related to biblical scholarship in the twentieth century: the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in eleven caves near Khirbet Qumran from 1947 to 1956 and the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Codices in Upper Egypt in 1945. Both corpora have provided scholarship and the greater public with an enormous amount of hitherto unknown sources, and with them an even greater number of new problems and persistent riddles. They have piqued the interest of journalists and novelists, and even stimulated various and strange conspiracy theories. Both discoveries have stirred up new waves of research and inaugurated a new period in scholarship. Although their primary impact was not entirely in the same fields of biblical research, New Testament scholarship in particular was affected by both waves of research. In some ways, the influences from Qumran and Nag Hammadi research were opposed to each other. So it is a good opportunity and a rarely undertaken move in scholarship<sup>1</sup> to juxtapose the influence of both corpora and the related research on New Testament scholarship. The organizers of the Berlin conference deserve thanks for providing such an opportunity.

In order to describe the impact and perhaps even interference of both discoveries on New Testament scholarship, we will first (1) call to mind a few general aspects of comparison between the two discoveries, before (2) having a brief look at the scholarly situation in New Testament debates at the time the discoveries were made and initially evaluated. In the main part of the paper, I will focus on two test cases for the scholarly impact of both corpora: (3) the

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<sup>1</sup> Mention should be made of a more popular presentation of the discoveries from Qumran and Nag Hammadi, together with other textual discoveries, such as El-Amarna and Ugarit, in Ekschmitt, *Ugarit—Qumran—Nag Hammadi*.

issue of the history-of-religions background of the Gospel of John, in particular its dualistic language and (4) the discussion on the eschatology of Jesus and a 'non-eschatological' Jesus. Finally, (5) the essay will conclude with a few reflections regarding the hermeneutics of history-of-religions work.

## 1 Some Common Circumstances of the Discoveries and Their Evaluation

Two textual discoveries, made roughly at the same time, at hidden places in the Middle East which were, at that time, still calm and almost untouched by modernity, invite scholars to make comparisons between their various aspects and circumstances.

(a) First of all, the stories of how the two corpora were discovered bear striking similarities;<sup>2</sup> they even invite the suggestion that there might be a kind of common literary 'genre' of a discovery 'legend.'<sup>3</sup> Both stories sound mysterious and are full of riddles: there are unknown writings in a cave or under a rock, hidden in jars, and found by locals, and only later do they receive scholarly attention. The writings are brought to clergymen and shown around to various people to be sold. Parts of the discoveries were purchased by national authorities or international institutions, but some portions remain hidden or in private collections. Then, there is the complicated process of bringing the material in its entirety under scholarly control. In both cases, there have been problems of inadequate treatment of the artefacts, resulting in the loss of textual material by people making sandals out them or burning them, and the texts have also suffered decay from exposure to light or storage in bank safes or fridges. In both cases, issues of ownership of the material remains and the intellectual property of its evaluation were raised which have changed the scholarly attitude toward such artefacts and their scholarly treatment.<sup>4</sup> In this respect, both discoveries have changed scholarship in various fields and also

2 On the discovery stories, see the early report in Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, and the more extensive story by Trever, *The Untold Story of Qumran*; see also Fields, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*. For Nag Hammadi, see the comprehensive history by Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Story*, as well as the earliest account by Doresse, *Les livres secrets des Gnostiques d'Égypte* (English translation: *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics*).

3 See the contribution by Christoph Marksches in the present volume. Consult also Goodacre, "How Reliable is the Story of the Nag Hammadi Discovery?"; Denzey Lewis and Blount, "Rethinking the Origins."

4 For Qumran, the legal case Qimron vs. Shanks about the intellectual property of the editorial and reconstruction work was crucial; see Macqueen, "The Scrolls and the Legal Definition of Authorship."

the way we deal with archaeological and textual discoveries today, although—fortunately—the materials discovered and investigated in the 1950s were not yet suspected to be modern forgeries, and a ‘forgery industry,’ as we have had during the last one or two decades, did not yet exist. In both cases (but more in the case of Qumran), the artefacts gained relevance with regard to the religious history of the places of their discovery and also with regard to the ownership of the material remains.

Both cases also stimulated a dynamic among the broader public which was influenced by the idea that the church and established scholarship were caught in ‘majority views’ which were decisively questioned by the new discoveries. Qumran scholarship since the 1950s was confronted with the suspicion that the church (i.e., first and foremost, the Vatican) or a clique of scholars were hiding information that might question the traditional views about Jesus and the early Christians. Likewise, the Nag Hammadi corpus was used to launch the idea that apart from the canonical gospels, there were a large number of other gospels of equal value which were suppressed or forbidden by the dogmatic powerplay of shadowy clergymen. Such suspicions were particularly effective for engaging a greater critical public and—especially—selling books.

(b) But apart from these various analogies in the circumstances of the discoveries and their evaluation, there is also a striking analogy with regard to their scholarly relevance: for the first time, the Qumran discovery brought to light a relevant number of Hebrew and Aramaic Jewish texts from the turn of the era, thus bridging the gap between the latest texts from the Hebrew Bible and the Mishnah.<sup>5</sup> Previously, scholarship on Second Temple Judaism and the Jewish world around the New Testament was almost totally dependent on Greek texts (by Flavius Josephus and Philo) and some pseudepigraphic texts transmitted mostly in secondary translations (Latin, Slavonic, Old Ethiopic, etc.). Since the Qumran discoveries, scholarship can draw on texts that can much better illuminate the language and thought of Palestinian Judaism of that period (including the early Jesus movement) and demonstrate that a number of terms, phrases, and ideas which had been considered un-Jewish, Hellenistic, or even Gnostic were actually attested within (at least parts of) the Judaism of the time.<sup>6</sup>

5 The only major Hebrew text known from the period before the Qumran discoveries was the *Nash Papyrus* with a compilation of some biblical passages, which before 1947 was considered the oldest biblical manuscript.

6 On the general relevance of the Qumran discoveries, see Frey, “Die Bedeutung der Qumran-Funde”; idem, “The Impact of the Dead Sea Scrolls”; idem, “Die Textfunde von Qumran und die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft”; idem, “Qumran.”



Likewise, the Nag Hammadi Codices brought to light a large collection of Gnostic or related original writings, though mostly not in their original language but in a translated version, so that the accounts of ancient heresiologists such as Irenaeus, Epiphanius, etc. could now be contextualized and compared with views articulated by authors from that variegated movement. Whereas before the Nag Hammadi discovery, only three Coptic Gnostic codices were known,<sup>7</sup> and scholarship was almost totally dependent on the accounts by the ancient heresiologists when describing the views of Gnostic groups, scholars could now draw their pictures of emerging Gnosticism more precisely and in critical distance from the mostly negative depictions of those authors. The scholarly views about the origins and development of Gnosticism could be revised on a completely new basis of sources.

(c) The impact of these discoveries, however, was felt in different fields of biblical studies. Whereas the Qumran discoveries have changed Hebrew Bible and New Testament studies, and—even more—the study of Early Judaism, Hebrew and Aramaic language studies, etc., the Nag Hammadi corpus is relevant for the study of the New Testament, but mostly as a source for the reception of biblical texts (particularly with respect to creation accounts, gospels, apostolic texts) within developments in the second and third century. A direct relation to New Testament texts could only be discussed with regard to the *Gospel of Thomas* and, to a lesser degree, to some other texts—if one presupposed daring source-critical theories.

(d) There were notable differences with regard to the history of publication. The Nag Hammadi Corpus was published and introduced into scholarship quite quickly, codex after codex, with a comprehensive English edition published in 1977, just 32 years after the first discoveries. This was not only to the merit of the international teams and their collaboration but was also possible due to the fact that the problems of lacunae and textual restoration were not as complicated as with the thousands of Qumran fragments. The Qumran corpus had a much more difficult publication history. Six of the seven big and relatively well-preserved scrolls from Cave 1 were published quickly in the early 1950s,<sup>8</sup> and these texts determined the way of scholarship in the early years. But the vast majority of small fragments from the other caves, in particular Cave 4, posed tremendous problems regarding identification, preservation,

7 These codices are Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae (Beza Codex), purchased in 1769 in Egypt and eventually brought to the Bodleian Library; Codex Askewianus, of unclear provenance in Egypt, purchased in 1785 by the British Museum; and Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae Gnosticus 8502, purchased in 1896 by Carl Schmidt in Egypt.

8 Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls of St. Mark's Monastery*; Sukenik, *The Dead Sea Scrolls of the Hebrew University*.

and editing. Other factors, including the political situation after the 1967 war, slowed down the publication process, so that only since the late 1980s and early 1990s, the bulk of the material became known to a wider public in scholarship. Therefore, the inner diversity of the library and the majority of halachic, calendric, sapiential, and liturgical texts could be appreciated and factored into scholarly discourse only with a considerable delay. By that time, however, the interpretations developed in the 1950s and 1960s had already become common, so that the scholarly views on the character of the library and the related groups had to be revised in the last two or three decades in the light of that 'new,' or belatedly published, evidence.

## 2 The Situation of New Testament Scholarship in the Middle of the Twentieth Century

It is important to briefly look at the situation of New Testament scholarship in the time shortly after World War II, when the discoveries were made public.<sup>9</sup> At that time, critical biblical scholarship was still dominated by Protestant theology, whereas Roman Catholics were still restricted in their participation in the critical examination of biblical texts. Biblical scholarship was still dominated by German and British scholars, with a change in German scholarship due to the war, during which (or shortly thereafter) a number of important scholars died,<sup>10</sup> whereas others dropped out of the international debate due to their involvement in ideological exegesis in the Nazi period.<sup>11</sup> After the war, Rudolf Bultmann and his school dominated the field in Germany.<sup>12</sup>

9 For the following paragraphs, see the more extensive treatment in Frey, "Qumran Research and Biblical Scholarship in Germany," 529–34.

10 Thus Hans Lietzmann (in 1942), Hans von Soden (in 1945), Ernst Lohmeyer (murdered by Russian occupation troops in 1946), Martin Dibelius (in 1947), and Julius Schniewind (in 1948).

11 Thus, e.g., Gerhard Kittel (1888–1948), who had inaugurated the *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, and his student Walter Grundmann (1906–1976) who had both been intensely involved in anti-Jewish writing, with Grundmann explicitly speculating about a non-Jewish (i.e., "Aryan") descent of Jesus. Grundmann, however, stayed active in East Germany church service, writing influential commentaries on the Synoptics and, together with Johannes Leipoldt, an influential textbook on the *Umwelt* of the New Testament.

12 The school included, e.g., Ernst Käsemann, Philipp Vielhauer, Herbert Braun, Erich Grässer, Günter Klein, but also the young Helmut Koester who moved in 1950 to North America to become one of the major figures in the evaluation of the Nag Hammadi texts.

Bultmann's views had been shaped by the history-of-religions school with a focus on the Hellenistic-oriental and allegedly Gnostic background of the New Testament, but a notable lack of interest in contemporary Judaism. Perceiving Gnosticism as an all-encompassing worldview, he used texts from Philo or the Jewish Wisdom tradition as sources for Gnostic thought and (re)constructed a 'Gnostic redeemer myth' from a range of very different sources, from Philo to late Manichaean and Mandaean texts.<sup>13</sup> Unlike some of his students, Bultmann rejected the question of the Historical Jesus as theologically irrelevant, focusing instead on the post-Easter 'kerygma'—mainly on Paul and John, who were considered the only real theologians in the New Testament. Bultmann interpreted both authors from the perspective of an alleged pre-Christian Gnostic worldview and with an existentialist hermeneutic inspired by the philosophy of the early Martin Heidegger.<sup>14</sup> Whereas Paul was still considered to express the kerygma with a Jewish veneer, John was considered the clearest expression of the Christian (= "eschatological") awareness. Historically, Bultmann proposed that the Johannine language originated in pre-Christian Gnostic baptismal circles, and that in particular the typical Johannine 'dualism' (of light and darkness, life and death) had adopted the philosophical worldview of Gnosticism. Here, Bultmann wanted to find a *cosmic dualism* that includes the awareness that a soteriological revelation is needed: an adoption and transformation of a (pre-Christian) *redeemer myth*. In his view, the achievement of the evangelist was that he adopted the general redeemer myth with his revelation-sensitive language, which was now "historicized" ("vergeschichtlicht") and "demythologized" by being related to the human figure of Jesus. Thus, the evangelist himself could appear as a forerunner of the existential interpretation Bultmann considered necessary with regard to early Christian myth and history. We can see, thus, that the assumption of a Gnostic background was of primary importance for Bultmann's interpretation of the Fourth Gospel. Here, in the Johannine 'kerygma,' cosmic dualism was transformed into a dualism of decision that confronts readers with the kerygma and, in that confrontation, with the presence of life and judgment.

Of course, Bultmann's views had many critics. British scholarship never accepted his history-of-religions constructions which were too obviously shaped to fit into a dogmatic and existential framework. Furthermore, more conservative scholarship, interested in the historical value of the gospels or

13 On the reconstruction of Bultmann's redeemer myth, see Frey, *Die johanneische Eschatologie I*, 133–40. Cf. the criticism by Colpe, *Die religionsgeschichtliche Schule*.

14 On Bultmann's systematic views of eschatology, cf. Frey, *Die johanneische Eschatologie I*, 85–118; idem, "Johannine Christology and Eschatology."

also in the Jewish tradition and background of Christianity, remained skeptical. Nevertheless, the impressive edifice of Bultmann's hermeneutical construct and his elegant combination of source-critical work and interpretation left little space for critics to question his views.

In this scholarly context, the Qumran discoveries could appear as a gift from heaven. The discovery of hitherto unknown Jewish documents could direct the interest of scholars to the field almost totally neglected by Bultmann, to the Jewish world around Jesus and the New Testament. It could also point to the importance of real historical backgrounds which had been so easily dismissed by Bultmann in favor of merely existential constructions. Thus, the Qumran discoveries could provide a framework for an alternative interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, its history-of-religions background, and its dualism, which was considered the central element of Johannine language.

### 3 Johannine Studies under the Influence of Qumran and Nag Hammadi

#### 3.1 *Qumran and the Background of Johannine Dualism*<sup>15</sup>

The texts from Qumran Cave 1, especially the *Community Rule* (1QS) and the *War Rule* (1QM), brought to light examples of a thorough dualism hitherto unknown in ancient Judaism and also unparalleled in the Hebrew Bible. This dualism seemed to provide a historically closer parallel to the type of dualism found in the Johannine writings (the Gospel and the Epistles) than the parallels adduced by Bultmann from later texts from Manichaeism and Mandaism. While Bultmann had neglected chronological issues when compiling his redeemer myth from various earlier and later sources, now there was a dualism at hand that was undoubtedly pre-Christian and belonged to the world in which the gospels are originally rooted.

The dualism found in the Qumran documents also differed from what was found in apocalyptic sources, and even more from later Rabbinic thought. In the early years, scholars were uncertain how to locate the Dead Sea 'sect' and its background, and it was an open question whether the views found in Qumran could be attributed to a type of "Jewish Gnosticism" or at least derived from Iranian thought. Thus, one of the first scholars to link the new texts with the

15 In the following paragraphs I draw on research presented more extensively in Frey, "Auf der Suche nach dem Kontext des Johannesevangeliums"; idem, "Licht aus den Höhlen?"; idem, "Recent Perspectives on Johannine Dualism and its Background"; idem, "Dualism and the World in the Gospel and Letters of John."

New Testament, the German Orientalist Karl-Georg Kuhn,<sup>16</sup> emphasized that the New Testament views were now paralleled in a “non-orthodox” (i.e., neither Pharisaic nor Rabbinic) type of Judaism, and that this non-orthodox type of Judaism was the “native soil” of Johannine language and thought.<sup>17</sup> Kuhn even concluded that the Essene sect was the door through which Zoroastrian ideas were transmitted into the world of Early Christianity. In this reconstruction, the Qumran paradigm replaced the leading Gnostic paradigm.<sup>18</sup> Consequently, the focus of history-of-religions scholarship on John shifted from Hellenism or Gnosticism to Judaism, albeit—at first—to an allegedly ‘sectarian’ or ‘heterodox’ type.

The long-term impact of the Qumran discoveries on Johannine scholarship was in fact the shift from a predominantly Hellenistic or Gnostic contextualization to a more thorough reconsideration of its Jewish roots and linguistic features. Some interpreters assembled lists of parallels between John and the Qumran sectarian texts<sup>19</sup> and concluded that John was rooted in Palestinian Judaism, or even more boldly that the evangelist had Qumranic roots, was a former member of the sect, or had memorized the *Community Rule*.<sup>20</sup> Other scholars even concluded that since the gospel of John was rooted in Jewish Palestine, it was therefore more historically reliable than Bultmann and the predominant critical research had assumed.<sup>21</sup>

Some of these claims are still upheld and repeated by a number of scholars, but in general, scholarship has become more cautious with regard to any claims of direct links between New Testament texts and the Qumran group and its in-group texts. Such caution is also caused by more recent developments in Qumran scholarship. In the 1990s, with the growing insight in the inner diversity of the Qumran library, scholars also noticed that the dualisms, e.g., in the *Treatise on the Two Spirits* and in the *War Rule* (1QM), are not

16 On Kuhn's dark history of engaging within Nazi ideology and anti-Judaism, see Frey, “Qumran Research and Biblical Scholarship in Germany,” 541–44.

17 Kuhn, “Die in Palästina gefundenen hebräischen Texte,” 210: “Wir bekommen in diesen neuen Texten den Mutterboden des Johannesevangeliums zu fassen, und dieser Mutterboden ist palästinisch-jüdisch, ist aber nicht das pharisäisch-rabbinische Judentum, sondern ist eine palästinisch-jüdische Sektenfrömmigkeit gnostischer Struktur.”

18 See also Frey, “Auf der Suche nach dem Kontext des Johannesevangeliums,” 69–70.

19 Cf. Brown, “The Qumran Scrolls and the Johannine Gospel and Epistles”; Charlesworth, “A Critical Comparison.”

20 Thus Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 237: “the evangelist had dualism in his bones ... [and] may well have started life as one of those Essenes who were to be found, according to Josephus, ‘in large numbers in every town.’” See also Charlesworth, “A Critical Comparison”; and idem, “The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Gospel according to John.”

21 Cf. Albright, “Recent Discoveries in Palestine and the Gospel of St. John.”

identical, but represent different types of dualism, and that not all texts from the Scrolls are shaped by such a thorough cosmic dualism.<sup>22</sup> It has, therefore, become more difficult to define the precise counterpart of the dualistic language in the New Testament.

The diversity among the Qumran texts, between 'sectarian' texts (composed within the group or movement of the 'Qumran community') and other texts composed elsewhere and merely copied, stored, and read by the Qumran group, has led to a modification of the scholarly questions. Now, it is no longer a question whether the evangelist was a former member of the sect or even read the 'sectarian' documents. He was not and he most likely had not. Furthermore, the various elements of dualistic language, such as eschatological opponents and terminological oppositions (e.g., light vs. darkness, truth vs. deceit, life vs. death, or also community vs. world), cannot be derived directly from Qumran, but are partly rooted in Jewish apocalyptic traditions and earlier biblical traditions, partly also in paralleled Diaspora Jewish texts such as *Joseph and Aseneth*, but always shaped according to John's narrative interests.<sup>23</sup> The consequence is that the dualistic language in the Fourth Gospel is not to be interpreted as a mere adoption from a certain religious milieu (neither Qumran nor Gnosticism), but the background of terms can be found mostly in Jewish texts, from Palestinian apocalypticism to the Diaspora. It was indeed the effect of the Qumran discoveries that they helped to draw scholarly attention back to the Jewish background of the Gospel, but this Jewish background is much wider than the ideology of a certain faction or 'sect.' In the meantime, the Qumran library itself has been perceived as a wide and variegated mirror of the literary production of Judaism between the third century BCE and the first century CE. Johannine scholarship has, therefore, abandoned one-sided views of the dependence on certain texts, or factions, and even the Judaism-Hellenism divide has been abandoned. Instead terms such as the 'logos' are read within the context of a variety of meanings and usages, from the Septuagint through Hellenistic-Jewish wisdom to Greek philosophy, that is if we can assume that the evangelist was aware of such a variety and deliberately chose the term because of its variegated meanings in order to lead readers to the right perception of Christ.<sup>24</sup>

22 Cf. the overview in Frey, "Different Patterns of Dualistic Thought."

23 On these issues, see, in addition to the publications mentioned above, Bauckham, "Qumran and the Fourth Gospel"; idem, "The Qumran Community and the Gospel of John"; Aune, "Dualism in the Fourth Gospel and the Dead Sea Scrolls."

24 Cf. recently Frey, "Between Torah and Stoa."

### 3.2 *The Impact of the Nag Hammadi Discoveries on Johannine Scholarship: Gnosticizing Reception or Glimpses into the Background of the Fourth Gospel?*

But what about the impact of the Nag Hammadi discoveries on Johannine research? The first scholarly articles that note the importance of some Nag Hammadi writings for New Testament scholarship only occurred when some Johannine scholars had already started to read the Fourth Gospel more in a Jewish context, rather than against the background of Gnosticism. Furthermore, the diversity within the Nag Hammadi Library was obvious from the very beginning, so that scholars were only capable of analyzing and working with individual texts, instead of treating all the texts as a corpus and assuming a unified ideology of a community behind them.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, when scholars began comparing the newly discovered writings with New Testament texts, looking for conceptual similarities (e.g., the vocabulary of the *Gospel of Truth* [NHC I,3; XII,2] with the Fourth Gospel,<sup>25</sup> and in particular the *Apocryphon of John* [NHC II,1 and par.]) they asked whether these texts attested to a Gnosticizing tendency within the Johannine tradition. If so, these texts provide scholars with a link—at least in the history of reception—between John and Gnosticism.<sup>26</sup> Other comparisons include the *Three Forms of First Thought* (NHC XIII,1<sup>\*</sup>)<sup>27</sup> the *Dialogue of the Savior* (NHC III,5)<sup>28</sup> and of course the *Gospel of Thomas* (NHC II,2).<sup>29</sup> Although the impact of all these comparisons on Johannine research has been quite limited, some aspects are interesting, at least from a methodological point of view. They illustrate how the relationship between the Gnostic writings and the Gospel of John could be (re)constructed in scholarship.

25 Thus, e.g., van Unnik, “The ‘Gospel of Truth’ and the New Testament”; Gärtner, “Evangelium Veritatis och Nya Testamentet”; and Barrett, “The Theological Vocabulary of the Fourth Gospel.”

26 Cf. Hengel, *Die johanneische Frage*; Nagel, *Die Rezeption des Johannesevangeliums*; idem, “Die Gnostizierung der johanneischen Tradition.”

27 Cf. Berliner Arbeitskreis (G. Schenke), “Die dreigestaltige Protennoia”; Robinson (*olim* Schenke), “The Trimorphic Protennoia and the Prologue of the Gospel of John”; differently Janssens, “The Trimorphic Protennoia and the Fourth Gospel”; Yamauchi, “Jewish Gnosticism?”; Helderman, “In ihren Zelten”; Luttikhuisen, “Johannine Vocabulary.”

28 Cf. Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*; DeConick, “The Dialogue of the Savior.”

29 See Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 113–24. A ‘dispute’ between Johannine and ‘Thomasine’ Christians has been suggested by DeConick, *Voices of the Mystics*; eadem, “From Community Conflict to Gospel Narrative”; differently Dunderberg, “John and Thomas in Conflict?”; Popkes, “Ich bin das Licht.”

Here it is interesting that the patterns of Bultmann's hermeneutics found some continuation, in particular in the Berliner Arbeitskreis für Koptisch-Gnostische Schriften. The most interesting example of that hermeneutical 'experiment' is the work with the *Three Forms of First Thought* (a text from the middle or later second century) which was understood as a close parallel to the Prologue of John (in its alleged pre-Johannine form). In an article from 1974, the authors within the circle (and later Gesine Robinson, *olim* Schenke, as an individual author) interpreted the parallels between the two texts in terms of a tradition-historical dependence, but notably in reversal of the chronology of the extant texts. According to their suggestion, the *Three Forms of First Thought* presented the relevant parallels "in their natural context," whereas in John's prologue they were "used in the service of an actually alien purpose."<sup>30</sup> The terminology raises suspicion: What is 'natural,' and how is 'actually alien' to be determined? At least, these are not purely historical categories. In a later article written under her own authorial responsibility, Gesine Robinson wanted to identify the Sethian baptism ritual as the common ground of the Johannine Prologue (or, rather, the hymn she considered its source) and the third revelation discourse in the *Three Forms of First Thought*.<sup>31</sup>

In this construction, Bultmann's hypothesis that the Johannine Prologue was shaped from an underlying hymn originating in Gnostic baptismal circles was now renewed in a modified form, with the Sethians replacing the former Gnostic baptismal circles.<sup>32</sup> But the hypothetical construction surpasses even Bultmann in its boldness: not a reconstructable text, a pre-Johannine hymn, but only a ritual, a phenomenon (which is more difficult to verify or falsify) is now considered the background behind the Johannine text. The gain of the construction is, certainly, that the Gnostic views assumed behind the Fourth Gospel are now taken from a Nag Hammadi text that could be dated to the second century, not from the much later Manichaean or Mandaeen texts, as in Bultmann's construction. Other scholars, from Carsten Colpe<sup>33</sup> to James Robinson,<sup>34</sup> only assumed a common reception of Jewish wisdom speculation in John and the *Three Forms*. Yvonne Janssens even reckoned with a reception of John's prologue in the *Three Forms of First Thought*,<sup>35</sup> and Robert M. Wilson

30 Berliner Arbeitskreis (Schenke), "Die dreigestaltige Protennoia," 734: "künstlich einem ihnen eigentlich fremden Zweck dienstbar gemacht."

31 Thus Robinson, "The Trimorphic Protennoia and the Prologue of the Gospel of John," 50.

32 Cf. Nagel, *Die Rezeption des Johannesevangeliums im 2. Jahrhundert*, 449 n. 1541.

33 Colpe, "Heidnische, jüdische und christliche Überlieferung," 119–24.

34 Robinson, "Sethians and Johannine Thought," 650–62.

35 Janssens, "Une source gnostique du Prologue?"; cf. also Yamauchi, "Jewish Gnosticism?," 480–84; Helderman, "In ihren Zelten," 181; Luttikhuisen, "Johannine Vocabulary," 181.



spoke of a “de-Christianization” of Christian tradition in that work.<sup>36</sup> The redactional analysis of the *Three Forms of First Thought* by its editor John Turner<sup>37</sup> makes things even more complicated: A reception of John can only be ascertained in the final redaction of the work, but not all alleged parallels between the *Three Forms* and the Johannine Prologue allow for the assumption of a tradition-historical or literary dependence.

The hermeneutical pattern, however, as applied by the Berliner Arbeitskreis—not only in this case—is obvious, and it was openly expressed by Hans-Martin Schenke in a paper from the 1991 meeting of the “Alte Marburger,” the scholarly association dedicated to the heritage of Bultmann’s theology. In that paper Schenke quite optimistically suggested that the Nag Hammadi texts could now replace the late Mandaean and Manichaean sources adduced by Bultmann for reconstructing his redeemer myth.<sup>38</sup> It is open to discussion whether this is a philologically sound option or, rather, a hermeneutical abuse of the texts in order to support a hermeneutical construct that scholars would like to maintain.

These views—and the related hermeneutical pattern—found the clearest imprint in Johannine studies in Helmut Koester’s work in *Ancient Christian Gospels*. With regard to Nag Hammadi studies and early Christian history, the Harvard professor and former student of Bultmann has become famous through his daringly early dating of the *Gospel of Thomas*<sup>39</sup> and of further alleged sources behind other Nag Hammadi writings. He has also trained an influential guild of students who were guided (and, as some say, also pressed) to subscribe to and spread his views. But it is often neglected, especially in the American context, that Koester was still strongly influenced by the theological hermeneutics he had adopted as a student of Bultmann in the 1950s in Germany, making him perhaps the most influential Bultmannian in North America.<sup>40</sup>

These hermeneutical premises are most openly expressed in an article from 1964 on “Heretics in Primitive Christianity as a Theological Problem” dedicated to Bultmann in his *Festschrift*.<sup>41</sup> According to Koester, “orthodoxy” is not

36 Wilson, “The Trimorphic Protennoia,” 52.

37 Turner, “Introduction NHC XIII,1,” 393–401. See also Poirier, “The Trimorphic Protennoia (NHC XIII,1) and the Johannine Prologue.”

38 Schenke, “Die Rolle der Gnosis in Bultmanns Kommentar,” 725–32; idem, “The Work of the Berliner Arbeitskreis,” 63.

39 Koester, “Introduction: The Gospel According to Thomas.”

40 Other mediators of ‘Bultmannian’ theology to North American scholarship were James Robinson, Norman Perrin (in the interpretation of the parables), and Hans Dieter Betz.

41 Koester, “Häretiker im Urchristentum” (revised English version, “The Theological Aspects of Early Christian Heresy”).

granted in the repetition of a traditional formula or in the reference to canonical writings, but only in the criterion of the cross, which is “der kritische Maßstab des historischen Geschehens ‘Jesus,’ an dem sich erweist, ob die Existenz der Glaubenden radikal geschichtlich verstanden, oder ob der Mythos der überlieferten Sprache letztlich der Maßstab geblieben ist.”<sup>42</sup> In other words, it is not Jesus’s act or words but only their truly existential understanding that make up true belief. While heresy is rooted in the “failure of demythologization in primitive Christianity,”<sup>43</sup> orthodoxy, or true faith, is possible where demythologization is successfully practiced.<sup>44</sup> It is this ‘Bultmannian’ program that also guided Koester in his historical verdicts, in the search for sources behind the historical narratives of the canonical gospels or a more original expression of faith in trajectories of sayings or revelation dialogues before their consolidation in the historical narrative of the gospels, because that consolidation could already be considered a failure of demythologization.

The continuation of Bultmannian views is most clearly visible in Koester’s works on the Fourth Gospel. Among Johannine interpreters, Koester most closely follows Bultmann’s source hypothesis,<sup>45</sup> accepting the hymn behind the Prologue, the signs source, the passion source, and, instead of Bultmann’s revelation discourses, a plurality of sayings and dialogues which make up the basis of the Johannine discourses. Methodologically, Koester’s views are guided by classical form criticism,<sup>46</sup> with the result that he prioritizes form-critical arguments over chronological issues or exact textual comparisons. Thus, Koester gives sayings collections (such as Q and the *Gospel of Thomas*) chronological priority over the developed ‘historical’ narrative of the Jesus story—a move which corresponds to the hermeneutical premise that history is unimportant in comparison with the kerygma, which does not need a narrative or a support from historical ‘facts.’ Likewise, dialogue gospels are given priority over against fully developed discourses, so that the missing link between the sayings of Jesus in the earlier tradition and the Johannine discourses can be seen in the dialogue gospels from Nag Hammadi. The hermeneutical pattern

42 Koester, “Häretiker im Urchristentum,” 71.

43 Koester, “Häretiker im Urchristentum,” 73.

44 Cf. Koester, “Häretiker im Urchristentum,” 74: The interpreter should ask “ob die Entmythologisierung gelungen ist, oder ob die entscheidenden Kriterien den mythologischen Inhalten der vorgegebenen Sprache entnommen sind, statt sich am Skandalon des historischen Ursprungs der Offenbarung zu orientieren.”

45 Cf. Koester, “Johannesevangelium,” 841–42; see also idem, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 244–72.

46 Cf. also the principles of his *Einführung*, which are in some accordance with Vielhauer, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur*; see also Koester, “Formgeschichte / Formenkritik.”

is visible in his view of the alleged source behind the *Dialogue of the Savior*, dated quite daringly to the last decades of the first century.<sup>47</sup> This principle is also visible in his view that sayings from a wisdom myth are incorporated in the *Apocryphon of James*,<sup>48</sup> where Koester—following his former student Ron Cameron<sup>49</sup>—explicitly states that in the *Apocryphon of James* (NHC I,2), those sayings represent an original myth which is interpreted by the author of John “in a reversal of the Gnostic pattern.”<sup>50</sup> While the allegedly ‘original’ sayings find the assurance of salvation in the religious experience of a vision of God, this assurance is now based on the love of God or of Jesus and the mutual love of the disciples, i.e., based on a christological and implicitly also ethical doctrine. Again, the general myth is given priority over against concrete, christological or ‘doctrinal’ expression in the Fourth Gospel.

Thus, Koester’s way of reconstructing (or, rather, constructing) the composition history of John is an exact reproduction of Bultmann’s pattern with mythological (Gnostic) ‘sources’ and a demythologizing evangelist. The question is open whether this kind of demythologizing is valued positively as a theological achievement of the evangelist or whether it is considered an inappropriate ‘doctrinalization’ or ‘historization’ of the mystical religious experience.<sup>51</sup> But it is obvious that there is a hermeneutical pattern that influences—or even determines—the historical or literary constructions, and the systematic or hermeneutical interests (which are not necessarily shared by Koester’s students) should be noticed in the background of the constructions.

47 Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 173–87; on the dating of the alleged source, see 174 and 187; for criticism, see Frey, *Die johanneische Eschatologie I*, 377–78. See also Létourneau, “The *Dialogue of the Savior* as a Witness to the Late Valentinian Tradition”; Lundhaug, “The *Dialogue of the Savior* (NHC III,5) as a Monastic Text.”

48 Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 187–201.

49 Cameron, *Sayings Traditions in the Apocryphon of James*, 116–20; see also Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 267.

50 Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 267.

51 Such a reading is cautiously suggested in two German monographs written in a certain continuity with the Berliner Arbeitskreis and the ideas of the late Hans-Martin Schenke: Hartenstein, *Charakterisierung im Dialog*, suggests that John draws on images of the four disciple figures which are partly presented in a more original manner in apocryphal traditions, in particular Mary Magdalene (the *Gospel of Mary*) and Thomas (the *Gospel of Thomas*). Petersen, *Brot, Licht und Weinstock*, 280–81, considers the relationship between the light metaphors in John and the ideas about light in Gnostic texts, without deciding on the historical or logical priority, but definitely with the implication that there is at least a possibility that the Gnostic texts may have chronological priority to the Gospel of John.

#### 4 The Eschatology of Jesus in the Light of Nag Hammadi and Qumran

A second test case for the influence of Nag Hammadi and Qumran on New Testament scholarship, which can only be discussed briefly, is their impact on the historical Jesus and his eschatology.<sup>52</sup> The possible relation of new textual discoveries to the figure of Jesus and the hope for new or more original material about him has stimulated scholarly and public interest in the Qumran and Nag Hammadi discoveries from the very beginning. The comparison of these corpora with Jesus led to bold claims early on which eventually had to be abandoned after more thorough investigations.

##### 4.1 *Nag Hammadi, the Gospel of Thomas, and the Non-Eschatological Jesus*

From the Nag Hammadi corpus, the *Gospel of Thomas* in particular was quickly incorporated into the quest for the Historical Jesus and the original shape of his sayings. As early as around 1900, the Greek fragments of the *Gospel of Thomas* from the Oxyrhynchus Papyri entered the vivid debate on the so-called “Agrapha,” the non-scriptural sayings of Jesus, and the search for more original sayings of Jesus among those testimonies.<sup>53</sup> With the publication of the Coptic version of the *Gospel of Thomas*, scholars soon speculated about the possibility that some of its sayings, or even the genre of a collection of sayings (similar to the Synoptic Sayings Source Q) were transmitted here in a form earlier than the canonical Gospels. Scholars such as Gilles Quispel,<sup>54</sup> Helmut Koester and his students,<sup>55</sup> or more recently April DeConick<sup>56</sup> claimed (with various patterns of reasoning) that the *Gospel of Thomas*, although transmitted only in a secondary version, provides glimpses at the earliest Jesus tradition. In particular, the so-called “Jesus Seminar” with its noteworthy scholarly method of casting ballots about the authenticity of Jesus’s sayings was willing to acknowledge the authenticity of numerous sayings and parables in the version transmitted

52 On these issues, I can refer to more thorough discussion in Frey, “Jesus und die Apokalyptik”; idem, “Die Bedeutung der Qumran-Funde”; idem, “Die Lilien und das Gewand”; Frey and Schröter, “Jesus in apokryphen Evangelienüberlieferungen.”

53 On that early debate and the search for more original sayings of Jesus, see Frey, “Die Lilien und das Gewand,” 124–26.

54 See the account of research in Frey, “Die Lilien und das Gewand,” 128–30.

55 Frey, “Die Lilien und das Gewand,” 132–37. Cf. in particular Koester, “One Jesus and Four Primitive Gospels”; Robinson, “LOGOI SOPHON”; see also Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 75–127; and Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*.

56 See the account of research in Frey, “Die Lilien und das Gewand,” 140–43. See in particular DeConick, *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*.

in the *Gospel of Thomas*,<sup>57</sup> rather than in their Synoptic form. The plea for the independence and historical source value of the *Gospel of Thomas* has been repeated since then by a number of interpreters, not only for reading the text in its own right,<sup>58</sup> but also with regard to the Historical Jesus.<sup>59</sup> In the last decade, however, there has been a shift in *Thomas* scholarship, and an increasing majority of specialists called for more caution in the issues of reconstruction and dating,<sup>60</sup> favoring the view of the work as a deliberate reinterpretation or ‘esoterization’ of the Jesus tradition.<sup>61</sup>

Thus, the *Gospel of Thomas* became a distinctly influential Nag Hammadi text with regard to Historical Jesus research, in particular inspiring the construction of the image of a ‘non-apocalyptic’ or ‘non-eschatological’ Jesus. It is no coincidence that this tendency is linked with the decidedly ‘enlightenment-oriented’ interests programmatically expressed by the Jesus Seminar.<sup>62</sup> In the background is the modern or post-modern preference for ‘mysticism’ and individualism and, perhaps in particular, the North American ‘culture wars’ between liberal exegetes and more ‘apocalyptic-oriented’ evangelicals with their social and political influence. Against the traditional image of an apocalyptic Jesus, the *Gospel of Thomas*’ lack of references to the death (and resurrection) of Jesus or to the apocalyptic term “Son of Man,” along with its apparently ‘realized’ and individualized language of the ‘kingdom,’<sup>63</sup> could help reconstruct a different Jesus, a purely ‘sapiential’ teacher who encourages mysticism and individualism, but does not preach a coming judgment, nor call for belief in the effect of his death or in the atonement for sins. Thus, the Jesus reconstructed by the Jesus Seminar is, as a reviewer has insightfully phrased it, predominantly “a hero of our times.”<sup>64</sup> But in their enthusiasm for a

57 Cf. the edition according to the constructions of the Seminar: Funk and Hoover, *The Five Gospels: What Did Jesus Really Say?*

58 Cf. also Zöckler, *Jesu Lehren im Thomasevangelium*; Nordsieck, *Das Thomas-Evangelium*; cf. for criticism the review by Schröter in *TRu* (2005).

59 Borg, “A Temperate Case for a Non-Eschatological Jesus”; idem, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship*; see already the interpretation of Jesus’s parables in line with Bultmann’s concept of time in Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teachings of Jesus*; idem, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom*.

60 Cf. Schröter and Bethge, “Das Evangelium nach Thomas (NHC II,2)”; Schröter, “Das Evangelium nach Thomas,” 492–98; Goodacre, *Thomas and the Gospels*; Gathercole, *The Gospel of Thomas*.

61 Cf. Popkes, “Die Umdeutung des Todes Jesu”; idem, “Von der Eschatologie zur Protologie.”

62 Cf. the references to Charles Darwin, Thomas Jefferson, and David Friedrich Strauss in the preface to Funk and Hoover, *The Five Gospels* (pp. 1–3).

63 Cf. Zöckler, *Jesu Lehren im Thomasevangelium*, 164–80.

64 Betz, review of Funk and Hoover, *The Five Gospels*, in *TLZ* (1994); cf. Frey, *Jesus und die Apokalypik*, 118–20.

new and different 'real' Jesus, the substantial problems, e.g., of reconstructing a first-century CE Greek or even Aramaic text from a Coptic version of the fourth century (which differs from the earliest Greek fragments), and of drawing a relatively non-Jewish image of Jesus, have been dismissed all too easily. This is where more precise information about the possibilities within Palestinian Judaism during the time of Jesus is needed, and here, in particular, the impact of the Qumran discoveries can be considered.

#### 4.2 *Wisdom and Eschatology in the Qumran Texts and the Relevance of the Qumran Discoveries for Jesus Research*<sup>65</sup>

How did the Qumran corpus and its evaluation affect these debates? We can leave aside here all the premature speculations about immediate connections between Jesus and his circle and Qumran or the Qumran community. All those ideas about Jesus as an Essene, Christian texts in the Qumran library, or direct connections between Essenes and the primitive community in Jerusalem cannot be substantiated by any reliable evidence.<sup>66</sup> The actual contribution of the Qumran library for the understanding of Jesus and the early Jesus tradition is that it has fundamentally changed our sources for understanding the Jewish world and thought world around Jesus and his earliest followers. This includes, e.g., a vast number of scriptural interpretations; a hitherto unexpected plurality of messianic and eschatological expectations that can now help us understand the origins of Christology from Jewish roots;<sup>67</sup> invaluable glimpses into the origins and early stages of Jewish apocalypticism;<sup>68</sup> and also numerous terms, phrases, and literary forms that appear within the gospel tradition. With regard to the eschatology of Jesus and his expectation of the 'Kingdom of God,' the Qumran sectarian texts provide the important analogy of a 'double eschatology' in which the awareness of present salvation and the expectation of a final eschatological period or end are not contradictions. As a result, the slogan in earlier Jesus research "either eschatological or non-eschatological" has become implausible for the Palestinian-Jewish context of that time, although the precise reasons for the awareness of present salvation differ between the

65 On the relevance of the Qumran discoveries for the understanding of Jesus, see the more extensive discussion in Frey, "Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und antikes Judentum"; idem, "Jesus, Paulus und die Texte vom Toten Meer"; idem, "Die Textfunde von Qumran und die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft."

66 Cf. Frey, "The Impact of the Dead Sea Scrolls," 419–38.

67 Cf. Frey, "Der historische Jesus und der Christus der Evangelien," 299–313.

68 For the following passages, I draw on research presented already in Frey, "Die Bedeutung der Qumran-Funde."

Qumranites and Jesus.<sup>69</sup> Whereas large parts of New Testament research—triggered by the early rationalist critique of eschatological expectation<sup>70</sup>—considered the simultaneity of expressions of the “already present” kingdom and the “not yet” a contradiction and, therefore, pressed for its dissolution (either in the sense of the presence of the kingdom or in the sense of a consistent, eschatological view), the observations in the Qumran texts indicate that such an alternative derives from theological interests and is not historically grounded. For the Qumran authors, no irreconcilable contradiction can be discerned between the (self-evidently held) end-time expectation and the certainty of participating in the fellowship with the angels already in the present. Not only the widely accepted alternative between ‘apocalypticism’ and (non-apocalyptic) ‘eschatology,’ but also the alternative between (mythological) ‘futuristic’ and (more highly esteemed) ‘present’ eschatology are historically inappropriate. This affects the construction of a coherently eschatological Jesus and also the construction of a completely non-eschatological Jesus: the ‘double eschatology’ in the Jesus tradition is historically the most plausible way of understanding the notion of the ‘kingdom of God’ and the eschatology of the Jesus of history.

But while these insights were already known in the 1960s,<sup>71</sup> the release of the hitherto unpublished fragments in the 1990s brought further revolutionary insights. In particular the sapiential texts from Qumran have brought to light a hitherto unknown type of sapiential thought in Palestinian Judaism<sup>72</sup> that differs from Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, or also the Wisdom of Solomon. In compositions such as *Instruction* and the *Book of Mysteries* which are most probably not the product of the Qumran community but originate in a wider range of sapiential thought of the late third or early second century BCE, we can see an early interweaving of wisdom and apocalyptic traditions. Thus, the image of the wisdom traditions that has been presupposed for Judaism around the turn of the era has changed decisively. The thesis that the Jewish wisdom tradition lacked an eschatological character (or even had an “eschatological disinterest”) based on the texts available at the time before the Qumran discoveries (primarily Ecclesiastes and the Wisdom of Solomon) can no longer be upheld in view of the new findings. This is of crucial relevance for the reconstruction of the earliest Jesus traditions. The scholarly attempt to present a

69 See Frey, “Die Bedeutung der Qumran-Funde,” 60–61.

70 On the early impulses for the criticism, cf. Frey, *Die johanneische Eschatologie* 1, 10–47.

71 See already the important work by Kuhn, *Enderwartung und gegenwärtiges Heil*, 189–204.

72 On these texts, cf. my remarks in Frey, “Different Patterns of Dualistic Thought”; Frey, “Flesh and Spirit.”

hypothetical, oldest substratum of the Sayings Source (Q), consisting of pure, non-eschatological wisdom material, and thus to characterize the 'true' historical Jesus as a wholly unapocalyptic wisdom teacher or popular philosopher must now appear quite implausible within the context of Palestinian Judaism around the turn of the era.<sup>73</sup> The often assumed incompatibility and alternative between wisdom and apocalyptic thought or between the genre of wisdom (such as the postulated genre of "Logoi Sophōn" for the Sayings Source) and apocalyptic forms of speech cannot be proved from the sources.<sup>74</sup> In view of the new insights into the Jewish wisdom tradition, some of the arguments put forward in favor of an 'unapocalyptic' Jesus or an 'unapocalyptic' earliest logia tradition appear to need revision. This is one of the most striking insights from the Qumran discoveries, in particular from the evaluation of the discoveries that became possible only since the release of the numerous fragments in the 1990s, and, interestingly, these insights largely contradict some of the speculations uttered in view of the texts from Nag Hammadi, in particular the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas*.

## 5 Concluding Reflections

It has become clear that both textual discoveries have substantially influenced New Testament scholarship, but to a different degree and in a different manner.

(a) Due to their chronological priority, the influence of the Dead Sea Scrolls has been much more intense and thoroughgoing than the influence from the Nag Hammadi discoveries. Qumran discoveries have led to a much more precise perception of the Jewish context and background of early Christian language and thought, although any kind of pan-Qumranism must be dismissed, and New Testament scholarship has to perceive the Jewish roots *and* the Greco-Roman contexts of the early Jesus movement, whereas a one-sided prioritization of the Jewish aspects has been rightly criticized.

The Nag Hammadi discoveries have influenced New Testament scholarship only in a more indirect manner. The Greek texts underlying the Coptic versions, even in the case of the *Gospel of Thomas*, can at earliest be dated to the second century, and only occasionally, the texts from Nag Hammadi (or their reconstructed *Vorlage*) can offer information about the time of the formation of the New Testament texts. The majority of texts, instead, point to later and

73 For further discussion, see Collins, "Wisdom, Apocalypticism and Generic Compatibility"; see also the detailed discussion in Frey, "Jesus und die Apokalyptik."

74 Cf. Robinson, "LOGOI SOPHON."



different situations and intellectual climates, so that the primary relevance of the Nag Hammadi texts is in illuminating the reception of biblical and early Christian traditions and the developments of thought in early Christian and Christian Gnostic traditions. If phenomenological comparisons without consideration of the chronological relations must be considered problematic, it appears hardly possible to continue Bultmann's pattern of interpretation by replacing the Mandaean and Manichaean sources with Nag Hammadi texts or their assumed sources.

(b) The debates have also shown that historical work is never a purely objective and 'uninterested' endeavor, but is always, more or less, influenced by issues of wider interest, of relevance, or philosophical/theological perspectives. Scholarship must be aware of the paradigms and patterns effective in the evaluation of texts, even in quite strictly philological and historical debates about the interrelation of different traditions or issues of textual dependence.

In Qumran studies, those issues include the hermeneutical question of the relationship between Jewish and "Christian" traditions. What is at stake for Jewish interpreters to claim even the New Testament writings to be a part of Second Temple Judaism, what was at stake for Christian interpreters when stressing the difference between the 'heterodox' character of the Qumran writings as the 'native soil' of early Christian thought, in its difference from Pharisaic or Rabbinic 'orthodoxy'? Is it 'dangerous' for Christian theology if some of its ideas are proven to be rooted or prefigured in Jewish traditions, or is it necessary (or maybe politically correct) to stress their Jewish character? How Jewish are Christian texts, and to what extent do we allow them to be Jewish? What is gained hermeneutically if, e.g., the Gospel of John is Jewish? Does this mean that it can be 'saved' from the allegation of Anti-Judaism, or that it can be considered more historically valid, or less influenced by 'alien,' pagan, syncretistic elements?

And what is at stake if there are parallels between New Testament texts and allegedly Gnostic texts? How can we deal with the dogmatic borders drawn by early Christian heresiologists? Can we overturn or simply neglect them—or are they still effective even where we would like to dismiss them? Whether we interpret John as 'anti-Gnostic' or 'anti-docetic' (as did Bultmann) or see the gospel on the way to a Gnosticizing tradition (as did some of his former students, e.g., Ernst Käsemann or Luise Schottroff) or rather as a tendency of increased dogmatism is not only important for determining John's place in the Christian canon. It is also a mirror of the author's own understanding of concepts of conservative/orthodox Christians or liberal advocates of original plurality and diversity within the Christian tradition—with various positions in between.

In view of the history of research, I suppose that with regard to subjects that have had a major effect in the past and in the present, any claim to have complete neutrality or objectivity is naïve. We would rather discuss the patterns involved in our historical work, the way of relating texts and textual corpora with each other, and also, honestly, the way we relate ourselves to the texts and the traditions involved. Hopefully, the trails blazed—together with the impasses—of the past seventy years of Qumran and Nag Hammadi studies will make us wise for the future.

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# Finding Stories: A Literary Critique of Certain Themes in the Story of the Discovery of the Nag Hammadi Codices and the Dead Sea Scrolls

*Christoph Marksches*

## 1 Introduction: Finding Stories and Legends<sup>1</sup>

Already in the preface of the first comprehensive publication concerning the find from Upper Egypt that we call today the “Nag Hammadi Codices,” the French scholar of Christian Egypt and Ethiopia Jean Doresse (1917–2007) drew parallels between the texts he called “Chenoboskion manuscripts” and the “much-admired manuscripts discovered near the Dead Sea.”<sup>2</sup> The conference “The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices” now offers for the first time the opportunity to compare two great finds of ancient texts from the years after the Second World War in detail—and, of course, this invites us to examine specific points of substance: Biblical figures, theological *topoi* and structures of argumentation, and more. One could certainly also construct a comparative history of the discovery, purchase, and publication of edited collections of these writings, and here also account for both similarities and differences. Finally, a comparative study of the attempts to contextualize the finds in terms of archaeology would also be attractive, although in the case of the Nag Hammadi discoveries, any such contextualization threatens to be as controversial as it is difficult. Unless I’m very much mistaken, the question in both cases revolves around whether it is possible to come up with a broadly accepted characterisation of the religious profile of the inhabitants of an area on the basis of archaeological remains from actual or alleged nearby archaeological sites. However, we will not delve into such questions here. They should be tackled in an entirely comparative fashion, although both cases, I say quite

1 I will deal with the subject in greater depth in a forthcoming monograph on “Gnostic” movements in Antiquity, which will appear in 2022. The editors not only have corrected the English but also gave some valuable advice regarding content.

2 Doresse, *Secret Books*, xi–xii. On Doresse’s life and career, see Lucchesi, “Jean Doresse.”

cautiously, concern the archaeological remains of groups whose identities are disputed.<sup>3</sup>

The present contribution is concerned with a different angle: a literary analysis of the different narratives concerning the finds.<sup>4</sup> This essay then, sets aside the question of whether the stories of the finds correspond to historical reality, or whether they are first and foremost supposed to serve a legitimising function in an economically contested, often semi-legal antiquities market. Answers to this latter, historical question usually, if I may say so, tell us more about the historiographical preferences of the historians at hand than the historicity of the actual events under purview. There are those who question the traditional stories about these finds in a very critical manner, and thus entirely reject the historical credibility of these stories. On the other hand, there are also those who tend to give more confidence to these traditions and therefore consider these stories to be more or less well supported by the available evidence. Preferable to this debate concerning the historical reliability of the find stories—which, by virtue of its basic historiographical assumptions, is rather boring—would be an economic-historical reading of the stories against the background of the international art trade and antique dealers in Egypt and Palestine. One would have to address, for instance, the issue of how the Bedouins and the *fellaheen* work together with antique dealers, and how both together protect sites from ubiquitous robberies and any other relevant competitors. Of course, we would then have to immediately discuss the foreign, European and American buyers and scholars who, together with a few domestic institutions, form the market. A thorough economic-historical analysis would clearly reveal the *Sitz im Leben* of these stories: they are not, of course, innocent historiographical pieces (if such things even exist), but rather serve to put forward arguments in the context of a fiercely competitive market where one's own economic interests must be defended against the interests of authorities, buyers and competitors in general. For a Western European—someone who is a potential customer in this antique market—is it not easy to see through such contexts or indeed to analyze them scientifically (or should I say: to examine them with a criminological approach)?

Furthermore, the source material and available evidence are quite different in each of the find contexts. That is why I shall leave this particular train of enquiry by noting that James M. Robinson's voluminous 2014 work *The Nag Hammadi Story* still takes a positivist approach in collating reports about Cairo antique dealers such as Phokion Tano and Albert Eid, who appear in the find

3 See Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*; Rohrhirsch, "Datengenerierung," 159–71.

4 For a similar approach to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, see Mroczek, "Batshit Stories."

stories. For example, Robinson simply translates Francophone sources about the French contributions to the early study, editing, and publication of the Nag Hammadi Codices into English for the reader, instead of critically editing them as sources of contemporary history.<sup>5</sup> If I understand the situation correctly, it was only seven years ago (immediately prior to the appearance of Robinson's 2014 book) that Nicola Denzey Lewis and Ariel Blount, as well as Mark Goodacre, first began to ask the usual questions that critical historians should pose. For example, they provide a basic sketch of the role of Phokion Tano, the Greek merchant from Cairo, within the context of a very successful dynasty of art dealers that supplied European and American collectors and museums with prominent finds of dubious provenance. There is also in the case of the Qumran finds a comparably voluminous work devoted specifically to the circumstances of the discovery: Weston W. Fields' *The Dead Sea Scrolls. A Full History*.<sup>6</sup> This work, however, clearly differs in its conception and execution from the work that Robinson—and others, following his indisposition— assembled. Accordingly, in the short summaries of the find stories (in light of ancient literary genres, one could speak of epitomisation) there are now numerous critical remarks regarding the truth content of classical narratives. Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra introduces his summary of the find stories in the 2016 textbook *Qumran*, in the series “Jüdische Studien,” with the simple statement: “the story of the discoveries is legendary.”<sup>7</sup> I also am not concerned here with the hermeneutic naïveté of our predecessors—in the sense of a simple narrative of progress—and the ostensible historical and scientific clarity of the current age. Scholarship has become much more sensitive to questions of provenance and the problems of the antiquity trade and the international antiquities market than were the generations of our fathers and grandfathers.<sup>8</sup>

I would like to take as my starting point the characterization quoted from Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra and suggest that we characterize the stories of the Qumran and Nag Hammadi finds both in their primary and secondary forms as in their popular epitomisations as ‘legends,’ and to consider the keyword ‘legend’ in an entirely literary-theoretical fashion. It is not a question here of a term being used pejoratively so as to cast doubt on the historical truth of

5 Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Story*, 1. For a criticism of Denzey Lewis, Blount, and Goodacre (as well as a critical reading of Robinson) see Burns, “Telling Nag Hammadi's Egyptian Stories.”

6 Fields, *The Dead Sea Scrolls. A Full History*.

7 Stökl Ben Ezra, *Qumran*, 8.

8 This point is amply demonstrated by the recent publication by Candida Moss and Joel Baden and their research on the highly problematic provenances of many pieces in the Green Collection exhibited by the Museum of the Bible in Washington (Moss and Baden, *Bible Nation*).

a narrative; rather, it is a question of the designation of a subgenre of narrative prose, a certain sort of text. I shall not spend time at this point discussing the fluctuating terminology and the problem of 'genre' in contemporary literary studies.<sup>9</sup> For my purposes, I shall initially make use of a kind of definition of genre that is based on the *Germanistik* monograph by Hans-Peter Ecker.<sup>10</sup> If one understands the term 'legend' in a purely literary-theoretical fashion, then, as we can learn from medieval studies,<sup>11</sup> 'legends' include an oral history prior to their literary fixation and their public use in certain social groups and institutional contexts (such as the liturgical reading of particular hagiographic sources in the Middle Ages, which is where the word 'legend' comes from).<sup>12</sup>

Keeping this basic history of 'legends' in mind, we may elaborate with recourse to insights from the study of literature: 'legends' are stories about important people and the events of their lives that have significance for a central context within a society or certain group. They are rich in images and told in concrete terms. At the same time, a legend is narrated dramatically: it has high and lows, it tells of loss and preservation. Miracles very often occupy a central place in a legend. Yet a certain distance from the everyday is frequently constitutive of the genre: what is told cannot happen to anyone at any time; rather, it is special. In this way, readers are not only emotionally captivated by the particular story: a legend may also convey religious consolation.<sup>13</sup> The stories of discoveries are founding legends that tell how fortuitously, or even miraculously, a particular institution or social order came to be. Of course, legends that arose out of modern, secular contexts are different from those of the ancient or medieval worlds. But one can speak, in the words of Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, of the "fascination with the question of luck," which is a stable characteristic of the genre over the ages—that is, the culmination of the story being a moment of luck that is conveyed to the protagonists and, accordingly, to the story's readers.<sup>14</sup> Thus, a legend is by no means exclusively or principally concerned with setting models of behavior or issuing injunctions to imitate a protagonist or a group of protagonists. Besides the *imitabile*, the legend also delves into the *venerabile, mirabile et amabile*.<sup>15</sup>

9 Hempfer, *Gattungstheorie*.

10 Ecker, *Legende*.

11 See Nahmer, "Legende."

12 Nahmer refers to the *Sacramentum Gallicanum*, PL 72: 451.

13 See e.g. Wahl, *Jakobserzählungen*, 88–89.

14 Gumbrecht, "Faszinationstyp Hagiographie," 37–84. Hans-Peter Ecker (see above, n. 10) recently expanded this approach by Gumbrecht.

15 Jolles, *Einfache Formen*, 36. On contemporary discussions as to whether miraculous stories are indispensable for the (medieval) genre, see Preen, *Antijüdische Stereotype*, 18–19.

## 2 Legendary Places: Qumran and Nag Hammadi

If we now examine the traditions concerning the find histories in question with reference to the characteristics of the legend genre, then we should begin with brief mention of the toponyms that are associated with the finds, since according to general antiquarian convention, the modern text-finds are named either after ancient localities or after their contemporary names. Remarkably, in both cases here, the conventions vary: one reads of “the Texts from Qumran,” or “the Finds of Khirbet Qumran,” or “the Essene Scriptures of the Dead Sea,” or “Discoveries in the Judean Desert of Jordan,” and, as already mentioned above, one may read further of “the texts of Chenoboskion,” or of “Nag Hammadi.” It must be made clear that the modern Egyptian city of Nag Hammadi is relatively distant from the possible discovery location of the Coptic Gnostic codices. “The Nag Hammadi Codices” are referred to as such since the city of Nag Hammadi had the nearest, major train station to the find, but this train station played virtually no role in investigation of the Codices’ provenance as the various research teams arrived by Jeep.<sup>16</sup> The respective alternatives are not innocent variants in designation; in the case of the Gnostic Library, the motivation is to make associations with the monastic toponym “Chenoboskion” disappear, thus repressing the library’s undeniable relationship to the monasticism of Egypt.<sup>17</sup>

The relationship between the excavations of Khirbet Qumran and the Scrolls is also problematized by use of the term “Dead Sea Scrolls.” Of course, it is part of the genre of legend that toponyms are unstable and can change. Moreover, Bedouins and *fellaheen* who live from the antique trade may not be interested in making their ‘hunting grounds’ too public; for this reason a literary feature of the genre converges with an economic strategy.

The investigations of Robinson and Fields, which in both cases extend almost to the present moment, were extensive. It is of course impossible to offer here a comprehensive comparison of the complete information about these finds with their subsequent investigation against the background of a literary-theoretical analysis of the ‘legend’ genre. I will hence concentrate on the narratives of each find’s origin and investigate the first scenes in the

16 So Stephen Emmel in a private conversation, 06.12.2017. The train station at Nag Hammadi seems to have been important for Doresse’s initial explorations (Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Story*, 201) and for Robinson’s own first visit (*ibid.*, 1102–3). According to Robinson, the earliest mention of a train stop by the find was Drioton’s mention to Doresse in 1947 of “the find of Daba” (*ibid.*, 7). See also Nongbri, *God’s Library*, 108–15.

17 But cf. now Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, passim, esp. 11–21 and Burke, “What Do We Talk About,” 33–37.

stories of Qumran and Nag Hammadi. Both cases involve narratives that native European and Anglo-American scholars have shared upon request and which they have written down—that is, what historical scholarship would refer to as written oral history. Oral narratives that are recorded a long time after the events recalled imply a significant degree of subjectively coloured memory.<sup>18</sup> In neither of our cases were such memories recorded by contemporary historians trained for such interviews or appropriately documented.

### 3 Finding Legends

I will briefly summarize the well-known details of the legends, specifically those regarding chance; the burning of ancient manuscripts; fear; and the wild growth in the sums of money involved in the trafficking of the manuscripts; the triumph of the scholar in the face of danger; and the providential appearance of an institutional authority. In the case of the Qumran find, Bedouins explained that one of their shepherd boys, Muhammed edh-Dhib (“the Wolf,” from the *Ta’amireh* tribe), discovered the first cave, later called 1Q, by chance in the autumn of 1947. The boy had followed a goat that had escaped from his herd up into the rocks. Coincidence and a wonderful discovery are, of course, the stuff of legend. The scrolls were hidden in a clay jug and it is purported that the Bedouins burned some of them in a campfire, the region having little wood, before selling them in Bethlehem to a Christian cobbler called Khalil Iskander Schalin (1910–1993)—nicknamed Kando—and to another dealer called Faida Salahi (George Isaiah).<sup>19</sup> As befits a legend, fear plays a role in the story told by the Bedouins—specifically, fear of the cave. Muhammad edh-Dhib only entered the cave the day after discovering it. The hope of discovering treasure and gold is also an element. The scrolls are disappointing at first and can only be used for the campfire, but they pay a reward later, which is of course less for the Bedouins than any subsequent sellers receive. The value of the scrolls climbs from 67 USD (which they eventually received from Kando) to fantastical sums. In the complicated chain of further brokers beginning in 1947/48, roles are played by both the Syrian metropolitan Mar Athanasius Jeschua Samuel (1909–1995) from the St. Markus Monastery in Jerusalem (for Khalil Iskander Schalin/Kando and Faida Salahi/George Isaiah were both members of his church), and the archaeologist Eleazar L. Sukenik (1889–1953), from the

18 Wierling, “Oral History,” 81–151.

19 So the short variant in Stegemann, *Essener*, 10–15, and Stökl Ben Ezra, *Qumran*, 8–16.

Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Sukenik bids over 6,000 USD and has to offer his house to the bank as collateral.<sup>20</sup>

The background of Sukenik's activities is particularly dramatic: on 29 November 1947—the evening of the UN vote on the partition of Palestine in New York, and hence shortly before the final outbreak of civil war between Jewish and Arabic militias—the scholar travels by bus to Bethlehem and receives a sample, passed through the barbed wire that divided Jerusalem into separate zones. The legend contains the generic motif of salvation from great danger and adversity. We could even ask if the narrative strand dealing with Sukenik carries an exemplary function typical of the genre: like the Jewish archaeologist, every scholar should recklessly commit to a cause. Moreover, in the form of the Syrian metropolitan, a “representative of the absolute” breaks through into the everyday world, as Hans-Peter Ecker sees as typical for the genre.<sup>21</sup>

So much for the Qumran find. My goal here, as I have said, is not to examine the legend for its historical accuracy. I will, however, briefly note that the Bedouin Muhammad edh-Dhib—the boy who purportedly found the scrolls by chance when chasing after an escaped goat—belonged to a Bedouin tribe who had a long history of trading in archaeological finds and antiquities, and that such legendary narratives were a common sales strategy in such business. In view of this context, it is less surprising that the narratives about the discovery on the Dead Sea contradict each other in many details—for example, it is not really clear how many people accompanied Muhammed when he made his discovery.<sup>22</sup>

We come now to the report of the discovery of the Nag Hammadi texts, canonized primarily by James M. Robinson in his monumental monograph and the basis of his own field research (Robinson's account is markedly different from those of the French researchers Doresse and Puech, who were directly involved in early trafficking and interpretation of the codices, as I have pointed out elsewhere and will not repeat here).<sup>23</sup> According to Robinson, in 1945 a *fellah* named Muhammad 'Ali al-Samman found by chance a jug at the foot of the cliff known as Jabal al-Tarif, to the north of El-Debbah, when he was digging for natural fertiliser made from the Nile mud (*sabakh*, or better, *sibakh*). At first, being afraid of spirits (*djinn*), he did not open it. Once again, we encounter the

20 Fields, *The Dead Sea Scrolls. A Short History*, 10.

21 Ecker, *Legende*, 140.

22 Fields, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Full History* 1:24: three to five persons.

23 Marksches, “The Nag Hammadi Library. A Coptic Gnostic Collection or Christian-Monastic Literature from Egypt?” (Stuart Lecture in Religion, Princeton, 19.11.2015). This lecture will be reprinted in revised form in the aforementioned monograph (see above, n. 1).

generic motifs of chance, and the surmounting of great fear and danger. And, of course, this legend also sees its heroes in a dangerous predicament, comparable to the Jewish-Arab civil war: in 1945, Muhammad 'Ali al-Samman became entangled in a blood feud involving murder and cannibalism. Just like the Bedouins of the Judean desert are supposed to have burned certain scrolls in their campfire, the mother of Muhammad 'Ali is also purported to have burned in her oven pieces of the find, which in her eyes was worthless.<sup>24</sup>

As in the story of the Qumran find, a priest also plays a role here, in this case, the Coptic priest from al-Qaṣr,<sup>25</sup> al-Qummuṣ Basilyus 'Abd al-Masih, who died in 1970. He participated in the identification of the codices as Coptic texts and created contacts with Cairo that ultimately, having involved various intermediaries, led to the sale of the texts. As in the case of the Syrian metropolitan, the priest's religion differs from that of the *fellaheen* who discovered the texts. And, of course, we also see an increase in the amount of money demanded and paid for the codices—it quickly becomes fantastical. The priest represents in this legend the absolute power that protects the Coptic Gnostic texts from the ignorance of the simple rural population and the external danger of the blood feud. This is all strongly reminiscent of the story of the Qumran find.

#### 4 Conclusions

So much for the Nag Hammadi find. I will close by drawing some conclusions from these observations. The parallels between the two find legends are, as I have said, striking and, in part, lend themselves to an informal comparison by reference to the literary genre of the legend. Nevertheless, even here, the issue is not of how much historical truth is contained in a legend: Mark Goodacre and, independently of him, Nicola Denzey Lewis and Ariel Blount have posed the appropriate questions and I must at this point refer to their respective articles.<sup>26</sup> It is also worth mentioning that, already at an early date, James M. Robinson's reconstructions of the find story raised considerable doubts, in a form of disclaimer to the first volume of the *Facsimile Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (pub. 1984).<sup>27</sup> We could, for example, discuss how

24 A kind of synthesis or synopsis as result of the analysis of sources by Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Story*, 20–40.

25 Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Story* 1: 42–44.

26 Goodacre, "How Reliable," 303–22; Denzey Lewis and Blount, "Rethinking Origins," 399–419.

27 Robinson, ed., *Facsimile Edition*, 3 n. 1: "Rodolphe Kasser and Martin Krause wish to make it known here that they have serious reasons to put in doubt the objective value of



in this case—as in that of the Qumran find—it remains unclear just how many *fellaheen* were involved in the find. The numbers vary also in the case of Nag Hammadi (as I have already documented elsewhere).<sup>28</sup>

As I have stated, my objective here was not to raise once more the question of the historical accuracy of the stories of the discoveries of the Qumran and Nag Hammadi texts. This has already been done and need not be repeated. My goal was, rather, through a comparative literary analysis of the find stories as examples of the ‘legend’ genre, to make a modest contribution to our determination of the values of these stories as sources. Of course, alongside such a literary analysis, a cultural-anthropological or ethnological investigation of the contexts is also required,<sup>29</sup> for which I admit to lacking the expertise.

However, it is tempting to approach the subject with further comparative studies. Many surprising analogies make it tempting to compare the Qumran and Chenoboskion finds, the texts from the Dead Sea and those of Nag Hammadi. Both great finds preserve approaches to ancient Judaism at the time of the Second Temple, and to ancient Gnosticism, that have not been transmitted by the ancient Christian majority church. Both finds provoked expectations, if they were not overwhelmed by them: it was hoped in both cases that totally new insights would result into the history of ancient Christianity, its beginnings and its form during the high Imperial Era.<sup>30</sup> Regarding the publication of both libraries, there were pointed exchanges between scholars, arguments over publication rights, and legal disputes.

In both cases it is controversial as to how we should situate the people who possessed and hid the writings within the history of religion and Hellenism in the Imperial Era—are we dealing with “Essenes” and “Gnostics”? Doubts were already raised at an early stage concerning the cave finds’ connection to the archaeological remains of Khirbet Qumran, the relationships between the texts and, consequently, the function of the different discoveries as libraries

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important points of the Introduction that follows. They contest especially the detailed history of the discovery of the Coptic Gnostic manuscripts of Nag Hammadi resulting from the investigation of James M. Robinson. Kasser and Krause and others who were involved do not consider as assured anything more than the core of the story (the general location and the approximate date of the discovery), the rest having for them more than the value of stories and fables that one can collect in popular Egyptian circles thirty years after an event whose exceptional significance the protagonists could not at the time understand.”

28 Marksches, “The Nag Hammadi Library” (see above, n. 23).

29 See for instance Nongbri, “Finding Early Christian Books,” 17–18.

30 Cf. also Burns and Goff’s introduction to this volume.

(in particular by the Chicago scholar of Judaism, the late Norman Golb).<sup>31</sup> The same is true regarding the relationship between Pachomian monasteries and the texts that are now usually connected with the town of Nag Hammadi, but which actually have nothing to do with it. Should we talk of those who produced them as a “sect” or, more neutrally, as a “group”? In both cases, particular elements of the finds were marginalized given the parochial agendas of the modern, academic disciplines of Religious Studies or Theology. I still have vivid memories of how amazed I was when, in 1991, in contravention of the law, the Huntington Library published both blue volumes of *A Facsimile Edition of the Dead Sea Scrolls* and, studying these volumes, I discovered the great number of Greek fragments amongst the photographic series, whilst I had primarily expected Hebrew and Aramaic texts. Hans-Martin Schenke must have been similarly amazed when he identified a badly corrupted text of Plato amongst the Nag Hammadi (or Chenoboskion) find—likewise, the team of papyrus experts who first noticed the monastic contexts of the cartonnage papyri.<sup>32</sup> A literary analysis does not come close to exhausting what we might learn from a comparative study of the Qumran and Nag Hammadi finds, but it nonetheless is a step towards providing a more critical perspective concerning the academic legends about these finds told by our elders.

To conclude, I will also remark that, alongside the finds of Qumran and Nag Hammadi, we should also consider the so-called Dishna papyri, which for the most part have found their way into the Bodmer collection in Geneva and can be presumed to have been discovered relatively close to the Jabal al-Tarif cliff.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, this comparative approach of three finding stories must be done elsewhere.

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32 Schenke, “Review of Robinson,” 236–42.

33 See Robinson, *Story of the Bodmer Papyri*; on the finding place, see Kasser, “Fragments,” 80; cf. now Lundhaug, “Dishna Papers,” and the contribution by Lundhaug in this volume.

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**PART 3**

*Texts, Manuscripts, and Canons: Scripture, Scribes,  
and Exegesis at Qumran and Nag Hammadi*





# Material Philology and the Nag Hammadi Codices

Hugo Lundhaug

What can the Nag Hammadi Codices, as material artifacts, tell us about the context(s) of their production and use, and of the identity and interests of the people who produced and used them?<sup>1</sup> Most Nag Hammadi research has been undertaken from the perspective of the texts' original authorship, rather than that of the time and place of the production and use of the manuscripts in which they are found. In many ways, this perspective is understandable. After all, most ancient texts have been approached in this way, with a view towards the original texts and the authorial intentions behind them, often with very little attention paid to the material evidence of the manuscripts. Yet, the material remains of these texts, the manuscripts in which they have been preserved, constitute *direct evidence* of people who *actually* copied and read them,<sup>2</sup> and with regard to many of the texts of the Nag Hammadi Codices, the only such evidence.<sup>3</sup> Paradoxically, when such works are preserved only in single copies, it also hides from view the fluidity inherent in their transmission, thus giving the impression of relative textual stability, i.e., of a text that is close to that of its "original." This impression is misleading, however, for in a manuscript culture

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- 1 The research underlying this article was for the most part conducted under the aegis of the NEWCONT project (New Contexts for Old Texts: Unorthodox Texts and Monastic Manuscript Culture in Fourth- and Fifth-Century Egypt), at the University of Oslo, Faculty of Theology. The project was funded by the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Community's Seventh Framework Programme (ERC Grant agreement no. 283741). I am especially grateful to Lance Jenott, for years of collaboration on the topics discussed in this contribution, and to Christian H. Bull, Kristine Toft Rosland, and Paula Tutty for discussions. I would also like to thank René Falkenberg in particular for helpful feedback on this article, as well as the other participants of the Berlin conference for highly stimulating discussions. Special thanks to Dylan M. Burns and Matthew Goff for organizing it.
  - 2 Cf. Williams, "Response," 208: "our tendency traditionally has been to equate rather too facilely or thoughtlessly the 'text' of a given writing only with what is after all our own modern text-critical 'guess-timate' about the 'original,' skipping past on our way perfectly real, physical copies of that writing that someone did use."
  - 3 The exceptions are *Ap. John*, *Gos. Thom.*, *Orig. World*, *Wis. Jes. Chr.*, *1 Apoc. Jas.*, *Pr. Thanks.*, *Perf. Disc.*, *Teach. Siv.*, *Zost.*, *Ep. Pet. Phil.*, *Sent. Sext.*, and Plato, *Resp.* For full references to the attestations for these works outside the Nag Hammadi Codices, see Jenott, "Reading Variants," 56–58.

the gap between the moment of authorship and the surviving textual evidence can often be insurmountably wide, as texts were subject to change in transmission as they passed through different times, contexts, and even languages.<sup>4</sup> Without direct access to the texts as their authors wrote them, and with a high probability that the texts as we have them are significantly different from how their authors intended them, the nature of our preserved evidence should be kept in mind. The extant material evidence constituted by the Nag Hammadi Codices can tell us much about at least *one* actual context in which these texts were copied and read, and this may ultimately inform our understanding of *why* they were copied and *how* they were read.

### 1 Scribes as Readers—Textual Transmission in a Manuscript Culture

The practice of interpreting texts as they appear in manuscripts, and of studying those who produced and used those manuscripts, as opposed to interpreting or trying to reconstruct their hypothetical originals, is commonly referred to as either “Material Philology” or “New Philology.” The American medievalist Stephen Nichols coined both these terms. He famously came up with the latter for the seminal 1990 special issue of the medievalist journal *Speculum*, entitled “The New Philology,” which above all served to introduce the insights of French Medievalist Bernard Cerquiglini’s then recently published polemical treatise against traditional philological practices, *Éloge de la variante*, to the English-speaking scholarly community.<sup>5</sup> With the help of Nichols, Cerquiglini’s insights that “medieval writing does not produce variants, it is variance,” and that every single manuscript attestation of a work is important in itself, rather than merely as evidence to be used in the reconstruction of a text as close as possible to the author’s “original” composition, proved to be foundational for the so-called “New Philology,” or, less provocatively, “Material Philology” as Nichols subsequently labelled it.<sup>6</sup> Confronted with the highly fluid textual traditions of medieval literature in the vernacular, preserved in

4 See Lundhaug, “Illusion of Textual Stability”; Jenott, “Reading Variants”; Rubenson, “Textual Fluidity”; Parker, *Living Text*; Bradshaw, “Liturgy and ‘Living Literature’”; Nichols, “Mutable Stability.”

5 Nichols, “New Philology: Introduction”; Cerquiglini, *Éloge de la variante*, later published in English translation as *In Praise of the Variant*. On New/Material Philology, see further, e.g., Nichols, “Why Material Philology?”; Driscoll, “Words on the Page”; Lundhaug and Lied, “Studying Snapshots”; Spiegel, “Reflections.” See also Nichols’ more recent discussion of New Philology, including Nichols, “New Challenges”; idem, “Dynamic Reading.”

6 Nichols, “Why Material Philology?” Both terms are in use today.



an abundance of manuscripts, Cerquiglini, Nichols, and others regarded the quest for origins inherent in traditional philological practices to be highly problematic.<sup>7</sup> Not only did they point out that the often unpredictable textual fluidity displayed in these manuscripts prove resistant to the construction of stemmata and the establishment of critical texts, but they also emphasized the problematic fact that the traditional focus on establishing a single text as close as possible to the “original” also led to a dismissal of a majority of manuscripts as unimportant or uninteresting in themselves. The alternative provided by the “New” or “Material” philology was to turn this perspective on its head and make the manuscripts themselves, and those who produced and used them, the focus of inquiry.<sup>8</sup> Attention was thus shifted to the extant texts as they appear in actual manuscripts, with all the implications of their materiality taken into consideration, including the processes of textual transmission in a manuscript culture, which differed markedly from those of print culture, not least in terms of its (lack of) stability. Indeed, it was the perspectives on texts and authorship brought in by print culture, they argued, that had guided traditional philology, and that constituted a hindrance to understanding texts circulating in a manuscript culture.

With manuscripts and the mechanisms of textual transmission in focus, scribes, readers, and reception take center stage, which again brings in a new set of questions and assumptions. First of all, in the course of their transmission, the works attested in the Nag Hammadi Codices had in all likelihood passed through the hands of multiple readers. Among these readers, the scribes were doubtlessly among the most significant. As not only copyists, but also readers of the texts they copied, the scribes often adapted the works they copied in accordance with their own goals and interpretations as they copied them. The texts they wrote down thus reflect not simply the works as their authors intended them, but also an often complicated process of revision, rewriting, and updating in light of changing circumstances.<sup>9</sup> By implication, getting to know the scribes who copied the texts into our extant manuscripts

7 For an overview of the history and principles of New Philology, see Driscoll, “Words on the Page”; Lundhaug and Lied, “Studying Snapshots.” The term “New Philology” was coined by Nichols in his article “The New Philology: Introduction.” The foundational studies are Cerquiglini, *Éloge de la variante*; English tr. Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant*; and Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale*; English tr. Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*.

8 In Nag Hammadi studies, a focus on manuscript culture was first advocated by King, “Approaching the Variants”; and in essence, but without using this terminology, by Emmel, “Religious Tradition.”

9 See, e.g., Penn, “Monks, Manuscripts, and Muslims”; idem, “Moving Beyond the Palimpsest”; Haines-Eitzen, “Social History,” 488–89.

should thus also help us better understand the texts themselves, in the form in which they have been preserved to us, as well as the reasons why they were copied and read in the community the scribes were part of or connected to. In contrast to the texts' original authors, whose identities and contexts are lost to us, we can gain access to the Nag Hammadi scribes and their community through analyses of the codices' materiality, construction, discovery location, handwriting, and paratextual features such as titles, readers' aids, corrections, scribal notes, and colophons.

## 2 Colophons and Scribal Notes

It goes without saying that the scribes of the Nag Hammadi Codices, as well as their possible superiors or commissioners, had their own agendas for copying these particular texts. One way of addressing the question of what these agendas may have been, and in what contexts the copies were made, is to look closer at the paratextual features of the manuscripts.<sup>10</sup> These include paragraph marks, sigla, titles, various forms of decoration, glosses, corrections, and marginal notes, but the paratextual feature that arguably brings us closest to the scribes and the contexts in which they worked is the colophon. Colophons or scribal notes are extant in Nag Hammadi Codices I, II, III, VI, VII, and VIII, and a close reading of them in comparison with colophons in other manuscripts from this and later periods gets us closer to those who copied the texts, and most likely also those who read them.<sup>11</sup>

A prime example is found at the end of Nag Hammadi Codex II, where the scribe wrote a short benediction of the "holy ones" and "spiritual ones," while asking for prayers from his "brothers," thus indicating the communal monastic setting of the production of the codex.<sup>12</sup> It has been shown that the phrases and terms of reference used in this colophon are particularly at home in a monastic setting, where such benedictions are commonly attested.<sup>13</sup> The communal monastic context for the production and use of these texts also seems to be reflected in another colophon, found at the end of Nag Hammadi Codex VII,

10 For the concept of paratexts, see Genette, *Paratexts*.

11 For in-depth analyses of the Nag Hammadi colophons, see Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 178–206; Lundhaug and Jenott, "Production, Distribution and Ownership."

12 The colophon follows the end of the *Book of Thomas*, at NHC II 145,20–23: "Remember me also, my brothers, in your prayers. Peace to the holy ones and the spiritual ones" (text and translation in Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 183). For analysis and discussion of this colophon, see Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 183–89.

13 See Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 183–89.

which likely provides us with information on the intended owner of the codex as well as the relationship between him and the scribe.<sup>14</sup> Here the scribe states that the book he has just finished copying belongs to “the fatherhood,” a common term for ecclesiastical or monastic leadership,<sup>15</sup> indicating that the intended owner of the book was likely the scribe’s monastic superior, and quite possibly even the abbot of his monastery. The scribe’s reference to himself as a “son” should in this context be understood in a highly common metaphorical sense, indicating the hierarchical relationship between him and his superior. These colophons thus indicate that the context of production and use of the Nag Hammadi Codices was that of a community, and the terms and phrases used are in line with what we find in use in communities of monastics.<sup>16</sup>

Further insight into the collaboration and networks between scribes and readers, as well as the process by which this particular scribe selected which texts to copy into the codex, can be gained from a unique scribal note found in Nag Hammadi Codex VI. Crammed inside a decorative frame that sets it apart from the preceding *Hermetic Prayer of Thanksgiving* and the following excerpt from the *Asclepius*, the scribe wrote a note to the intended recipients of the codex explaining the rationale behind the selection of texts.<sup>17</sup> The note communicates two important things. Firstly, it explains why a particular text was included in the codex. While it is somewhat opaque whether the text in question was the *Prayer of Thanksgiving* or the excerpt from the *Asclepius*,<sup>18</sup> the important point to note is that the scribe felt the need to explain his choice, while at the same time letting the recipients (in plural) know that he had access to more texts of this sort, which he could have copied. He says he refrained

14 The colophon follows the end of the *Three Steles of Seth*, at NHC VII 127.28–32: “This book belongs to the fatherhood. It was the son who copied it. Bless me, father. I bless you, father. In peace. Amen.” (text and translation in Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 178). For analysis and discussion of this colophon, see Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 178–83.

15 For references, see Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 181.

16 For a thorough discussion of the colophons of the Nag Hammadi Codices, see Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 178–206.

17 NHC VI 65.8–14: “I have copied this one text of his. Indeed, very many of his (texts) have come into my hands. I have not copied them, thinking that they may (already) have come into your (pl) hands. For truly I hesitate to copy these for you since they may (already) have come into your (pl) hands, and the matter may cause you (pl) trouble. For the texts of that one which have come into my hands are numerous” (text in Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 197). For analysis and discussion, see Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 197–206. See also the discussion in Bull, “Panopolis Connection,” 138–39.

18 While arguments can be made in favor of both alternatives, the weight of the evidence seems to favor the *Prayer of Thanksgiving*. See Williams and Jenott, “Inside the Covers”; Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 199–202.

from copying these other texts so as not to cause the recipients undue trouble or inconvenience, while indicating that these texts are still available should the intended recipients want them.<sup>19</sup>

The tone of the note and the fact that the scribe wrote it directly into the codex, between two texts, and not on, for instance, a separate accompanying piece of papyrus, indicate that the scribe and the recipients likely knew each other, and the way in which the scribe refers to other texts he has access to and could have copied, indicates that they were engaged in a book-exchange network, the likes of which we know from other contemporary sources.<sup>20</sup> In this case, the scribe and recipients may well have been part of one or more monastic groups, or perhaps different sub-groups within the same monastic federation. They may for instance have been monks at different Pachomian monasteries, for example at Phbow and Shenaset, the two monasteries located closest to the site where the Nag Hammadi Codices were discovered, or the scribe may have been a monk at a Pachomian monastery somewhat further away, such as the one in Panopolis (Shmin) described by Palladius in his *Lausiatic History*, as recently suggested by Christian Bull.<sup>21</sup> Interestingly, in the relevant passage, Palladius also describes the existence of a scriptorium in this monastery.<sup>22</sup> The fact that the scribe made a choice without consulting the recipients first, suggests that they were located at a distance from each other and that this was not a commercial transaction.

### 3 Collaboration and Variance in the Production of the Nag Hammadi Codices

The communal nature of the production and use of the Nag Hammadi Codices is also evident when we compare the scribal hands of the manuscripts, as was noted already by Jean Doresse, who observed that the Nag Hammadi Codices show us “the work of copyists working in co-operation, even though their dialects differ.”<sup>23</sup> While scholars have come to different conclusions regarding the exact number of scribes who worked on the Nag Hammadi Codices, no one has

19 For the possible senses of this reference to trouble or inconvenience, see Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 204–5.

20 See Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 197–206; Haines-Eitzen, “Social History,” 484–86.

21 Bull, “Panopolis Connection,” 141.

22 Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 32.

23 Doresse, *Secret Books*, 138.

failed to note the existence of a number of interesting cases of palaeographical similarity, variation, and overlap within and between the codices.<sup>24</sup>

The first to conduct an analysis of the palaeography of the Nag Hammadi Codices was Doresse, who came to the conclusion that they were the work of nine scribes, whom he grouped into four classes based on similarity.<sup>25</sup> Martin Krause later followed Doresse's conclusions regarding the number of scribes, with one exception: identifying the scribe of Codex VII with the scribe who copied the second half of Codex XI, Krause reduced the total number of scribes to eight.<sup>26</sup> James M. Robinson, on the basis of a "rapid survey" by Manfredo Manfredi, challenged Doresse's conclusion that Codices IV, V, VI, VIII, and IX were the work of one and the same scribe, concluding instead that they were the work of five different scribes, albeit representing the same scribal "school."<sup>27</sup> This conclusion regarding the possible separate identities of the scribal hands of Codices IV, V, VI, VIII, and IX was later reflected in the final report of the Nag Hammadi Codices editing project, where Stephen Emmel estimated that the Nag Hammadi Codices could altogether have been the work of as many as fourteen scribes (in line with Robinson), while noting that some of the hands are so similar that in reality the number of scribes might be as low as eight (as suggested by Krause), in which case Codices IV, V, VI, VIII, and IX would indeed need to be identified as the work of one and the same scribe. Furthermore, he tentatively suggested that the scribe of the eight lines on page 47 of Codex II could possibly be identified with the scribe of Codex XII.<sup>28</sup>

On the basis of his own autoptical analysis of the manuscripts Michael A. Williams later came to conclusions that were broadly in line with those of Robinson/Manfredi.<sup>29</sup> Studying the hands in detail, and focusing especially on the palaeographically highly similar Codices IV, V, VI, VIII, and IX, he concluded that they are most probably the work of five different scribes; but contrary to Manfredi's reported conclusion that the closest similarity was that between Codices VI and VIII, Williams concluded that Codices IV and VIII are the two most similar, while VI is closest to IX, while forming a group together with V.<sup>30</sup> With regard to the total number of scribes, Williams concluded that the maximum number should be increased to fifteen, suggesting that the scribe who

24 See table 5.1 for an overview of the various suggestions.

25 Doresse, *Secret Books*, 139–45. Doresse's groups were, A (scribes 1, 2, 3): III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX; B (scribes 4, 5, 6, 7): II, XI, 3–4; C (scribe 8): I, 1–3 + 5, X; D (scribe 9): 1, 4, XI, 1–2.

26 Krause, "Zum koptischen Handschriftenfund."

27 Robinson, "On the Codicology."

28 Emmel, "Nag Hammadi Codices Editing Project."

29 Williams, "Scribes," 334–42; idem, *Rethinking*, 242–44.

30 Williams, "Scribes," 341.

copied the *Book of Thomas*, the final text of Codex II, may perhaps not have been identical with the one who copied the first six tractates in the codex,<sup>31</sup> a suggestion that had also previously made by Hans-Martin Schenke.<sup>32</sup> If the different format of the final text of Codex II, which has more lines per page and letters per line than the rest of the texts in the codex, was not simply the result of the same scribe using a different format in order to fit the final text into the remaining pages, but rather a different scribe altogether, the codex would in fact be the work of three scribes.

Williams has later returned to the question of the number of scribes behind Codex II as well as its possible scribal overlap with Codex XIII in a recent study together with David Coblentz. They concluded on the basis of a statistical analysis of the use of articulation marks that it was probably the main scribe of Codex II who also copied the final tractate of the codex after all, but that Codex XIII was most likely the work of a different scribe, albeit probably from the same "school," since these hands are indeed highly similar in most respects.<sup>33</sup> The tendency towards postulating an increasing number of scribes based on minute palaeographical differences has also been met with some skepticism. Criticizing the proliferation of postulated scribes, Alexandr Khosroyev has come to a conclusion closer to that of Doresse, Krause, and the minimal hypothesis of Emmel, than to the maximalist suggestions of Williams and Manfredi/Robinson, ultimately concluding that the Nag Hammadi Codices were probably the work of nine or ten scribes. To reach this number, Khosroyev identifies the majority scribe of Codex II with the scribe of Codex XIII, assigns two scribes to the debated group consisting of IV, V, VI, VIII, and IX (V, VI, IX and IV, VIII respectively), and regards the eight lines on page 47 of Codex II to be possibly the work of the scribe of Codex X (rather than XII).<sup>34</sup>

Regardless of the exact number of scribes, what may certainly be concluded from all these analyses is that some of the Nag Hammadi scribes clearly worked on more than one codex, and that several of the codices are the work of more than one scribe. Palaeographical analysis shows for instance that Codices I, XI, and II were produced by two (and in the latter case maybe even three) scribes each. These codices were clearly not the products of isolated individuals, but of

31 Williams, *Rethinking*, 243.

32 Schenke, *Thomas-Buch*, 1–2.

33 Williams and Coblentz, "Reexamination," 427–56. The possibility should be kept in mind, though, that the same scribe may have changed his (or her) use of articulation marks over time, and we cannot know exactly how close together in time the two codices were produced. They may have been produced the same year, or there may conceivably even have been decades between their production.

34 Khosroyev, *Bibliothek von Nag Hammadi*, 136–42.

a group of people who collaborated on their production. When this evidence is combined with that of the scribal note and colophons discussed above, we may conclude that the codices were made either within a single community or by collaborating communities.

Palaeographical connections between the codices may be drawn in different ways. Some of the codices are closely connected to each other by sporting highly similar hands. Codices IV, V, VI, VIII, and IX, for example, have highly similar scribal hands, where those of Codices IV and VIII are almost identical. These five codices may be the product of anything from one to five individuals, and making the call is not made easier by the fact that we do not know how far apart in time these five codices were produced. It is difficult to assess whether the differences between such similar hands could simply be due to the passage of time, as people's handwriting seldom stays exactly the same as they get older. A host of other factors could also cause the same individual to write differently, such as time constraints, lighting, time of day, scribal equipment, papyrus quality, etc.

It is also important to note that we should not jump to the conclusion that codices sporting clearly distinct palaeographical styles must have been manufactured in different communities or locations, as people in the same community could have very different palaeographical styles. In the making of Codex XI, for example, one of the two scribes working on Codex I collaborated with the scribe who copied the entire Codex VII (including one of the colophons discussed above). These three codices may thus be grouped together on the basis of scribal overlap, even though the hands of the three scribes who worked on them are markedly different from each other. The hand of the scribe who copied the *Treatise on the Resurrection* in Codex I and the first half of Codex XI is in no way similar to that of the main scribe of Codex I or that of the scribe who copied the second half of Codex XI and the entire Codex VII.<sup>35</sup> Had it not been for the clear collaboration between the three scribes who worked on Codices I, VII, and XI, they would never have been grouped together, as their hands are highly distinct from each other. Indeed, had they been discovered separately, the two halves of Codex XI would certainly not have been grouped together on the basis of scribal hand, nor indeed on the basis of dialect or textual contents, as the two halves are clearly distinct in both respects. Yet the two halves of Codex XI were indeed copied onto the same quire of papyrus sheets (it is a single-quire codex), showing beyond doubt the close relationship between the two scribes. This scribal variation must therefore be kept in mind when we

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35 Cf. the comment of Krause, "Texte von Nag Hammadi," 224.

ponder the case of Codex III, which cannot easily be grouped together with the other Nag Hammadi Codices on the basis of palaeography.

As for Codex II, which sports the work of at least two scribes, it may possibly be a witness to scribal overlap with up to two other Nag Hammadi Codices. As we have noted, the hand of the main scribe of Codex II is so similar to that of Codex XIII that they may be the work of the same scribe, or perhaps that of “a student and instructor,”<sup>36</sup> and the scribe who only copied a few lines of the *Gospel of Thomas* in Codex II may possibly have been the same who copied Codex XII, as suggested by Emmel,<sup>37</sup> or perhaps Codex X as Khosroyev has suggested.<sup>38</sup>

TABLE 5.1 Scribal hands

NHC	Doresse	Krause	Emmel	Williams	Khosroyev
I.1–3, 5	8 (C)	2	1	A	8
I.4	9 (D)	3	2	B	7
II.1–6 (except 47.1–8)	6 (B) (C)	6	3 (= 14?)	I	3
II.2 (47.1–8)	6 (B) (C)	6	4 (= 13?)	J	4
II.7	6 (B) (C)	6	3 (= 14?)	K? (or I?)	3
III	1 (A)	5	5	M	9
IV	2 (A)	1	6 (= 7, 8, 10, 11?)	D	2
V	2 (A)	1	7 (= 6, 8, 10, 11?)	F	1
VI	2 (A)	1	8 (= 6, 7, 10, 11?)	G	1
VII	3 (A)	4	9	C	6
VIII	2 (A)	1	10 (= 6, 7, 8, 11?)	E	2
IX	2 (A)	1	11 (= 6, 7, 8, 10?)	H	1
X	8 (C)	2	12	O	5 (= 4?)
XI.1–2	9 (D)	3	2	B	7
XI.3–4	4 (B)	4	9	C	6
XII	7 (B)	8	13 (= 4?)	N	10
XIII	5 (B)	7	14 (= 3?)	L? (or I?)	3

36 Turner, “Introduction to Codex XIII,” 362.

37 Emmel, “Nag Hammadi Codices Editing Project,” 28: “The hand of scribe 4 [NHC II 47.1–8] is remarkably similar to that of scribe 13 [NHC XII], but the surviving work of the former is too little (only eight lines of text) to permit a certain identification.”

38 Khosroyev, *Bibliothek von Nag Hammadi*, 138–39.



Furthermore, two codices that cannot be grouped together on palaeographical grounds, but which are nevertheless connected are Codices VI and XIII, since the latter, consisting only of eight leaves (16 pages) removed from its original codex in antiquity, was found tucked into the cover of the former. There are several likely scenarios that may explain why the remains of Codex XIII were merged with Codex VI in this way,<sup>39</sup> and while the actual reason will always remain obscure, it is an interesting fact that it connects two codices in antiquity that belong to different sub-groups of codices as determined on the basis of palaeography alone. This case is thus in one sense similar to that of Codices I and VII, which are also securely connected in antiquity while being highly distinct palaeographically and codicologically.

The codices can also be compared and grouped on the basis of the construction of their leather covers. Jean Doresse was also the first to study the

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39 There are two main questions: (1) Why were these leaves, containing the *Three Forms of First Thought* as well as the beginning of the untitled text known as *On the Origin of the World*, removed from the original codex in the first place (and why only these leaves), and (2) why were they inserted into Codex VI? The primary motivation for the transfer of the *Three Forms* from its original codex to Codex VI could simply have been to add it to the latter, and the removal from the original Codex XIII could simply have been a consequence of this choice. But if the removal of *Three Forms* from Codex XIII was the primary motivation, there are three main possibilities for this: (1) *Three Forms* could have been removed in order to save it from being confiscated; or (2) in order to save it from being discarded with the rest of the codex due to irreparable damage to the codex for some reason or other; or (3) in order to save the rest of the codex from being confiscated due to the presence of the *Three Forms* within it. There are also several possible reasons why only this text was removed from the original Codex XIII: (1) It could be because this was the text that its owners did not already have access to in the other Nag Hammadi Codices, or (2) because it was conveniently located at the center of a quire and thus easily removed without destroying several other texts in the process. (3) It may have been the only objectionable text in its original codex, possibly together with *On the Origin of the World*, and having removed it, the rest of the codex may have passed the scrutiny of censors, or (4) it may have been the only text from the codex its owners had any interest in preserving. If, on the other hand, the primary reason for the text's transfer was to incorporate it into Codex VI, this may either have been (1) because it fit particularly well within that particular codex, or (2) because it was regarded as valuable on its own. It may have been integrated with Codex VI in order to hide and save it together with the texts of that codex, or simply in order for it to be possible to read it together with those texts. The specific reason for including the leaves of XIII within VI need not have anything to do with their contents, though, as another possible reason might simply be because the leaves of Codex XIII were of almost exactly the same size as those of VI. We also cannot know whether the Codex XIII leaves were tucked into the front of Codex VI only at the time of its burial or at an earlier date. As we can see, there are several scenarios that may plausibly explain the observable facts. On these questions, see also Robinson, "Inside the Front Cover"; Williams and Jenott, "Inside the Covers," 1025–52.

construction of the Nag Hammadi covers in detail,<sup>40</sup> and here he was later followed by Berthe van Regemorter,<sup>41</sup> Martin Krause,<sup>42</sup> and James M. Robinson, who conducted his own thorough analyses while synthesizing the results of the previous investigations.<sup>43</sup> Robinson's many publications dealing at least partly with this topic remained the most comprehensive studies of the construction of the codices and their covers until the recent publication by Julia Miller and Pamela Spitzmueller, which has now brought the study of the covers one step further.<sup>44</sup>

The studies of Robinson and Miller/Spitzmueller are fascinating with regard to the internal comparison of the Nag Hammadi Codices. Firstly, according to Robinson, the codices that are most similar to each other with regard to their cover construction are IV, VIII, and V.<sup>45</sup> Secondly, he found the covers of Codices II, VI, IX, and X to be clearly distinct from the previously mentioned group of three, while they individually also share various features with covers outside of these two most distinct groups. Finally, Codices I, VII, and XI, which we have seen are connected through scribal overlap despite their clear palaeographical differences, would not have been grouped together on the basis of their covers or other codicological features, except for their size, as they are the tallest Nag Hammadi Codices, albeit together with Codex II. Otherwise they are clearly distinct. In terms of their quire structure, for instance, Codex I, with its three quires, is different from the other Nag Hammadi Codices, which are all single-quire codices.<sup>46</sup> Codex I is also clearly distinct from Codices VII and XI by having soft and thin leather as opposed to the thick and stiff leather of the latter two codices.<sup>47</sup> Miller and Spitzmueller come to broadly similar

40 Doresse, "Les reliures des manuscrits gnostiques."

41 Van Regemorter, "La reliure des manuscrits gnostiques."

42 Krause, "Zur Bedeutung des gnostisch-hermetischen Handschriftenfundes"; idem, "Texte von Nag Hammadi," 221–23.

43 Robinson published his results in various places, but most notably in Robinson, "Construction"; idem, *Facsimile Edition ... Introduction*, 71–86.

44 Miller and Spitzmueller, "Gift from the Desert." This is a lavishly illustrated and clearly written study documenting the construction of the covers in an excellent manner and constitutes the most well-documented analysis to date of their construction and preservation. Note, however, that their inclusion of radiocarbon dating results for the cover and cartonnage of Codex I was premature. For complete results and analysis of this evidence, see Lundhaug, "Dating and Contextualising," together with idem, "Date of MS 193," for a discussion of the radiocarbon dating method (in addition to presenting the results of the radiocarbon analysis of Schøyen MS 193).

45 Robinson, "Construction," 186; idem, *Facsimile Edition ... Introduction*, 81–83.

46 Robinson, "Construction," 184; idem, *Facsimile Edition ... Introduction*, 39–43; See also Linjamaa, "Why Monks."

47 Cf. Miller and Spitzmueller, "Gift from the Desert," 481.

conclusions as Robinson, but with some notable differences. While they rightly note that “The problem with categories defining the physical characteristics of the books is that there are so many possible determinants,”<sup>48</sup> they identify two distinct groups of codices on the basis of their cover design and construction, which they think may have been bound by single binders. They name these binders the “Nag Hammadi Simple Binder” and “Nag Hammadi Advanced Binder” respectively. To the “Simple Binder” they assign Codices IV, V, and VIII, and to the “Advanced Binder,” whom they are relatively confident was a single person, they assign Codices VI, IX, and X.<sup>49</sup>

When we look at the codicology and palaeography of the Nag Hammadi Codices together, what is striking is that whichever way we choose to group together codices on the basis of various scribal and codicological criteria we see a number of cases of overlap, similarity, and variation that both create and cut across possible sub-groups. Indeed, when we look at palaeography together with size, format, and cover construction, it is clear that the codices with the greatest similarity of scribal hands (IV, V, VI, VIII, and IX) are distributed across the two most distinct groups of covers (IV, V, VIII vs. VI, IX, X). Moreover, while Codices IV and VIII, on the one hand, and VI and IX on the other, which may belong to separate palaeographical subgroups if we are to further subdivide the highly similar codices in this group,<sup>50</sup> are also separated by having clearly distinct covers, the neatness of these two distinct groups are, however, complicated by the fact that Codex V is palaeographically closer to VI and IX while sporting a cover highly similar to IV and VIII. Moreover, the most distinct group of covers—the most advanced group—which according to Miller and Spitzmueller were probably made by the same individual, comprise codices that are significantly different from each other in terms of palaeography, for it not only includes Codices VI and IX, but also Codex X. Finally, the three tall codices with scribal overlap (I, VII, XI) also contain highly distinct hands, and if we were to group them together purely on the basis of their size, Codex II would also join the group, since it is as tall as Codex XI, while sharing more features with Codices VI, IX, and X in terms of its cover construction. In summary, then, no clear groups of more than two manuscripts can be made where both codicological and palaeographical features align, which only happens with Codices IV and VIII, and VI and IX respectively.

Once we start to look at the distribution of the various features together, we thus see how problematic is Robinson’s hypothesis (followed by Miller and

48 Miller and Spitzmueller, “Gift from the Desert,” 459 n. 57.

49 Miller and Spitzmueller, “Gift from the Desert,” 462–63 n. 65.

50 See Williams, “Scribes”; Williams, *Rethinking*, 243.

Spitzmueller) that we may distinguish four reasonably distinct groups of Nag Hammadi Codices on the basis of their material features (IV/V/VIII; II/VI/IX/X/XIII; I/VII/XI; III) and that these could be characterized as originally separate “collections.”<sup>51</sup> Once we realize that the group of five palaeographically most similar codices are clearly divided by belonging to the two most distinct groups of covers, while at the same time noticing that the three codices that are most securely connected by having overlapping scribes are palaeographically highly distinct, we see that there is little reason to expect a high level of standardization of book-production even within a single location or community of production, even when there is clear evidence of collaboration.

While this insight throws doubt on any conclusions regarding originally separate sub-groups within the Nag Hammadi collection, there are still interesting patterns to be drawn between the codices and possible implications that are open to speculation. As figure 5.1 shows, however, we cannot clearly delineate more than two groups of codices plus Codex III.

While Codices I, XI, and VII are closely connected with each other, they do not clearly overlap with the other main group by means of the criteria hitherto outlined. On the other hand, Codices IV, VIII, V, VI, IX, X, II, XIII, and to some extent XII, are connected in such ways as to render it relatively unlikely that they originally constituted separate collections. In addition to the features mentioned above it should also be noted that the versions of the long recension of the *Apocryphon of John* found in Codices II and IV are so similar that it seems likely that they were copied in the same place or community, thus cementing the connection between these otherwise very different codices.<sup>52</sup>

It is thus possible to draw materially based connections between all possible sub-groups of codices except Codex III, which is the only Nag Hammadi codex that is truly distinct from the others in terms of both scribal hand and cover construction, and which does not overlap to any significant extent with any of the other Nag Hammadi Codices, except of course in its contents<sup>53</sup> and by being manufactured using papyrus and leather, although Miller and Spitzmueller do classify it together with Codices I, II, and VII as having advanced, but irregular

51 Robinson, *Facsimile Edition ... Introduction*, 86; Miller and Spitzmueller, “Gift from the Desert,” 465 n. 69, although they also state that they feel that “Codex II is unique in so many ways that the authors feel that it could be in a category all its own” (ibid., 463).

52 Painchaud, “Production and Destination,” 390, suggests that these two may have been copied from the same exemplar; see also Bull, “Panopolis Connection,” 136, and the synoptic edition of *Ap. John* in Waldstein and Wisse, eds., *Apocryphon of John*.

53 *Ap. John* is also found in Codices II and IV, *Holy Book* is also found in Codex IV, and *Eugnostos* is also found in Codex V.

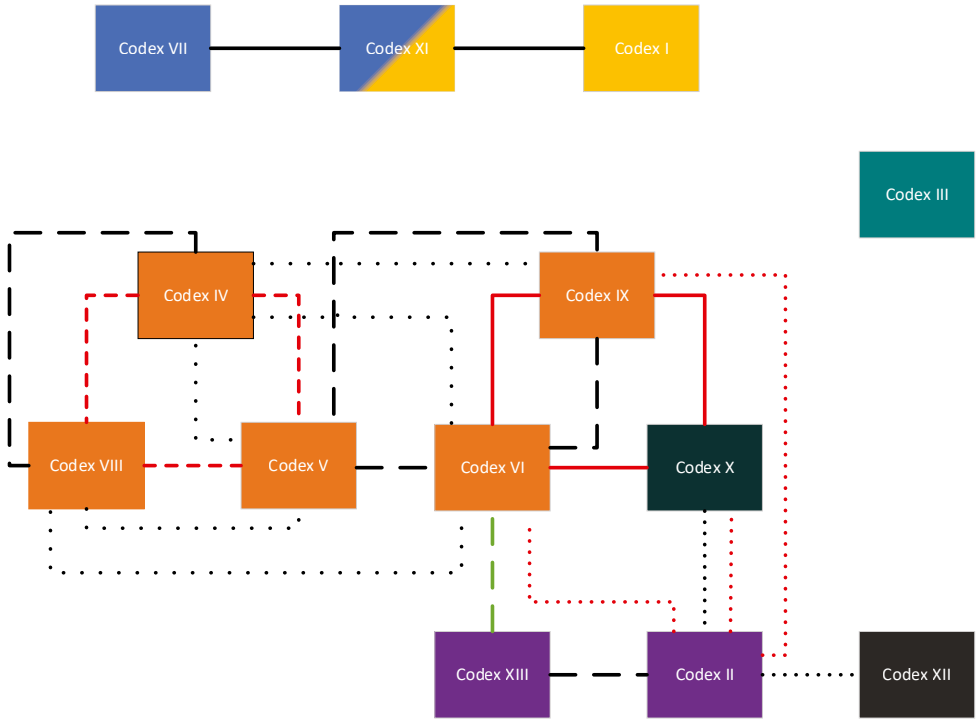


FIGURE 5.1 Material relationships between the Nag Hammadi Codices  
 The colors of the boxes represent palaeographical styles, the black lines represent palaeographically based connections (solid lines represent secure connections, and dotted lines less secure connections), and the red lines represent connections based on the construction of the covers (the more solid the line, the more secure the connection). The green line between Codex VI and XIII represent the fact that the latter was found tucked inside the former, having been placed there in antiquity.

cover construction.<sup>54</sup> It is worth noting that this codex also has an acquisition story that is somewhat distinct from the others. It was the first of the Nag Hammadi Codices to be acquired by the Coptic Museum, where it arrived by another path than the other codices already in October 1946—less than a year after the codices’ discovery in December 1945, while the rest of the codices, with the notable exception of Codex I, were confiscated from Phokion Tano and Maria Dattari in 1952 and became part of the collection of the Coptic Museum in June of that year.<sup>55</sup> Codex III was even supposed to be

54 Miller and Spitzmueller, “Gift from the Desert,” 462 n. 65.  
 55 Funk, “Linguistic Aspect,” 137 n. 23; Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Story*, 1:69, 76, 117, 177.

published already in 1951, while it was still labelled as Nag Hammadi Codex I.<sup>56</sup> Reportedly, all the Nag Hammadi Codices, including Codex III, were given by the main discoverer, Muhammad Ali al-Samman, to the priest in his home village of al-Qaṣr, al-Qummuṣ Basilyus ‘Abd al-Masiḥ. Basilyus lent Codex III to his wife’s brother, Ragheb Andarawus ‘Abd al-Said, who lived in the nearby village of Dishna. After some back-and-forth documented by Robinson, Ragheb eventually sold Codex III to the Coptic Museum in October 1946.<sup>57</sup> Wolf-Peter Funk, noting the fact that the language of Codex III is closer to standard Sahidic than any of the texts in the other Nag Hammadi Codices, has indeed posed the question whether Codex III could perhaps have been discovered independently of the other Nag Hammadi Codices, suggesting that its somewhat distinct codicological and dialectal features may point in that direction.<sup>58</sup> However, when pondering the possibility that Codex III may have been discovered independently from the rest of the Nag Hammadi Codices, it is worth noting that it was by following the trail of Codex III that Robinson discovered what had happened to all the other codices.<sup>59</sup> The likelihood that this codex was found together with the other Nag Hammadi Codices thus outweighs the possibility of a different provenance.

As we can see from the above comparisons of the Nag Hammadi Codices’ various material features, we have incontrovertible evidence of multiple people collaborating in various ways in the production of these codices, but with a notably limited degree of standardization. At the end of the day, when evaluating the significance of the similarities, variance, and overlaps between the codices, we thus need to ask ourselves what degree of standardization of book-production we would expect to see in the early monastic communities located in the vicinity of the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Codices at such an early stage in the history of monasticism? I would argue that the various instances of overlaps and variance in terms of palaeographical and codicological features correspond to what we should expect to see in an early monastic federation, such as the one constituted by the Pachomian monasteries of the fourth and early fifth centuries, where people with different backgrounds,

56 It was first referred to as Codex III in 1957.

57 For these and further details, see Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Story*, 11–119. See also Burns, “Telling Nag Hammadi’s Egyptian Stories.”

58 Funk, “Linguistic Aspect,” 136–37. It may also conceivably have been Codex III’s distinctive outward features that caused Basilio to select this particular codex to lend to Ragheb, and the fact that it is among the most well-preserved of the Nag Hammadi Codices may have contributed to this decision.

59 Robinson, “Discovering and Marketing,” esp. 22–23; see also idem, *Nag Hammadi Story*, 11–119, esp. 66–70.

skills, and training joined the new monastic communities from all across Egypt and beyond.<sup>60</sup>

#### 4 Scribes and Readers Attested in the Cartonnage of the Covers

We are not yet completely finished with the leather covers, though, as they not only give us information based on the codices' size, format, or methods of construction, but also provide us with additional contextual information about the people who produced them from the glued-down scraps of used papyri that was used to stiffen the leather covers. The contents of these papyri are illuminating in several respects.<sup>61</sup> The cover of Codex VII is most important in this respect. It was this cover that contained by far the most cartonnage documents. Importantly it contained a significant number of monastic letters, in both Greek and Coptic, which provide us with a unique window into a monastic community active in the vicinity of Chenoboskion (Sheneset) in the fourth century that may well have been directly connected to both producers and users of these codices.<sup>62</sup> In Codex VII, we encounter several named monks, including Daniel, Aphrodisias, and Sansnos, the latter being a priest and monk of significant authority and network, who had major administrative responsibilities and influence. His influence and activities indicate that he was part of a monastic community comprising a significant number of people.<sup>63</sup> Most intriguing of all the cartonnage fragments, however, comes from a letter written by a monk named Pappoute to his "beloved father Pachome."<sup>64</sup> The possibility that this "Pachome" should be identified with Pachomius, the founder of

60 Indeed, this situation in the early phase of Pachomian monasticism would also explain the curious dialectal mixtures and linguistic variance on display in the Nag Hammadi texts. On this point, see Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 214–17. For a description and analysis of the dialects of the Nag Hammadi Codices, see Funk, "Linguistic Aspect."

61 The cartonnage fragments were published in Barns, Browne, and Shelton, eds. *The Nag Hammadi Codices: Greek and Coptic Papyri*. For a discussion of the relationship between the cartonnage documents and the producers and users of the codices themselves, see Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 104–45; Tutty, "Monks of the Nag Hammadi Codices"; Bull, "Panopolis Connection."

62 See esp. Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 104–45; Tutty, "Monks of the Nag Hammadi Codices."

63 Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 46–54. On Sansnos see also Goehring, "Provenance of the Nag Hammadi Codices."

64 For an image of the fragment, where the name "Pachome" can be seen clearly, as well as a transcription, translation, and discussion of its significance, see Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 135–39.

Pachomian monasticism, should not be lightly dismissed. For while there were certainly other people named Pachomius, the geographical location of the manuscript discovery, the dates of the dated cartonnage documents, and the way in which Pachome is addressed in this letter are all consistent with such an identification. Moreover, while Papnoute was certainly a common name, it should be noted that Pachomius' *oikonomos* at Pbow, the major Pachomian monastery, which was also the one second closest to the discovery site at Jabal al-Tarif after Shenaset,<sup>65</sup> was indeed named Papnoute.<sup>66</sup>

While there has been some debate regarding the possible relation between the monks of the cartonnage letters and the producers of the codices,<sup>67</sup> one of the pieces of evidence that strongly support such a connection is constituted by the remains of a letter used as cartonnage in the cover of Codex VIII. While the Coptic letter, which has been designated C16, is highly fragmentary, it is clear that it, like C15 from the same cover, contains introductory epistolary phrases similar to several of the other monastic letters, as well as final greetings that make reference to "all the brothers." What is particularly interesting, however, as has recently been pointed out by Paula Tutty, is that it is palaeographically very close to the texts of Codex VIII itself, the codex for which this cover was made.<sup>68</sup> This observation is consistent with the theory of internal recycling as a likely source for a great number of the documents found in the cartonnage of the Nag Hammadi Codices.<sup>69</sup> Simply put, some of the monks found in the Nag Hammadi cartonnage documents may well have been among the scribes and readers of the codices and texts themselves.

Moreover, the location of the Nag Hammadi discovery,<sup>70</sup> close to the early Pachomian monasteries at Shenaset, Pbow, Tabennesi, and Tmoushons,<sup>71</sup> the geographical names mentioned in the cartonnage documents, and the letter to Pachome, all add to the likelihood that the monks who produced and used the Nag Hammadi Codices were members of the Pachomian monastic order,

65 See the maps in Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 18, 20–21, 31. On the location of the early Pachomian monasteries, see Lefort, "Les premiers monastères pachômiens."

66 Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 136–38.

67 For discussion and references, see Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*.

68 Tutty, "Monks of the Nag Hammadi Codices."

69 See Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 139–42, against the theories of Shelton, "Introduction," 11, of a "town rubbish heap" and that of Wipszycka, "Nag Hammadi Library and the Monks," 188–89, of a "waste paper trader." For a refutation of the latter idea, see Bagnall, *Early Christian Books*, 58.

70 On the location of the Nag Hammadi Discovery, see Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Story*, 1:7–16, 20–40, 2:1101–25; Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 11–21, 39–42.

71 On the location of these and the other early Pachomian monasteries, see Lefort, "Les premiers monastères pachômiens."



which incidentally is also the monastic organization on which we have by far the most documentation in this particular area of Egypt.<sup>72</sup> It should also be noted that while the largest group of fragments of monastic letters were found in Codex VII, such fragments were found in covers from both main groups of codices as outlined above (I, VII, XI, and IV, VIII, V, VI, IX, X, II, XIII, XII). Furthermore, a fragment, from the Codex VII cartonnage, of what looks more like a literary text than a documentary letter, from its contents as well as from its literary hand, may possibly derive from a papyrus roll.<sup>73</sup> The fragment lacks a common epistolary beginning and the back of the fragment is blank. It could thus be the last page of a text from a codex, or simply a fragment from a roll. Since the little that is left of the text also reminds us of the literary letters by Pachomius and his successors Theodore and Horsiesios copied on rolls, and discovered as part of the Dishna Papers discovery,<sup>74</sup> this fragment may indeed also derive from such a literary monastic letter copied on a roll rather than in a codex. Moreover, fragments of a Genesis codex discovered in the same Nag Hammadi cover, palaeographically similar to the Nag Hammadi Codices and several of the manuscripts from the Dishna Papers discovery,<sup>75</sup> may also be added to the links between the Nag Hammadi scribes and the monastic community evidenced by the cartonnage fragments, and indicate a broader scope of literary activity and production than what is represented by the Nag Hammadi Codices alone, thus highlighting the fact that these codices should probably not be regarded as a complete library by themselves, but rather a part of an originally larger—perhaps much larger—collection of books.<sup>76</sup>

Finally, the cartonnage documents also provide us with indications of the manuscripts' date of production. The fragments from the cartonnage of the cover of Codex VII included three dated documentary papyri (from the years 341, 346, and 348), which not only provide us with a *terminus post quem* for the production of this particular codex, but also, by association and scribal overlap, for the rest of the Nag Hammadi Codices. Indeed, these dated documentary fragments are still the most secure basis for the dating of the Nag Hammadi Codices, even after the recent radiocarbon analysis of a piece of the leather

72 Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, esp. 246–56.

73 For the Coptic text with translation and discussion, see Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 128.

74 This is fragment C3; see Robinson, ed., *Facsimile Edition ... Cartonnage*, 55–56; Barns, Browne, and Shelton, eds., *The Nag Hammadi Codices: Greek and Coptic Papyri*, 132–33.

75 Kasser, “Fragments du livre biblique.”

76 See Lundhaug, “Dishna Papers.”

cover of Nag Hammadi Codex I.<sup>77</sup> Together, the evidence pertaining to the date of these two palaeographically connected codices (through their scribal overlap in Codex XI), fragments from Codex VII and the radiocarbon dated sample from Codex I, give us reasonable grounds to date these three codices to the fourth and, for Codices XI and VII possibly also early fifth, century.<sup>78</sup> The other codices must be dated primarily on the basis of their association with these three codices, with the caveat that these three codices constitute one of the two main groups of codices on the basis of the analysis of their covers and handwriting, as outlined above. In any case, this dating window corresponds to the early phase of the Pachomian monastic federation, which was first established in the area in which the codices were discovered.

## 5 Textual Fluidity and Active Readers

The observations made thus far provide us with a plausible context for the copying as well as the reading of the Nag Hammadi Codices. Yet most interpretations of the many texts contained in these manuscripts have implicitly taken for granted that there is a close similarity between the extant Coptic texts in their fourth- or fifth-century Nag Hammadi versions and their postulated second- or third-century originals, despite the fact that in most cases we cannot even be sure that a version of the text in question even existed at such an early date. The potential for change in the transmission of the texts from their hypothetical originals, usually believed to have been composed in Greek, to the extant Coptic texts tend to be either ignored or grossly underestimated. This is unfortunate, as it should indeed be our default assumption that the transmission of the works contained in the Nag Hammadi Codices were fluid, which is the norm in a manuscript culture. In the case of works like the *Gospel of Truth* or the *Apocryphon of John* this fluidity is readily apparent, since we have several copies preserved, which show a great deal of variance,<sup>79</sup> but we also need to remember that texts preserved to us in single copies were not inherently more stable just because, due to a lack of manuscript attestation, the fluidity is not readily apparent.<sup>80</sup>

77 On the dating of the Nag Hammadi Codices, including the full radiocarbon dating results, see Lundhaug, "Dating and Contextualising."

78 Lundhaug, "Dating and Contextualising," esp. 136.

79 See, e.g., Waldstein and Wisse, eds., *Apocryphon of John*; Wisse, "After the *Synopsis*"; Brix, "Two Witnesses."

80 See Lundhaug, "Illusion of Textual Stability."

It is furthermore to be expected that the texts have been consciously reworked in their transmission—to a greater or lesser degree—in light of contemporary concerns, in order to make them more relevant to their intended users.<sup>81</sup> And in most cases the only phase of their history of transmission that we know with any degree of certainty is the very last one, when they were copied into our extant codices sometime in fourth- and/or fifth-century Egypt. Their final redaction and rewriting—whether major or minor—thus likely took place in this context and, acknowledging the likelihood of a monastic provenance for the codices,<sup>82</sup> one should expect to find features of the texts that lend themselves specifically to monastic interests or interpretation. Although one is often left with the impression from scholarship on both monasticism and the Nag Hammadi Codices that there is a considerable gulf separating the two, I would argue that this says more about the methods and categories commonly used than about the entities being compared.<sup>83</sup> When reading the Nag Hammadi texts without the default assumption that they are “gnostic,” and thus without using the category of “Gnosticism” as an analytical category, and likewise reading the monastic sources without trying to look for “gnostic” traits in them, a comparison between Nag Hammadi texts and monastic sources often provides new insights into the meaning potential of the former.

One such example is the *Exegesis on the Soul* in Nag Hammadi Codex II. While much earlier scholarship has treated this as a “gnostic” text and even postulated earlier non-Christian layers of its redaction,<sup>84</sup> closer analysis reveals

81 Cf. Camplani, “Per la cronologia di testi valentiniani.”

82 For a sustained argument in favor of the monastic provenance of the Nag Hammadi Codices, see Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*. Whether their producers or users were male and/or female monastics is impossible to know, but as Gribetz, “Women as Readers of the Nag Hammadi Codices,” has recently argued, female monastics cannot be ruled out.

83 A representative example is Veilleux, “Monasticism and Gnosis,” 291, who argued that there is a lack of overlap between monasticism and “Gnosticism,” and that the monastic texts and the Nag Hammadi Codices belonged to different worlds, a conclusion that has recently been echoed by Joest, *Pachom-Briefe*, 53, who argues that since there are no traces of “Gnosticism” in Pachomian literature, the Nag Hammadi Codices must have little to do with Pachomian monasticism. But trying to establish a relationship between the Nag Hammadi Codices and Pachomian monasticism by looking for “Gnosticism” in the Pachomian sources is a procedure that presupposes that the Nag Hammadi Codices are Gnostic. This is highly problematic, not least in light of the devastating critiques of the usefulness of “Gnosticism” as a scholarly category by Williams, *Rethinking*; Williams, “Was There a Gnostic Religion?”; and King, *What is Gnosticism?* For a sense of the debate, see the articles in Marjanen, ed., *Was There a Gnostic Religion?*

84 Tuckett, *Nag Hammadi and the Gospel Tradition*, 51–52, has even characterized it as being “perhaps the closest to what one might have expected a Gnostic text to look like from the

close affinities with early monastic sources in its use of Scripture as well as in its treatment of the travails of the human soul, and of repentance and prayer.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, our reading of the most well-known of all the Nag Hammadi texts, the *Gospel of Thomas*, can fruitfully be informed by comparison with the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, as Melissa Harl Sellew has shown.<sup>86</sup> She finds that monastic readers “would find much of interest for the process of spiritual transformation, whether as confirmation or as challenge, in the words recorded there,”<sup>87</sup> and suggests that the *Gospel of Thomas* “can best be read in the desert as a guide to ethics and a proper attitude toward the work of reshaping the self.”<sup>88</sup> Other scholars have also recently connected the *Gospel of Thomas* to monasticism. Kimberley Fowler has argued that logion 100 makes particular sense from a monastic, and specifically Pachomian, perspective,<sup>89</sup> and René Falkenberg has shown how those parts of the text that make reference to the “single ones” would have resonated with Pachomian monastics.<sup>90</sup> And in addition, the other text in Nag Hammadi Codex II associated with Thomas, the *Book of Thomas*, likewise shows clear affinities with Pachomian monasticism in its ascetic theology.<sup>91</sup> Even the *Dialogue of the Savior*, in Codex III, which has commonly been treated as an early “gnostic” text, arguably fits better in a monastic context than a second-century “gnostic” one. As it has come down to us in Coptic it shows numerous affinities with monastic texts from the fourth century onwards, for instance in its treatment of death and the ascent of the soul. Even if one were to uphold an early date for the “original” context of this work (which I would not), these affinities would at the very least not only help us understand why monks in Upper Egypt would have been interested in copying and reading it, but it also gives us an indication of how they may have understood it.<sup>92</sup>

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reports of the Church Fathers.” See also, e.g., Scopello, *L'Exégèse de l'âme*; eadem, “Jewish and Greek Heroines.”

85 For detailed analysis, see esp. Lundhaug, “Monastic Exegesis and the Female Soul.” For another analysis of this text in light of Pachomian monasticism, see Fowler, “The Ascent of the Soul and the Pachomians.” See also Lundhaug, “Prayer in the Nag Hammadi Codices.” On the use of Scripture in early monastic writings, see, e.g., Timbie, “Writing Rules”; eadem, “*Meleta* and Monastic Formation”; Rousseau, “Successors of Pachomius.”

86 Sellew, “Reading Jesus in the Desert.”

87 Sellew, “Reading Jesus in the Desert,” 96.

88 Sellew, “Reading Jesus in the Desert,” 101.

89 Fowler, “Reading *Gospel of Thomas* 100.”

90 Falkenberg, “‘Single Ones’ in the *Gospel of Thomas*.”

91 Lundhaug, “‘This is the Teaching of the Perfect Ones’”

92 See Lundhaug, “*Dialogue of the Savior*.”

Other, perhaps more obvious, candidates for closer comparison with monastic texts include the *Teachings of Silvanus*, a part of which we know circulated, even at a much later date, under the name of none other than the monastic pioneer St. Antony himself.<sup>93</sup> Indeed, the text's many thematic affinities with early Egyptian monasticism add important layers of potential meaning when we read it in the context of the time and place of the manuscript's production and use.<sup>94</sup> Blossom Stefaniw has recently placed the *Teachings of Silvanus* together with the *Sentences of Sextus* in the context of early Egyptian monasticism, arguing that they should both be understood in terms of literature of monastic instruction.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, István Czachesz has placed the context of the final redaction of the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles* within Pachomian monasticism,<sup>96</sup> and Christian Bull has shown how the other Christian texts of Codex VI would have been amenable to the interests of monastic readers, even including the Hermetic texts<sup>97</sup> and the idiosyncratic Coptic translation of a part of Plato's *Republic*.<sup>98</sup> Bull has also shown how the *Apocryphon of John*, attested in three of the Nag Hammadi Codices (NHC II, III, and IV) would have been of special interest to monastics,<sup>99</sup> Paul Linjamaa has made an argument for the monastic context of the copying and reading of the *Tripartite Tractate* in Codex I,<sup>100</sup> and an argument has been made by Louis Painchaud and Jennifer Wees for the likelihood of a monastic redaction of *On the Origin of the World*.<sup>101</sup> Several studies have specifically highlighted debates over "Origenism" and "Origenist" monks as plausible contexts for Nag Hammadi texts and codices.<sup>102</sup>

93 See Funk, "Ein doppelt überliefertes Stück." The manuscripts in question are the Coptic parchment leaf BL Or. 6003, which contains this text on one side, and an eighth-ninth-century Arabic manuscript containing a collection of texts attributed to Antony, where this excerpt is included among them.

94 See, e.g., Bumazhnov, "Be Pleasing to God."

95 Stefaniw, "Hegemony and Homecoming." On the relationship between Antony, Pachomius, and *Teach Silv.*, see also Janssens, "Les Leçons de Silvanos."

96 Czachesz, "Identity of Lithargoel." See also Haas, "L'Exigence du renoncement," who shows great similarities between *Acts Pet. 12 Apost.*, *Pistis Sophia*, and *Apophthegmata Patrum*. with regard to the rejection of the material world.

97 Bull, "Hermes Between Pagans and Christians"; idem, "Great Demon of the Air," 105–20.

98 Bull, "Origenistic Reading"; idem, "Greek Philosophy."

99 Bull, "Women, Angels, and Dangerous Knowledge."

100 Linjamaa, "Why Monks."

101 Painchaud and Wees, "Connaître la différence."

102 See, e.g., Dechow, "Nag Hammadi Milieu"; Lundhaug, "Origenism in Fifth-Century Upper Egypt"; Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 238–46; Bull, "Origenistic Reading"; idem, "Greek Philosophy"; Linjamaa, "Why Monks." On the role of Origen and "Origenism"

As we have already seen, in relation to the scribal note in Codex VI, scribes could assert agency in the selection and sequence of texts in the codex, and several scholars have argued that the sequence of texts in various Nag Hammadi Codices show signs of conscious design and that the texts were meant to be read together in the order in which they are found in the manuscripts.<sup>103</sup> Among such studies, some have read entire codices from a monastic perspective, as arguments have been made for a specifically monastic reading of Codices I,<sup>104</sup> II,<sup>105</sup> III,<sup>106</sup> and VI.<sup>107</sup>

Even without identifying specifically *monastic* themes, there are multiple indications of other contemporary concerns in the Nag Hammadi texts as well, including echoes of doctrinal debate and conflict, of which many are amply attested in fourth- and early fifth-century Egypt. Such echoes have been identified in many Nag Hammadi texts including, but not limited to, the *Gospel of Philip*, the *Treatise on the Resurrection*, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, *Melchizedek*, the *Gospel of Truth*, the *Tripartite Tractate*, the *Concept of Our Great Power*, and the *Teachings of Silvanus*.<sup>108</sup> Still, while several studies have located such

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in early Egyptian monasticism, see esp. Rubenson, "Origen in the Egyptian Monastic Tradition"; Dechow, *Dogma and Mysticism*.

- 103 This was first suggested by Williams, "Interpreting"; and reiterated in Williams, *Rethinking*, 247–60. See also Kaler, "Prayer of the Apostle Paul," who builds on the suggestions of Williams to argue for the importance of the *Prayer of Paul the Apostle* as the first text of Codex I. Arguments have also been made for certain codices being intended as multi-volume works to be read in sequence. See Williams, "Interpreting," 24–27, and Williams, *Rethinking*, 250–52, arguing that Codices IV and VIII may have been intended as a two-volume set, on the basis of palaeography and codicology as well as contents. Painchaud and Kaler, "From the *Prayer of the Apostle Paul*," have similarly argued that Codices I, XI, and VII were intended to be read as a three-volume set, in that order, based on the scribal overlap and their analysis of the contents of these codices. However, it is difficult to see how three codices that are so different with regard to codicology, palaeography, and dialect could have been originally intended as a three-volume set.
- 104 Jenott and Pagels, "Antony's Letters."
- 105 See Jenott, "Recovering Adam's Lost Glory"; Eduard Iricinschi, "Scribes and Readers"; Fowler, "From the Apocryphon of John." For a reading of the codex from an ascetic, but not necessarily specifically monastic, perspective, see Gilhus, "Contextualizing the Present."
- 106 Falkenberg, "Making of a Secret Book."
- 107 Bull, "Non-Christian Texts." Parts of the argument have been published in idem, "Origenistic Reading"; idem, "Great Demon of the Air."
- 108 For examples of such echoes of late doctrinal polemics, see, e.g., Mortley, "Name of the Father"; Camplani, "Per la cronologia"; Camplani, "Sulla trasmissione"; Lundhaug, "Textual Fluidity and Post-Nicene Rewriting"; idem, "Begotten, Not Made"; idem, "Tell me what shall arise"; idem, "Nag Hammadi Codices"; idem, "Origenism." See also the arguments for polemical redaction in Painchaud and Janz, "Kingless Generation," 439–60. For analyses of doctrinally influenced fluidity in the (*First*) *Apocalypse of James*, and the *Letter*

features, much research undoubtedly remains to be done from this perspective, as most studies of the Nag Hammadi texts have focused on the hypothetical Greek originals postulated to derive mainly from the first, second, and third centuries CE. Material philology helps lead us back to the Nag Hammadi Codices as manuscripts and urges us to try to understand their texts in light of the context of production and use of these particular material artifacts.

## 6 Scribal Paratexts Indicating Reception

Looking closer at these artifacts constituted by the Nag Hammadi Codices we also see that the scribes have left us clues in some of the manuscripts, in the form of paragraph marks and similar signs, indicating how the texts were intended to be used and interpreted. We see for instance in Codex VIII that the scribe—or a later reader—employed paragraph marks to indicate specific passages of interest. These are found in both *Zostrianos* and the *Letter of Peter to Philip*, the two texts that are contained in this codex. In the former they are used to bring attention to passages discussing differences among souls, and who it is that will be saved, while in the latter they highlight places where Christ's incarnation and ascension are mentioned.<sup>109</sup> In both cases the paratextual marks clearly indicate passages of theological significance.

Similarly, the main scribe of Codex I highlighted certain passages in the *Tripartite Tractate* using diple. At the bottom half of page 119, for instance, four lines are marked in this way on the left-hand side of the text. These are only partly set in ekthesis, and their appearance and location suggest that they were added by the scribe while he was copying, rather than by someone else adding them later. The reason why they were added can again be discerned from the contents of the passage. The *Tripartite Tractate* operates with three categories of people, namely the “material race,” the “psychic race,” and the

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*of Peter to Philip*, see, respectively, Jenott, “Reading Variants,” and Jenott, “Peter’s Letter to Philip.”

109 *Zost.* 26.19–20: The paragraph mark appears to the left of line 19. It is ignored in the edition of Layton (CGL), while it is shown clearly in the edition of Barry et al. (BCNH). *Zost.* 30.9–11: The paragraph mark appears in the left margin between lines 9 and 10. It is ignored in the edition of Layton, but it is shown clearly in the edition of Barry et al. *Zost.* 44.1–4: paragraph marks appear in the left margin above line 1 and between lines 4 and 5. They are ignored in the edition of Layton, but are shown clearly in the edition of Barry et al.; Similarly also at *Zost.* 45.1, 64.12–13, and 96.19–20. The paragraph marks at *Ep. Pet. Phil.* 136.16–20; 138.4–5, 16–17, 24–25, 140.17–18, are ignored in both the editions of Ménéard (BCNH) and Wisse (CGL).

“pneumatic race,” and the passage in question deals with the middle category of the “psychic race.” According to the marked passage, this race “is double according to its determination for both good and evil. It takes its appointed departure suddenly and its complete escape to those who are good.”<sup>110</sup> The diple in the margin thus indicates that this crucial middle position of the psychic race and their ability to be saved was of particular interest to the group of monastic readers to which this scribe belonged.

Similar use of paratextual marks, including tricolon, dicolon, and paragraphus, to highlight passages that seem to be specifically relevant to the interpretation of the purpose of the composition of the codex as a whole can also be seen in Codex III, as has recently been shown in detail by René Falkenberg.<sup>111</sup> Other scribal interventions indicate the care taken by scribes or later readers to correct mistakes made in the copying of the codices,<sup>112</sup> or their continued interaction with the texts in the form of glosses, such as we can see in Codex v, where the scribe appears to have glossed a considerable number of words and letters with alternatives, including the glossing of Greek words with Coptic equivalents.<sup>113</sup>

## 7 Material Philology and Monastic Manuscript Culture

By this brief overview, I hope to have demonstrated how an approach informed by material philology provide insights into both the production and use of the Nag Hammadi Codices and the reception of their texts. We have seen how analyses of scribal hands, paratextual features, codex construction, and cartonnage provide ample evidence of collaboration in the production of the codices between a number of people, most probably monks, working together in a community. Material philology not only provides us with insights into the production and use of the material artifacts constituted by our surviving manuscripts, but also into the reception of the texts they contain. These texts may be conceptualized as snapshots of fluid texts—texts that are dynamic by

110 *Tri. Trac.* 119.23–27, text and tr. in Attridge and Pagels, “Tripartite Tractate,” 308–309. In the Brill edition of the text, these paratextual diple are described as “fillers” (*ibid.*, 1:3), but as we can clearly see from the *Facsimile Edition*, this does not seem to be their function. Instead they seem to indicate a passage of special interest to the scribe, or that the scribe thought would be of special interest to the intended readers. If they were intended simply as fillers it would have been very strange to place them partly in ekthesis as is the case here. On the significance of this passage as well as the other passages in *Tri. Trac.* that are marked with diple, see Linjamaa, “Why Monks.”

111 Falkenberg, “Making of a Secret Book,” esp. 105–14.

112 See, e.g., Oerter, “Schreiber oder Korrektoren?”

113 See Parrott, ed. *Nag Hammadi Codices V, 2–5 and VI, 5*.



nature and constantly in the process of creation<sup>114</sup>—rather than as flawed carbon copies of their authors' intention. This facilitates a contextualization of their meaning in relation to what we know about the communities that were active in the vicinity of where the codices were discovered, in the time period in which they were produced and used. Importantly, with material philology as our starting point we no longer need to connect our analyses of the Nag Hammadi texts to hypothetical contexts of original authorship, but may rather anchor our interpretation to contexts that emerge from studies of their concrete material remains.

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114 Cf. Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, 48.

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## Jewish Scrolls, Monastic Codices, and Material Philology

*Matthew Goff*

In keeping with the comparativist, interdisciplinary spirit of this volume, the editors thought it prudent for a specialist in the Dead Sea Scrolls to react to and briefly engage the contribution of Hugo Lundhaug, who offers an extensive and detailed presentation of the Nag Hammadi texts as material artefacts. Lundhaug's study testifies to an important and on-going shift in scholarship that is also impacting the study of ancient Judaism: the movement away from a traditionalist, historical-critical focus on postulating the original form of texts and reconstructing the historical and cultural milieu in which they were composed, towards an appreciation of the manuscripts in which the texts are found as material objects. The overall approach constitutes an application of the "New Philology" developed in medieval studies in the 1990s to the study of ancient texts and manuscripts, as Lundhaug discusses.

This development attests to a broader movement in the study of antiquity which can be described as the rehabilitation of the scribe. The scribe is no longer marginalized as a mere copyist, another anonymous link in a chain of transmission, the sole value of which is to be able to work back to the original text. So understood, the individual copyist-scribe only makes an appearance when he makes a mistake, which detracts from the modern scholar's pursuit of the original. Lundhaug's study reverses the gaze. He looks for the agency of the scribes who produced the Nag Hammadi texts—how they worked, and the decisions they made as readers, scholars, and producers of texts. As he illustrates, attention to paratextual features, such as colophons or texts used as cartonnage, gives crucial insight into how these texts were read and interpreted in a late antique Egyptian context. These scribal details shed light not on an earlier postulated Gnostic context, but rather constitute material evidence for an often ignored scribal-monastic context. Better understanding that context can help scholars discern why the Nag Hammadi texts take the form that they have, and how they were produced, transmitted, and collected into codices—indeed, why we have them at all.

The general "new philology" approach adopted by Lundhaug is also currently making a substantive contribution to the study of ancient Judaism.

His colleague in Oslo, for example, Liv Ingeborg Lied, is producing analogous insights with regard to *2 Baruch*.<sup>1</sup> This text is routinely interpreted as a Jewish apocalypse from the first century CE. While this may in fact be the composition's provenance, the text is attested only in the sixth-century Syriac manuscript Codex Ambrosianus; focusing on a putative first-century context of composition ignores its manuscript setting, including its paratextual features, which constitutes crucial evidence for understanding how *2 Baruch* was read in late antiquity—a topic, as part of a growing interest in the reception and transmission of texts in later periods, in which scholars of ancient Judaism are increasingly engaged.

When it comes to the Dead Sea Scrolls, the intellectual landscape is similar but also noticeably different. As the example of Lied's work on *2 Baruch* illustrates, the paradigm shift ongoing in the study of ancient Judaism that most resembles the 'material turn' delineated by Lundhaug is often taking place with regard to non-canonical texts, sometimes classified as pseudepigrapha, which are typically preserved only in late antique or medieval manuscripts. Other examples would be *2 Enoch* or the Ethiopic evidence for *1 Enoch*. The Dead Sea Scrolls, by contrast, do not preserve a gap of many centuries between the production of the extant manuscript evidence and putative dates of composition, with a qualified exception with regard to texts in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>2</sup> Traditionally, scholarly interest in the scrolls has focused on the centuries in which they were written, roughly the second century BCE to the first century CE, with the putative time of composition often understood to be a century or two earlier than the manuscripts in which they are preserved—a shorter gap between the 'original' text and its manuscript evidence than what is normally the case in Nag Hammadi studies.

Also, while many Qumran scholars rely on critical editions of Qumran texts, the nature of the evidence has always demanded scholarly examination of the material evidence itself—to a greater degree, it seems, than has traditionally been the case in Nag Hammadi studies. Here the issue is not simply the fact that the Qumran corpus is a larger text hoard than its Nag Hammadi

<sup>1</sup> Lied, *Invisible Manuscripts*.

<sup>2</sup> I say "qualified" because while it is abundantly clear that the scrolls constitute our oldest evidence for many biblical texts, and that they are manuscripts roughly from the turn of the common era of texts written centuries earlier, the intellectual tools traditionally deployed to discover the original versions of texts (in particular Pentateuchal texts), such as source criticism or redaction criticism, purport to discern changes in texts that happened long before the time the scrolls were written. Much of this kind of biblical scholarship, which was dominant in the field long before the scrolls were discovered, often still does not extensively engage the scrolls. For discussion of this issue, see Brooke, "The Qumran Scrolls."

counterpart—roughly 930 texts in the former corpus, compared to 52 in the latter. Also the former are generally written on leather, with some on papyrus, whereas in the Nag Hammadi texts are written on papyrus sheets. With the Nag Hammadi material, while there are some poorly preserved pages, by and large they are readable texts, preserved in codices. With the Dead Sea Scrolls this is more of an exception than the rule. The scrolls preserved by their tradents in scroll jars in Cave 1 (such as the Isaiah Scroll or the Community Rule) are relatively intact, and there are also lengthy scrolls from Cave 11 that have an extensive amount of intact text, as is the case for example with the *Temple Scroll* (11Q19) and the large *Psalms Scroll* (11Q5). The majority of the Qumran texts are reconstructed on the basis of scholarly analysis of much smaller fragments. Of those roughly 930 texts from Qumran, they are actually a product of modern editors assembling and joining together of over 100,000 individual fragments. In some cases the scholarly act of reconstruction is relatively uncontroversial whereas in others it is highly subjective. Some compositions have very few blocs of extended text surviving intact and are almost wholly the product of scholarly reconstruction, such as 4QInstruction or the *Book of Giants*. Such compositions raise a host of materialist questions that remain by necessity up for debate and continual reevaluation. In such cases major questions such as which fragments should be classified as belonging to the composition or how should they be arranged (giving us the sense of a beginning, middle, or end of a composition), cannot be answered with certainty. The textual form of the core evidence in the Nag Hammadi material seems by comparison more stable.<sup>3</sup> This, it seems, should be attributed not only to the fact that the Qumran texts are scrolls and the Nag Hammadi material are from codices—‘books’ with front and back leather covers—but also that the Qumran scrolls are in general older—approximately five centuries—than the Nag Hammadi Codices.

Also, a major factor for renewed attention to the material condition of the Qumran scrolls has not been the rise of new philology but rather concerns about forgeries, prompted by the now decisively established fact that several fragments hailed as texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls bought in recent years by American evangelical institutions, most prominently the Museum of the Bible, are in fact forgeries. This realization was not achieved by paleogeographic or orthographic analysis of textualist scholars alone but also through

3 One of the few cases where a debate about how to identify the contours and character of wholly fragmentary text(s) in the Nag Hammadi corpus genuinely remains ongoing is that of the so-called “Valentinian liturgical fragments” in NHC XI. For a recent discussion of these fragments criticizing earlier reconstructions, see Lundhaug, “Evidence.”

coordination with scientists with expertise in materials analysis, in particular Ira Rabin of BAM (Bundesanstalt für Materialforschung und -prüfung).<sup>4</sup>

While the time and context of material production is not being discovered anew among scrolls scholars to the extent Lundhaug describes in Nag Hammadi circles, the basic picture he describes is very compatible with that offered by Qumran scholars—the Dead Sea Scrolls, like the Nag Hammadi Codices, are the product of a set of ancient scribal communities. Members of those communities read, studied, and produced texts. They are not mere copyists. Both corpora are products of scholars and intellectuals steeped in manuscript culture. This is also acknowledged by the extensive volume, *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies*, which includes an overview of the study of manuscripts in various linguistic contexts, with chapters on both Coptic and Hebrew codicology.<sup>5</sup> As do the Nag Hammadi texts, the scrolls offer a rare window into not only texts from antiquity but also a glimpse into how they were used and produced.

Yet engaging these material features is quite different with the Qumran scrolls in comparison to the Nag Hammadi Codices. Following the reconstruction methods pioneered by Stegemann, measuring changes in distances between repeated wear patterns in the remnants of a scroll allows scholars to estimate how it was rolled and thus its circumference when wrapped, which can give an impression of the ‘original’ length of a scroll even if relatively little of it survives.<sup>6</sup> The Nag Hammadi texts by contrast offer instructive ‘book’ features highlighted by Lundhaug, such as Robinson’s pioneering work on Coptic codicology, or the use of texts in cartonnage. Also, whereas there are relatively few (five) cases of multiple copies of a single text at Nag Hammadi,<sup>7</sup> there is abundant evidence for multiple copies at Qumran. Over thirty texts preserve material from Isaiah, for example. The Qumran evidence very much supports the general thrust of Lundhaug’s argument, based on the diversity among the texts for which there are multiple versions at Nag Hammadi (e.g., the *Apocryphon on John*), that they are not simply multiple copies of a single composition but rather discrete material productions in dynamic and surprisingly fluid textual traditions. The Qumran scrolls support this intuition, since they attest numerous examples of compositions with extensive variation.

4 See for example, Davis et al., “Nine Dubious ‘Dead Sea Scrolls’ Fragments.”

5 Bausi et al., *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies*, chs. 5 and 9.

6 Stegemann, “Methods for the Reconstruction of Scrolls.” See also now Ratzon and Dershowitz, “The Length of a Scroll.”

7 These are: *Gos. Truth* (NHC I,3; NHC XII,2); *Ap. John* (NHC II,1; III,1; IV,1); *Orig. World* (NHC II,5; XIII,2’); *Holy Book* (NHC III,2; IV,2); *Eugnostos* (NHC III,3; V,1).

One can also trace the historical development of texts, as is the case for example with the *Community Rule*. Putting the manuscripts for this composition in historical sequence allows scholars to recognize that scriptural citations were added during this process and scribal corrections to the work's penal code made punishments against violating sectarian guidelines more severe. The writings from Qumran not only show forms of scriptural texts that do not fit with the later Masoretic or Septuagint text types. The scrolls not only show forms of biblical texts with a range of variants but also attest interpretive works which were fashioned as forms of those biblical texts, blurring the line between scripture and interpretation (e.g., *Jubilees*, *Temple Scroll*). The poorly named 4QReworked Pentateuch texts, while they used to be understood as a reworking of an MT-like text are now more commonly understood as variant forms of scriptural texts. The Dead Sea Scrolls illustrate that scriptural writings and other texts were mediated with a degree of pluriformity and scribal creativity that descriptors such as "biblical," which implies a fixed text, cannot accurately describe. Scholars of ancient Judaism have in recent years stressed that modern conceptions of textuality and authorship can be easily and anachronistically imposed on the Dead Sea Scrolls, hindering our appreciation of the Qumran scribes' emic conception and production of texts.<sup>8</sup> Both the Qumran and the Nag Hammadi corpora comprise critical evidence for understanding how texts were understood, interpreted, and transmitted in antiquity.

There are also similar methods and approaches that have been applied to the material evidence of both corpora. Radiocarbon dating has proven successful with both groups of texts, helping confirm their antiquity. Both corpora also attest the importance of paleography, the analysis of handwriting. As Lundhaug discusses, this has been a locus of Nag Hammadi scholarship, as it can help identify the distinctive features of individual scribes that can help us better understand the scribal networks that produced these documents. The Qumran scrolls attest a much larger number of scribal hands than the ranges discussed in the Nag Hammadi texts (8–14). Norman Golb famously claimed that no fewer than 500 scribes produced the Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>9</sup> This number is probably excessive but the number of different discernible scribal hands, often within a single manuscript, is nevertheless large. Yardeni has claimed to find the same scribal hand in 54 Qumran manuscripts.<sup>10</sup> This kind of scholarship, as in Nag Hammadi studies, can offer new insights into the scribal networks that produced the manuscripts. An ongoing project in digital paleography led

8 Najman, *Seconding Sinai*; Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination*.

9 Golb, "Khirbet Qumran," 103.

10 Yardeni, "A Note on a Qumran Scribe." See also Crawford, "The Qumran Collection," 124.



by Mladen Popović brings together Qumran scholars and computer scientists who are experts in artificial intelligence. While the final results of this project are still forthcoming, it is reasonable to think that a computer can identify scribal hands with greater accuracy than the human eye. This project has recently concluded for example that the famous Isaiah Scroll from Cave 1 was written out by not one scribe but two.<sup>11</sup>

As two distinct ancient communities of manuscript culture, the scrolls are also rich in paratextual features, as is also the case in the Nag Hammadi Codices, as Lundhaug expertly lays out. Scholarship on the Qumran scrolls often relies on critical editions that often do not reproduce paratextual elements, but scholars have devoted consistent attention to them, and the evidence has been skillfully brought together in a single volume by Emanuel Tov.<sup>12</sup> While the symbols, which are often forms of Hebrew letters in a cryptic script, remain opaque to scholars, they provide critical information as to how the scrolls were read and used, providing a glimpse into a milieu of ancient textual scholarship. Vacats are often used to demarcate new sections, and a single letter, such as paleo-Hebrew *waw*, in the margins often can as well.<sup>13</sup> Some markings may be remnants of a sort of ‘critical apparatus’ to a text, signaling variants or missing text, when compared against other copies.<sup>14</sup> Brooke has suggested that the “X” marks in the margins of the *Habakkuk Peshet* give an insight into textual performance, cues as to how a text was to be read.<sup>15</sup> There are no colophons, in contrast to the Nag Hammadi texts. Also since both the Qumran and Nag Hammadi texts to differing extents engage and reformulate a common Hellenistic heritage, it is possible, and an area for further inquiry, that the two corpora may utilize some of the same paratextual markers that derive from the Alexandrian grammatical traditions, such as signs that resemble the *diple* (an arrow or gamma-like mark; 4QCant<sup>b</sup> 3) mentioned by Lundhaug.<sup>16</sup>

The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices both illustrate a key point—these corpora do not simply preserve ancient texts. They also provide an impression of ancient manuscript culture—how texts were read, utilized and produced by scholars and scribes in antiquity. Comparison of the two groups of texts from a material philology perspective, an important scholarly endeavor not yet carried out substantively, opens up the possibility of better understanding the respective scribal cultures that produced them.

11 Popović, Dhali, and Schomaker, “Artificial Intelligence.”

12 Tov, *Scribal Practices*.

13 Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 207.

14 Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 205.

15 Brooke, “Physicality, Paratextuality,” 188.

16 Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 201, 210, 361, 364.

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# The Biblical Canons after Qumran and Nag Hammadi: Some Preliminary Observations

*Jens Schröter*

## 1 The Dead Sea Scrolls, the Nag Hammadi Codices and the Biblical Canons<sup>1</sup>

In this article, I will look at the Dead Sea scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices with special attention to the formation of the Jewish and the Christian Bibles. At the outset, I should stress that these will be only preliminary observations on a topic which has attracted new attention in recent research, namely the origin and development of collections of authoritative writings in early Judaism and early Christianity.<sup>2</sup> The growing interest in this subject owes not least to the discoveries, editions, and translations of so-called “non-canonical” or “apocryphal” Jewish and Christian texts since the last third of the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> These findings have inaugurated fresh perspectives on the relationship of writings that ranged from the authoritative, ‘canonical’ Jewish and Christian writings, on the one hand, to such texts that, on the other hand, had been consigned to the periphery of the canon, rejected entirely, or, in some cases, even forgotten—until they were discovered anew in modern times.<sup>4</sup> More recent research on the formation of the biblical canons and the so-called “apocryphal” writings has pointed out that there were no clear-cut boundaries between accepted, disputed, and rejected writings of early Judaism and early Christianity. Rather, this wide range of writings provides insights into complex processes within ancient Judaism and ancient Christianity as multifaceted

1 This article was completed during a fellowship at the Center “Beyond Canon,” University of Regensburg, in the academic year 2020/2021.

2 See Schmid and Schröter, *Making of the Bible*; Barton, *History of the Bible*; McDonald, *Formation*; Marksches, *Christian Theology*; Becker and Scholz, *Kanon in Konstruktion*; McDonald and Sanders, *Canon Debate*; most recently see Collins, Evans, and MacDonald, *Ancient Jewish and Christian Scriptures*.

3 The literature about these texts is meanwhile abundant. See the overviews by Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*; Collins and Harlow, *Eerdmans Dictionary*; Gregory et al., *Oxford Handbook*.

4 See Nicklas and Schröter, *Authoritative Writings*; DiTommaso and Oegema, *New Vistas*; Piovaneli, Burke, and Pettipiece, *Rediscovering*; Lehtipuu and Petersen, *Antike christliche Apokryphen*.

religious movements with diverse strands and multiple interpretations of Jewish and Christian traditions.<sup>5</sup> Thus, it comes as no surprise that there were also differing opinions about which texts and traditions should be regarded as authoritative and fundamental for the faith in the one God, the origin of the world, and the way to salvation. The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices are collections which provide important insights to these debates.<sup>6</sup>

I will approach the topic by way of a brief discussion of some characteristics of these collections. Although both the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices belong to the most important discoveries of biblical and related manuscripts in the twentieth century, they differ in many ways. Their place of discovery, materiality, and content are quite different, as are their respective contributions to the history of ancient Judaism and ancient Christianity. The Dead Sea Scrolls are Jewish texts from the Second Temple period, containing biblical manuscripts and Jewish writings outside of what later became the Jewish Bible, but also commentaries on biblical books and other exegetical writings, calendrical, sapiential and liturgical texts, rules for the life of a Jewish community—or perhaps more than one community—which for a certain period inhabited the settlement at the Dead Sea, and so forth.<sup>7</sup> Most of these writings are written in Hebrew or Aramaic; some are in Greek,<sup>8</sup> pointing to the preservation of Jewish texts mostly in the Hebrew and Aramaic language and serving as an important witness for these texts beyond the Septuagint.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the *scrolls* discovered in the Qumran caves and at some nearby places such as Wadi Murabbaat, Nahal Hever, and Masada provide insights into Second Temple Judaism, with special regard to a Jewish group or perhaps several groups, their daily life and their ethical rules,<sup>10</sup> as well as their authoritative writings and their interpretation of these texts.<sup>11</sup> The *scrolls* are therefore important witnesses for the history of Judaism in the Hellenistic-Roman

5 See the contributions in: Frey et al., *Between Canonical and Apocryphal Texts*.

6 On the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices as collections, see the contributions of Lundhaug and Goff (“Jewish Scrolls”), in this volume.

7 For overviews see Stökl Ben Ezra, *Qumran*; Collins and Lim, *Oxford Handbook*; Schiffman and VanderKam, *Encyclopedia*; VanderKam and Flint, *Meaning*; Xervatis and Porzig, *Einführung*; VanderKam, *Dead Sea Scrolls Today*; Frey, “An Overview.”

8 See Tov, “Nature”; Tov, “Greek Biblical Texts”; Tov, *Texts*.

9 According to Tov (see above, n. 8), from the approximately 900 Qumran manuscripts, around 150 are in Aramaic, twenty-seven in Greek, the others are in Hebrew. An important Greek manuscript from the Dead Sea is, of course, the Minor prophets scroll from Nahal Hever.

10 See Hempel, “Dead Sea Scrolls”; Collins, “Jewish Communities”; Brakke, *Gnostics*.

11 See Frey, “An Overview”; Collins, “Sectarian Communities”; Taylor, *Essenes*.

period, the collection and interpretation of biblical and related writings, and the emergence of the Jewish Bible.<sup>12</sup>

The writings discovered in 1945 in Upper Egypt, close to the city of Nag Hammadi, are an entirely different case.<sup>13</sup> These texts are compiled in 13 *codices*, written in different Coptic dialects, at least some of them are translations from Greek originals. The codices date from the fourth or fifth centuries CE. They have therefore to be interpreted within the history of Christian book production and usage of codices consisting of various writings.<sup>14</sup> Several of the Nag Hammadi writings themselves, however, were composed already in the second or third century. In some cases, an earlier date of origin is attested by Greek fragments or by references in philosophical or theological works.<sup>15</sup>

The Nag Hammadi Codices contain a wide range of texts; most of them are of Christian origin, some are non-Christian philosophical texts of which Latin or Greek versions are known either from quotations or in extant manuscripts, e.g. *Asclepius* and *The Sentences of Sextus*, or by references in other writings, such as *Zostrianos*, which Porphyry mentions in his *Life of Plotinus* (ch. 16). The Christian texts from Nag Hammadi include gospels or gospel-like texts, prayers, philosophical and mythological treatises, apocalypses, prayers, etc.<sup>16</sup> The broad literary profile and religious outlook points to various early Christian groups and social contexts. Some of these texts may have been produced by so-called “Gnostic” groups, such as e.g. the Valentinians<sup>17</sup> or the “Sethians,”<sup>18</sup> whereas others served as contributions to early Christian discourses, e.g. on the resurrection of the human body, the redemption of the soul, or the origin

12 See Frey, “Authority”; Frey, “Qumran”; Tigchelaar, “Qumrantexte”; Lim, “Authoritative Scriptures”; VanderKam, “Questions of Canon”; Ulrich, “Qumran and the Canon.”

13 See Lundhaug and Jenott, *Nag Hammadi Codices*; Turner and McGuire, eds., *Nag Hammadi Library*. See further Meyer, *Gnostic Discoveries*; Pagels, *Gnostic Gospels*.

14 See Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*. For a more general perspective see Hurtado, *Earliest Christian Artefacts*; Gamble, *Books and Readers*.

15 The *Gospel of Thomas* is attested by two Greek papyri from Oxyrhynchus (P.Oxy. 1 and 654); see further the examples adduced in the following paragraph.

16 See Schröter and Schwarz, eds., *Nag-Hammadi-Schriften*.

17 Several of the Nag Hammadi writings, such as the *Gospel of Truth*, the *Gospel of Philip* and the *Tripartite Tractate* (perhaps also the *First Apocalypse of James*) are witnesses of the Valentinian system. For more recent approaches to this strand see Marksches and Thomassen, eds., *Valentinianism*.

18 The origin and profile of a “Sethian” Gnostic group is disputed. See Schröter, “Figure of Seth.” However, the “Sethian” strand of Gnosticism may be identified with what others have called “classical Gnosticism” or just “the Gnostics.” Thus e.g. Layton, “Prolegomena”; Turner, “Sethian Gnosticism.” King prefers the phrase “Sethian Christians” (*What is Gnosticism?*). For a more recent approach, see Schmid, *Christen und Sethianer*.

of the world.<sup>19</sup> Some of the Nag Hammadi texts are in competition with writings which later were accorded 'canonical' status,<sup>20</sup> whereas others provide glimpses into the social and liturgical life of early Christian groups. A text like the *Gospel of Thomas* may have served as a manual for Jesus followers, while writings attributed to John, James, Peter or Paul claim to provide meaningful information about these figures, their relationship to Jesus and their specific message. The translations of these texts into Coptic and their compilation in codices points to their usage in a fourth- or fifth-century Christian context. They may have been gathered, stored, and perhaps also used by Egyptian monks for a certain period, until they were buried in caves close to Nag Hammadi.<sup>21</sup>

For a comparison of the Dead Sea Scrolls with the Nag Hammadi Codices it might be helpful to begin with a look at some common characteristics that these collections share, despite their apparent differences. Some of the Qumran texts, such as Enochic writings, the *War Scroll*, or the *Rule of the Congregation*, show an interest in an eschatological or apocalyptic interpretation of history.<sup>22</sup> Several of these texts also mention messianic figures such as a priestly and a royal Messiah or Melchizedek.<sup>23</sup> This may be compared to some of the Nag Hammadi writings which are also concerned with an apocalyptic interpretation of history and a redeemer figure who reveals to the human beings knowledge necessary for the redemption of the souls and their ascent to heaven.<sup>24</sup> Several of these apocalyptic texts are collected in NHC V under the name of figures such as Adam (NHC V,5), Paul (NHC V,2), or James (NHC V,3; V,4). A fragmentary text from Qumran Cave 11 and a tractate from NHC IX, also very fragmentary, are devoted to the figure of Melchizedek who in both texts appears as a heavenly figure with a specific role in the process of redemption.<sup>25</sup> The focus on an apocalyptic view of history in several texts from Qumran and

19 The dispute with groups like the Valentinians or the Markosians is well attested by Irenaeus. Writings such as the *Treatise on the Resurrection (Letter to Rheginus)* or the *Gospel of Thomas* belong to early Christian debates about the interpretation of the figure of Jesus and the content and meaning of Christian faith in a more general way.

20 Some of the Nag Hammadi writings (*The Apocryphon of John*, *The Hypostasis of the Archons*, and *On the Origin of the World*) provide competing interpretations of the Genesis account about the creation of the world and the human being.

21 See Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*.

22 See Frey, "Apocalyptic Writings."

23 See Hogeterp, *Expectations*; Charlesworth, *Qumran-Messianism*.

24 See Wurst, "Apokalypsen"; Burns, "Apocalypses"; Shellrude, *Nag Hammadi Apocalypses*.

25 On the figure of Melchizedek in the Qumran and Nag Hammadi corpora, see further the introduction to this volume.

Nag Hammadi may point to an underlying relationship between early Jewish and 'Gnostic' views of God, the human being, and the process of salvation.<sup>26</sup>

Remarkably, by contrast, among the writings which later formed the Jewish and the Christian Bible, there are only few apocalyptic texts, compared to the significant number of such writings in ancient Judaism and early Christianity. This may indicate a strong interest in an apocalyptic worldview held by several early Jewish and early Christian groups, whereas such an interpretation seems to have been not very prominent among the groups behind the authoritative collections of Rabbinic Judaism and the Christian church.<sup>27</sup> From a sociological point of view, both the Qumran scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices provide glimpses of groups with distinct concepts of God's intervention into the cosmic order and human history. It would be attractive to ask whether these views were literally or sociologically related to each other and why such interpretations of history have only loose connections to those developments that eventually resulted in the normative Jewish and Christian collections of writings.

Other points of comparison between the Qumran writings and the Christian or Gnostic texts from Nag Hammadi include an interest in a strict separation between good and evil<sup>28</sup> and a focus on a radical ethos and a respective view of ascetic life. These characteristics may point to Jewish and Christian groups with a certain ethos and way of life. Although a direct social relationship between such groups is unlikely, the religious and ethical perspective in some writings of these collections present analogies worthy of closer analysis.

The writings from Qumran and Nag Hammadi also contribute to a more nuanced assessment of the developments leading to and surrounding the formation of the Jewish and the Christian Bibles. Thereby it should not be overlooked that the various collections and lists of authoritative writings in ancient Judaism and in ancient Christianity prove that the formation of the biblical "canons" of Judaism and Christianity were related to each other, even if they developed in distinctive ways. This is already demonstrated by the fact that early Christian theologians were familiar with the Greek translations of the Hebrew and Aramaic Jewish writings in the Septuagint, including the tradition of twenty-four biblical books. This somewhat artificial numbering of biblical books was perhaps modeled after the Homeric corpus, the two sections of which were each divided into twenty-four parts.<sup>29</sup> Subsequently, this

26 Dubois, "What is 'Gnostic?'"

27 See DiTommaso, "Time and History."

28 See Frey, "Apocalyptic Dualism"; Lanzillotta, "Way of Salvation."

29 See Darshan, "Twenty-Four Books."



tradition was applied to the number twenty-two which matches the letters of Hebrew alphabet.<sup>30</sup> The early Christians also took over the designation “the law (or Moses) and the prophets” as designation of the authoritative writings from Jewish tradition<sup>31</sup> and developed these collections further by the juxtaposition of their own writings.<sup>32</sup> The formation of the biblical canons in Judaism and Christianity therefore emerged in relation to and in competition with each other. Moreover, these processes were surrounded by such writings which contributed to the Jewish and Christian interpretations of the world, the nature of humankind and the way to salvation, but did not make it into the authoritative collections of the Jewish and the Christian Bibles.

The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices belong to those texts which were in some way or another related to the biblical texts.<sup>33</sup> They therefore demonstrate in their respective ways how formative Jewish and Christian writings were used, interpreted, rewritten, and expanded. They also point to the fact that the biblical writings of Judaism and Christianity appear as fixed, authoritative corpora only from a later perspective: in the formative period of both the Jewish and the Christian Bibles—i.e., roughly between 300 BCE and 350 CE—by contrast, there was much fluidity with regard to the impact of texts and traditions on the formation of Judaism and Christianity and their usage by early Jewish and early Christian groups.<sup>34</sup>

30 The tradition of twenty-four books appears first in 4 Ezra 14:44–47, twenty-two books are mentioned first by Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1:37–42. The twenty-two books according to the Hebrew alphabet are also mentioned by Origen, Jerome, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Athanasius.

31 See 2 Macc 15:9; 4 Macc 18:10; *T. Lev.* 16:2 (“the law and the words of the prophets”); 1QS 1, 3; VIII, 15–16; 4Q397 (4QMMT<sup>d</sup>) 14–21 10, 15; 4Q504 2 III, 12–14; CD V, 21–VI, 1 (par 4Q266 3 II, 8–9): “Moses and the holy anointed ones.” In the New Testament see Matt 5:17; 7:12; 11:13 (“the prophets and the law”); 22:40; Luke 16:16; John 1:45; Acts 13:15; 24:14; 28:23; Rom 3:21.

32 The tradition of a tripartite canon of the Old Testament was developed only later and cannot be presupposed in early Christianity. The remarks in the prologue to the Greek translation of Ben Sira (“the law and the prophets and the others that followed them” or similarly), the reference in 4QMMT (“the book of Moses [and] the book[s] of the pr[o]phets and Davi[d ... the annals of] each generation”) as well as in Luke 24:44 (“the law of Moses and the prophets and psalms”) show that a third part of the “canonical” writings was not yet fixed. Instead, the Jewish Bible and the Christian Old Testament emerged from a common ground in two different directions and in communication and differentiation from each other.

33 Of course, among the Qumran writings almost all texts of the Hebrew Bible are attested. See the next paragraph.

34 See VanderKam, “Questions of Canon”: “As nearly as we can tell, there was no *canon* of scripture in Second Temple Judaism.” The same applies to the formative period of Christianity.

Some texts from Qumran and Nag Hammadi are occasionally classified as “parabiblical texts,” “Rewritten Bible,” or the like.<sup>35</sup> These terms indicate that the texts in question are “closely related to texts and or themes of the Hebrew Bible.”<sup>36</sup> It should be noted, however, that from a historical perspective none of these designations seem appropriate since they already presuppose the distinction between “biblical” and “non-biblical” texts, whereas the texts from Qumran and Nag Hammadi indicate that such a distinction would only emerge later.<sup>37</sup> There are good reasons to assume, for instance, that for the Qumran community (or communities) Enochic writings or *Jubilees*, which are well attested among the Qumran scrolls,<sup>38</sup> were no less important than the Prophets or Job—perhaps even no less important than the Torah. As regards Nag Hammadi writings such as the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Apocryphon of John*, or the *Treatise on the Resurrection*, it is just as likely that they do not react to a fixed New Testament canon, but instead participate in debates about the formation of the authoritative Jesus tradition, Christian views on resurrection, and interpretation of the biblical account about the creation of the world.<sup>39</sup> The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices may therefore illuminate the multifaceted processes that eventually resulted in the formation of the Jewish and the Christian Bibles. Thus, these collections demonstrate that the developments towards the biblical canons were not targeted processes which strictly ran towards a certain form of the Jewish and the Christian Bible. Rather, these collections illuminate that Jewish and Christian theological, philosophical, and ethical views included a wide range of traditions and texts which were read, interpreted, and used in liturgy, philosophical discourse, and instruction for daily life. Viewed from such a perspective, the Qumran scrolls and the

35 Among the Qumran scrolls the *Genesis Apocryphon*, the *Book of Jubilees*, the *Temple Scroll*, and the so-called *Reworked Pentateuch* texts, among others, are sometimes designated as “parabiblical,” “Rewritten Bible,” or “rewritten scripture.” See e.g. Zahn, “Genre”; eadem, *Genres of Rewriting*; García Martínez, “Parabiblical Literature”; Falk, *Parabiblical Texts*; Lange, “Parabiblical Literature”; Stökl Ben Ezra, *Qumran*, 173–88, 216–23; Xervatis and Porzig, *Einführung*.

36 This is the description of parabiblical literature by Emanuel Tov who introduced the term in DJD 13 (1994).

37 See Flint, “Scriptures”: “the terms *canon*, *canonical*, *Bible*, and *biblical* should not be used with reference to the Dead Sea Scrolls and other Second Temple literature” (271–72).

38 Twelve Aramaic manuscripts attest Enochic writings, which comprising the entire corpus of 1 *Enoch* except the *Parables of Enoch*. *Jubilees* is represented by fragments of fourteen or fifteen Hebrew manuscripts. Both works thus are among the most attested writings of the Qumran scrolls.

39 In the second and third centuries, the New Testament canon was in the making, but not yet fixed. See Gamble, “New Testament Canon,” 267–94; Parker, *Textual Scholarship*.

Nag Hammadi Codices provide glimpses into Jewish and Christian traditions beyond the canonical/non-canonical divide.

## 2 The Dead Sea Scrolls within the Development of the Jewish Bible

According to current estimates, among the fragments of more than 900 scrolls discovered at Qumran, there are more than 200 biblical texts.<sup>40</sup> Among those texts are earlier and later ones. Most of them were probably produced in the settlement itself, whereas others were brought to it from elsewhere. For the formation of the Jewish Bible, it is important that the Qumran scrolls point to compilations and usages of writings that differ in many respects from the Jewish Bible of later times.

Remarkably, pieces of all biblical books except Esther are extant. One could conclude, then, that almost all biblical texts were also used in Qumran. However, the case is more complicated.<sup>41</sup> First, the relationship between the scrolls discovered in the Qumran caves and adjacent places, and, on the other hand, the Jewish community or communities in the Qumran settlement itself, is not straightforward.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, the hypothesis of an Essenic community that inhabited the Qumran settlement and used or even produced the biblical manuscripts discovered in the caves nearby is probably too simplistic.<sup>43</sup> The main scrolls from Qumran that describe the life of a Jewish community are the *Damascus Document* and the *Community Rule*.<sup>44</sup> From both texts, fragments of ten or more manuscripts were discovered. Yet the descriptions of the communal life in these documents differ in many ways. Whereas the *Damascus Document* and also the so-called *Rule of the Congregation* (1Q28a) describe a family life of men, women and children, the *Community Rule* (*Serekh ha-Yahad*; 1Q28) and the *War Scroll* (1QM) presuppose a community that eschewed monetary wealth, the *yahad*, in Qumran. Whether both of these communities lived in Qumran at the same time or inhabited the place successively is difficult to assess. At any rate, the *Damascus Document* and the *Community Rule* point to two different Jewish communities: a radical and celibate one without family and private property, and a second group with communal life and religious practices, such as common prayers, etc. That there were two different groups

40 See Tov, "Categorized List."

41 See Flint, "Scriptures." Flint lists nine criteria "for deciding whether or not specific books were viewed as Scripture by the Qumran community" (293–304).

42 See Zangenberg, "Zwischen Zufall," 121–46.

43 See Hempel, "Community Structures."

44 See Hempel, *Qumran*; Hempel, *Community Rules*; Frey, "Rule."

of Essenes at the place can be explained against the background of Josephus's description of the Essenes as a Jewish party divided into a branch of men who practiced celibacy and despised marriage, and another one that lived in family relationships.<sup>45</sup>

The archaeological evidence also supports the interpretation of Qumran as a site inhabited by Jewish groups with a strong orientation towards religious life and purity regulations.<sup>46</sup> The great number of biblical and related texts in the caves close to the settlement; the *mikvaot*; the remarkable number of manuscripts of the aforementioned *Community Rule* and *Damascus Document*; as well as liturgical and calendrical texts—they all indicate a site at which religious life and observation of purity rules played an important role. Regardless of the exact history of the settlement and the Jewish population there, because of its specific character the site is of special importance for the character of ancient Judaism, its religious outlook and its collection and usage of authoritative writings.

With respect to the development of the biblical canon, a reference to 4QMMT is instructive.<sup>47</sup> This document (which is attested by fragments of six copies: 4Q394–399) consists of a letter with halakhic instructions concerning different ritual regulations. Whether it belonged to the texts of the *yahad*, was sent to the *yahad*,<sup>48</sup> or just gives an overview on several matters concerning rituals and purity, is disputed. The early date of the writing (probably second century BCE) seems to point to a stage before the formation of the *yahad*, which in turn makes the writing particularly interesting with regard to the authoritative Jewish writings. In 4Q397 14–21 10–11 we read the following passage:

To you we have [written] that you must understand the book of Moses [and] the book[s of the pr]ophets and Davi[d ... the annals of] each generation.<sup>49</sup>

This is probably the oldest text mentioning collections of authoritative Jewish writings, even older than the Greek preface to Sirach.<sup>50</sup> The sentence refers to the authority of the Torah and the prophets, whereas the reference to David

45 Josephus, *J. w.* 2.119–161.

46 For an overview see Stökl Ben Ezra, *Qumran*, 87–132. See also Magness, *Archaeology of Qumran*.

47 See Kampen and Bernstein, *Reading 4QMMT*.

48 See Wearne, “4QMMT.”

49 See Qimron and Strugnell, *Qumran Cave 4, V*, 58–61. Reconstruction and translation: García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *Dead Sea Scrolls*.

50 See n. 32 above.

remains somewhat unclear. It may either point to the psalms as the third group of writings, since according to Jewish tradition “David” was the composer of the psalms. However, David may also be included among the prophets, as is probably also the case in Luke 24:44 as well: “the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms.”<sup>51</sup> The phrase “annals of each generation” probably refers to Chronicles as another group of biblical books. The passage is therefore hardly a testimony for a tripartite or even four-fold Jewish Bible. It rather testifies to the authority of Moses (or the Torah) and the prophets. The prophets are thereby probably perceived as interpreters of the Torah as the main authority.<sup>52</sup>

The authority of the Torah at Qumran is corroborated by several manuscripts written in so-called paleo-Hebrew script.<sup>53</sup> These are: 4Q12; 6Q1 (Gen); 4Q22 (Exod); 4Q11 (Gen and Exod); 2Q5; 6Q2, 11Q1 (Lev); 1Q3 (Lev and Num) as well as 4Q45 and 4Q46 (Dtn). Some of these fragments include two books of the Torah, and may therefore have been part of a scroll with all five books of the Torah. In some texts the Tetragrammaton is written in the paleo-Hebrew script.

Another remarkable characteristic concerning the Torah in Qumran can be perceived by the so-called *Reworked Pentateuch* texts 4Q158 and 4Q364–367.<sup>54</sup> These fragments probably belonged to different manuscripts and may be dated to the first century BCE. They consist of several passages which do not appear in the Torah text of the Jewish Bible, such as an expanded version of Miriam’s song in Exod 15 as well as several regulations of the law.<sup>55</sup> Instead, these fragments show a relationship with the Samaritan Pentateuch, the *Temple Scroll*, and the *Book of Jubilees*.<sup>56</sup> In all probability, they do not presuppose an authoritative text of the Torah, but are witnesses to other textual traditions. This may be regarded as an indication that there was no fixed, authoritative text of the Torah, but rather a fluidity in its textual transmission.

The Qumran writings differ from the later Jewish Bible also with regard to other texts. There are two different versions of the book of Jeremiah: a longer version which is also known from the Hebrew Bible, and a shorter version which is also attested by the Septuagint. Perhaps both versions were used side by side with no attempt to reconcile them with each other or to produce a

51 See Becker, “Grenzziehungen,” 226–33; McDonald, *Formation*, 1169–75.

52 See the analysis of the text by Ulrich, “Non-Attestation.”

53 See Tov, *Texts*, 167–69, 214.

54 See Zahn, *Rethinking*; Zahn, “Problem.”

55 See Perrin, “Variants of 4Q (Reworked) Pentateuch”; Crawford, *Rewriting Scripture*, 39–59.

56 See Zahn, *Rethinking*; VanderKam, “Questions of Canon.”

single, authoritative edition.<sup>57</sup> The Psalm scrolls from Qumran show different orders of the Psalms, with Psalm 151 also attested in Qumran.<sup>58</sup> Some of the Qumran writings which were obviously as important as the Torah and the prophets, but did not become part of the Jewish Bible, include the books of Enoch, *Jubilees*, the *Temple Scroll*, and the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*.

Another important characteristic which is instructive for the usage of authoritative writings is the existence of quite a number of texts which may be called “interpretative literature.”<sup>59</sup> These include *pesharim* on the Psalms and on prophetic books, the so-called *Genesis Apocryphon* (1Q20), and other exegetical writings. The Qumran scrolls are therefore also important witnesses for a stage in the formation of authoritative literature in Second Temple Judaism in that they are not only witnesses for the collection of writings, but also for the emergence of exegetical literature: books that presuppose the authority of certain writings and regard them as meaningful for the situation of the community and for the consummation of history. As do early Christian writings, texts from Qumran also regard books such as Deuteronomy, the Psalms, or Isaiah as of primary importance for the interpretation of their own time and the future.

Altogether, it can be concluded that the Qumran scrolls are important witnesses for the formation of certain collections of texts which were regarded as authoritative for the self-perception as well as the religious and ethical life of one or more Jewish group(s). Thereby, the scrolls escape a clear-cut distinction of biblical—let alone ‘canonical’ texts—on the one hand, and non-canonical writings on the other. Instead they provide insights into a dynamic process of collection, usage, and interpretation of authoritative texts in Second Temple Judaism. With regard to the later Jewish Bible, consisting of the parts “Torah,” “Neviim,” and “Ketivum,” it is especially striking that among the *scrolls* the books of Enoch belong to the most prominent apocalyptic writings, whereas the *Book of Jubilees* provides a paraphrase of the book of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus and might therefore be included in the so-called “Rewritten Bible” literature. It is, however, striking that among the Qumran writings we find not only the books of the Torah and their interpretation, but also a paraphrase of parts of them.

The scrolls therefore bear witness to the fact that in Second Temple Judaism, the formation of corpora of authoritative writings was still in flux with regard

57 The Jeremiah tradition attested by Judean Desert texts besides the biblical manuscripts is analyzed by Tigchelaar, “Jeremiah’s Scriptures.”

58 See Flint, *Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls*; Dahmen, *Psalmen- und Psalterrezeption*.

59 See n. 35 above.

to content as well as to textual forms. This can likewise be presupposed for early Christianity and its usage of Jewish scriptures. Although the bulk of quotations from Jewish writings in early Christianity comes from books which later became part of the Jewish Bible or the Christian “Old Testament,” there was no authoritative “canonical” list or textual version of these writings. Moreover, early Christian usages of Jewish Scripture can also be compared to the exegetical writings from Qumran, insofar as authoritative Jewish writings were regarded as prophetic literature which can likewise highlight the situation of the Qumran community and that of the early Christians, and bear witness to their faith in Jesus Christ. At Qumran as well as in early Christianity, the authoritative Jewish writings were regarded as the living word of God that can be applied to their present situation. The Qumran scrolls thus also provide a ‘hermeneutical perspective’ on the authoritative Jewish writings which can be compared to early Christian usages of these texts.

### 3 The Nag Hammadi Codices and the Formation of the New Testament

The Nag Hammadi Codices provide a different challenge concerning the formation of a corpus of authoritative writings than do the Qumran scrolls. There are striking differences, but also similarities between the two collections with regard to the relationship of biblical and non-biblical writings. Unlike the Qumran scrolls, there are no “canonical” writings from the Jewish or Christian Bibles among the Nag Hammadi texts. The codices do therefore not provide additional manuscripts of the biblical texts or an alternative understanding of the authoritative writings. Moreover, these texts never served as the basis for a community of “Gnostics,” a monastic congregation or the like.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, some of these texts can be regarded as “reenactments” or new interpretations of figures and traditions of early Christianity,<sup>61</sup> while others provide alternative interpretations of the biblical accounts of the creation of the world and of

60 The codices themselves may have been compiled by Egyptian monks as Lundhaug and Jenott have suggested (see Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*). This, however, does not explain the provenance of the writings themselves and their respective contributions to key issues in early Christian discourses. The Nag Hammadi writings can definitely not be regarded as an “apocryphal Bible” or the like.

61 The term “reenactment” (“Neuinszenierung”) was introduced by Nicklas (“Zwischen Redaktion”) to describe the relationship of second-century gospels to their predecessors. It can be used in a wider sense for the relationship of second- and third-century Christian writings to earlier texts.

humankind. Thus, the Nag Hammadi writings testify in their own way to the diversity of early Christianity concerning social formation as well as different positions about key issues in early Christian discourses. This may be illustrated by a few examples.

The *Gospel of Thomas* (NHC II,2) clearly presupposes the existence of earlier gospels and develops its own distinct portrayal of Jesus as the redeemer who reveals the knowledge necessary for eternal life and for the return to the Kingdom of the Father.<sup>62</sup> The way back to the heavenly origin is described as the relationship of image and likeness: The human beings are only able to see the images, whereas the light within the images is concealed to them (logion 83). The human beings rejoice when they see their likenesses. But they will see their images which came into being before them, and which neither die nor do they become manifest (logion 84).<sup>63</sup> The origin of humankind is thus interpreted in the *Gospel of Thomas* with the help of Platonic anthropology as the correspondence of heavenly origin and earthly counterparts of the human beings.<sup>64</sup> This may be compared to the *Gos. Phil.* (NHC II,3), which despite its apparent differences to the *Gos. Thom.*, shares its view on humankind as an “image” which must return to the heavenly origin. This return is called “rebirth” and interpreted as resurrection of the flesh of the human being that was transformed into another flesh, capable of receiving eternal life.<sup>65</sup>

A distinct “Platonic” interpretation of the biblical account of the creation and the role of Jesus is provided by the *Apocryphon of John*.<sup>66</sup> As its appearance at the beginning of three Nag Hammadi codices (II, III, and IV) and the myths related by Irenaeus in *Adversus Haereses* 1.29–30 indicate, the writing may have served as a basic text for Christian groups represented by several of the Nag Hammadi writings.<sup>67</sup> *Ap. John* narrates the creation of the first human beings Adam, Eve, and their sons in a detailed way, and emphasizes that salvation is only possible as the return to the divine source by overcoming the

62 For a recent concise overview see Schwarz, “Gospel of Thomas.” See further Gathercole, *Composition*; Schröter, “Evangelium nach Thomas.”

63 See the interpretation of both sayings in: Miroshnikov, *Gospel of Thomas and Plato*. See further Gathercole, *Gospel of Thomas*, 509–18.

64 See Miroshnikov, *Gospel of Thomas and Plato*; Patterson, “Jesus meets Plato.”

65 See *Gos. Phil.* NHC II 56.26–57.19, 67.12–18, 68.31–37.

66 See Pleše, “Intertextuality”; Waldstein, “Primal Triad.” See also the essay by Goff in the present volume.

67 Irenaeus relates the myth of a group which he designates as “multitude of those who know Barbelo” (*multitudo Gnosticorum Barbelo*, *Adv. Haer.* 1.29.1). For this translation of the phrase see Holzhausen, “Gnostizismus.” The provenance and profile of this group remains uncertain. Sometimes, however, the *Apocryphon of John* is regarded as the basic text of the “Sethians” or the “classic” Gnostics. See Schenke, “Das sethianische System.”



hostile powers. The *Nature of the Rulers* (NHC II,4) and the writing without title *On the Origin of the World* (NHC II,5) also provide interpretations of the Genesis account about the creation of the world and the origin of humankind. This shows a tendency in some of the Nag Hammadi texts to interpret the relationship of creation and salvation in a way that is different, when compared to other early Christian texts which refer to the biblical account about God's creation of humankind and to the bodily resurrection of the human being. This characteristic can be related to the apocalypses from Nag Hammadi mentioned above.

The *Apocalypse of Adam* (NHC V,5) may serve as an example.<sup>68</sup> In the form of a revelation of Adam to his son Seth, the text narrates the creation of Adam and Eve, their superiority to the creator god and their loss of the glory as likenesses of the true God. After the deluge, Seth, as the true offspring of Adam, generates the race of the human beings that will eventually be saved. As other texts from Nag Hammadi, the *Apoc. Adam* provides a polemical reinterpretation of the biblical account of the creation of the first human beings and the deluge. It is therefore a striking example of those Nag Hammadi writings which focus on biblical texts and provide a counter-exegesis with the help of mythological and philosophical traditions. Moreover, the reference to the figure of Seth demonstrates that Jewish and Christian traditions were connected in a specific way, insofar as the creation of humankind and the redemption of a certain lineage—the offspring of Seth—are related to each other.

The Nag Hammadi writings referred to above are witnesses to debates about the creation of the world, the origin of humankind, the resurrection of the dead, and the way to salvation in early Christianity. These discourses are likely to have influenced the formation of Christian theology and the canon of the New Testament as writings from authors such as Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen demonstrate. Some of the Nag Hammadi texts are particularly interested in telling the Christian story as a “counter narrative” to the biblical writings,<sup>69</sup> and to integrate Jesus as a redeemer figure in such accounts. The reference to a chosen race which in some Nag Hammadi writings is related to the figure of Seth may thereby indicate that groups represented by these texts combined Jewish and Christian traditions in their own ways.

68 See Grypeou, *Apokalypse Adams*.

69 See Watson and Parkhouse, *Telling the Christian Story*.

#### 4 Conclusion: The Qumran Scrolls, the Nag Hammadi Codices, and the Formation of the Biblical Canons

This paper began by pointing out some differences between the Qumran scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices, and shall conclude by way of reiterating these differences. The two collections differ in many ways, although there are also some common elements, such as an apocalyptic worldview and references to certain redeemer figures in some of these writings. This may point to early Jewish and early Christian groups that were focused on an interpretation of history with the help of apocalyptic elements, such as knowledge about the upper world and the course of history until the end of time. In several of the Nag Hammadi writings, this perspective is elaborated to a philosophical model about the origin of the world and the way to salvation. These tractates therefore participate in a debate about the relationship of Platonic philosophy and Christian faith which originated in the course of the second century and developed further in the third and fourth centuries. Several of the Nag Hammadi writings—such as *Gos. Thom.*, *Gos. Phil.*, *Ap. John*, *Treatise on the Resurrection*, *Nat. Rulers* and *Orig. World*, to name but a few—also participate in a discussion about a Christian view on creation, the relationship of the Most High God to the lower world, and the salvation of humankind.

The Jewish group(s) that collected and interpreted the Qumran scrolls had their own views on the faith in God and a life according to God's commandments. The groups responsible for the composition of several of the Nag Hammadi tractates likewise developed distinct views on the interpretation of Jewish and Christian traditions. Despite their peculiarities and differences, these collections therefore provide important insights into the history of early Jewish and early Christian views on God, the world and the salvation of the human beings. They also bear witness to debates about collections of authoritative writings, textual traditions, and the life according to God's commandments. Last, but not least, these two collections point to distinct religious, philosophical and social milieus in which the foundational corpora of ancient Judaism and Christianity emerged.

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**PART 4**

*Portrayals of Patriarchs in the Dead Sea Scrolls  
and the Nag Hammadi Codices*





# From Adam to the Patriarchs: Some Biblical Figures in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Library

*George J. Brooke*

## 1 Introduction

It is not possible in a short essay of this kind to review all of the principal scriptural figures named in both the Qumran corpus of the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Nag Hammadi texts.<sup>1</sup> The focus of this study is on the major figures named in the book of Genesis.<sup>2</sup> Much work on those figures has been presented most recently by Jaan Lahe in his 2012 monograph and it is not necessary to repeat most of that descriptive work here.<sup>3</sup> In his book Lahe's overall conclusion is that any comparison between the Nag Hammadi texts and Jewish sources really only points to shared sets of traditions between Judaism and Gnosis in various common cultural milieux. Obviously, he has been careful to avoid falling into the trap of thinking that in relation to any particular topic a single-line trajectory might be described to explain the view of one aspect of Jewish tradition in later Gnostic sources, even though his analysis shows a continuing interest in the Syro-Palestinian Jewish background of much that is Gnostic.<sup>4</sup> I too have wished to avoid that trap, but I have been trying to

1 In this study the principal edition and translation of texts used for convenience for the Dead Sea Scrolls is that of García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, adjusted where indicated; that used for the Nag Hammadi Texts is Meyer, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*. I am grateful to the editors of this volume for their significant suggestions that have improved this study in several ways.

2 For scriptural references and allusion in the Dead Sea Scrolls see especially Lange and Weigold, *Biblical Quotations and Allusions*. For the Nag Hammadi texts the principal corresponding resource is Evans, Webb and Wiebe, eds., *Nag Hammadi Texts and the Bible*; see also the briefer survey by Helmbold, *The Nag Hammadi Gnostic Texts and the Bible*.

3 Lahe, *Gnosis und Judentum*.

4 Such interest is visible in Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity*; also in Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 276–94; and in the publications of many others. Even though it is preferable not to draw direct lines of continuity, to some scholars this common cultural context implies something more continuous between Second Temple Jewish sources and those of Gnosticism; see, e.g., Fairen, *As Below, So Above*.

piece together some perspective, a line of argument, for making sense of at least some of the similarities and differences between the scriptural figures in the non-scriptural scrolls from Qumran and the references to them in the Nag Hammadi texts.<sup>5</sup>

The purpose of this paper, then, is not to provide comprehensive descriptive and analytical detail on individual figures from the Hebrew scriptures as they appear in the two literary corpora. Rather, the purpose is to provide some more general observations on the use or non-use of such figures to see whether some greater specificity might be given to the widely acknowledged view that both literary corpora are variously dependent on a wide range of passages from the Hebrew Bible, specificity both in terms of which figures are selected for reference and re-use and why, and also in terms of how such figures were transmitted into their new contexts, whether directly or indirectly. The dominant sense that I have of the differences between the corpora concerns the place of worship, and more specifically the role of the priesthood as an institution in the community and non-community compositions from the Qumran caves. This seems to be not just a matter of differences in topic and theme, resulting in the use of different literary genres in the two corpora, but a more fundamental variation of perspective.

## 2 From Creation to the Flood

Let us begin at the beginning. Most modern commentators on Genesis distinguish between the so-called primeval history (Genesis 1–11) and the patriarchal narratives (Genesis 12–50). There is some evidence from the Qumran caves that at least some Jews in the late Second Temple period drew a line rather at the end of Genesis 5, or perhaps just into the beginning of chapter 6. The evidence rests in large part in two matters. On the one hand there is some evidence from the manuscripts for such a division. While there is evidence that most of, if not all,<sup>6</sup> the chapters of Genesis were known to those who put the scrolls in the caves at and near Qumran, it is likely that at least one manuscript copy of Genesis, 4QGen<sup>d</sup>, was of such small proportions that

5 It is salutary to note that the first volume of Scholer's cumulative bibliography, *Nag Hammadi Bibliography: 1948–1969*, has a separate section for articles on the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Gnostic texts, but there is no such section in the second volume, *Nag Hammadi Bibliography 1970–1994*, nor in subsequent versions.

6 The most extensive attempt at trying to show that not all of Genesis as in the MT was part of the Qumran collection was offered by Cryer, "Genesis in Qumran."

it could only have contained Gen 1–5, if that.<sup>7</sup> This probability, which might well apply to one or more other manuscripts, is reinforced by the survival of the earliest commentary on Genesis, *Commentary on Genesis A* (4Q252), which seems to contain extracts from several other works laid out in the order of Genesis. *Commentary on Genesis A* begins with the extract of the rewritten section of Genesis that begins with Gen 6:3 and, with numerous gaps, contains implicit and explicit commentary on material up to Genesis 49. There is no commentary on anything from Genesis 1–5.<sup>8</sup> *Commentary on Genesis A* implies that it was appropriate to review divine engagement with the world from the point of re-creation through the flood and thereafter. Strikingly, Gnostic pre-occupation is overwhelmingly with what is to be found in Genesis 1–5.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, a set of observations about the antediluvian period as reflected in the non-scriptural scrolls from the caves at and near Qumran is worth noting. With the exception of the copy of the book of *Jubilees* from Cave 11 (11Q12), antediluvian figures are noticeably absent. For human figures, there is little mention of the individual Adam (perhaps only ten out of 160 occurrences of *ʾdm*), only one mention of Eve in the phrase “all the children of Eve” in a wisdom composition (4Q418 126 11 9) and no mention of Cain and Abel. Furthermore, in the community compositions there is very little reference to Eden or Paradise. Of considerable note too is the absence of Seth in what is extant in the scrolls from the Qumran caves. By contrast, Seth is very much present in the Nag Hammadi materials, particularly those linked closely with what many have identified as Sethian Gnosticism.<sup>10</sup> Many of the rewritings of scriptural narrative materials in the compositions from the caves at and near Qumran exploit what is not said or developed in the Hebrew scriptures; it seems that in the case of Seth some of the compositions amongst the Nag Hammadi corpus have similarly exploited such gaps for their own purposes, combining very brief scriptural references with other traditions, including some from Jewish sources.<sup>11</sup> Though it is an argument from silence, I certainly

7 For the evidence see the discussion in Brooke, “4QGen<sup>d</sup> Reconsidered.”

8 For more detailed discussion of this juxtaposition of evidence see Brooke, “Genesis 1–11.”

9 It is notable that apart from a handful of references to Gen 6:1–5, as might be expected, nearly all the scriptural references for Genesis highlighted by Layton are to Genesis 1–5: Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 521. At p. xxii, Layton concludes: “Gnostic scripture is distinctive because the gnostic myth competes strongly with the book of Genesis, thus rivalling the basic system used by other Christians to orient themselves to the world, the divine, and other people.”

10 See, especially, Lahe, *Gnosis und Judentum*, 283–90.

11 See the valuable comments of Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity*, 82: “the Gnostic figure of Seth is largely defined on the basis of scripture interpretation, especially of the key passages, Gen. 4:25 and 5:1–3.... The Gnostic traditions pertaining to

do not think that the absence of Seth from the Qumran caves was because some other immediately contemporary group had already come to adopt and harness him for their own purposes.<sup>12</sup>

What then about Adam as a proper name? In the non-community texts from the Qumran caves it seems as if the proper name Adam occurs in only about ten instances, though of course several passages can be disputed.<sup>13</sup> There seems to be little interest in Adam in both the Hebrew Bible and in subsequent Jewish literature.<sup>14</sup> With the exception of *Jubilees*, the Wisdom of Solomon, the *Life of Adam and Eve*, and the writings of Philo, most of the so-called Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha do not seem to take *ʾdm* as an individual figure.<sup>15</sup> The limited reference to the person Adam in biblical and Jewish tradition makes the modern reader wonder, when *ʾdm* does indeed seem to occur as a proper name, whether it is correct to read it as a reference to the individual Adam. Such limits applied to the individual figure might reflect a community, even a sectarian viewpoint of some kind, such as an antipathy to royal readings of the figure. Nevertheless, there might be some recognition of the wider cultural significance of primal man as in the cosmic and microcosmic speculations of several Hellenistic traditions. And such cosmology might have influenced the attempt at humanising the temple in the phrase *miqdaš ādām* (the Greek names for the four corners of the world: *Anatole, Dysis, Arctos, Mesembria*). It is clear that the movement of which the Qumran community was a part knew of Adam as a figure, but he seems to have been marginal (e.g., Sir 25:24; 33:10–13; Tob 8:6; 4Q403; 4Q423; 4Q504). The major exception in the corpus is the book of *Jubilees*. In 4Q216 (Jub<sup>a</sup>) VII, 15 the 22 generations between Adam and Jacob are named, an echo of the blessing based on the holy tongue's alphabet (*Jub.* 2:23–24). Later parallel traditions (Epiphanius, *De mensuris et ponderibus* 22) associate the number 22 with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the number of canonical books. The proper name Adam occurs in 11QJub 1 3, 10 (cf. *Jub.* 4:7, 10).

In three places the phrase “all the glory of Adam” occurs. In CD III, 20 this is in parallel with “eternal life” (*hyy ntsh*). In 1QS IV, 22–23 it is the criterion

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a special race of Seth show clear influence from Jewish traditions regarding the righteous lineage of Seth.”

- 12 Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity*, 127, has argued, together with others, that “the Sethian Gnostic system is essentially non-Christian, and probably even pre-Christian in its origins.”
- 13 Some of this description of Adam in the Dead Sea Scrolls is derived from part of my study, Brooke, “אדם *ʾādām*.”
- 14 A maximalist view of the evidence is presented in the studies in Laato and Valve, eds., *Adam and Eve Story*.
- 15 So claims Levison, *Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism*.



on which God establishes the covenant. In 1QH<sup>a</sup> IV, 15 it features as part of a description of the community's present existence: "You have raised an eternal name. Forgiving offence, casting away all their iniquities, giving them as a legacy all the glory of Adam and abundance of days." The phrase itself might be based on a pastiche of ideas from Ezek 1:26–28. In 4Q504 (DibHam<sup>a</sup>) 8 4 most interpreters read Adam as a proper name in association with the reference to the Garden of Eden. That liturgical prayer calls on God to remember that he "has made Adam our father in the image of your glory."<sup>16</sup> The expression "all the glory of Adam" might well have a basis in liturgy of some kind. It seems to reflect what might be termed a "high" anthropology, whether it refers to a prelapsarian Adam or created humanity.

In relation to the theme of inheritance (1QH<sup>a</sup> IV, 15) stands the very difficult text 4Q418 81 + 81a 3: "For he has made everyone and has given each of them their inheritance. And he is your portion and your inheritance among the sons of Adam, and over his inheritance he has given them authority. And you, honour him by this: by consecrating yourself to him, in accordance to the fact that he has placed you as a holy of holies over all the earth, and among all the gods he has cast your lot." To whom does the inheritance belong and how should the various phrases be translated? It is difficult to know. Equally problematic but to be mentioned is the concept in 4Q418 251 1, where the editors propose reading "the inheritance of Adam."<sup>17</sup> Perhaps there is some deliberate ambiguity in some of these references as there almost certainly is in that elusive phrase *miqdaš ādām* in 4Q174. Similar ambiguity is to be found in 1Q34bis 3 II, 3, in which the phrase "seed of Adam (*hā-ādām*)" could simply be taken as "human seed."<sup>18</sup>

There is little more to be said. Five further texts can be mentioned. First, there is 4Q305 1 II 2 in which knowledge is "given to *adam*"; does that refer to a person Adam in the light of Genesis 3? Second, there are the daily prayers of 4Q504. In the very fragmentary context of 8 13, a prayer for the first day in which Adam seems to be mentioned, *adam* appears once more with the definite article in a phrase "*adam* in the ways of"; in the light of the earlier mention of Adam in Eden, should that also be rendered as Adam? Later in 4Q504 131–32 6 the indefinite noun *adam* should probably not be understood as a reference to Adam. Third, there is 4Q511 (Shir<sup>b</sup>) 52–59 2 in which God is described

16 See Chazon, "The Creation and Fall of Adam"; Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 92–95.

17 Strugnell and Harrington, "Instruction," 456 (DJD 34).

18 Though the proper name is not explicitly used, it can be thought that 4Q417 1 I, 13–18 describes Adam as an individual person; see Høgenhaven, "Adam in Qumran Wisdom Literature."

as “slow to anger, bountiful in favour, a foundation of truth” who does something “to/for Adam and his sons.” Here, if there is a reference to Adam, together with his sons, he is merely the recipient of divine beneficence. Fourth, in 4Q521 8 6, part of the so-called *Messianic Apocalypse*, there is a possible reference to Adam in a very broken context, which also seems to refer to the blessing of Jacob, the temple utensils, and “all his anointed ones.” Fifth, it is worth pointing out that in the most recent edition of the *Hodayot* 1QH<sup>a</sup> IV, 39 (// 4QH<sup>b</sup> 1 1), previously understood as “every human treaty” or some such phrasing, is rendered as the “whole covenant of Adam.”<sup>19</sup> Other suggestions have been made for reading the Hebrew here as a form of *br*, “the whole creation of Adam/humanity,” or as a form of *byn*, “toute intelligence (*bryt*) humaine.”<sup>20</sup> Little can be built on such uncertainties, not least since the Hebrew Bible knows of no covenant with Adam.

So, overall, apart from a few semi-technical idioms involving glory and inheritance, and with the exception of the book of *Jubilees*, little use is made of the individually named figure of Adam in the scrolls that survive from the caves at and near Qumran. In some ways this is not unlike the Hebrew Bible in which the individual named Adam plays a similarly minimalist role. There might be more going on, such as deliberate avoidance of speculation concerning the nature of humanity as depicted in Genesis 1–3, but that is difficult to maintain overall, given the intricate uses and reflections of those chapters in a composition such as *Instruction*, even though Adam is not explicitly named.<sup>21</sup>

The situation in the Nag Hammadi corpus is very different and offers multiple references, especially (if not exclusively) in Sethian compositions.<sup>22</sup> They seem to refer explicitly to the individual Adam and to include him as archetypal or embryonic, sometimes with Eve, either positively or negatively, in the various metaphysical constructions of the cosmos and its multiple hierarchies.<sup>23</sup> There are diverse scriptural tags, not least Gen 1:26–27 and 2:7, that enable or are reflected in such references to Adam.<sup>24</sup> I observe the difference here, but have no immediate explanation as to what causes one corpus to remain largely silent about the individual Adam, while the other is much more vociferous.

19 Stegemann, Schuller and Newsom, *1QHodayot<sup>a</sup>*, 72–74 (DJD 40).

20 Puech, *La croyance des Esséniens*, 394, n. 286.

21 See further, Wold, *Women, Men, and Angels*, 117–19, 207–12.

22 On the major features of Sethian compositions see Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*.

23 Note, e.g., the comments on Adam and Eve implied in the use of Genesis 2–3 in *Exegesis on the Soul*: see the nuanced discussion in Wilson, “Old Testament Exegesis,” 217–24.

24 See, e.g., Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity*, 29–38, on the speculation of the *Apocryphon of John*; also see the detailed study on Adam and Christ by Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 159–88.

I wonder whether the Enochic perspective on the origin of evil and the possible strategies for coping with evil took the community compositions found at Qumran together with those with which they had sympathy away from much engagement with the personages of the opening chapters of Genesis, and I wonder whether Paul's Adam-Christ typology or the explicit interest in Adam in Egyptian Jewish contexts had something to do with the transformation of the Adamic elements of Jewish anthropology, at least as far as some Gnostic works are concerned.

### 3 Noah and the Patriarchs

The figure of Enoch and the Enochic corpus are considered by others in this volume, so I largely skip over them here, though it should be noted that the actual individual Enoch is named only four times in the compositions, other than the books of Enoch, from the Qumran caves and but once in the Nag Hammadi corpus, though several compositions evince knowledge of the traditions, such as ascent and the extensive angelology, associated with him.<sup>25</sup>

In the non-scriptural scrolls from the Qumran caves, Noah and the patriarchs of the Genesis narratives play a significant role in several respects. Although there is not a unified overall programme of Noah ideology, it is possible to suggest that several features of the Noah stories and the figure of Noah himself are used to create some kind of counterpart to the sin introduced by the fallen angels. There is a pattern, particularly in Aramaic texts and traditions, concerning sin that is associated with the revelation to Enoch and the role of the watchers. The counterpart priesthood traces its lineage to Noah (or in some respects also to Enoch). Michael Stone has described this as the "Priestly-Noachic Tradition."<sup>26</sup> The association with Noah seems to depend upon his building of an altar and sacrificing a burnt-offering after the flood (Gen 8:20–21) and Noah's role is pivotal because of the way he bridges the flood, just as demonic figures did according to Enochic tradition. Thus, Noah does not just function as the progenitor of salvation through his building of the ark, but also through his emblematic priestly behaviour.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, his role in salvation is also highlighted in other ways as has variously been observed. In the *Genesis Apocryphon*, as also in *Jubilees*, nearly every episode that is selected

25 See Lahe, *Gnosis und Judentum*, 290–92.

26 Stone, *Ancient Judaism*, 33–52.

27 I have provided some reflections on Stone's work in relation to Second Temple priesthood in Brooke, "Patterns of Priesthood."

for retelling is embellished in some way, usually so as to make Noah a fully developed literary character.<sup>28</sup> In 1Q19 and probably 4Q534 as well as in the *Genesis Apocryphon* and the *Epistle of Enoch* the particularity of Noah's birth is portrayed, possibly to underline his heroic status. Bernstein notes "references to Noah at Qumran appear uniformly positive."<sup>29</sup> Perhaps Noah is the recipient of special revelation as in *Instruction* ("the rz nhyh and he made it known to Noah") and in 4Q253 ("to make known to Noah"); and perhaps some aspects of that revelation were understood as preserved in writing in a "book of the words of Noah" (1QapGen v, 29) which might have been part of a wider set of traditions, especially priestly traditions, associated with Noah.

In the Nag Hammadi texts, Noah features on a few occasions. In the Sethian *Secret Book (Apocryphon) of John* (NHC II 28–29), the events surrounding the preparation for the flood are retold so that "Forethought" is responsible for warning Noah about the plans of the "first ruler." The text openly contradicts the Genesis account: "it did not happen the way Moses said, 'They hid in the ark' (Gen 7:7). Rather they hid in a particular place, not only Noah, but also many other people from the unshakeable generation. They entered that place and hid in a bright cloud. Noah knew about his supremacy. With him was the enlightened one who had enlightened them, since the first ruler had brought darkness upon the whole earth." After this hint that there is a tradition about special revelation to Noah, the text then continues with the actions of the fallen angels.<sup>30</sup> In the *Gospel of Philip* (NHC II 84.20–85.1) there is reference to the ark as a symbol of salvation. In the Sethian text *Melchizedek* (NHC IX [12].4–8) Noah seems to feature in a list of ante-diluvian figures, among others, who have received revelation. In the Sethian *Nature of the Rulers (Hypostasis of the Archons)* in the narrative retelling of Genesis it is Norea, Adam and Eve's daughter, who is centre stage.<sup>31</sup> At the relevant point she tries to board the ark that has been commissioned by Sabaoth but she is denied access by Noah, and destroys the ark with fire; so Noah rebuilds it (NHC II 92.8–18). She is rescued by the angel Eleleth (NHC II 92.21–93.32). In the *Revelation (Apocalypse) of Adam*, another Sethian text, the most extensive retelling of the Noah stories

28 On Noah as a literary character, see Bernstein, *Reading and Re-Reading Scripture at Qumran*, 1:291–322.

29 Bernstein, *Reading and Re-Reading Scripture*, 1:316.

30 See also the essay in this volume by Goff, "It Didn't Happen the Way Moses Said It Did."

31 See Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity*, 84–94; for the *Hypostasis of the Archons* Pearson concludes: "Norea thus functions in this text as both a feminine heavenly power, a redeemer figure working in behalf of Gnostic humanity against the machinations of the world rulers, and a symbol of spiritual humanity in need of redemption. She is, in other words, a Gnostic 'Sophia' figure" (*ibid.*, 93).

focuses on the non-scriptural divine command that Noah and his children should refrain from producing any offspring, the breach of which results in a discourse that is an explanation for the election of some people through their knowledge of the eternal God (NHC V 70.16–76.20). Here it is noticeable in the light of the compositions from the Qumran caves that Noah seems to be more closely linked with salvation history with several particular features, rather than with priestly practice.

In the Dead Sea Scrolls such priestly traditions involving Noah seem to be reflected in the *Aramaic Levi Document* and the *Testament of Qahat*. In the *Aramaic Levi Document*, just before Levi is declared to be especially beloved, Jacob makes a reference to what Abraham had found in “the writing of the book of Noah concerning the blood” (ALD X, 10).<sup>32</sup> This location of priestly lore might also be referred to in the *Aramaic Genesis Apocryphon* v, 29: “[a copy of] the book of the words of Noah.” Stone has pointed out how Qahat seems to be central to the genealogy from Levi to Aaron as a priest who himself “and his seed will be an authority of kings, a priesthood for Israel” (ALD Gk. Athos XI, 6); Stone takes this to be a pre-Hasmonean full version of the text, not preserved in the Aramaic manuscripts and he sees it as offering an alternative to the separation of powers that is indicated, for example, in the dual messiahs of Aaron and Israel (1QS IX, 11).<sup>33</sup> It is important to note, by way of contrast, that neither Levi, nor Amram, nor Qahat seem to feature, even indirectly, in any part of the Nag Hammadi corpus, a factor which highlights intriguingly the view that probably all the types of Gnostic worldview could dispense with the need for a sacrificial system and any kind of cultic priesthood, though the *Melchizedek* text plays with some aspects of the idea.<sup>34</sup>

In the Aramaic *Testament of Qahat*, Qahat is the traitor of ancient priestly lore from his father Levi to his son Amram. The inheritance is described as existing in “my books” (4Q542 1 II, 12), apparently books of Noachic priestly lore, though in what survives of 4Q542 only Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Levi are mentioned. Stone has noted that 4Q542 contains a tradition that is reflected

32 This terminology is also ambiguous: was the book just about blood, or is the reference merely to that part of the book which was about blood?

33 The separation of powers is commonly described as a feature of Second Temple high priesthood, but this might need to be qualified in the light of the Aramaic traditions about Levi.

34 Note too that Codex Tchacos is heavy on criticism of the Jewish sacrificial cult in Jerusalem, as in the *Apocalypse of James* (CT 27.9–28.20, where Jesus calls himself a priest who does not accept sacrifice, unlike the god of the Jews; this passage is poorly preserved at Nag Hammadi) and the *Gospel of Judas* (CT 37.20–39.26; the famous vision of the Temple replete with sin and cannibalism). For a recent discussion viz. *Gos. Jud.* that takes a somewhat different view, see Townsend, “Sacrifice and Race in the Gospel of Judas.”

in *Jubilees*: “In *Jub.* 21:10, Abraham concludes a catalogue of detailed sacrificial *halachot* that he has given Isaac by saying, ‘Because thus I have found written in the books of my forefathers and in the words of Enoch and in the words of Noah.’ *Jubilees* introduces Enoch into the teaching’s genealogy and mentions Noah, which evokes *ALD*.<sup>35</sup> This leads Stone to put together four other items, possible evidence for Noachic “books”: the so-called “Book of Noah” (1Q19), a composition in Hebrew that resembles Noachic sections of 1 *Enoch* 106–107 (on the birth of Noah); the “Books of the Words of Noah” (1QapGen v, 29), possibly a designation of a first person narrative source used in the *Genesis Apocryphon*; the mention of Noah’s writings in *Jub.* 10:1–14;<sup>36</sup> and possible Noachic sources behind parts of 1 *Enoch* (1 *En.* 60; 65:1–69:25; 106–107). These short books seem to have contained material on the birth of Noah, on how sacrifices should be performed, and on medicine and the apotropaic control of demons.

It seems to me that this Aramaic pattern of priesthood is combined with an Adamic one in certain respects in the Hebrew book of *Jubilees*. In *Jubilees* the reader seems to be presented with four dimensions of Noah’s priesthood, two of which (priestly instruction and prayer against demons) dominate in the Aramaic traditions found amongst the Dead Sea Scrolls and are most likely to be dependent on the Enochic outlook that is inherited eventually by Levi and his descendants. Noah’s priesthood is exercised firstly through his performance of sacrificial offerings, which is mentioned in language suitable for priests (*Jub.* 6:1–3; 7:1–6): upon leaving the ark Noah offers a whole burnt offering to atone for the land which inaugurates the Feast of Weeks, and then to celebrate the fruitful success of his vineyard, Noah holds a feast on the first day of the first month when he offers a whole burnt offering “in order that he might thereby seek atonement for himself and for his sons” (*Jub.* 7:3), offering up “a sweet odor which is pleasing before the Lord his God” (7:5). Secondly, there are blessings and curses. The cursing of Canaan and the blessing of Shem are to be understood as politically linked to the distribution of land (7:7–19).<sup>37</sup> Thirdly, Noah has a priestly didactic role, giving instruction on the need to avoid fornication, blood pollution and injustice (7:20–33), and on the setting aside of the first fruits as a matter of righteousness: “and you will be righteous and all your plants will be upright, because, thus, Enoch, the father of your father, commanded Methuselah, his son, and Methusaleh (commanded) Lamech, his son.

35 Stone, *Ancient Judaism*, 40.

36 “And Noah wrote everything in a book just as we taught him according to every kind of healing. And the evil spirits were restrained from following the sons of Noah” (*Jub.* 10:13–14). All citations of *Jubilees* in this essay are from Wintermute, *OTP*.

37 The blessing and cursing and distribution of land run through until the section that provides a curse on the violation of boundaries (*Jub.* 9:14–15).

And Lamech commanded me everything which his fathers commanded him" (7:37–38). And fourth, there is the formulation of apotropaic prayer against the demons (10:1–6); that seems to be particular esoteric priestly craft coping with the problem of evil through a system of protection of the individual from what threatens from outside.

Much of this mixture of priestly motifs is also to be found in other compositions, not least the community ones that have come from the Qumran caves. For example, the Enochic pattern of things is referred to in the references to the watchers in sectarian historiography. "Any assessment of the Qumran sect's ideas must take into account that the ... Pseudepigrapha dedicated to the Enoch to Noah axis provided an explanation of how the world reached its present state."<sup>38</sup> The Noachic pattern of priesthood discernible especially but not exclusively in non-sectarian Aramaic compositions of the second half of the Second Temple period associates priesthood genealogically most notably with Levi through Jacob back to Isaac; it is a tradition that is first given focus by Noah. Part of the tradition is concerned with dealing with human sin and evil through sacrifice, but significantly, in the light of the Enochic view of the world, a significant part of the tradition is concerned with esoteric protection from the demonic. Isaac, Jacob, Levi and his direct descendants are concerned with passing on and sometimes elaborating priestly lore, often described as contained in books.<sup>39</sup> Such lore can be traced back to Noah himself, the first to sacrifice after the flood. Several of the patriarchal traditions are to be found in Aramaic sources and as such might reflect contexts of priestly practice where Aramaic was the institutional, if not the liturgical language.

In the light of the Noachic pattern of priesthood and priestly function already laid out, something can be said about the significant priestly pair, Abraham and Melchizedek, in the non-scriptural compositions from the Qumran caves.<sup>40</sup> In the Aramaic tradition that we see represented in the *Genesis Apocryphon*, Abram is depicted as a priest: "... until I reached Bethel, the place where I had built an altar, and I built it once again. Upon it I offered holocausts and an offering to the God Most High, and invoked the name of the Lord of the Universe there; I praised God's name and blessed God" (1QapGen XXI, 1–3). In addition, Abram recognizes the priesthood of Melchizedek, king of Salem, who brings him food and drink. "He was a priest of the Most High

38 Stone, *Ancient Judaism*, 52.

39 On other minor aspects of the references to Isaac and Jacob in the non-scriptural scrolls from the Qumran Caves see Brooke, "Further Thoughts on Isaacs"; Brooke, "Jacob and His House."

40 On the paucity of other material on Abraham beyond the *Genesis Apocryphon*, see Bernstein, "Where are the Patriarchs?"

God" (XXII, 15) and he blesses Abram. Abram gives him a tithe of all the wealth of the king of Elam and his allies that he has acquired. This is the endorsement of Melchizedek's priesthood through the Levitical system.<sup>41</sup> Then, in 11QMelchizedek, Melchizedek as priest is foregrounded in an eschatological role. It is noticeable that it is not an Aaronide high priest who makes atonement: "and the d[ay of aton]ement is the e[nd of] the tenth [ju]bilee in which atonement shall be made for all the sons of [light and] for the men [of] the lot of Mel[chi]zedek" (11QMelch II, 7–8). The dating here corresponds in some way with the Enochic system of ten weeks, though precisely at what point the counting begins in each case can be debated.<sup>42</sup> In later pseudepigraphical texts such as 2 *Enoch*, Melchizedek is associated with Noah: "Intriguingly, 2 *Enoch* transfers Noachic characteristics from Noah to his apocryphal brother Nir, and as part of this process, Melchizedek becomes Nir's adopted son."<sup>43</sup>

In the Nag Hammadi texts, little is said of Abraham. In the *Gospel of Philip* (NHC II 82.26–29) his insight in relation to circumcision is held up as a positive example of the need to destroy the flesh; nothing in the short sentence that is inserted in a string of other sayings, notably about marriage and what is hidden, quite picks up and develops this, making the allusion seem incidental and unnecessary, certainly not required by the context. Intriguingly a similar seemingly incidental reference to Abraham occurs in the context of the marriage of the soul in *Exegesis on the Soul* (NHC II 133.31), though there the allusion is to the command Abraham received to leave his country and relatives.

In the *Second Discourse of the Great Seth* (NHC VII 62.27–64.17), Abraham is listed together with Adam, Isaac, Jacob, and others as laughingstocks, because of the false status they are said to have had. In none of this is there any appeal to any cultic associations that Abrahamic traditions might have had nor to his association with Melchizedek.<sup>44</sup> Even in the Sethian *Melchizedek* in NHC IX, though there is some damage in certain sections, there does not appear to be any mention of Abraham, though there is of Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah and

41 Cf. *ALD* V, 2: Jacob endorses his recognition of Levi's priesthood by offering him a tithe (cf. *T. Lev.* 9:4).

42 See the discussion of the chronological materials by Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus*, 315–71.

43 Stone, *Ancient Judaism*, 34.

44 On the significance (and relative absence) of Abraham in Gnostic and esp. Sethian literature, see Burns, "Is Sethian Gnosticism an Abrahamic Religion?" The analysis there underscores the point that Abraham features in a number of Gnostic sources (including some where he does not actually appear, such as the discussions of Sodom and Gomorrah, which are unintelligible without reference to him), yet always with reference to his status as a paragon of virtue; when cultic association comes into it, he is even attacked, which was a transgressive move.



some other figure marked as one of a list of *nomina sacra*. Melchizedek's high priesthood is indeed described, but the whole is a reflection on the priestly self-offering of Hebrews combined with other traditions, especially those associated with describing his military victories, rather than a close reworking of Genesis 14.<sup>45</sup>

#### 4 More on Jacob and Levi

Amongst the Dead Sea Scrolls the patriarchal traditions on priesthood and the cult are discernible also in the *Temple Scroll*. This composition stresses Levitical tradition that stands apart from the Aaronic priestly perspective though it systematically adopts and adapts those traditions from the Torah that link the priesthood with Aaron at Sinai and that represent them for life in the land associated with Deuteronomy. It is worth describing some of the contents of the *Temple Scroll*, not only because they provide evidence about Levi, but because the lack of concern with such things in the Nag Hammadi corpus becomes all the more striking.

What does a Levitical view of the world look like?<sup>46</sup> Three aspects of Levitical ideology as reflected in the *Temple Scroll* can be described briefly. First, the Levitical ideology of the *Temple Scroll* is a reassertion of the view of Israel as tribal, a concern that seems to be entirely absent from the Nag Hammadi compositions.<sup>47</sup> This tribal interest seems to be done to push for the pre-eminence of the tribe of Levi.<sup>48</sup> Thus in the description of the twelve gates of the temple court, Levi is in the centre on the east side (XXXIX, 12). For the Levites, the *Temple Scroll* "restores their tithes (LX, 6–9), grants them parity with the priests on the king's advisory council (LII, 12–15), awards them the shoulder from every well-being offering (XXI, 4), twice the portion of the other tribes from the prescribed well-being offerings for the New Wine and

45 As noted by Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity*, 110–14.

46 On the Levites and Levi as an ideal priestly figure in the Scrolls see especially, Kugler, "The Priesthood at Qumran." Some other aspects of the Levitical view of things are presented in Brooke, "Levi and the Levites"; reprinted in a revised form in Brooke, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*, 115–39.

47 On ethnicity in Nag Hammadi sources the standard work is Buell, *Why This New Race? 'Ethnic reasoning' in the corpus does not appear to be understood in biological terms.*

48 On the status of the Levites in the *Temple Scroll*, see especially Milgrom, "The Qumran Cult." Milgrom argued that the attempt to provide parity or superiority for the Levites was a matter of the right interpretation of Deuteronomy, evident also in 1 and 2 Chronicles ("For the Levites were more upright in heart than the priests in sanctifying themselves" [2 Chron 29:34b]).

New Oil festivals (xxi, [1]; xxii, 12), and the right to pronounce the priestly blessing (lx, 11).<sup>49</sup> The role of the Levites is also reflected in the transmission of Ezekiel in some circles where the text of Ezek 44:15 (“The Levitical priests, the descendants of Zadok”; *whkhnym hhwym bny šdwk*) is understood as “The priests and the Levites and the sons of Zadok” (CD III, 21–IV, 1: *hkhnym whlwym wbnysdwk*). Thus, the Levitical perspective of the *Temple Scroll* is a strong assertion about the relative value of Levites within the priestly system. The composition thus represents debates within Second Temple groups of priests and Levites about their roles, rights, and privileges, debates not surprisingly absent from the later Nag Hammadi corpus, despite many scriptural traditions being carried forward there.<sup>50</sup>

Second, this tradition of priesthood is linked, at least by the redactor, with Jacob, something also visible in the Aramaic traditions amongst the Dead Sea Scrolls: “They shall be for me a people and I will be for them for ever; I shall dwell with them for ever and always. I shall sanctify my [te]mple with my glory, for I shall make my glory reside over it until the day of creation, when I shall create my temple, establishing it for myself for all days, according to the covenant which I made with Jacob at Bethel” (11Q19 XXIX, 7–10). In a way somewhat akin to the book of *Jubilees*, the redactor is writing in Hebrew, aligning Hebrew traditions with those represented most forcefully in pre-sectarian Aramaic compositions.

A third point might not be necessarily Levitical. It is noteworthy that the combined rewritings of the Torah that the *Temple Scroll* represents is a description of the world from the Holy of Holies outwards. This reminds the reader that the priestly perspective on the world is essentially spatial rather than temporal. The created order is viewed in terms of spatially delimited degrees of holiness. And, since the temple and its sacrificial system as described in the *Temple Scroll* is the one that should have been created but never was, it is a particular view which excludes other views. The space can only be occupied by one kind of priest.<sup>51</sup> This spatiality is a priestly conception in Second Temple Judaism; it can be set alongside the cosmological concerns of several of the Nag Hammadi texts.<sup>52</sup> Such juxtaposition is indicative of similarities and differences, but mostly the latter: even though the Temple might be conceived

49 Milgrom, “The Qumran Cult,” 176–77.

50 Suitably enough Lahe, *Gnosis und Judentum*, makes no mention of Levi.

51 Something of this debate is also expressed in 4QMMT, which is not simply about two groups jockeying for position, but reflects a serious clash of ideologies.

52 On the notion of the true temple as heavenly in Nag Hammadi Valentinian literature (*Gos. Philip* and *Interp. Know.*), see Twigg, “Esoteric Discourse and the Jerusalem Temple”; idem, “The Temple-Mystical Background.”

as a microcosm, priestly concerns for degrees of purity in the Dead Sea Scrolls differ markedly from philosophical speculations about the aeons.

There is no mention of Levi, the son of Jacob, anywhere in the Nag Hammadi corpus, and such absence, together with the silence of the texts on the priestly role of patriarchal figures from Noah onwards indicates a largely different set of perspectives on the patriarchs between the two corpora.

## 5 Some Concluding Remarks on Similarities and Differences

What emerges from this brief consideration of some key figures from Genesis in the Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi corpus? Many detailed observations have been made by previous generations of scholars, but some matters are worth rehearsing briefly.

First, in the so-called sectarian or community compositions and even in those elsewhere there is little attention to ante-diluvian figures and their possible significance. Although a non-community composition such as *Instruction* implies several things about the nature of humanity and the created order, those are hardly identified with any named individuals. Overall in what emerges from the Qumran caves there is some continuity with the traditions of scripture themselves, in which Adam seldom features, but over against what is discernible most notably in the writings of Philo, the Qumran corpus seems to hint at views about the cosmic and eschatological significance of Adam, and yet is characterised by extreme reticence about him as an individual, perhaps with the sole exception of the Hebrew traditions represented in *Jubilees*. This reticence also concerns Eve, Cain and Abel, and is paramount in the silence on Seth.

Juxtaposition with the Nag Hammadi corpus highlights several stark distinctions. With Adam named in a wide range of Nag Hammadi works, it is readily discernible that there is speculative metaphysical interest in how the scriptural material about the first human might fit within broader systems of thought about the origins of humanity and the nature and potential of human beings. The Nag Hammadi texts show that there is much more of a symbolic system in the later works, whereas a work like *Instruction* seems to offer only tentative engagement with its wider Hellenistic context. The debate continues as to whether such wide-ranging development of Adam the individual arises independently or is dependent on mediating factors and traditions. In addition, the exploitation of the figure of Seth, largely undescribed in Genesis, in at least one brand of Gnostic thinking contrasts with what might be deemed the non-purposive silence on him in the Qumran corpus.

Second, for Noah and the Patriarchs there are several intriguing similarities and differences. The differences include for the Qumran corpus most notably a combination of institutional, political and ethical concerns which are highlighted all the more clearly when there is juxtaposition with the Nag Hammadi texts. Institutionally in the compositions from the Qumran caves there is a concern with the pre-Aaronic establishment of the priesthood; but some measure of similarity with some Nag Hammadi compositions is to be found in the way such priesthood depends upon special revelation, particularly as that might concern a take on the problem of evil and the demonic in which the writings associated with Enoch play a major role. Politically there is an interest in the right occupation of the land; the Nag Hammadi texts are not engaged with such divine promises and their enactment. And ethically there is appeal to the patriarchs as examples of right and wrong behaviour, right inasmuch as several anticipate the requirements, especially the cultic requirements, of the Law and live by it in the pre-Sinaitic period; in the Nag Hammadi texts the patriarchs are not ethical models and while Moses can verify resurrection as in the transfiguration or be linked with esoteric knowledge (as in reference to the non-extant Archangelic Book of Moses the Prophet), the Law, whether Sinaitic or as Pentateuch, has status only as a foil: “it did not happen the way Moses said”; “the testimony about Moses was wrong, since he never knew me [Great Seth]” (*Disc. Seth*; NHC VII 63.29–31).

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# Celestial Landscapes and Heavenly Ascents: The Slavonic *Book of the Holy Secrets of Enoch the Just* (2 *Enoch*)

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на Таткето



## 1 Former Discourses in Exploring the *Slavonic Apocalypse of Enoch*: Towards a New Epistemological Paradigm

In his analysis of 2 *Enoch*, Józef Tadeusz Milik followed unconditionally André Vaillant's thesis that the *terminus post quem* for the Slavonic edition of the longer recension is between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup> As for the *Vorlage* of the shorter recension, he maintained that it was originally written in Greek, and argued that it was probably composed by a monk who lived and worked in the ninth or tenth century in Constantinople,<sup>2</sup> concluding that

[t]he Greek author of the Book of the Secrets of Enoch [...] used the Enochic Pentateuch in the form with which we are familiar through the Ethiopic version. In his description of secrets of heaven and earth he drew freely on the Book of Watchers (e.g. the name of the Ophanim angels), and the Astronomical Book (e.g. the year of 364 days); some features were taken from the Book of Dreams and the Epistle of Enoch. Some rare copies of this bulky opus must have been accessible in the monastic libraries in Constantinople, since the patriarch Nicephorus, at the beginning of the 9th century, was familiar with their stichometry.<sup>3</sup>

1 Milik, *Books of Enoch*, 108–9, re: Vaillant, *Le livre des secrets d'Hénoch*, xxiii–xxv.

2 Milik, *Books of Enoch*, 109–12, re: Vaillant, *Le livre des secrets d'Hénoch*, xiii–xiv, xxiv.

3 Milik, *Books of Enoch*, 109–10.



In a seminal article published in 1980, Madeleine Scopello challenged Milik's position by addressing common *topoi* attested in both the Sethian Gnostic *Zostrianos* (NHC VIII.1) and the Slavonic *Book of the Secrets of Enoch*,<sup>4</sup> thus reversing the hitherto dominant, formidable trend in defining the latter as a "late" text. In this she argues that *2 Enoch* was one of the apocalypses known to Gnostic authors.<sup>5</sup> As Scopello observes, the angelification of *Zostrianos* at NHC VIII 5.15–20 closely recalls that of Enoch in *2 En.* 22:8–10.<sup>6</sup> General similarities abound as well: both texts are celestial travelogues led by heavenly escorts, culminating in the acquisition of esoteric knowledge not revealed even to angels.<sup>7</sup> Scopello thus introduced a startlingly innovative approach into scholarship on Enochic literature: that already in the mid-third century CE (the *terminus post quem* for a Greek version of *Zostrianos*), the Greek version

4 Scopello, "The Apocalypse of *Zostrianos*."

5 Ibid., 376.

6 In *Zost.* NHC VIII 5.14–22, *Zostrianos* testifies: "I was baptized there, and I received the image of the glories there and I became like one of them. I traversed the atmospheric realm and passed by the Aeonic copies after immersing myself [there] seven times [in] living [water], once for each of the aeons [...]" (tr. Turner, "Zostrianos," 548). Cf. *2 En.* 22:10: "And I looked at myself, and I was like one of the Glorious Ones, and there was no difference of aspect (var. appearance)" (И ЗЪГЛАДАЪ ВСА САМЪ И БЫХЪ ЯКО ЕДИНЪ СЪ СЛАВНЫЪ. И НЕ БАШЕ РАЗАНЪННА ВЪЗРАНОГО). However, as Scopello observes, while *Zostrianos*'s identification with the Glorious Ones marks the beginning of his heavenly journey, in the Slavonic text it occurs in the narrative about the visionary's ascent to the highest (designated either as the Seventh or as the Tenth) Heaven.

7 On the human seer as receiving supra-angelic knowledge, compare *Zost.* NHC VIII 12.8.15–18 and *2 En.* 24:2–3. Here too, the parallel obtains at different stages in the ascent: while in *2 Enoch* the text-unit about the revelation of esoteric knowledge communicated to the visionary is placed between the statement concerning the identification of Enoch with the Glorious Ones and the Divine narrative-testimony about the secrets of Creation, in *Zost.* it marks the end of the narrative about the mysteries revealed to the initiated. While it is true that the shifting of "quotations from *2 Enoch*" (to paraphrase Scopello) within the fabric of *Zost.* may be explained as a decisive ideological blueprint of its author, whose aim was to incorporate into his composition the theological discourse of Gnosticism, the logistics of the very act of reshuffling within the narrative the "formulaic bricks" borrowed from the Judaeo-Christian apocalyptic repertoire remains open to question. The matter merits further study elsewhere, but it is worth remarking that the formulaic theory of Albert Lord (cf. his *Singer of Tales*), as applied to the comparative study of Homeric Greek poems and contemporary South-Slavonic folk epics, may provide just the right methodology for dealing with the phenomenon of "Enochic loci" in Gnostic writings (as originally discussed by Scopello). The implementation of Lord's methodology in examining the "narrative thesaurus" of the *Book of the Secrets of Enoch* against the background of Gnostic heritage, thus detecting the "formulaic bricks" attested in these two traditions, may bring surprising results. The primary task of such an enquiry would be to identify the constituents of their common thesauri, investigating whether the detected parallels are due to cross-textual interdependence and fertilization, or to the prior existence of a certain shared pool of inherited proto-traditions.

of the composition that we now designate as *2 Enoch* was already in circulation. Meanwhile, in 1994 John C. Reeves, arguing that Scopello “has presented a compelling case for the textual dependence of *Zostrianos* upon *2 Enoch*,” embarked on bringing into the scope of the discussion the Manichaean evidence, suggesting that “a plausible argument can also be made for Mani’s possible reliance upon portions of this same Enochic composition.”<sup>8</sup> Albeit briefly, he examines the “intriguing correlation between material found in Slavonic Enoch and Manichaean traditions.”<sup>9</sup> He is interested predominantly in common *loci* of celestial geography, and in particular in the scheme of the ten-fold heavens of the Universe<sup>10</sup> (as attested in *1Ke* 88.6–7, 118.20, 170.4 and some Manichaean Sogdian fragments<sup>11</sup> on the one hand, and *2 Enoch* 21–22 on the other), suggesting that “apart from later kabbalistic texts [...] this seems to be the sole reference to ‘ten heavens’ in Jewish cosmological discussion.”<sup>12</sup> Reeves further explores the intriguing correlation between the Manichaean interpretation of the “the motif of ‘Heavenly Paradise’ that features a supernal Tree of Life” and that found in *2 En.* 8:3–4,<sup>13</sup> noting that “there is a conception common to both traditions that the Tree of Life serves as either a temporary or permanent domicile for God.”<sup>14</sup> He also compares and contrasts the portrayal of the shackled angels hanging up in the darkness of the Second Heaven, awaiting the Great Judgment (*2 En.* 7:1–5), to that of the “heavenly captives” who are “fastened upon,” or “suspended from the firmament” (as presented in some Manichaean sources).<sup>15</sup> Reeves notes:

If, as the Enochic tale alleges, evil came to earth from heaven (and bearing in mind Enoch’s status as Apostle of Light in Manichaean teaching), then a neat solution for the apparent enigma is to identify the wicked watchers of Enoch with captive archons from the Realm of Darkness who were imprisoned in heaven by agents of the Realm of Light. Such an interpretive step receives textual warrant only through *2 Enoch* 4.<sup>16</sup> It thus seems highly likely that Mani was cognizant of at least this peculiar

8 Reeves, “Jewish Pseudepigrapha,” 184.

9 Reeves, “Jewish Pseudepigrapha,” p. 187.

10 Reeves, “Jewish Pseudepigrapha,” 186.

11 Henning, “A Sogdian Fragment,” 307 (lines 78, 81).

12 Reeves, “Jewish Pseudepigrapha,” 202 (n. 78).

13 Reeves, “Jewish Pseudepigrapha,” 187–91.

14 Reeves, “Jewish Pseudepigrapha,” 190.

15 Reeves, “Jewish Pseudepigrapha,” 201 (notes 75, 76 and 77).

16 Reeves follows the segmentation of the text according to Pennington’s translation; cf. her “*2 Enoch*,” 330–31. Note that in Andersen’s translation this is chapter 7; cf. “*2 (Slavonic Apocalypse) of Enoch*,” 112–14.

tradition, and moreover utilized its testimony in adapting the Enochic tale of the “descent of the Watchers” to its new Manichaean setting.<sup>17</sup>

While Reeves’s arguments are further developed in works of other scholars,<sup>18</sup> his contribution to the subject remains somewhat overlooked, like that of Scopello.<sup>19</sup> Responding to the work of Scopello and Reeves, the present study thus offers a close reading of the ascent narrative in 2 *En.* 1–20, adducing numerous additional thematic parallels to some other ancient sources: the Nag Hammadi *Apocalypse of Zostrianos*, the *Secret Book of John*, and the *Apocalypse of Paul*; the Manichaean (Berlin) *Kephalaia*; the Qumran fragments from 1 *En.*, the *Book of the Giants* and the *Damascus Document*; the Babylonian Talmud, as well as Syriac and Jewish Aramaic incantation texts. All this evidence, it will be argued, should lead us to contest the epistemological paradigm championed by Milik wherein the Church Slavonic corpus preserves relatively late, derivative Enochic traditions of little relevance for understanding religious literature and scribal practices of antiquity.

## 2 The Slavonic *Book of the Holy Secrets of Enoch the Just* and the Utilisation of the Ascent Theologoumenon

Scholars have noticed that the 2 *Enoch* shares common ground with a cluster of ascent apocalypses<sup>20</sup> circulating in the Byzantine Commonwealth (such as

17 Reeves, “Jewish Pseudepigrapha,” 187.

18 Cf. Kósa, “*Book of Giants* Tradition,” esp. 148–49, n. 24.

19 See further Scopello, “Angels in Ancient Gnosis,” 32–33, noting the neglect of Gnostic ascent narratives by scholars treating ancient Jewish and Christian anagogic literature (ibid., 32, n. 76). Nonetheless, the explorations of Scopello prompted an interdisciplinary cross-fertilization between methodologies employed by scholars working on 2 *Enoch* and by specialists in Gnostic and Manichaean studies; see the discussion in Reeves (*Heralds*, 40–41), Pearson (*Ancient Gnosticism*, 88), Burns (“Apocalypse of Zostrianos”; *Apocalypse*, 142), Piovanelli (“From Enoch to Seth,” 79–112), and others.

20 The approach here to the bibliographical overview of the literature on the subject of heavenly journeys (with special emphasis on the anabasis pattern, as attested in 2 *Enoch*) is of necessity rather selective. On the variety of uses of the ascent theologoumenon, see the seminal contributions by Widengren, *The Ascension of the Apostle*; Segal, “Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, Early Christianity, and Their Environment,” 1333–94; Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*; Frankfurter, “The Legacy of Jewish Apocalypses in Early Christianity,” 129–200; Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*; Yarbrow Collins, “Ascents to Heaven in Antiquity,” 553–72; Schattner-Riese, “Levi in the Third Sky,” 801–20.

the *Apocalypse of Abraham*,<sup>21</sup> the *Apocalypse of Baruch* (3 *Baruch*),<sup>22</sup> the *Ascension of Isaiah*,<sup>23</sup> the *Apocalypse of the Virgin Mary*,<sup>24</sup> the *Apocalypse of Paul*,<sup>25</sup> etc.). Their Church Slavonic editions were meticulously studied against the extant Greek *Vorlagen*, with one conspicuous exception—the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. There are no traces of its Greek *Vorlage*, except for the brief entry in the *Stichometry of Nicephorus* (ninth century) in which a vague reference is made to a composition attributed to Abraham.<sup>26</sup> A tantalizing piece of information related to the same matter is presented by Epiphanius of Salamis (writing around 375 CE). Alongside the Sethian treatise attributed to Allogenes the Stranger, he lists an apocalypse purportedly composed by Abraham (*Pan.* 39.5.1):

They [i.e. Sethians] compose certain books in the names of great men and say that there are seven books in Seth's name, and give the name, "Strangers," to other, different books. And they compose another in the name of Abraham which they call an "apocalypse" and is full of wickedness, and others in the name of Moses, and others in others' names.<sup>27</sup>

The fact that an "apocalypse" composed in the name of Abraham was mentioned by Epiphanius together with other compositions, the authorship of which was attributed by Gnostics to Seth and Allogenes, raises the question whether the above quoted fragment from the *Panarion* might actually contain an hitherto overlooked reference to the Greek *Vorlage* of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, which is yet another composition that, similarly to 2 *Enoch*, survives exclusively in Church Slavonic. In any case, such a reference indicates that Slavonic apocalypses ought to be taken into consideration in a more systematic way in (re)constructing the scope of scribal sources employed in Gnostic writings.

21 Cf. Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*; Orlov, *Heavenly Priesthood in the Apocalypse of Abraham*.

22 Cf. Kulik, 3 *Baruch*.

23 Cf. Charles, *The Ascension of Isaiah*; Giambelluca Kossova et al., *Ascensio Isaiae*.

24 Cf. Baun, *Tales from Another Byzantium*.

25 Cf. Trunte, *Reiseführer durch das Jenseits: die Apokalypse des Paulus in der Slavia Orthodoxa*.

26 Hennecke, Schneemelcher, ed., Henning, ed. and tr. *New Testament Apocrypha*, 50.

27 Williams, tr., *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, 279.

### 3 Witnesses to the *Slavonic Apocalypse of Enoch*

The extant witnesses to the *Slavonic Apocalypse of Enoch* in which the composition survives in full are classified into two recensions: the longer (MSS S,<sup>28</sup> J,<sup>29</sup> P<sup>30</sup> and M<sup>31</sup>), and the shorter (MSS U,<sup>32</sup> Bars/Sok,<sup>33</sup> Srezn,<sup>34</sup> МР U<sup>35</sup>). Along with them a group of witnesses (MSS N,<sup>36</sup> VL/Jov,<sup>37</sup> Bars<sub>1</sub>/Sok<sup>38</sup>) renders retailed, somewhat trimmed editions of either the longer or the shorter recensions;

- 28 MS 321/447 (fols. 269r–323r), the National Library of Serbia (Belgrade); Bulgarian redaction (fourteenth century). The manuscript was destroyed during the bombardment on the 6th of April 1941. The first edition was produced by Sokolov, *Materialy i Zametki po Starinnoi Slavianskoj Literature*, Vyp. Tretii (vii/2): *Slavianskaia Kniga Enokha*, 1–80.
- 29 MS 13.3.25 (fols. 93r–125r), the Library of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg; Bulgarian redaction (fifteenth–sixteenth cent.). Published (with the assistance of A. Panayotov) by Macaskill, *Slavonic Texts*, 38–236.
- 30 MS Khlud D. 69 [XAYA. A. 69] (fols. 58–82), the State Historical Museum (the Addendum to the Khludov Collection), Moscow; Ruthenian redaction (copied from a Bulgarian protograph in 1679 in The Orthodox Monastery of the Exaltation of the Cross in the city of Poltava). The first edition was produced by Popov, “Bibliograficheskie Materialy,” 89–139.
- 31 MS 552, the Archaeographic Collection of the Romanian Academy of Sciences Library, Bucharest; Bulgarian redaction (dated 1485–1510); copied in Moldavia (presumably in the scriptorium of the Dobrovăț Monastery). Unpublished.
- 32 MS 3/18 (fols. 626r–638v), the Uvarov Collection, the State Historical Museum, Moscow; North-Russian redaction copied most probably in Novgorod or Pskov (fifteenth century), based on an earlier Bulgarian copy. Published in Sokolov and Speranskii, *Materialy i Zametki po Starinnoi Slavianskoj Literature* (Part 1), 109–30.
- 33 MS 2729 (fols. 9r–34v), the Barsov Collection, the State Historical Museum, Moscow; Russian redaction, (seventeenth century). Published in 1889 by Sokolov, *Materialy i Zametki po Starinnoi Slavianskoj Literature*, Vyp. Tretii (vii/2): *Slavianskaia Kniga Enokha*, 82–107.
- 34 MS 45.13.4 (fols. 357r–366v), the Library of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg; Russian redaction (sixteenth century); published by Macaskill (with the assistance of Panayotov), *Slavonic Texts*, 38–234. See also Sreznnevskii, “Otchet Otdeleniiu,” esp. 109–11, 122–23.
- 35 MS 1828 (fols. 522r–544r), the Uvarov Collection, the State Historical Museum, Moscow; Russian redaction (seventeenth century). Published by Mil’kov and Polianskii, *Kosmologicheskie Proizvedeniia*, 459–93.
- 36 MS 151/443 (fols. 1r–24v), the National Library of Serbia, Belgrade; Serbian redaction (sixteenth century), copied from an earlier Russian text. Published in 1884 by Novaković, “Apokrif o Enohu,” 70–81. The manuscript was destroyed during the bombardment on the 6th of April 1941.
- 37 MS *Slave* 125 (fols. 308v–330v), the Austrian National Library, Vienna; Serbian redaction, copied in the sixteenth–seventeenth centuries from an earlier Russian text. Published by Jovanović, “Apokrif o Enohu,” 209–38.
- 38 MS 2730 (fols. 87r–98v), the State Historical Museum, Moscow; Russian redaction, copied in 1701. For the earliest critical edition, see Sokolov and Speranskii, *Materialy i Zametki po Starinnoi Slavianskoj Literature* (Part 1), 131–42.

they constitute an additional class of texts which may be designated as representatives of the abbreviated redaction. In the latter case some of the narrative units that are originally attested in the longer and the shorter recensions are either considerably compressed, or altogether removed. This is most probably a result of the intervention of the scribes who could no longer comprehend the content of the earlier manuscripts on the basis of which they produced their copies. Finally, there also exists a parallel cluster of fragments, most of which (with only a few exceptions) derive from the shorter recension.<sup>39</sup> The storyline of the composition (as attested in longer and shorter recensions, and in the abbreviated redaction) may be divided into several distinct parts. These will be examined, compared, and contrasted to the evidence emerging after the discoveries of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Library.

#### 4 Prior to Ascent: The Seer's State of Anxiety (2 *En.* 1–2)

Provided in this narrative unit is brief but crucial information concerning the calendrical framework of the forthcoming celestial journey of “the righteous Enoch.” It is reported to have commenced on the first day of the New Year,<sup>40</sup> a festival which—in terms of social anthropology—is universally regarded as the archetypal temporal marker of the ultimate “liminal stage.”<sup>41</sup> Thus the account about Enoch's ascent acquires symbolic overtones of a “rite of passage”<sup>42</sup> testimony reporting the experience of the narrator (a point to which I shall return later).

39 For a survey of witnesses, see Badalanova Geller, *Second (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch*, 12–15; idem, “Heavenly Writings,” 199–203; idem, “Enochic Texts and Related Traditions,” 513–19.

40 That is, on the day of the regnal New Year, 1st of Nisan (cf. Esth 3:7); hence Enoch appears to have ascended to heaven at the spring/vernal equinox.

41 Significantly, *The Great Reading Menology* (Великие Четъи-Минеи), compiled in the 1530s–1540s under the supervision of the Metropolitan of Moscow Makarii, assigns in the rubric for 31st December a fragment from 2 *Enoch*, entitled *A Homily From the Books of the Righteous Enoch Who Was Before the Flood* (Слово ѿ кнѣгъ Еноха праведнаго, прежде потопа), which is almost identical with the fourteenth-century *Měnilo Pravednoe* (Мнѣило праведное) from the collection of the Trinity Lavra of Saint Sergius; see Dolgov, ed., *Velikie Minei Chetii*, 2496–99. This suggests that the New Year reference in 2 *Enoch* had practical applications for identifying liminal periods within the ritual calendar of the Eastern Orthodox Church and was not just perceived as a literary trope. See also the discussion in Badalanova Geller, *Second (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch*, 10.

42 Further on the concept of “liminality” in relation to “the rites of passage” and “initiation rites,” see Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*; Turner, “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*”; idem, “Liminality and Communitas.”

The visionary is visited by two angels who are to elevate him to the Throne of the Lord situated in the zenith of heavens. At that time Enoch is 365 years old, and his age is interpreted as a numerical metaphor allegorically referring to his role as the inventor of the calendar; as it will become clear at a later stage, the image of Enoch as the archetypal astronomer becomes the focal point of the description of his explorations into the movements of celestial luminaries, which he carries out when he reaches the Fourth Heaven (2 *En.* 11–17).

But how does Enoch's otherworldly trip begin? The patriarch was asleep in his bed, apparently resting after having observed the mandatory New Year rites and ceremonies, when suddenly a profound sorrow overwhelmed him: "a great sadness entered his heart" [ВЪЗЫДЕ ВЕЛІЕ СКРЪБЬ ВЪ СРЪЦЕ МОЕ] and he was "weeping with his eyes" [ПЛАЧЕСА ОУНМА МОИМА], while he struggled to comprehend the source of his grief (2 *En.* 1:3). The motif of the state of anxiety and distress experienced by the visionary prior to his heavenly ascent is one of the universal *topoi* of Judaeo-Christian apocalyptic compositions and is likewise attested in a number of writings circulating in the Byzantine Commonwealth concurrently with 2 *Enoch*. It is found, for instance, in the incipit of the *Apocalypse of Baruch* (3 *Baruch*), which is devoted to the emotional state and indeed despair of the visionary lamenting over the destruction of Jerusalem, before his ascent to celestial realms under the guidance of *angelus interpres*. One such example comes from the thirteenth-fourteenth century Serbian redaction of 3 *Baruch* copied in the Dragolev Codex;<sup>43</sup> the text is entitled "A Sermon of Saint Baruch<sup>44</sup> when the angel Panuil [Phanuel] was sent to him on the Holy Mountain of Zion beside the river, as he cried over the captivity of Jerusalem. O Lord, give Thy blessing" (УЪТЕНІЕ СЪГО ВАРОХА, ІЕГ<Д>А ПОСЛАНЫ БЫ̇ К НЕМОУ АНГЛЪ ПАНУИНА ОУ СЪОУ ГОРОУ СЪОУНЮ НА РЪЦЪ, ІЕГ<А> ПЛАКА СЕ О ПЛЪНЕНІИ ІЕРОУСЪМЪСЦЪМЪ. ГН̇ БЛОСВН).<sup>45</sup> The text in question reads:

When King Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem and enriched Babylon, then I, Baruch, cried loudly and said: "Lord, in what way was King Nebuchadnezzar righteous? Why did You not spare Your city Jerusalem which is Your vineyard of glory? Why have You acted so, Lord?" As I was crying, an angel of the Lord appeared and said to me: "Be silent, O man, concerning your grief. This is what was meant to happen to Jerusalem.

43 The manuscript was originally part of Prof. P.S. Srećković's collection, subsequently donated to the National Library of Belgrade, MS 651/632.

44 The opening part of the title (i.e., the expression "A Sermon of Saint Baruch") may be also interpreted as "Reading According to Saint Baruch." From the point of view of the scribe, the text may have been intended to be read during a Church service.

45 The text was published by Ivanov, *Bogomilski Knigi i Legendi*, 191–207.

But thus speaks the Lord Almighty to you, as He sent me before your face so that I could tell you all the mysteries of God. For your tears, and your voice entered the ears of the Almighty God. But give me your word that you will not embellish or withhold anything [from what I will tell you]. I will relate to you many mysteries which no man has ever seen." And I, Baruch, said to the angel: "As the Lord God lives, [...] should I embellish or withhold anything, may the Lord be my Judge."<sup>46</sup>

The apocalyptic trope of a "deeply troubled" visionary overwhelmed by spiritual apprehension and distress before his heavenly ascent features also in Gnostic tradition. One such case is presented by *Zostrianos* (NHC VIII 3.13–28), where the sage is engulfed by anxiety "which weighs upon the eponymous seer prior to revelation."<sup>47</sup> As soon as he begins contemplating the idea of delivering himself "to the beasts of the desert for a violent death," he faces "the messenger of the knowledge of the eternal Light," and "very quickly and very gladly" goes with him "to a great light cloud" (NHC VIII 3.26).<sup>48</sup> The trope of profound grief suddenly engulfing the seer prior to the mystery of revelation occurs also in the introductory chapter of yet another Gnostic tractate, the *Secret Book of John* (NHC II 1.30–2.20), written in the form of a dialogue between the resurrected Christ and his disciple John, son of Zebedee.<sup>49</sup> When the latter was subjected to a verbal insult by "the Pharisee named Arimanius," he "turned away from the temple and went to a mountainous and barren place," as he was "distressed within." But it was exactly the state of distress that would prompt the mystery of revelation:

At the moment I was thinking about this, look, the heavens opened, all creation under heaven lit up, and the world shook. I was afraid, and look, I saw within the light [someone standing] by me. As I was looking, it seemed to be an elderly person. Again it changed its appearance to be a youth. Not that there were several figures before me. Rather, there was a figure with several forms within the light. These forms were visible through each other, and the figure had three forms. The figure said to me: "John, John, why are you doubting? [...] I am the incorruptible and the undefiled one. [Now I have come] to teach you what is, what [was],

46 Cf. Ivanov, *Bogomilski Knigi i Legendi*, 192–93; see also Gaylord, "3 Baruch," in Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:662.

47 Burns, "Apocalypse of Zostrianos," 30.

48 Sieber, "Zostrianos VIII.1," 370.

49 Turner and Meyer, "Secret Book of John," 108.



and what is going to come. [...] So now, lift up your [head] that you may [hear] the things I shall tell you today, and that you may relate them to your spiritual friends who are from the unshakable generation of the perfect human.”<sup>50</sup>

On the other hand, the encounter between the visionary and his heavenly escort in 2 *En.* 1:3–4 is much more elaborate than that in some Gnostic apocalyptic compositions (e.g., *Zostrianos*). Thus, while pondering upon the cause of his distress, Enoch is suddenly confronted by two huge men<sup>51</sup> with snow-like hands/arms<sup>52</sup> (var. with hands/arms as golden wings),<sup>53</sup> whose faces were as luminous as sunlight<sup>54</sup> (var. as luminous as candles).<sup>55</sup> Their wings were brighter than gold,<sup>56</sup> and their eyes were as radiant as burning candles.<sup>57</sup> The words uttered by them were emerging from their mouths like blazing flames,<sup>58</sup> while their garments were idiosyncratically characterised, “like a polychromatic burst of singing.”<sup>59</sup> Scholars have been struggling with the interpretation

50 *Ap. John* ННС II 1.30–2.20, tr. Turner and Meyer, “Secret Book of John,” 108.

51 MS S: АВНСТА МН СЕ ДВА МОУЖА ПРѢВЕЛНКА ЗЪЛО; MS J: ЯВНШЖ МН СА ДВА МЖЖА ПРѢВЕЛНКА СЪЛО; MS P: ЯВНША МН СА ДВА МЪЖА ПРЕВЕЛНКА СЪЛО; MS U: ЯВНСТА МН СА ДВА МОУЖА ВЕЛНКА СЪЛО; MS N: ЯВНСТА МН СЕ ДВА МЪЖЕ ПРѢВЕЛНКА СЪЛО.

52 MS S: РЖЦѢ НХ БЪЛЪНШН СНЪГА; MS J: РЖЦѢ НМ БЪЛЪНШН СНЪГА; MS P: РЖЦѢ НХ БЪЛЪНШН СНЪГА.

53 MS U: РОУЦѢ ЕЮ ЯКО КРНЛЪ ЗАТЪ; MS N: РОУЦѢ ЈЕЮ ЯКО КРЫЛЪ ЗАТН.

54 MS S: Н БЪШЕ ЛНЦЕ ЕЮ ЯКО СЛНЦЕ СЪВТЕЦЕСА; MS J: Н БЪШЕ ЛНЦА НМЪ ЯКО СЛНЦЕ СЪВТАЦЕ СА; MS P: Н БЫША НМ ЛНЦА ЯКО СЛНЦЕ СЪВТАЦАСА; MS N: ЛНЦЕ ЈЕЮ ЯКО СЛНЦЕ СЪВТЕ СЕ.

55 MS U: ЛНЦЕ ЯКО СВѢЦН ГОРАСТА.

56 MS S: КРЫЛЪ НХ СВѢТЛЪНШН ЗАТЪ; MS J: КРНЛА НМЪ СВѢТЛЪНШН ЗАТА; MS P: КРЫЛА НХЪ СВѢТЛЪНШН ЗАТА.

57 MS S: СЪУН ЕЮ ЯКО СВѢЦН ГОРАЦН; MS J: ОУН НМ ЯКО СВѢЦН ГОРАЦН; MS P: СЪУН ЖЕ НХ ЯКО СВѢЦА ГОРАЦА; MS N: ОУН ЈЕЮ ЯКО СВѢШН ГОРЕШН. The phrase is missing from MS U.

58 MS S: НЗЪ ОУСТЬ НХ СЪГНЪ НСХОДА; MS J: НЗ ОУСТЬ НМ СЪГНЪ НСХОДА; MS P: СЪ ДСТЬ НХ СЪГНЪ НСХОДА; MS U: НЗ ОУСТЬ ЕГО ЯКО СЪГНЪ НСХОДА; MS N: НЗЪ ОУСТЬ ЈЕЮ СЪГНЪ НСХОДЕН.

59 MS S: ОДЪАНІЕ НХ ПЪНІЕ РАЗДЪАНІЕ ВНОМЪ МНОГЫХЪ БАГРН; MS J: ОДЪАНІЕ НМЪ ПЪНІЕ РАЗДАНІЕ ВНОМЪ МНОГЫХЪ БАГРЫ; MS P: СЪДЪАНІЕМЪ Н ПЪНІЕМЪ РАЗДААНІА ВНОМЪ БАГРЫ; MS U: СЪДЪАНІА ЕЮ ПЪНІЮ РАЗДААНІЮ; MS N: СЪДЪАНІЕ ЈЕЮ ПЪНІЕ РАЗАНУ ПО. Significantly, the Church Slavonic noun пѣннѣ may be employed in other sources to render Gr. ὕμνος, ὕμνησις, ἀνεσις, ψδῆ, thus denoting not only the concept of “singing” in general, but also functioning as a term for “hymn”/“ode.”

of the latter passage ever since the publication of the first edition of *2 Enoch*, but without reaching consensus.<sup>60</sup>

The answer to this linguistic conundrum appears to be rather straightforward, if one considers the fact that the Church Slavonic term denoting “clothing” (ѠДѢАНІЕ) is conventionally used to render the Greek term *στιχάριον*,<sup>61</sup> which is phonetically close to the term *στιχηρά* (Slav. СТІХЕРА), denoting “hymn.” In short, the Slavonic scribe who was responsible for the original translation of the Greek *Vorlage* of *2 Enoch* either misread the noun *στιχάριον* (“vestment”/“garment”/“clothing”) as *στιχηρά* (“song”/“hymn”), or intentionally used paronomasia; and since the *στιχάριον* was known to be “multicoloured,” the *στιχηρά* was likewise described as “polychromatic.” To sum up, the apparent misreading of (or versed wordplay with) the Greek *Vorlage* triggered *ad hoc* the mechanism of domestic Slavonic hermeneutics. Furthermore, the resulting exegesis of the aural icon of angelic agency became supported by the subsequent description (*2 En.* 22:2) of the Throne of the Lord as “polyphonic” (МНОГЪГЛАСНН), and this imagery corresponds to the general apocalyptic concept of “seeing the voice” (cf. Rev 1:12–15).

To return to parallels between the descriptions of the commencements of celestial journeys in Slavonic apocalyptic tradition (e.g. *2 Enoch*) and the Gnostic one (e.g. *Zostrianos*): when urged by their angelic escort to set off to the heavenly realm, both visionaries *rush* to fulfil the requests immediately, with no delay. Thus Enoch testifies that, having “hastened and bowed” before his luminous visitors (ОУЕДРН Н<sup>Х</sup> Н ПОКЛОННХСА НМА), he quickly leaves his house and closes the doors behind him, as instructed (Н ОУСКОРН<sup>Х</sup> ПОСЛОУШАЕ НЗЫДО<sup>Х</sup> ВЪНЬ НЗ ДОМОУ МОЕГО Н ЗАТВОРН<sup>Х</sup> ДВЕРН ЪКОЖЕ РЕКОСТА МН). He then urges his children not to search for their father until

60 Morfill and Charles suggest: “their dress had the appearance of feathers”; see idem, *Book of the Secrets of Enoch*, 2. While stating that “the text at this point seems to be incorrigibly corrupt,” Andersen maintains that the phrase should be translated as “their clothing was various singing”; see idem, “2 (*Slavonic Apocalypse*) of Enoch,” 106. Pennington, on the other hand, suggests “their clothing was a diffusion of foam”; see idem, “2 Enoch,” 329. Other scholars also joined the discussion by arguing that the decipherment of this idiosyncratic Enochic expression (e.g. ѠДѢАНІЕ ЕЮ ПѢНІЮ РАЗДААНІЮ) should be based on the semantic coverage of Church Slavonic terms denoting “clothing” (ѠДѢАНІЕ) and “singing” (ПѢНІЕ), and especially on the conventional association of these two terms (as attested in the stock phrase “garments of glory”) within general framework of Isa 59:17, 61:10, Ps 34:26, Job 29:14, etc.; see the discussion in Navtanovich, “ѠДѢАНІЕ ЕЮ,” esp. 6.

61 Together with lexeme ѠДѢАНІЕ in the Slavonic domain there circulated a specialised term СТІХАРЬ (denoting “vestment worn during liturgical ceremonies”), which was a calque of Gr. *στιχάριον*.

the Lord returns him to them. In a similar way, Zostrianos hurries to follow the instructions of the angel: "I very quickly and very gladly went up with him."

## 5 Rising to the First Heaven (2 *En.* 3–6): Means of Ascent

The content of the ensuing ascent-narrative (2 *En.* 3–20) deals with matters of cosmographic templates and cosmological knowledge. It is presented as a testimony of the visionary who rises through different strata of the Universe, heaven after heaven, from the lowest to the highest, and vividly describes the otherworldly landscapes he observes there, along with the celestial dwellers inhabiting them. If one compares and contrasts the logistics of heavenly journeys in 2 *Enoch* and some Gnostic texts (e.g., *Zostrianos*), the following common features become apparent. Both Enoch and Zostrianos are transported upwards on *clouds*. In the case of Enoch, the visionary is taken on the wings of his heavenly escort, who carry him up to the First Heaven, after which he is "deposited on clouds" which "moved along." Zostrianos, on the other hand, simply states that he goes up with the angel "to a great light-cloud." The description of Enoch's heavenly journey, however, is much more elaborate than that of Zostrianos, which may be explained by the different types of apocalyptic discourses employed in these two texts. In the case of 2 *Enoch*, the explicitly outlined template of celestial architecture functions as a spatial framework of the visionary's gradual exposure to the secrets of the Universe and his progressive acquisition of revelatory knowledge, with each heaven marking a higher stage of his initiation. In fact, 2 *Enoch* exhibits the typical traits of an archaic narrative rendering "rites of passage" (Van Gennepe) and "liminal experiences" (Turner); hence the strict layout of its celestial template, the transparency of which is so striking. In contrast, in the case of 1 *Enoch* (including data from the Dead Sea Scrolls) and some Gnostic apocalypses (such as NHC XI,3 *Allogenes*), the scheme of multilayered heavens is somehow blurred, and details concerning their numbers appear to be not of primary but of secondary importance, with the cosmographic details of the over-worldly journey being trimmed while the emphasis shifts to the final phase of the acquisition of revelatory knowledge by the visionary.

At the First Heaven, Enoch encounters the rulers of the stellar ranks, and the angels who guard the awesome storehouses of snow and ice, along with the hoards of the clouds from which they enter and exit.<sup>62</sup> There the visionary

62 Similar *topoi* are employed in Job 38:22–23; see also the reference to the storehouses of the winds, the hail, the mist, and the clouds in 1 *En.* 41:3–5.

further observes related meteorological and atmospheric phenomena, and comes across “two hundred angels who rule over the stars and the heavenly congregation, and who fly with their wings thus encircling along all the planets” (Н ПОКАЗАШЖ МН .С̄. АГГЛАЬ, НЖЕ ВЛАДАЕ<sup>T</sup> ЗВЪЗ<sup>A</sup>АМН, Н СЛОЖЕНІЕ НБСЕ<sup>M</sup>. Н ЛЪТАЖ<sup>T</sup> КРНЛЫ СВОИМН, Н СЪБЪХОДА<sup>T</sup> ПО ВСЪХ<sup>X</sup> ПЛАВАЮЩН<sup>X</sup>; 2 *En.* 4:1–2). Significantly, their number is identical with that of “the Watchers who parted from the Lord with their Prince Satanail” (СН СЖ<sup>T</sup> ГРНГОРН, НЖЕ СЪВРЪГОШЖ<sup>C</sup> С̄ ГА .С̄. ТЪМЖ СЪ КНАЗЕ<sup>M</sup> СВОИ<sup>M</sup> САТАНАИЛЕ<sup>M</sup>; 2 *En.* 18:3).<sup>63</sup>

## 6 The Second Heaven (2 *En.* 7): The Imprisonment of Chained Apostate Angels

At the Second Heaven, described as a massive celestial prison, Enoch encounters shackled apostate angels (implicitly identified as Watchers’ associates/subordinates)<sup>64</sup> and converses with them. They plead with him, asking him to pray to God and make a petition before Him on their behalf concerning their future fate, which remains to be decided. To quote the longer recension of 2 *En.* 7:1–5 (MS S):

And these men took me and raised me up to the Second Heaven. And they showed to me [what was there]; and I saw darkness much deeper than the darkness on Earth. And there I beheld enchained prisoners (ВЕРНЖНН) kept under watch who were hanging, awaiting the Measureless (var. Great) Judgment (var. Tribunal). And these angels were much darker than earthly darkness, and they produced incessant crying at all times. And I said to the two men who were with me, “Why are these ones being made to suffer unceasingly?” The two men answered me, “These are the Lord’s apostates who did not obey the command of the Lord, but followed their own will, and withdrew [from God] with their Prince, [and with those angels] who are sentenced in the Fifth Heaven [i.e., the Watchers].” I became saddened on their account; and these angels bowed before me, and said to me, “Man of God, pray for us to the Lord.” And I answered them, saying, “Who am I to pray for the angels, as

63 For the formulaic number “two hundred,” see the discussion below.

64 See also the discussion in Rubinstein, “Observations on the *Slavonic Book of Enoch*,” 7–10.

I am but a mortal man? Who knows where I myself am going and what will befall me and who will pray on my behalf?"<sup>65</sup>

The text-unit quoted above is almost identical with the corresponding chapters in MSS P and J, except that the lexeme *ВЕРНЖНН* (as attested in MS S) is replaced by *ВЕРЫЖННКЫ* (in MS J), or by *ВЕРЫЖННКН* (in MS P), as a plural form of the masculine noun *ВЕРЫЖННКЪ* (elsewhere spelled as *ВЕРНЖЪННКЪ*/*ВЕРНЖННКЪ*).<sup>66</sup> The text of chapter 7 (verses 1–5) in MS P reads as follows:

And these men took me and raised me up to the Second Heaven. And they showed to me darkness much deeper than the darkness on Earth. And there I beheld enchained prisoners (*ВЕРЫЖННКН*) kept under watch, who were hanging, awaiting the Great and Measureless Judgment (var. Tribunal). And these angels were much darker than earthly darkness, and they produced incessant crying at all times. And I said to the two men who were with me, "Why are these ones being made to suffer unceasingly?" The two men answered me, "These are the Lord's apostates who did not obey the command of the Lord, but followed their own will, and withdrew [from Him] with their Prince, and those [angels] who are sentenced in the Fifth Heaven [i.e., the Watchers]." I became saddened on their account; and they bowed before me, saying, "Man of God, pray for us to the Lord." And I answered them, saying, "Who am I to pray for the angels, as I am but a mortal man? Who knows where I myself am going and what will befall me and who will pray on my behalf?"<sup>67</sup>

The mythologoumenon of the apostate angels hanging in chains in the dark abode of the Second Heaven is likewise attested in the other two witnesses to the longer recension: MSS J and M.<sup>68</sup>

65 Cf. Sokolov, *Materialy i Zametki po Starinnoi Slavianskoj Literature*, Vyp. Tretii (vii/2): *Slavianskaia Kniga Enokha*, 5–6.

66 For the semantic coverage of forms *ВЕРНЖЪННКЪ*/*ВЕРНЖЪННКЪ* ("prisoner shackled in chains"), see Miklosich, *Lexicon*, 61; Sreznevskii, *Materialy*, 245; Bonchev, *Rechnik na Tsŭrkovnoslavanskiia Ezik*, 71.

67 Cf. Popov, "Bibliograficheskie Materialy," 92–93.

68 Significantly, the detail of "confinement by enchainment" is absent from all known witnesses to the shorter recension and the abbreviated redaction. Thus the old hypothesis of Sokolov regarding the priority of the longer recension over the shorter gains further weight, since it is unlikely that the local Slavonic scribes would have invented *ad hoc* the motif of "the bound angels" as a mere embellishment to the narrative, especially in the light of the attestations of the topos of "bondage as Watchers' punishment" in 1 *Enoch* 10; see also the discussion below.

Recalling the parallel attestations of the “firmaments as penitentiary” cosmographic paradigm in Manichaean corpus and in the Slavonic *Book of the Holy Secrets of Enoch the Just*, as originally highlighted by Reeves (see above), it may be observed that, while in the latter case the imprisoned apostate angels are “hanging in chains” in the dark abode of the Second Heaven, in the former “the captive archons” are “fastened upon,” or “suspended from the firmament.”<sup>69</sup> In both cases the offenders appear to be subjected to an identical punishment—they are to hang in/from a celestial spot situated above the terrestrial realm; but while in Slavonic texts the motif of fetters/chains with which the hanging angels are bound is spelled out in a rather direct manner, in the Manichaean texts it is implied. Additional data (related to the function the defeated archons had in the construction of the cosmos) from Coptic Manichaica was further provided by Kósa, who underlines that the trope of the rebellious demons and/or the Watchers (*egrēgoroi*) “bound with chains/fetters” is attested on several occasions in the Berlin *Kephalaia* (e.g. *1Ke* 58.24–28; 93.25–27; 268.15–17, etc.),<sup>70</sup> and suggests that “the motif of enchainment seems to be a widely spread” one.<sup>71</sup> Frequently attested within the Manichaean cosmographic template,<sup>72</sup> however, are also recurrent references to both the firmaments and the earths as possible *loci* of punishment. One such case is presented by *1Ke* 51.25–32; according to this text, the Living Spirit has judged

a[1] the rulers, the powers of sin who had faulted and sinned against the sons [of] the First Man, [...] according to right[e]ous judgement. He has bound them in heaven and earth. He put each one to the place fitting for him, he weighed each of them [acco]rding to his c[ru]elty and oppression. [While] some [of] the[m] he enclosed in [the prison, ot]hers he hung head down.<sup>73</sup>

Then again, the defeated Watchers (*egrēgoroi*) may be imprisoned in a subterranean realm (e.g. “the depths of the earth, below the mountains,” *1Ke* 117.1–4),

69 Reeves, “Jewish Pseudepigrapha,” 184–87.

70 For additional references to “bound” or “fettered” demons in the Manichaean corpus, see the data presented in Kósa, “Imprisoned Evil Forces,” esp. 73.

71 Kósa, “*Book of Giants* Tradition,” 165.

72 Cf. Kósa, “*Book of Giants* Tradition,” 164–67 (with reference to *1Ke* 58.24–28, 79.31–33, 88.23–24, 88.27–30, 93.25–27, 117.1–4, 118.20–23, etc.); idem, “Imprisoned Evil Forces,” 71–78 (with reference to *1Ke* 22.15, 31.27–28, 51.25–32, 52.16–19, 76.4–8, 92.12–14; 104.27–28, 105.7–10, in addition to references from *1Ke* immediately cited above; *Psalms-Book, Part 2* 11.14–17; 209.29–210.10; *Acta Archelai* 8).

73 *1Ke* 51.25–32, tr. Gardner, *Kephalaia*, 56, in Kósa, “Imprisoned Evil Forces,” 73.

despite the fact that their rebellion took place in the firmament.<sup>74</sup> And although the Manichaean tradition may refer to enchained demons in prisons situated in various locations (the firmament[s], the earth[s], or below ground), the image of the shackled prisoners *hanging in chains* in a celestial jail is missing. Significantly, it appears to be the hallmark of *2 Enoch*.

In contrast, in *1 En.* 10 the Watchers and their offspring are neither “hanging in chains,” nor “fastened upon,” or “suspended from the firmament.” Instead, they are sentenced by the Lord to be bound;<sup>75</sup> Raphael is to bind Azazel “by his hands and his feet, and throw him into the darkness” (*1 En.* 10:4–5),<sup>76</sup> while Michael is to punish “Semyaza and others with him who have associated with the women” by binding them “for seventy generations under the hills of the earth until the day of their judgment and of their consummation, until the judgment which is for all eternity is accomplished” (*1 En.* 10:11–13).<sup>77</sup> No hanging in chains, or fastening upon the firmament is mentioned here, but bondage in darkness “until the end of all generations” (*1 En.* 10:15).

In the light of the data presented above, it appears that the celebrated fragment from the Epistle of Jude 6 concerning the fate of “the angels who kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation” is much closer to the Slavonic *Book of the Secrets of Enoch*, rather than to *1 Enoch*, contrary to the conventional opinion of scholars.

As in *2 En.* 7:1, according to which the apostate angels are hanging in chains in the darkness of the Second Heaven, in the Epistle of Jude 6 they are likewise “reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.” As in the Epistle of Jude, in *2 Enoch* no illicit transmission of secret knowledge on behalf of the angels to their human wives is mentioned. The reason given for the punishment of the condemned angels in the Second Heaven is their apparent failure to obey the commandments of the Lord;<sup>78</sup> instead

74 Kósa, “*Book of Giants* Tradition,” 164.

75 For binding as an act of divine judgment carried out by Raphael and Michael, see Stuckenbruck, *The Myth of the Rebellious Angels*, 224; briefly analysed by him is also the parallel interpretations of this motif in the *Book of the Watchers* (*1 En.* 10:4–8) and *Jub.* 5:6; 10:7–8; see *ibid.*, 16, 28. See also the discussion in Arcari, “Illicit Unions,” 435, as well as the contribution of Losekam, in this volume.

76 See also Stuckenbruck, *The Myth of the Rebellious Angels*, 22; Drawnel, “The Punishment of Asael (*1 En.* 10:4–8) and Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Literature.”

77 Cf. Knibb, “*1 Enoch*,” 194–96; Drawnel, *The Aramaic Books of Enoch*, 180–86 (with reference to his convincing reconstruction of 4Q202 21–28).

78 This is also the case with some Aramaic magic bowls, where the sin of the angels “is not that of revealing the Lord’s secrets, but rather of transgressing their Lord’s command.” See Paz, “Eternal Chains,” esp. 544.

of following His will, they are reported to have turned away from Him, along with the brotherhood of the Watchers and their Prince. His identity is to be revealed only when the visionary ascends further up and encounters them on the higher, Fifth, Heaven; this is no one else but the notorious Satanail (2 *En.* 18:3–4). Thus in the Slavonic *Book of the Secrets of Enoch* there appear to be two separate congregations of fallen angels who are detained on the Second and on the Fifth heavens respectively. The narrative about the Fifth Heaven (as we shall see later) actually clarifies the sub-text of the narrative about the Second Heaven and provides a more detailed explanation of the nature of the transgression of the apostate angels enchained there; the latter are simply designated as associates/subordinates of the Watchers who, in turn, are described as repentant, remorseful warrior-giants. Having broken their Covenant with God, they left the celestial realm together with their Prince, after which they engaged in carnal relationships with earthly women. In contrast to their imprisoned brethren on the Second Heaven (who were never described as warriors), the Watchers in the Fifth Heaven are not shackled. In fact, nowhere in the surviving manuscripts containing the *Book of the Secrets of Enoch the Just* are the chained angels hanging in the Second Heaven called “Watchers.”<sup>79</sup> Designated as “Watchers” in 2 *Enoch* are only repentant celestial warrior-angels interned on the Fifth Heaven. Their subordinates, who are jailed in the Second Heaven, are simply regarded as their “brethren” (2 *En.* 18:7). Still, both angelic congregations—that on the Second, and that on the Fifth Heaven—appear to have been punished for abandoning the celestial realm in exchange for terrestrial dwelling. In Jude 6, angelic sin is formulated in a rather similar way: they “kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation.”

This, in turn, raises once again the thorny issue of the chronological framework of the *Vorlage* of 2 *Enoch*, and strengthens the argument that a Greek version of the Semitic original was already in circulation at the nascence of Christianity.<sup>80</sup>

79 The terms which are used in 2 *Enoch* 18 to denote “the Watchers” represent Slavonic transliteration(s) of the Greek term Ἐγγήγοροι; see the discussion below.

80 Significantly, the concept of “the chains of the demons of the underworld” is likewise glossed in the Sethian treatise *Three Forms of the First Thought* (NHC XIII 41.1–42.3); see Turner, “Three Forms of First Thought (NHC XIII,1),” 726–27:

“I am their father, and I shall tell you a mystery, // ineffable and unspeakable by [any] mouth. // Every bond I loosed from you, // and the chains of the demons of the underworld I broke, // the very chains that bound and restrained my members. // The high walls of darkness I overthrew, // and the secure gates of those pitiless ones I broke, // and I smashed their bars. // And the evil force and the one who beats and hinders you, // and the tyrant, the adversary, the king, and the present enemy, // all these I explained to those



As for the “demon bound in chains” mythologoumenon, in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages it engendered a constellation of *historiolae* related to magic rites and witchcraft. In a recent article Yakir Paz analyzes certain specific allusions to Enochic literature (e.g., *1 En.* 10:4–5, 12–15; *2 En.* 7:1 and *3 En.* 5) in incantation bowls against evil demons, with a special emphasis on transmission and reception of the myth of the fallen angels. While building his argument (on the basis of data presented in Syriac and Jewish Aramaic incantation texts),<sup>81</sup> Paz also mentions further parallels from Muslim sources (e.g., the account of the two fallen angels, Hārūt and Mārūt). In his exhaustive survey of traditions pertinent to the adaptations of “the motif of suspension of the fallen angels,” Paz suggests that its “earliest attestation is probably in the long version of *2 En.* 7:1.”<sup>82</sup> In addition, he brings into discussion a relevant fragment from the medieval *Aggadat Bereshit* containing an account about the punishment of the fallen angels, the wording of which closely parallels the one found in the Slavonic text (i.e., *2 En.* 7). The Hebrew text runs as follows:

Uzza and Azael “were the heroes of old, the men of renown” (Gen. 6:4). At the beginning they were men of renown, and now where are they? R. Eliezer son of R. Yosef said: They were suspended by iron chains and suspended in the mountain of darkness.<sup>83</sup>

Meanwhile, the narrative permutations of the *historiolae* of the evil demons fettered in chains engender a specific iconographic idiom, the most palpable representations of which are the portrayals of the “bound malevolent spirit,” as found in magic bowls.<sup>84</sup> At the same time, the “shackled demon” mythologoumenon appears to have functioned as the formative template of incantation texts in various linguistic environments (e.g., Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, Latin, Slavonic,<sup>85</sup> Romanian, etc.). Ethnographic data indicates that such

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who are mine, // who are children of light, // so that they may nullify them all, // be liberated from all bonds, // and return to the place where they were in the beginning.”

It seems to the present author that a reference to “the chains of the demons of the underworld” in this passage and parallels with *2 Enoch* is unlikely to be coincidental.

81 Paz, “Eternal Chains.”

82 Paz, “Eternal Chains,” 538.

83 Paz, “Eternal Chains,” 539.

84 See the image presented by Vilozny, “The Art of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls,” 31 (Fig. 1, depicting the demons being chained by their hands, necks, and feet).

85 For Slavonic tradition, see the incantation against the child-stealing witch in the chapter “Sisinius’s prayers against fevers” in Sokolov, *Materialy i Zametki po Starinnoĭ Slavianskoĭ Literature*, Vyp. 1–v, 38. See also the discussion in Badalanova Geller, “Between Demonology and Hagiology.”

spells, prayers and invocations are customarily inscribed on textile, parchment, metal plates, clay implements, etc., thus functioning as protective amulets and talismans.<sup>86</sup> Besides, they may be orally performed by magical practitioners as verbal rituals (either malevolent or benevolent). As for the “binding” motif, it may be employed in erotic spells and charms intended at fixing a bond between the client and the object of his/her sexual desire. Alternatively, such spells may aim at the destruction of such a bond between certain targeted individuals (whose interpersonal relations the practitioner aims at harming). The idiom of “binding/tying/fastening” (of both the angelic/demonic and human agents), along with its reversed construing (that is, “unbinding/untying/unfastening”), appears thus to have verbalized the very nature of magical rites and ceremonies, i.e. the attempt at impacting the social setting of the individual’s existence, saturated in the realm of angelic and/or demonic agency.<sup>87</sup> The Enochic trope of demonic punishment appears to have been instrumentalized by magical practitioners, and the trope of “binding the demon” became a ritual act. The narrative of the *Book of the Secrets of Enoch* (chapter 7) appears to be the earliest source in which such types of ritual vocabularies and prescriptions are coined.

## 7 The Third Heaven (2 En. 8–10): Paradise and Hell

On the Third Heaven Enoch finds himself in the blessed realm of Paradise, a “place of inconceivable beauty” (МѢСТО ТО НЕСЪВѢДНО ДОБРОТОЖ). Significantly, the cosmographic template of the location of Paradise on the Third Heaven coincides with that attested in the testimony of the apostle Paul in 2 Cor 12:2–4. A similar celestial scheme is employed in some recensions of the Slavonic *Life of Adam and Eve* 25:3 (following the Greek *Apocalypse of Moses* 37:5), the *Vision of Paul*, etc.<sup>88</sup>

86 Palaeographic evidence points out that on many occasions these texts may be copied by monks, or by members of the clergy.

87 The trope of malevolent opponents being shackled with chains of iron brought from Hell (i.e. Sheol and Gehenna) is likewise attested in Aramaic counter-charms against sorceries and witchcraft; see Levene, *Jewish Aramaic Curse Texts*, 31–32, 121–22.

88 For the description of the Paradise *topoi* in Slavonic parabiblical writings, see Sedel’nikov, “Motiv o Rae”; Uspenskiĭ, “Drevnerusskoe Bogoslovie”; Badalanova Geller, “Recasting the Bible”; idem, “Hierotopia and Ethno-Geography.”

In 2 *En.* 8:3 “the Tree of Life” (ДРЪВО ЖИЗНЬНО) is in the center of Paradise.<sup>89</sup> Enoch compares its appearance to that of crimson-gold fire (ЗЛАТОВН<sup>А</sup>НО, И ЦРЪВЕНО ОБРАЗО<sup>М</sup>. И ОГНЕЗРАУНО), and clarifies that its majestic body marks the heavenly spot where the Lord rests when He goes into the Garden (НА НЕ<sup>М</sup> ЖЕ ПОУНВАЕ<sup>Т</sup> ГЪ ЕГДА ВЪСХОДИ<sup>Т</sup> ВЪ РАИ). As for the “spatial” characteristics of “Edom’s Garden” itself, it is situated on the border between the realm of “mortality/ephemerality/transience” (ТЛѢНІЕ/ТЪЛѢНІЕ), and that of “immortality/imperishability/eternity” (НЕТАЛѢНІЕ/НЕТАЛѢНІЕ).<sup>90</sup> Two springs emanate from there: from one milk and honey issue forth (ЕДННЪ ТОУН<sup>Т</sup> МЕ<sup>А</sup> И МЛѢКО), and from the other—oil/chrisem (ѢЛЕН)<sup>91</sup> and wine (ВННО).

The similar trope of the four rivers issuing forth from Paradise is attested in a vast number of Church Slavonic witnesses to the *Vision of Paul*, for instance.<sup>92</sup> Thus, according to one of the Bulgarian versions of the latter text, entitled “A Discourse-Homily Addressed to Christian(s) for the Sake of the Suffering Soul and For the Solace on Behalf of Saint Apostle Paul Who Once Ascended to the Third Heaven” (СЛОВО ПОДУЕНІЕ ХР<sup>Ъ</sup>ТІАНОМЪ РАДИ ДІПА БОЛЕЗНЮ И ШТЕПЕННЕ ЗА СЪАГО АПОСТОЛА ПАВЛА НЕКОЕ ВРЕМЕ КАКВО СА ВОЗНЕСЕ ДО ТРЕТО НЪО) from MS 1081 (fols. 25v–42v) from the Bulgarian National Library, copied in 1821, the following description of the four rivers streaming within the Paradise landscape is made:

There were four rivers streaming there. The one from the western side of the Holy City<sup>93</sup> is of honey, from the southern side is as white as milk, from the east is of oil [and from the north is of wine]. And I, Paul, said to the Angel: “My Lord, what are these rivers running in this City?” And he answered me: “These four rivers are called on earth with their own names. The river of honey is called Fision [= Pishon], the river of wine is called Tigar [= Tigris], the river of oil is called Gion [= Gihon], and the river of milk is called Efrat [= Euphrates]. This is for the sake of the saints who lived in this world having sought after no food or drink, but suffered

89 Cf. Rev 2:7: “To everyone who conquers, I will give permission to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God.”

90 In other Church Slavonic sources, the noun ТЛѢНІЕ is employed to convey Gr. φθορά, σαθρότης, whereas its antonym НЕТАЛѢНІЕ is used to translate Gr. ἀφθαρσία.

91 The form used here (ѢЛЕН, Gr. ἔλαιον), is identical to that attested in the episode of the angelification of Enoch (cf. 2 *En.* 22:8–9): “And the Lord said to Michael, “Take Enoch and extract him from his earthly garments; and anoint him with sweet (var. blessed/holy) chrisem (ПОМАЖИ ЕЛЕЕМЪ БЛАГЫМЪ)! And dress him with garments of glory!”

92 Generally, see van Ruiten, “Four Rivers of Eden.”

93 As in other Church Slavonic sources, Paradise is identified with the Heavenly Jerusalem.

from hunger and thirst, and from evil for the sake of the Lord, and this is how they spent their days [during their life-time]; when they enter the City, they are awarded by the Lord with thousands of honours.”<sup>94</sup>

The unfolding description of the paradisaical landscape in the above quoted Bulgarian redaction of the *Vision of Paul* appears to have been reproducing a spatial template similar to that of *2 Enoch*. In both cases, the blissful abode on the Third Heaven is imagined as an eternal dwelling of the righteous in which they are to rest after their death. Also on the same heaven, next to the radiant residence of the righteous, a dreadful dungeon is engulfed by darkness. It is to this “frightening place of all kinds of tortures and torments” (ТОУ МЪСТО СТРАШНО ЗЪЛО, ВСЪКА МЖКА МДЪЕНІА НА МЪСТЪ ТО<sup>М</sup>) which, according to *2 En.* 10:1, is situated in the northern side of the Third Heaven (НА СЪВЕРНЖ СТРАНЖ), where the human sinners are sent after their lifespan expires. There they are tormented by “strange, pitiless angels, carrying swift weapons and causing merciless torture” (И АГГАН ТОУЖНИ И НЕ МЛ<sup>С</sup>ТНВЫ, ПОСАЩЕ ОРЖЖІА НАПРАСНА, МЖВЕЩЕ НЕ МЛ<sup>С</sup>ТНВНО; *2 En.* 10:3).

The list of sins committed by those sentenced to the dark dungeon in the Third Heaven is long: it includes witchcraft, sorcery, divination, idolatry, apostasy, stealing of human souls, harassing the poor and taking away their property, refusing to feed the hungry but starving them to death instead, etc. (*2 En.* 10:4–6). One of the most distinct characteristics of the celestial landscape of the Third Heaven is that it encompasses the eternal abodes of both the righteous and the sinners; of course, the former are to dwell in everlasting light, while the latter are to suffer in infinite darkness.

Significantly, the realm allocated for the post-mortem sufferings of sinful humans is strictly separated from the space allotted for the brotherhood of the fallen angels (e.g., the Watchers and their associates). Humans are sentenced on the Third Heaven, while angels—on the Second and on the Fifth Heavens; under no circumstances are the human and angels (even the fallen ones!) to mix. At the same time, the motif of punishment by hanging of (occasionally) enchained mortal sinners occurs in other writings (e.g. the *Apocalypse of the Theotokos*, etc.). It is also typical for the vernacular iconography of the Beyond, as attested in mural paintings on the open galleries or women’s compartments of virtually every single church in the Balkans; as it happens, this region, once part of the Byzantine Commonwealth, appears to have been the ultimate

94 The fragment is found on fol. 33r.

hometown of the anonymous scribes who carried out the translation of the *Vorlage* of 2 *Enoch* from Greek into Church Slavonic.<sup>95</sup>

Then again, in some narratives of the post-mortem punishment (which forms the very core of the axiology of the Beyond), the concept of “sin” appears to be intertwined with the concept of “intellectual ineptness” (or “lack of sense of reason”).<sup>96</sup> Thus the idea that the fall of humankind was caused by ontological ignorance is manifested in a rather straightforward way in 2 *En.* 30:15–17, in the passage containing God’s testimony concerning the creation of man. Emphasized in this anthropogonic account is that after His having created the primordial Adam out of seven substances and given him free will (Н ДА<sup>Х</sup> ЕМ<sup>8</sup> ВОЛА<sup>А</sup> ЕГО), God pointed out to him two pathways—that of the light and that of the darkness (Н ОУКАЗА<sup>Х</sup> ЕМОУ .В. ПЖТН, СВЪ<sup>Г</sup> Н ТЪМЖ):

And I told him “Here is Good, and here is Evil (СЕ ТН ДОБРО А СЕ ЗЛО)”; so that I may come to know whether he [= Adam] has love for Me or abhorrence (ДА ОУВѢ<sup>М</sup> ЛЮБОВ ЛН НМА<sup>Г</sup> КЪ М’НѢ ЛАН ПЕНАВНСТЬ); and so that it might become plain who among his kin is to be the one that shall be devoted to Me (ДА ЯВНТСА ВЪ РОДѢ ЕГО ЛЮБАЩЕН МА). Whereas I knew his nature (АЗ ЖЕ ВНАДѢ<sup>Х</sup> Е<sup>С</sup>ТВО ЕГО), he did not know his nature (СОН ЖЕ НЕ ВѢ<sup>А</sup>ШЕ СВОЕГО Е<sup>С</sup>ТВА), and [it was because of this ignorance that] he was to sin (ЈАКО СЪГРѢШНТН ЕМОУ ЕС). This is why ignorance is more lamentable than sin (ТОГО РАДН НЕВѢ<ДѢ>НІЕ ЕС ГОРЕ СЪГРѢШЕНІА). And I said to him, “After the sin, there is nothing but death (Н РѢ<sup>Х</sup> ПО СЪГРѢШЕНІН ННО РАЗВѢ СЪМРѢ<sup>Г</sup>Ь).”<sup>97</sup>

The translation of this passage is notoriously difficult, since the Church Slavonic verb СЪГРѢШАТН/СЪГРѢШНТН (conventionally used to render Gr. ἀμαρτάνω, but also πταίω) may denote “to sin,” “to trespass,” “to commit a crime,” “to err,” “to make a mistake,” “to do something wrong,” etc.<sup>98</sup> The semantic coverage of its cognate forms СЪГРѢШЕНІЕ/ГРѢХЪ (Gr. ἀμαρτία, ἀμαρτήμα, παράπτωμα)

95 As for the question of the mutual interdependence between the codes of the iconography, verbal art and literature, it remains understudied.

96 Anthropological and folklore research recently undertaken in the Balkans shows that in vernacular Christian exegesis the concept of “intellectual blindness” is intertwined with that of the Original Sin (and hence the fall of humankind), and this type of discourse is of paramount importance for Slavonic ethnohermeneutics; this theme, within the context of Folk Bible traditions, is discussed elsewhere.

97 Quoted *apud* Andersen’s translation of MS J, “2 (*Slavonic Apocalypse*) of *Enoch*,” 152.

98 See Miklosich, *Lexicon*, 921.

includes not only “sin,” but also “error,” “mistake,” “fault,” etc.<sup>99</sup> Significantly, in *2 En.* 30:16 the concept of “sin” (СЪГРѢШЕННІЕ) is bound to that of “ignorance” (НЕВѢДѢННІЕ), with the latter being recognised as the cause for the former. One finds this association most striking, especially against the background of some basic Gnostic concepts. In fact, there is a similar statement in *Zostrianos* (NHС VIII,1) in the description of the end of his heavenly trip, during which “the mysteries of each aeon and angelic entities ruling them have been revealed” to him. Following the revelation concerning the Fourth Aeon, *Autogenēs*, Zostrianos is conveyed the following enigmatic message:

Now all the others that reside in matter were all persistent. It was because of their knowledge of majesty, their audacity and power, that they came into existence and adorned themselves. Because they did not know God, they shall pass away.<sup>100</sup>

The identification of the concept of “ignorance” as a cause for “passing away”—either in literally, or metaphorical sense—in *2 Enoch* and *Zostrianos* is yet another intriguing parallel between these two works.

## 8 The Fourth Heaven (*2 En.* 11–17)

When taken by his celestial escort to the Fourth Heaven, Enoch studies the trajectories of the Sun and the Moon and “measures carefully” the size of the gates through which the two luminaries enter and exit. The content of this sub-unit shares common ground with the *Astronomical Book* (*1 En.*).<sup>101</sup> It is also on this heaven where Enoch acquires astronomical and calendrical lore; in his testimony he does not just produce a practical table of calendar reckoning but describes in detail a systematic mathematical scheme of the heavenly bodies and their regular movements. Enoch is thus portrayed as someone able to mastermind numbers, perceived as a mystical projection of the harmony of the macrocosm. And although *2 En.* draws upon calendrical and astronomical details similar to those found in *1 En.*, the narrative strategies employed

99 See Miklosich, *Lexicon*, 921.

100 Cf. *Zost.* NHС VIII 128.7–18 in Turner, “Zostrianos,” 581.

101 The relationship between these two texts was never a subject of a separate study.

in these two compositions bring forth two separate, self-contained storylines. Indeed, *2 En.* does not recycle abridged renditions of the *Astronomical Book* (i.e. *1 En.*), but produces its own compendium of calendrical and astronomical data, encapsulating it within a self-contained narrative describing the celestial landscape.

While analysing the *Astronomical Book* (*1 En.*), Otto Neugebauer managed to prove that it was based on Babylonian astronomy, and, taking on board the Aramaic fragments from the Dead Sea Scrolls, he argued that *1 En.* brought—or, more precisely, transferred—Babylonian astronomical theory to Jewish Palestine.<sup>102</sup> Unfortunately, Neugebauer never introduced the data from *2 En.* into the discussion, thus failing to recognize that Babylonian epistemological models are conveyed in both *1 Enoch* and *2 Enoch*.

## 9 The Fifth Heaven as a Domain of the Repenting Angels (*2 En.* 18)

When Enoch reaches the Fifth Heaven on the wings of his angelic escort, he encounters there a celestial host of what initially appears to be “an uncountable” multitude of warriors (МНОГЫЖ ВОЕ НЕИЗЪУЧЕННІЕ). At a later point (*2 En.* 18:3), their quantity would be clarified as two hundred,<sup>103</sup> and this tell-tale formulaic number is the same as the one attested in the *Book of Watchers* (*1 En.* 6:6–7).<sup>104</sup> Significantly, in several Manichaean (Sogdian,<sup>105</sup> Middle Persian,<sup>106</sup> etc.) sources (e.g. the *Book of Giants*), the number of rebellious demons is also given as two hundred.<sup>107</sup>

Meanwhile, the term employed to designate the Watchers in different Slavonic MSS fluctuates in its spelling: *Grigore* [ГРІГОРЕ], *Grigorē* [ГРІГОРѢ],

102 Neugebauer, *The ‘Astronomical’ Chapters of the Ethiopic Book of Enoch*. See also Drawnel, “*1 Enoch* 73:4–8 and the Aramaic *Astronomical Book*,” 687–704; idem, *The Aramaic Astronomical Book (4Q208–4Q211) from Qumran*.

103 Occasionally (in MSS S, J and M) it is embellished and upgraded to “two hundred myriads.” On the other hand, while in most of the witnesses to *2 Enoch* the number of the Watchers is defined as “two hundred,” in some versions of the longer recension (MSS J and P) there occurs a peculiar clarification that there were only three Watchers who actually descended to the crest of Mount Hermon and broke their Covenant with God (И ѿ ПНХЪ СОИИДОШАСА ТРИ НА ЗЕМАЮ ѿ ПРСТА ГДАНА, НА МЪСТО ЕРМОНЕ ПРОТОРГОШАСА, СЪВЪЩАНІА НА РАМѢ ГОРЫ ІЕРМОНСКІА).

104 See the discussion in Fröhlich, “Giants and Demons,” esp. 99, 109.

105 Cf. Henning, “Book of the Giants,” 68–71.

106 Henning, “Book of the Giants,” 70.

107 See Kósa, “*Book of Giants* Tradition,” 148, 164, 167–68, 171, 175; Wilkens, “Remarks,” esp. 223.

*Grigori* [Грнгорн], *Grigorie* [Грнгорїє], *Grigori* [Грнгорїн/Грнгорнн], *Grigor'i* [Грнгорьн], *Grigory* [Грнгоры], *Egrigor'/Egrigori/Egrigori* [Егрнгорь/Егрнгорн/Егрнгорнн], *Igrigor'i* [Игрнгорьн], etc.<sup>108</sup> As noticed by scholars,<sup>109</sup> all these alterable forms are in fact inconsistent transliterations of the Greek term(s) Γρήγοροι, Ἐγρήγοροι (= the Watchers). This would indicate that the Greek *Vorlage* (or, most probably, *Vorlagen*) of the composition now designated as 2 *Enoch* contained a particular term similar to (or identical with) the angelonym ἐγρήγοροι, as attested in the *Chronography* of George Synkellos,<sup>110</sup> in the excerpt "From the First Book of Enoch, Concerning the Watchers" (Ἐκ τοῦ πρώτου βιβλίου Ἐνώχ περὶ τῶν ἐγρηγόρων; i.e., 1 *En.* 6.1–9.11).<sup>111</sup> Meanwhile the linguistic analysis of lexicographical data gathered from the extant witnesses to 2 *Enoch* shows that in *Slavia Orthodoxa* there circulated a corpus of multiple orthographic permutations of the Greek term(s) Γρήγοροι, Ἐγρήγοροι; in all surviving sources these angelonyms were transliterated, but never translated (as it is usually the case with *onomastica sacra*).<sup>112</sup> The forms designating the Watchers in Slavonic witnesses to 2 *Enoch* are thus to be regarded as borrowings from a certain parabiblical thesaurus of Enochic lore, the imprints of which can be traced back to the early Byzantine Greek chronographa (and in particular to the works of Panodorus or Annianus, on the bases of which George Synkellos builds his discourse), notwithstanding the Aramaic counterparts of the term in the Qumran fragments from the *Book of Giants*.<sup>113</sup>

Furthermore, as duly noted by W. Henning already in 1943, in his study on "The Book of the Giants," the term *Egrēgoroi* (as a designation of the Watchers), was likewise employed in some Coptic Manichaean texts (such as the *Kephalaia*).<sup>114</sup> Further philological explorations into the geography of

108 See the survey of relevant lexicological data in Badalanova Geller, "Unde malum?"

109 See the discussion in Charles and Forbes, "2 *Enoch*," 439–40 (n. XVIII.3); Andersen, "2 (*Slavonic Apocalypse*) of *Enoch*," 130 (n. 18a).

110 See Dindorf, *Georgius Syncellus et Nicephorus*, 20–23, 42–47, 60.

111 See Dindorf, *Georgius Syncellus et Nicephorus*, 20–30; Adler and Tuffin, *Chronography of George Synkellos*, 16–23. On textual emendation in Synkellos' *Enoch* excerpts, see Adler, *Time Immemorial*, 175–82.

112 In contrast, in Church Slavonic versions of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* the term denoting the Watchers is translated; see Badalanova Geller, "Enochic Texts and Related Traditions," 480–82.

113 See also the analysis of the term 𐤆𐤍 as "wakeful (one)" in the *Book of Giants* fragments from Qumran in Stuckenbruck, "203. 4QEnoch Giants<sup>a</sup> ar," 26–27.

114 See Henning's publication of some pertinent fragments from *1Ke* 92.24–31 ("Now attend and behold how the Great King of Honour who is ἔνωια, is in the third heaven. He is ... with the wrath ... and a rebellion..., when malice and wrath arose in his camp, namely the Egrēgoroi of Heaven who in his watch-district [rebelled and] descended to the earth. They did all deeds of malice. They revealed the arts in the world, and the mysteries of



the lexicographic blueprints of the cognate terms denoting “the Watchers” (e.g. the Greek Γρηγόροι/Εγρηγόροι, the Coptic *Egrēgoroi*, the Slavonic Грнгоре/Грнгорѣ/Грнгорн/Грнгоріе/Грнгорін/Грнгорнн/Грнгорьн/Грнгоры/Егрнгорь/Егрнгорн/Егрнгорнн/Нгрнгорьн, etc.) in various cultural environments may clarify the multilingual dimensions of the Enochic corpus.

Enoch’s testimony about his experience on the Fifth Heaven commences with a brief description of circumstances surrounding his encounter with the brotherhood of the Watchers. The visionary reports that “their appearance was like that of humans” (ВНДѢНІЕ Н<sup>х</sup> АКО ВНАДѢНІЕ УЛБѢУЕ), and “their immensity was greater than huge giants” (ВЕЛНУѢСТВО Н<sup>х</sup> ВЕЩЕ ЦЖДОВЬ ВЕЛНКУ<sup>х</sup>). Their faces were morose (Н ЛНЦА Н<sup>х</sup> ДРАХЛА), and their mouths were constantly silent (Н МЛѢУАНІЕ ОУСТЬ Н<sup>х</sup> ВЪСЕГДА); this appears to be the explanation as to why there was no service held on the Fifth Heaven (Н НЕ ВѢ СЛОУЖЕНІА НА .Ѓ.МЬ НБСН). However, in contrast to the account about the apostate angels imprisoned in Second Heaven (2 *En.* 7), no hanging on chains is mentioned in the description of the Fifth Heaven, or confinement. There is only a depressing, grim awareness of the forthcoming Great Tribunal to which its inhabitants are condemned, and a deafening silence of those awaiting it.

But why are the Watchers being punished? Enoch is eager to find out the roots of their grievous sin and asks his celestial escort to explain them to him. The narrative then begins unfolding—as in the accounts concerning the Second and the Third Heaven—as a dialogue, and the visionary is duly informed about the events leading to Watchers’ punishment. While 1 *En.* focuses in a somewhat obsessive way on the mythologoumenon of the illicit transmission of esoteric knowledge by rebellious angels to their earthly wives (the overwhelming impact of which is palpable throughout the entire composition to the extent that it becomes its hallmark),<sup>115</sup> 2 *Enoch* is entirely free of the theme. As in the narrative unit about the apostate angels hanging in chains in the celestial prison on the Second Heaven (2 *En.* 7), in the account about the Fifth Heaven there is no reference to the proscribed crossing of epistemological boundaries between the celestial and terrestrial realms, neither is

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heaven to the men. Rebellion and ruin came about on the earth ...”) and 1*Ke* 171.16–19 (“Earthquake and malice happened in the watchpost of the Great King of Honour, namely the Egrēgoroi who arose at the time when they were ... and there descended those who were sent to confound them”); Henning, “The Book of the Giants,” 71. See also Kósa, “*Book of Giants* Tradition,” 153–54.

115 The literature on the subject is vast; for recent publications, see Reed, “Gendering Heavenly Secrets”; Drawnel, “Knowledge Transmission.”

there mentioned the violation of the gender-bound restrictions of knowledge transmission. The storyline is simple and straightforward: instead of obeying the orders of the Lord and keeping the Covenant with Him, the Watchers decided to follow “their own will,” and “parted from Him with their Prince Satanail.” At this point Enoch is promptly reminded that “those who followed in their footsteps” are the prisoners in the Second Heaven, engulfed by deep darkness (ИЖЕ СЖ<sup>Т</sup> НА ВТОРЪ<sup>М</sup> НБСН СЪБАРЪЖНМН ТЪМОЖ ВЕЛНКОЖ) whom he has already seen. In short, the guilt of the Watchers and their subordinates turns out to be the annulment on their behalf of their primordial Covenant with the Lord, as a result of their decision to exercise their free will. Significantly, a similar line of argument is presented in the *Damascus Document* (4Q266 2 ii 14–21):

And now, sons, listen to me and I shall open your eyes so that you can see and understand the deeds of God, so that you can choose what he is pleased with and repudiate what he hates, so that you can walk perfectly on all his paths and not allow yourselves to be attracted by the thoughts of a guilty inclination and lascivious eyes. For many have gone astray due to these; brave heroes stumbled on account of them, from ancient times until now. For having walked in the stubbornness of their hearts the Watchers of the heavens fell; on account of it they were caught, for they did not heed the precepts of God. And their sons, whose height was like that of cedars and whose bodies were like mountains, fell. All flesh which was on the dry earth expired and they became as if they had never been, because they had realized their desires and had failed to keep their creator’s precepts, until his wrath flared up against them. Through it, the sons of Noah and their families strayed, through it, they were cut off.<sup>116</sup>

Like in *2 Enoch*, in the *Damascus Document* the nature of Watchers’ misconduct is interpreted in terms of “their walking after the stubbornness of their hearts.” The “mighty warriors” are considered to have transgressed not because they revealed secret knowledge to their wives (as in *1 En.*), but “because they did not keep God’s commandments.” These parallel attestations of one and the same idea—the identification of the Watchers’ sin as an act of infringement of the Covenant between them and the Lord, and a further wrongful exercise of free will—in both *2 Enoch* on the one hand, and certain compositions discovered in the Dead Sea Scrolls (e.g., the *Damascus Document*) on the

116 Quoted after García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 1:553–55 (CD-A 1–11); see also Fraade, “History (?),” 522–23.

other—shows that the hitherto maintained hypothesis of the lack of any such correspondences between these two traditions should be reassessed.

One further matter. The case of the Watchers' transgression gets even more complicated when one takes into consideration the fact that in *2 En.* 18:1 they are described as warriors, which would mean that the refusal to follow the orders of their Commander-in-chief would qualify as grievous misconduct, similar to that of soldiers deserting combat. As members of the Heavenly Host, they are supposed to follow unconditionally the orders of the Lord, and never question, let alone disobey them. Besides, the angels are supposed to be free of carnal bondage with the human race and are expected to dwell in the incorporeal domain of their celestial homeland. Instead, the Watchers "descended from the Throne of the Lord" down to "the crest of the Mount Hermon," where they broke their Covenant with Him and engaged in carnal relationships with "the daughters of men," thus defiling the earth with their deeds (Н ѠСКВРЪННСА ЗЕМЛА ДЪЛАМН НХ). As a result of their having engaged in sexual encounters with the human race, a hybrid progeny was sired, whose deeds further polluted the terrestrial realm.

In both *1 En.* and *2 En.* the summit of Mount Hermon is designated as a spatial mark of iniquity, leading to total desecration of the Universe. According to *1 En.* 6:6, this is the spot where the Watchers came down and swore their oath. In *2 En.* 18:4 the crest of Mount Hermon is described as the place where the Watchers descended from the Throne of the Lord (a detail missing from *1 En.*) and broke their Covenant with Him (ПРЪТРЪГОША СЪВЪЦАНІЕ НА РАМЪ ГОРЫ ЕРМОНСКЫЕ), thus polluting the earth with their deeds.<sup>117</sup>

The closing paragraph of the text-unit devoted to the Fifth Heaven poses further questions; they are related to the singular image of the repenting angels, as presented in *2 En.* 18:8–9. Thus, after his having witnessed the sorrowful laments and overwhelming bereavement of the Watchers on account of the gloomy destiny of their brothers languishing in the darkness of the Second Heaven, the visionary urges them "to start holding a liturgy and begin serving before the face of the Lord" (ПОСТАВНТЕ СЛОУЖБН ВАШЕ Н СЛОУЖНТЕ ПРЪА ЛИЦЕМ ГИИМЪ). The Watchers "listened to Enoch's admonishment and lined up in four ranks in this Heaven" (ПОСЛОУШАШЕ НАКАЗАНИА МОЕГО Н СТАШЖ НА УЕТРИН УНИИ НА ПЪСН СЕМ), after which "four trumpets sounded together with a loud voice" (ВЪСТРЖЪНШЖ .Д. РИ ТРЖЪН ВЪКОУПЪ ГЛЪСОМ ВЕЛНКОМ) and "the *Grigori* began singing in accord, and their voices ascended

117 On the axiology of "Mount Hermon" as a spatial icon of Watchers' sin, see Charles and Forbes, "2 *Enoch*," 440 (n. XVIII. 4); Andersen, "2 (*Slavonic Apocalypse*) of *Enoch*," 132 (n. 18e).

to the face of the Lord” (ВЪСПѢШЖ ГРНГОРН ЕДННОГЛА<sup>С</sup>НО. Н ВЪЗЫДЕ ГЛА<sup>С</sup> Н<sup>Х</sup> ПРѢ<sup>А</sup> ЛНЦЕ<sup>М</sup> ГНА). The question as to whether the Lord is going to take into consideration the repentance of the Watchers, as formulated in 2 *Enoch*, remains open.

The crucial point raised by the present analysis, however, is that the image of the repenting (fallen) angels in 2 *Enoch*—which plays such an important role in the eschatological macro-narrative unfolding in a parascriptural heritage of *Slavia Orthodoxa*—parallels that of repentant giants praying to God for mercy in the Qumran *Book of Giants*,<sup>118</sup> and that of kneeling giants, likewise repenting their sins, in the *Book of Giants* in Manichaean tradition.<sup>119</sup> These significant parallels between Enochic traditions, as attested in Aramaic, Coptic and Slavonic, are of utmost importance for the study of the apocalyptic traditions in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages.

## 10 The Sixth Heaven (2 *En.* 19)

On the Sixth Heaven, positioned below the Lord’s footstool, Enoch sees “seven cohorts of angels, most bright and very glorious—their faces radiant, more than the shining sun’s rays” (ВНАДѢ<sup>Х</sup> ТОУ .З. УЕТЬ ДГГЛА ПРѢСВѢТЛН Н СЛАВНЫ ЗѢЛО. Н ЛНЦА Н<sup>Х</sup> СНАЕЦП ПА<sup>В</sup> ЛОУУЪ СЛНУНЫХЪ ЛЪЦЕЦЕСА). Responsible for keeping the equilibrium of the Universe, they are in charge of monitoring the movements of the stars (ЗВѢЗ<sup>А</sup>НОЕ ХОЖАЕНІЕ), the rotation of the Sun (СЛНУНО ОБРАЦЕНІЕ), the phases of the Moon (ЛОУНО ПРѢМѢНЕНІЕ), and the well-being of the cosmos (МНРСКОЕ БЛГОТВОРАЕНІЕ). Enoch does not engage in dialogue with them, but reports on their celestial and terrestrial obligations:

there are angels who oversee seasons and years, and angels [in charge] of rivers and seas, and angels [in charge] of every earthly fruit, and of every grass; these are the ones providing all sustenance to every living being; and there are angels [in charge] of all human souls who write down all the deeds [of all people], and [of] their lives before the face of the Lord.<sup>120</sup>

118 Perhaps the earliest attestation of this motif is found in 4QEnGiants<sup>a</sup> (copied in the middle of the first century BCE); see García Martínez, *Qumran and Apocalyptic*, 103. See also the discussion in Goff, “Sons of the Watchers,” esp. 117, 124–25.

119 See the discussion in Kósa, “*Book of Giants* Tradition,” 172–77.

120 Cf. Sokolov, *Materialy i Zametki po Starinnoi Slavianskoj Literature*, 18–19.

To sum up, the description of the Sixth Heaven replicates, to a certain degree, that of the First Heaven. At the same time, it appears to be the upper crust of the multiple firmaments below the footstool of the Lord.

## 11 Reaching the Highest Heaven (2 *En.* 20–22)

There are two types of celestial maps in 2 *Enoch*. According to the first one, attested only in one of the witnesses to the longer recension (MS S), but in all witnesses to the shorter recension (MSS U, Srezn, MPU, Bars/Sok) and the abbreviated redaction (MSS N, VL/Jov, Bars1/Sok), the number of heavens is seven.<sup>121</sup> The template of the sevenfold firmaments is the most popular one in Slavonic parabiblical traditions; for instance, it is implemented in the storyline of *Isaiah's Vision*,<sup>122</sup> and certain indigenous apocalyptic compositions, including the “revelations” of some male and female seers prophesying in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, whom the members of the local communities venerated—and even worshiped—as “Living Saints,” thus implicitly associating them with Enoch as the archetypal visionary.<sup>123</sup>

According to some witnesses to the longer recension of the *Book of the Secrets of Enoch* (MSS J, P, and M), however, the heavens are reported to be not seven, but ten, and this scheme—seven plus three—is likewise attested in the Nag Hammadi *Apocalypse of Paul* (NHC V,2)<sup>124</sup> and in some Manichaean sources (e.g. *1Ke* 88.6–7, 118.20, 170.4).<sup>125</sup> Still, the comparison between the descriptions of the celestial landscapes witnessed by the visionaries during their ascents, as presented in the Coptic and the Slavonic accounts, shows that the only cosmographic feature these compositions have in common is the pattern of the “tenfold firmament.”

It is often asserted that the passages containing the description of the eight, ninth and the tenth heavens (as found in 2 *En.* 20:3, 2 *En.* 21:6, and 2 *En.* 22:1) are

121 On the concept of the seven heavens in Jewish and Christian apocalypses, see Yarbro Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, 21–54.

122 See Ivanov, *Bogomilski Knigi i Legendi*, 131–64. The main difference between 2 *Enoch* and *Isaiah's Vision* is that in the latter case the visionary does not ascend bodily, while in the former he does. This is why Enoch's body is anointed and hence he acquires an angelic status, whereas Isaiah does not.

123 See the discussion in Badalanova Geller, “South Slavic,” esp. 289–91.

124 Scopello and Meyer, “Revelation of Paul,” 313–19. See also the discussion in Kaler, *Flora Tells a Story*, 60–62, 168–71.

125 See above the earlier discussion in Reeves (“Jewish Pseudepigrapha,” 186, 202) and others.

interpolations.<sup>126</sup> The analysis of the content of these chapters, however, raises questions about the background of the scribes responsible for these insertions, since they demonstrate significant knowledge of Jewish cosmological models, as attested in the Babylonian Talmud.

According to MS J, the visionary is shown the Throne of the Lord from a distance and deduces that it must be situated on the Tenth Heaven (2 *En.* 20:3); the fragment is rather short and runs as follows:

And they showed me from a distance the Lord who was sitting on his exceedingly high Throne, for this is where God is, on the Tenth Heaven, which in the Hebrew language is called Aravoth (אַרַבּוֹתָ).<sup>127</sup>

A similar phrase is inserted in MS P:

What is therefore on the Tenth Heaven, given that it is there where the Lord dwells? God is on the Tenth Heaven, which in the Hebrew language is called Aravat (אַרַבַּתָּ).<sup>128</sup>

Meanwhile, the name of the Tenth Heaven in MSS J and P renders the Hebrew term *Araboth*.<sup>129</sup> Significantly, the latter is also found in 3 *En.* 41:3.<sup>130</sup> It is also attested in the Babylonian Talmud (*Hag.* 12b), where all the seven heavens are listed by name (*Vilon, Raqia, Shechqim, Zevul, Ma'on, Machon, and Araboth*). *B. Hag* 12b also provides the following description:

*Araboth* is that in which there are Right and Judgment and Righteousness, the treasures of life and the treasures of peace and the treasures of blessing, the souls of the righteous and the spirits and the souls which are yet to be born, and dew wherewith the Holy One, blessed be He, will hereafter revive the dead. [...] There [too] are the Ofanim and the Seraphim, and the Holy Living Creatures, and the Ministering Angels, and the Throne of

126 Cf. Morfill and Charles, *Book of the Secrets of Enoch*, 27 (n. 6); Andersen, "2 (*Slavonic Apocalypse*) of Enoch," 135 (n. 20d), 136 (n. 21j). Elsewhere the present author suggested that the numerical shift from *seven* to *ten* in celestial topography of heavens (as attested in MSS P and J) may have reflected (or been impacted by) the conversion from the Glagolitic to Cyrillic script (and the subsequent transposition from the Glagolitic numeral system into Cyrillic). See earlier discussion in Badalanova Geller, "Poetics of Errors."

127 *Apud* Andersen's translation of MS J, "2 (*Slavonic Apocalypse*) of Enoch," 134.

128 Cf. Popov, "Bibliograficheskie Materialy," 103.

129 See also the comments on the forms *Аравотъ, Араватъ, Аравотъ* in Sokolov and Speranskii, *Materialy i Zametki po Starinnoi Slavianskoj Literature* (Part 2v), 158–59 (n. 1).

130 Alexander, "3 (*Hebrew Apocalypse*) of Enoch," 292, 305.

God; and the King, the Living God, high and exalted, dwells over them in *Araboth*, for it is said: Extol Him that rides upon *Araboth* whose name is the Lord (Ps 68:5).<sup>131</sup>

In short, in *b. Hag. 12b*, the term *Araboth* denotes the realm where righteousness and justice dwell, referring specifically to the highest (in this particular case, seventh) heaven; under the same token it functions as “a poetic name for heaven.”<sup>132</sup> However, in *b. Hag. 12b* the term *Araboth* is not listed together with the terms *Mazzalôt* or *Kokabîm*;<sup>133</sup> they are absent from the text, which means that the medieval Slavonic scribe responsible for this addendum into the redactions of 2 *Enoch*, even if he had access to *b. Hag. 12b*, the latter was not used as a direct source. The knowledge about the *Araboth* as the highest heaven may have been transmitted orally. In both schemes, the Jewish cosmology (i.e. *Hag. 12b*) and *Slavonic Enoch* (MSS J and P), the term *Araboth* refers to the zenith of the celestial realm.<sup>134</sup>

As for the references to the names of the Eighth and the Ninth Heavens, they are found in 2 *En. 21:6* (*en bloc* with the name of the Tenth Heaven, which occurs immediately after that, in 22:1). Here follows the passage concerned from MS P:

And Gabriel swept me up like the wind takes away a leaf, and he moved me along and put me down before the Face of the Lord. And I saw the Eighth Heaven, which is called in the Hebrew language *Muzaloth* (ЕЖЕ НАРЕЧЕТСА ЕВРЕЙСКНМЪ ЯЗЫКОМЪ М8ЗАЛОӨЪ), the changer of the seasons (ПРЕМЪНТЕЛЪ ВРЕМЕНЕМЪ), of dryness (С8ХОТН) and wetness (МОКРОТН), and the twelve zodiac signs (ДВАНДЕСАТИМЪ СОДІАМЪ), which are above the Seventh Heaven. And I saw the Ninth Heaven, which in the Hebrew language is called *Kukhavym* (Н ВНАДЪХЪ Ө-Е П8БО, ЕЖЕ ПО ЕВРЕЙСК8 ЗОВЕМЪ К8ХАВЫМЪ), where the heavenly houses of the twelve

131 Cf. *Soncino Talmud Chagigah* (<https://www.halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Chagigah.pdf>).

132 Jastrow, *Dictionary*, III3.

133 See the discussion below.

134 As pointed out by Ryan, brief articles about a certain mysterious star *Aravan* occur in some seventeenth-eighteenth centuries Russian miscellanea containing calendrical and astronomical/astrological fragments (e.g. Pascal Tables (*Paskhaliia*), astrological articles entitled *Planetnik*, the *Seal of Solomon* rebus, etc.); see Ryan, “The Oriental Duodenary Animal Cycle in Old Russian Manuscripts,” 16–17. The latter detail indicates that in the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries the scientific thesaurus of the Orthodox Slavs employed the term *Araboth* (in a somewhat amended version) as an astronomy.

zodiac signs are. And on the Tenth Heaven, *Aravoth* (НА ДЕСАТОМЪ НБСН ДРАВОӨЪ), I saw the view of the face of the Lord, like iron made burning hot in a fire.<sup>135</sup>

Significantly, nowhere in the text of *2 Enoch* do the scribes mention any of the first seven heavens by name. Special terms are used to designate only the “superfluous heavens” (i.e., the Eighth, the Ninth and the Tenth). In other words, only those heavens which appear to be incompatible with the (otherwise) dominant scheme of the seven heavens are defined by special appellations. As mentioned above, these particular passages in MSS J and P, which are missing from the other text-witnesses of *2 Enoch*, are most probably interpolations. Furthermore, the designations of the three additional heavens (*Muzaloth*, *Kukhavim* and *Aravoth*) are in fact “domesticated” Slavonic versions of genuine Hebrew words (i.e., *Mazzaloth*, *Kokabim* and *Araboth*) which are otherwise widely attested in the Targumim, Talmud Bavli and Yerushalmi, and midrashic literature. Thus the lexeme *kokavim* is used as a common term designating stars, planets and zodiac signs.<sup>136</sup> The lexeme *mazzalot* has a similar semantic coverage: it means “planet,” “constellation,” and even “luck.”<sup>137</sup> The Hebrew terms *Kokabim* and *Mazzaloth* often occur together (as in *b. Ber.* 10a), but not in conjunction with the poetic word *Araboth* (as used in *b. Hag.* 12b). The taxonomy of the different heavenly strata in the celestial scheme in *2 Enoch* is a rather exceptional case; this more probably indicates the oral transmission of cosmological knowledge. This specific “heavenly thesaurus” (as employed in MSS J and P) betrays the scribe’s attempt not only to iron out the problematic details concerning the troubling deviations from the conventional patterns of heavenly topography (i.e., ten versus seven heavens), but also to revive the dormant memory of the Jewish lineage of *Slavonic Enoch*.

To sum up: While most of the text-witnesses to *2 Enoch* maintain that the celestial habitat is divided into seven strata, in some of the extant redactions of the longer recension the number of heavens is ten; and since a similar scheme of the “ten-layered” celestial realm is attested in the Nag Hammadi *Apocalypse of Paul*, as well as in some Manichaean sources, this detail raises some important questions that may relate to the reception history of both *2 Enoch* and the *Apocalypse of Paul*. Would it be plausible to consider the possibility that at the time when the Greek translation of the Semitic *Vorlage* of *2 Enoch* was made, there were two concurrent protographs based on either the model of

135 Cf. Popov, “Bibliograficheskie Materialy,” 104.

136 Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 619.

137 Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 755.



“the seven heavens” or on that of “the ten heavens”? And can we contemplate whether the latter celestial scheme was likewise known to the author(s) of the Nag Hammadi *Apocalypse of Paul* and the Manichaeans? This hypothesis may bring new nuances to the discussion opened by Madeleine Scopello as to whether *2 Enoch* was not “part of the stock knowledge of a cultivated man such as the author of *Zostrianos*” (see above), and indeed of the rich multilingual milieu fostering Gnostic ideology.<sup>138</sup>

## 12 Conclusion

The initial stage of the present argument was aimed at describing and challenging a deeply entrenched misconception about the origins and the nature of *2 Enoch*, as propagated by J.T. Milik: that the composition was late and derivative in comparison to *1 Enoch*. His viewpoint appeared to be substantiated by the discovery of Qumran Aramaic fragments of *1 Enoch* in the Dead Sea Scrolls, suggesting that they attest to the only legitimately ancient version of the Enochic corpus. When a sober view is taken of all the palaeographic evidence, it appears that the Slavonic manuscripts in which *2 Enoch* survives are in fact older than the Ethiopic manuscripts which preserved *1 Enoch*, and that there is virtually no evidence to support the common assumption that Slavonic Enoch was either “late,” or a “secondary” composition based upon redrafts of the textual corpus of *1 Enoch*. The differences between the two texts are substantial, even if based on a similar theme: *1 Enoch* is a compendium of complex data comprising astronomy, cosmology, angelology, etc., and is organized into a cluster of distinct books, while *2 Enoch* is a unified narrative reflecting the kind of heavenly journey and revealed knowledge, some of which became appropriated in Gnostic texts. *2 Enoch* is much less encumbered with technicalities in comparison to *1 Enoch*, but it manages to convey the key message of how this biblical patriarch was brought up to the seventh (or the tenth) stratum of heaven, and how he witnessed the cosmic structures and logistics of the Universe, with the crucial detail of returning to earth to convey this esoteric knowledge to his descendants. As a chronicle, *2 Enoch* was much more likely to have inspired other visionary works of this kind, since it was more accessible and adaptable to oral transmission while appealing to the imagination of anyone contemplating the idea of heavenly ascents.

Due to the legacy of scholarship which has treated *2 Enoch* as a secondary work containing relatively few novel contributions to the discourse on the

<sup>138</sup> Scopello, “*The Apocalypse of Zostrianos*,” 380.

Second Temple Judaism or early Christianity, important data from this text has either been missed or neglected, including comparisons with Gnostic literature from Nag Hammadi, Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran, or Manichaean sources. Some recent studies (e.g., by Scopello and Reeves) have changed the discourse, but without managing to alter the commonly held view of *2 Enoch* as relatively unimportant in comparison with *1 Enoch*. While the present work is not intended as a comprehensive survey of certain key themes and motifs in *2 Enoch* and in the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Nag Hammadi Library and Manichaean literature, our main argument is that these parallels need to be taken into consideration. They include: the state of anxiety prior to the ascent (*2 En.* 1–2; cf. *Zost.* NHC VIII 3.13–28; *Ap. John* NHC II 1.30–2.20); the description of the enchained angels hanging in the Second Heaven (*2 En.* 7.1–5; cf. *1Ke* 58.24–28 *passim*); the designation of sin as ignorance, in contrast to salvific knowledge (*2 En.* 30.15–17; cf. *Zost.* NHC VIII 128.9–14; *Test. Truth* NHC IX 31.10–15, 31.22–32.8, etc.); the designation of the Watchers (*2 En.* 18) as giant warriors, their sin as wrongly exercised free will (cf. CD 2.14–21), and their response as penitence (*2 En.* 18:8–9; cf. 4QEnGiants<sup>a</sup>); the notion that there are not seven, but ten heavens (some witnesses to the long recension of *2 En.* 20:3; cf. *Apoc. Paul* NHC V,2), the last three of which bear adaptations of Hebrew words otherwise known from the Targumim, Talmudim, and midrash.

The present analysis suggests that *2 Enoch* may well have influenced Gnostic literature in its role as the very first Jewish literary work of its kind to describe the adventure and wonders of a heavenly journey, which ancient storytellers and scribes would certainly have cherished and reiterated time and time again.

### Acknowledgments

Preliminary research on the present article was carried out within the framework of the GIF (German-Israel Fund) grant for the project *Visitors from Heaven, Visitors to Heaven: Judaeo-Christian Encounters and the Last Lingua Sacra of Europe* (under the auspices of Freie Universität Berlin and Hebrew University of Jerusalem), in the period 2015–2018. Research culminating in the final version of this text was carried out in the period 2019–2021 during my Fellowships at the Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte, Berlin and at Selma Stern Zentrum für Jüdische Studien Berlin-Brandenburg. Unless otherwise specified, all the translations from Church Slavonic are made by the author.

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# It Didn't Happen the Way Moses Said It Did: Exegesis, Creativity, and Enochic Traditions in the *Apocryphon of John*

Matthew Goff

## 1 Introduction

The Polish scholar Józef Milik in 1976 made an enormous contribution to the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls by publishing an *editio princeps* of the Aramaic fragments of Enochic books discovered at Qumran.<sup>1</sup> At one point in this erudite tome Milik brings up a range of late antique Coptic texts in which the figure of Enoch is prominent.<sup>2</sup> They include an Enochic apocryphon from the fifth or sixth century housed in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York and the so-called Munier fragments, so named because they were originally published by Henri Munier, which are preserved in the Coptic Museum in Cairo.<sup>3</sup> Milik suggested that the Munier fragments might have originated from a homily. The Nag Hammadi scholar Birger Pearson took up and confirmed Milik's proposal, establishing that they are from a late antique homily entitled *Encomium of the Four Bodiless Creatures*, referring to the four creatures of Rev 4:6–8.<sup>4</sup> While I am glad that this Qumran scholar was able to contribute in this manner to the field of Coptology, Milik marshalled this Coptic evidence to advocate for a position that has gone over in the field of Second Temple Judaism like a lead balloon—that the *Similitudes of Enoch* (1 Enoch 37–71) is a Christian text from the third century.<sup>5</sup>

1 Milik, ed. and tr., *Books of Enoch*. See also now Drawnel, *The Aramaic Books of Enoch*.

2 Milik, ed. and tr., *Books of Enoch*, 98–106.

3 Both works have been in recent years published by Birger A. Pearson. See his “Coptic Enoch Apocryphon,” 153–97; Pearson, “Fragments,” 375–83. He earlier published an edition of the Pierpont apocryphon in “Pierpont Morgan Fragments,” 227–83. For the *editio princeps* of the Munier fragments and the Pierpont text, see, respectively, Munier, “Mélanges,” 210–28 (esp. 212–15); Crum, *Theological Texts*, 3–11.

4 Pearson, “Fragments,” 376. See also Wansick, “Homilies,” 2:27–47. Note also the discussion on this homily in Suciú, *The Berlin-Strasbourg Apocryphon*, 5–9, 127.

5 Nickelsburg, and VanderKam, 1 Enoch 2, 60; Greenfield, and Stone, “Enochic Pentateuch,” 51–65.

Milik's employment of late antique Egyptian evidence regarding Enoch to support an unpersuasive thesis raises the question of how this Coptological material can or should have value for scholars of Second Temple Judaism. In this essay I would like to offer one suggestion—such evidence can be valuable as part of an effort to understand the contribution of Second Temple Enochic literature to the interpretation of Nag Hammadi texts. In recent years there has been a pervasive interest among scholars of Second Temple Judaism, often inspired by the excellent scholarship of Annette Yoshiko Reed, on delineating the *Nachleben* of ancient Jewish Enochic traditions in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, to see how Enochic traditions and texts, firmly rooted in the second and first centuries BCE because of the Qumran finds, were interpreted and appropriated in later centuries. But often these efforts by specialists in ancient Judaism have not engaged the Nag Hammadi literature.<sup>6</sup> Experts in this corpus have, by contrast, richly discussed and examined iterations of the watchers myth in this material.<sup>7</sup> The key examples of watchers traditions among the Nag Hammadi writings are found in the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, and *On the Origin of the World*. Losekam has written a useful monograph on watchers traditions in this corpus.<sup>8</sup> Stroumsa goes so far as to argue that one of the most important macro-themes in the Nag Hammadi corpus—the conception of evil—should be understood as a “radical transformation” of the Enochic watchers myth.<sup>9</sup> But Stroumsa's conclusions about the importance

6 Major treatments of the reception of Enochic traditions include scant if any inclusion of Nag Hammadi materials. Annette Yoshiko Reed in her important volume on the subject doubts the value of this corpus for tracing these traditions. See her *Fallen Angels*, 276 (also 149). In the recent survey of Enochic traditions by Reed and John Reeves no Nag Hammadi material is given prominence, while some Coptic material is (e.g., *Pistis Sophia*). See Reeves, and Reed, *Sources*, 220–21. The otherwise excellent study by Stuckenbruck on the reception of Enochic traditions in Christianity likewise never engages this corpus. See Stuckenbruck, “Book of Enoch,” 7–40. Nag Hammadi texts receive minor treatment in Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 98–99. Some surveys of apocalyptic literature include discussion of Nag Hammadi texts. See, for example, Fallon, “Gnostic Apocalypses,” 123–58; VanderKam, “1 Enoch,” 70–76.

7 See, for example, Bull, “Women,” 75–107; Perkins, “Watchers Traditions,” 139–56; Pearson, “1 Enoch,” 355–67; Scopello, “myth,” 220–30; Janssens, “Fornication,” 488–95. A volume by Gerard P. Luttikhuisen (*Gnostic Revisions*) is distinctive for focusing on interpretations of Genesis in Nag Hammadi literature while never engaging substantially with forms of the watchers myth in that corpus. With regard to other efforts to delineate connections between Enochic traditions and the Nag Hammadi Codices, note that Scopello has argued that *Zostrianos* cites a form of *2 Enoch*, and that fragments of a Coptic version of this book have allegedly been in recent years discovered. See Scopello, “Apocalypse,” 376–85; Hagen, “No Longer,” 5–34. See further the contribution of Badalanova Geller, in this volume.

8 Losekam, *Sünde*.

9 Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, 19 (also 32).

of Enochic themes for interpreting Nag Hammadi materials is problematized by a basic fact—that Enoch is not once in this corpus invoked as an authoritative source of revelation. No Nag Hammadi text appeals to books attributed to Enoch.<sup>10</sup> I would like to engage this topic by focusing primarily on one major Nag Hammadi text, the *Apocryphon of John*, which offers one of the most extensive cosmogonic and anthropogonic myths in this corpus. I suggest that the creative and loose style of exegesis evident in this text displays an attitude towards its source material that allows for the possibility that whoever produced the text utilized a form of the *Book of the Watchers* but did not cite it. Also, the Nag Hammadi material focuses on Jesus and other foundational Christian figures as sources of revelation, rather than patriarchs in their Old Testament. Finally, late antique Egyptian sources focus on the figure of Enoch and the tradition that he is a scribe in relation to final judgment. This helps explain why Nag Hammadi texts do not appeal to him as a source of revelation about the origins of the cosmos and humankind. He was not associated with the very beginnings of human origins but rather the end of human life.

## 2 Watchers Traditions in the ‘Apocryphon of John’

The *Apocryphon of John* offers an elaborate cosmogonic myth.<sup>11</sup> It is often identified as Sethian.<sup>12</sup> Core elements of the myth in the text are found in Irenaeus’ *Against Heresies*, in his caustic summary of the beliefs of a group he describes as gnostics (1.29).<sup>13</sup> This indicates that some version of material in the *Apocryphon* was in circulation by ca. 180 CE. The fourth-century

10 Losekam, *Sünde*, 360, raises this question, saying that it needs to be addressed. So too Reed, *Fallen Angels*, 276.

11 For the standard text and translation of the *Apocryphon of John*, see Waldstein and Wisse, eds. and trs., *Apocryphon*. Translations of the composition in this article rely on this source. See also Krause and Labib, eds., *Apokryphon*. Translations and editions also include Barc and Funk, eds. and trs., *Livre des secrets*; Turner and Meyer, trs., “Secret Book”; Layton, tr., *Gnostic Scriptures*, 23–54; Wisse, tr., “Apocryphon of John.” The scholarship on the *Apocryphon of John* is vast. It includes Denzey Lewis, *Cosmology and Fate*, 85–97; Davies, *Secret Book*; King, *Secret Revelation*; Pleše, *Poetics*; Burke, *Secret Scriptures*, 87–89.

12 See, for example, Losekam, *Sünde*, 152; Pearson, “Current Issues,” 63. For recent assessments of how to understand Seth-related traditions in early Christianity, see Burns, *Alien God*, 154–59; M.A. Williams, “Sethianism,” 32–63; Rasimus, “Ophite Gnosticism,” 235–63.

13 The key text is available as Appendix 4 in Waldstein and Wisse, eds. and trs., *Apocryphon*, 189–93. As discussed there, Theodoret (fifth century) in *Haereticarum fabularum compendium* 13 also preserves material that corresponds to the cosmogonic myth of the *Apocryphon of John*. He attributes it to the Barbeloites, a group he describes as going by other names and originating from the teaching of Valentinus. See also Rasimus, “Ophite Gnosticism,” 255.

Nag Hammadi texts preserve three full iterations of the text. It is the opening composition of Codices II, III, and IV, and another copy is preserved in the so-called Berlin Gnostic Codex (BG), which was discovered in 1896 but not published until 1955.<sup>14</sup> No other Nag Hammadi text has more copies attested than the *Apocryphon of John*. Its four witnesses attest a long and a short recension of the composition (II and IV; III and BG, respectively).

The *Apocryphon of John* purports to disclose an extensive revelation about the origins and nature of the cosmos and humankind, divulged by the resurrected Christ to the apostle John. The text presents itself as beginning where the Gospel of John leaves off, assuming the authority of the New Testament gospel and extending it to itself (John 20:30). John for the bulk of the text is presented in the first person, occasionally asking questions. Much of what Christ reveals is a creative and elaborate reformulation of material in Genesis 1–8. An abiding interest in these chapters is found throughout the Nag Hammadi library; other texts, such as the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, also present an iteration of Genesis material. Much of the first half of the *Apocryphon* purports to tell the prehistory of Genesis 1, providing the context in which its reformulation of Genesis should be understood. The text describes “the One,” the invisible eternal Spirit who is also understood as masculine (the Father; cf. *Allogenes* [NHC XI 62.27–63.12]). He is paired with Barbelo, the Divine Mother who was created by a thought from the One; she is thus a feminine spiritual counterpart to the male spirit of the Father.<sup>15</sup> She is impregnated by the One’s gaze of pure light, producing a child who is also described as self-generated, producing a type of trinitarian formulation.<sup>16</sup> The *Apocryphon* describes the heavenly world as having four luminaries, or eternal realms (Harmoziel, Oroiael, Daveithai, and Eleleth); each one has three aeons or hypostases associated with it. The fourth luminary is associated with the aeons Perfection, Peace, and Sophia (NHC II 8.18–20). Sophia introduces imperfection into the cosmos by creating an offspring without a partner or the approval of the One.

The offspring is Yaldabaoth, an important figure in Nag Hammadi literature. His name has been understood as having a Semitic origin.<sup>17</sup> In the *Apocryphon of John* he is described as a snake with a lion face and also goes by the names Sakla and Samael.<sup>18</sup> He is the first archon and, strikingly, corresponds to the

14 Till, *Die gnostischen Schriften*.

15 This basic dyad is also in Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.29.

16 NHC II 7.18–20; III 11.3–7; BG 32.4–9.

17 Gershom Scholem for example argued that the phrase derives from ילד צבאות. See his “Jaldabaoth,” 405–21. See also Alexander, “Jewish Elements,” 1060; Pearson, “Biblical Exegesis,” 30.

18 The latter name also signifies the chief archon in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (e.g., NHC II 87.3).

deity who appears in the Old Testament. Yaldabaoth formed the *psychē*-body of Adam (his material body is formed later) and gives life to it by potency he acquired from Sophia.<sup>19</sup> This results in the archons and powers of the world being jealous of him. The divine mother and father show compassion for the banished Adam and send him Eve, or Insight, who at this point is hidden within Adam's psychical body, a creative and philosophical iteration of the scriptural trope that she begins as a rib of Adam. Yaldabaoth and the archons seek to obscure that Adam's origin stems from heavenly spirit-beings and thus create a new form for him out of matter, resulting in the biblical Adam. Major Genesis episodes, including occasional unmarked quotations of Genesis texts, are recast as key episodes in a cosmic drama in which the forces of the material world are devoted to keeping humankind mired in ignorance about our divine nature.<sup>20</sup> Placing Adam in Eden becomes a ploy to ensure his lack of comprehension. The flood becomes an effort not to destroy the wicked, as in the surface text of Genesis 6, but rather to eliminate "the immovable race" (ΤΤΕΝΕΑ ἸΑΤΚΙΜ), people who should be understood as in the lineage of Seth and who have not succumbed to the machinations of the archons.<sup>21</sup> Noah and these others are hidden in a cloud.<sup>22</sup> The failure of the flood to destroy this group results in the text's iteration of the watchers story:

He made a [plan] with his angels. He sent his angels to the [daughters] of men that they [might raise] offspring from them, thus giving satisfaction to themselves. And the first time [they did not succeed]. And [when they had no] success, they [made a plan together] to create [the counterfeit spirit] in imitation [of the spirit] who had descended. Their angels changed their appearance [in] the likeness of their husbands [in order to fill] them with the spirit that was in [themselves], full of the darkness that stems from evil. They brought them gold [and] silver and gifts and [things made of copper] and iron metal and every thing of the kind. And they [steered] them into distractions [so that] they would not remember their immovable Providence (Pronoia).<sup>23</sup>

19 NHC II 19.23–32; par III 24.4–14; BG 51.12–20.

20 Note for example the quotation of Gen 1:26 ("Come let us create a man ...") presented as a statement uttered by Yaldabaoth in NHC II 15.1–4. In III 22.1–6/BG 48.6–14 this is spoken by the seven archons.

21 Giversen, "Apocryphon," 75; Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, 36.

22 NHC II 29.10; III 38.3; BG 73.9. See Williams, *Immovable Race*.

23 This is the version of the text in NHC III 38.10–39.4. Key differences between the other versions of this text (BG 73.18–75.3; NHC II 29.16–30.2; IV 45.15–46.10) are discussed below. See also Bull, "Women," 87–88.

The archons create “their counterfeit spirit” (πεγαυτιμιμον [μη]ῖα) by which to corrupt human souls.<sup>24</sup> These rulers assume the form of the women’s husbands and sleep with them. This sexual episode does not yield monstrous giants as in the *Book of the Watchers* but rather children whose minds are closed and associated with darkness. This episode is essentially the end of the revelation disclosed by the *Apocryphon*.

This text’s iteration of the watchers myth is important in the overall scheme revealed by the *Apocryphon of John*. It is critical for understanding how the text presents the current predicament in which humanity finds itself. Along with the flood story, this watchers story helps explain that there are three types of humankind—the Sethian “immovable race,” i.e., those with Noah who never succumbed to the archons; those of this race who did succumb to them; and the children of darkness produced by the women.<sup>25</sup> In the long version of the *Apocryphon* it is followed by the Pronoia hymn in which the feminine spirit Barbelo encourages listeners in the first person to awake from the sleep of ignorance. The composition ends on a powerful hymnic note stressing that, at least for some, the cosmic predicament in which people are stuck is not absolute or inescapable.<sup>26</sup>

### 3 Where’s Enoch?

The *Apocryphon of John* clearly attests a form of the watchers myth. But the composition never appeals to Enoch himself. This phenomenon is not limited to this text. Enoch is never invoked as an author or a source of revelation in the Nag Hammadi Codices, in striking contrast to late Second Temple Jewish literature.<sup>27</sup> This absence seems even more striking when one considers that there is ample evidence in late antique Egypt that Enochic literature was valued and considered important. Perhaps the core example is the Panopolitanus text, a Greek manuscript that preserves part of the *Book of Watchers*.<sup>28</sup> This manuscript is routinely used by scholars interested in the Aramaic Enoch texts from Qumran since comparison of the Aramaic, Greek, and Ethiopic forms of the material is critical for understanding the development of Enochic

24 NHC III 39.7–8; BG 75.6–7; cf. II 30.9.

25 Luttikhuisen, *Gnostic Revisions*, 100.

26 Denzey Lewis, *Cosmology and Fate*, 96–97; Davies, *Secret Book*, 148.

27 Enoch is only mentioned once in the entire Nag Hammadi collection, in *Melchizedek* (NHC IX,1), in a list of biblical patriarchs. See Burns, “Gnostic,” 454–57. Consult also Lahe, *Gnosis und Judentum*, 292.

28 Nickelsburg, 1 *Enoch* 1, 12; idem, “Enochic Manuscripts,” 251–60.

literature. The Panopolitanus text, discovered in the late 1800s in a grave in Akmim in Upper Egypt, is from the fifth or sixth century CE, a time and location not radically different from that of the Nag Hammadi Codices.<sup>29</sup> The manuscript makes it reasonable to argue that Egyptian scribes at the time had access to and utilized a form of the *Book of the Watchers*, as does other evidence. Excerpts from the writings of a third-century alchemist from Panopolitanus by the name of Zosimos which are preserved in Syncellus also contain a form of the watchers myth.<sup>30</sup> Syncellus' Byzantine era chronography also attests the other major Greek witnesses to the *Book of the Watchers*, two lengthy excerpts of the work that are generally understood as deriving from two sources, Panodorus and Annianus, both of whom are fifth-century, Egyptian monks.<sup>31</sup> There are also fragments from the Egyptian site Oxyrhynchus that may attest portions of the Enochic *Astronomical Book* and the *Book of Dreams* in Greek (P. Oxy. xvii 2069).<sup>32</sup> There is in addition contemporary Egyptian evidence for the view that Enochic literature had a type of scriptural authority and that this was a disputed point.<sup>33</sup> In his famous 39th festal letter of 367 CE, a document generally cited as the earliest iteration of the list of books that became the standard New Testament canon, the Alexandrian bishop Athanasius is compelled to delineate the legitimate scriptures of Christianity in part because many consider Enochic writings important: "Who has made the simple folk believe that books belong to Enoch even though no scriptures existed before Moses?" (§21).<sup>34</sup> In the Coptic *Pistis Sophia* (third or fourth century) Jesus

29 Kraus and Nicklas, *Petrusevangelium*, 25–27; Bull, "Women," 82–83. Note also criticism of the story of the discovery of the Panopolitanus text in Nongbri, *God's Library*. See also the important new work on the Panopolitanus text by Dugan ("Enochic Biography").

30 Zosimos asserts that both hermetic writings and scripture state that a "race of demons" lusted after women and taught them illicit knowledge. This implicitly attests the view that the *Book of the Watchers* has scriptural authority. For more on Zosimos, see Bull, "Wicked Angels," 3–33; Olson, "Alchemist's Library," 135–53; Fraser, "Zosimos," 125–47; VanderKam, "1 Enoch," 83–84; Adler and Tuffin, trs., *Chronography*, 18–19. Consult also Lawlor, "Book of Enoch," 178–83.

31 Bull, "Women," 98–100; Adler and Tuffin, trs., *Chronography*, lxxv; Adler, *Time Immemorial*, 177.

32 The key material corresponds to portions of 1 *Enoch* 77–78, 85–86. For a review of the evidence, see Nickelsburg and VanderKam, 1 *Enoch* 2, 345–48; Chesnutt, "Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 2069," 485–505. See also Frankfurter, "Legacy," 189. Also note that there is a Coptic fragment that attests a form of 1 *En.* 93:3–8. See Nickelsburg, 1 *Enoch* 1, 15; Milik, ed. and tr., *Books of Enoch*, 81–82; Donadoni, "Un frammento," 197–202.

33 Also, contrast the differing attitudes towards Enochic writings in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 6.25 and *Cels.* 5.54. See Pearson, "Enoch in Egypt," 135–36; Reed, *Fallen Angels*, 197–200.

34 The fuller context of the portion quoted above emphasizes that Athanasius considered Enochic writings illegitimate: "[The category of apocrypha] is an invention of heretics,



claims he spoke to Enoch in the garden of Eden and conveyed revelation to him which he wrote down in two “Books of Jeu” (2.99), and that he did so to preserve this knowledge so that the archons would not destroy it by means of the flood (3.134).<sup>35</sup> In the Coptic *Books of Jeu* acquired by James Bruce in the eighteenth century—the same person who brought Ethiopic Enoch manuscripts to Europe—there is no attribution to Enoch.<sup>36</sup> In any case, the *Pistis Sophia* shows that Enochic attribution of texts was possible in circles related to the scribes who transmitted and produced the Nag Hammadi material, raising the question all the more why this theme is absent in this corpus.<sup>37</sup>

#### 4 The Exegetical Style and Mode of Revelation of the ‘Apocryphon of John’

The absence of Enoch as a figure in this material should not, I think, be attributed to any sort of anti-Enoch animus but rather understood as a consequence of major themes and perspectives in the *Apocryphon of John* and in other Nag Hammadi texts. A significant reason Enoch is not prominent involves exegesis and textuality. The revelation disclosed in the *Apocryphon of John*, like other

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who write these books whenever they want and then generously add time to them, so that, by publishing them as if they were ancient, they might have a pretext for deceiving the simple folk ... Who has made the simple folk believe that those books belong to Enoch even though no scripture existed before Moses? On what basis will they say that there is an apocryphal book of Isaiah? He preaches openly on the high mountain and says ‘I did not speak in secret or in a dark land’ (Isa 45:19). How could Moses have an apocryphal book? He is the one who published Deuteronomy with heaven and earth as witnesses (Deut 4:26; 30:19) ...” This translation is from Brakke, “New Fragment,” 61. See also Reed, “Pseudepigraphy,” 467; Frankfurter, “Legacy,” 171; Pearson, “Enoch in Egypt,” 137.

35 The key portion of *Pistis Sophia* 2.99 reads: “You will find them [additional mysteries] in the two Books of Jeu which Enoch wrote when I spoke with him from the Tree of Knowledge and from the Tree of Life in the Paradise of Adam.” This same basic statement is also in *Pis. Soph.* 3.134. For these texts and translation, see Schmidt and MacDermot, eds. and trs., *Pistis Sophia*, 492–95, 698–99. It is also available in Reeves and Reed, trs., *Sources*, 219–20. For discussion of the date of the *Pistis Sophia*, consult Crégheur and Johnston, “En amont de la découverte de Nag Hammadi.” See also VanderKam, “1 Enoch,” 74–76; Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 99; Milik, ed. and tr., *Books of Enoch*, 99; Pearson, “Enoch in Egypt,” 140; Schmidt, and MacDermot, *Books of Jeu*; Evans, *Handbooks to Eternity*.

36 Crégheur, “Pour une nouvelle histoire.”

37 Also, regarding the *Apocryphon of John*, note that the text shows no aversion against appealing to books whose authority was not held universally. At one point in the form of the narrative in II 19.10, the resurrected Christ, when talking about the angelic creation of the *psychē*-body of Adam, says that further information on the topic can be found in a “Book of Zoroaster” (cf. Porphyry, *Vit. Plot.* 16).

texts from this corpus, clearly centers on reformulating the book of Genesis. Events that resonate with the *Book of the Watchers* are not presented as from an Enochic book but rather as if they were part of the book of Genesis that is being reconfigured. This is similar to Second Temple texts attested at Qumran such as the Enochic *Animal Apocalypse* and the *Book of Jubilees*, both of which present iterations of the watchers myth as part of larger narratives recounting primordial history that adapt Genesis material. As Brooke has observed, an interest in Enochic issues may have been one core issue driving interest in some Genesis narratives in this period. Engagement with Enochic material may have even shaped how Genesis manuscripts were produced; 4QCommentary on Genesis A (4Q252), begins with Genesis 6 and reformulates the flood story in a way that promotes a 364 day calendar, as does Enochic literature.<sup>38</sup> The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi texts illustrate that readers of Genesis at different places and different times, in the first century BCE and the fourth century CE, could develop similar reading strategies, with the watchers myth understood not as the basis of distinct Enochic narratives but as filling out the story told in bare outlines in Genesis 6, an issue I will return to below.

The mode of revelation in the *Apocryphon of John* also explains its 'Enochic absence.' The overarching conceit of the composition is that at issue is not the explication of a text at all but rather an oral revelation of truth from a heavenly figure about primordial events which actually took place. The composition constructs its authority by purporting to convey previously undisclosed revelation that is in continuity with the Christ event. The only Nag Hammadi pseudepigraphon attributed to a classic figure of the Hebrew Bible is the *Apocalypse of Adam* (NHC V,5). Not only is no Nag Hammadi text attributed to Enoch. Moses or Ezra are also never presented as authors in this corpus. Rather the matrix of revelation prioritizes foundational figures of Christianity, with texts attributed to figures like John, James, or Peter. The revealed knowledge is not legitimated as part of a chain of transmission received from earlier patriarchs, a striking contrast with Manichaeism.<sup>39</sup> Rather revelation is often thematized in the Nag Hammadi material as 'new' knowledge about the nature of the world that could not be known fully until the emergence of Christ.

Highlighting the conceit of revelation in the *Apocryphon of John* offers a helpful way to understand the composition's exegetical style. The text elaborates

38 Brooke, "Genesis 1–11," 481.

39 This is evident, for example, in the *Cologne Mani Codex* (48–56). For more on the theme of Mani's revelation being valorized as the extension and transmission of disclosures given to ancient patriarchs, see Baker-Brian, *Manichaeism*, 50–51; Reeves, *Heralds*, 210.

and allegorizes narrative details of Genesis.<sup>40</sup> As I mentioned above, entire key scenes in Genesis, such as the protoplasts in Eden are reconfigured in terms of the cosmic myth which the *Apocryphon* promulgates. One important aspect of the exegetical mindset of the *Apocryphon of John* has been accurately described as “corrective.”<sup>41</sup> For example, when recounting the flood it says “It is not as Moses said ‘They hid themselves in an ark’” (cf. Gen 7:7); rather they hid in a “luminous cloud.”<sup>42</sup> The logic of the exegesis is not that the scriptural reference to “ark” allegorically signifies that they were hidden someplace else. There was no ark. That they were hidden in a cloud is what ‘really’ happened.<sup>43</sup> The book of Genesis is understood as a valid but imperfect articulation of primordial events which is perfected by the revelation of Christ given to John. The version of it preserved by Moses is, the *Apocryphon* teaches, at times simply incorrect.

The attitude toward Genesis evident in the *Apocryphon* should be understood in the context of debates about and reflection on the place of scripture in the emerging religion of Christianity.<sup>44</sup> The case of Marcion, who argued that the Jewish scriptures should have no connection to devotion to Christ, exemplifies the issue.<sup>45</sup> The claim in the *Apocryphon of John* that “it is not as Moses said” is reminiscent of *Ptolemy’s Letter to Flora*, a text preserved in Epiphanius (*Pan.* 33.3.1–7.10).<sup>46</sup> This letter argues that some of the Pentateuch does in fact originate from God but that other portions were written by Moses himself and still others by the elders who ascended Sinai with him (Exod 24:9).

40 King, *Secret Revelation*, 186.

41 Nagel, “Paradieserzählung,” 51; Pearson, “Use,” 636; idem, “1 Enoch,” 360; Lahe, *Gnosis und Judentum*, 387–88.

42 NHC II 29.12; III 38.5; BG 73.12. Note that earlier in the *Apocryphon* (NHC II 10.14–19) Sophia hides Yaldabaoth in a cloud. In the *Apocalypse of Adam* Noah is on the ark and then asserts that people that will live for 600 years with angels of light, describing Noah and these others as being like “a cloud of great light” (NHC V 71.8). There is also another instance of “corrective exegesis” in the *Apocryphon of John* regarding Adam being put to sleep. The text teaches that Adam was not literally put to sleep when Eve was created but rather it signifies when Yaldabaoth veiled his perception. Here the short recension says “it is not as Moses said” (BG 58.16–17; cf. NHC III 29.4–7) but the long recension has “It is not as Moses wrote and you heard for he said in his first book” (NHC II 22.23–25). It is a debated issue but this suggests to me that the long recension represents an elaboration of an older form of the text, in which the textuality of the base text is more explicitly emphasized. See also Davies, *Secret Book*, 150–51; Perkins, “Watchers Traditions,” 145.

43 The exegetical mindset evident in this composition is reminiscent of what Blossom Stefaniw calls “noetic exegesis.” See her *Mind*.

44 Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 229–46.

45 The *Epistle of Barnabas* claims that the validity of the Mosaic law was lost when the Israelites worshipped the golden calf and Moses smashed the tablets (4.8; cf. 9.5).

46 F. Williams, *Panarion*, 216–21; Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 306–15. See also Norelli, “Décalogue,” 107–76; Pearson, “Use,” 644–45.

Both Ptolemy's *Letter* and the *Apocryphon of John* operate with the presupposition that the scriptural text is valid but at times inaccurate. This creates an intellectual space in which an authoritative interpreter is important, since such a figure gets to say which parts are considered inaccurate. This attitude allows for a great deal of exegetical freedom, allowing one to be quite creative, embellishing however the scriptural text is deemed to need correction or improvement.

The exegetical mindset evident in the *Apocryphon* helps explain why material from the *Book of Watchers* was able to be integrated into it. The same interpretative attitude applied to Genesis shapes its reformulation of material from the *Book of the Watchers*. A key observation is that in the *Apocryphon of John* the watchers episode occurs *after* the flood episode.<sup>47</sup> This is also the case in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (NHC II 92.8–32).<sup>48</sup> In the *Apocryphon* the watchers myth is utilized not to explain why the flood occurred but rather as a way to understand the post-diluvian situation of enslavement to ignorance in which humanity finds itself. Another striking reversal of the scenario in the *Book of the Watchers* is that in the *Apocryphon* the wicked angels do not disobey their divine lord; rather he sends them. Their descent to earth is part of a plan by Yaldabaoth and the archons to prevent humankind from having genuine knowledge of the cosmos and its own nature.<sup>49</sup> This reformulation of the story weakens the theme of sexual desire as the catalyst driving the angels' decision to arrive to earth. After an unsuccessful attempt to sway the women,<sup>50</sup> the archons create the "counterfeit spirit" by which to change the souls of people, adding an element not found in the *Book of the Watchers*.<sup>51</sup> Losekam I think rightly stresses the imitative character of this spirit, meant as a sort of perverted copy of the "epinoia of light."<sup>52</sup> This expression denotes the implantation of Eve within Adam, a sort of mythic reframing of her being originally his rib; heavenly powers inserted this feminine spirit in him so that she could

47 Losekam, *Sünde*, 172; Bull, "Women," 90; Perkins, "Watchers Traditions," 140.

48 The core iteration of watchers traditions in this text centers on the attempted rape of Norea. See Losekam, *Sünde*, 184–300.

49 NHC II 29.16; III 38.10–11; BG 73.18–74.1.

50 In the *Book of the Watchers* there is no account of the angels failing to connect with the women. The addition of this trope emphasizes the ability of some people to resist the machinations of the archons. This helps establish the possibility that some who are entrapped in ignorance have the innate capacity to end this condition. There is also a parallel in the *Hypostasis of the Archons*. In that text Norea rejects the archons when they try to entice her (NHC II 92.20–93.17). See Bull, "Women," 90.

51 King, *Secret Revelation*, 109; Losekam, *Sünde*, 160.

52 Losekam, *Sünde*, 162.

restore his perfection to him and teach him about his heavenly origins.<sup>53</sup> The counterfeit spirit of the archons does the opposite. The sexual intercourse between the angels and the women is thematized primarily as a way to infect the women with this wicked spirit.

There is a similar exegetical freedom with regard to the *Apocryphon's* adaptation of the Azazel episode of *1 Enoch* 8. In the Nag Hammadi text the angels only provide to the women *material* gifts—gold, silver, and other metals.<sup>54</sup> Completely removed is any sense that the angels provide knowledge, such as how to make swords or the motion of celestial bodies. This is intelligible in the context of the larger myth of the *Apocryphon*. The whole point of this myth is to prevent humankind from acquiring authentic knowledge. While Stroumsa has argued that we should understand major themes in Nag Hammadi literature as shaped by Enochic narrative, the iteration of the watchers myth in the *Apocryphon of John* I think, while not necessarily refuting his thesis, strongly illustrates the opposite point—the composition displays a willingness to revise core elements of the watchers myth in light of its own worldview.<sup>55</sup>

## 5 Enoch the Scribe of Final Judgment

Another possible reason that revelation about the origins of the world is not associated with Enoch in Nag Hammadi texts is that this motif does not accord well with how the figure of Enoch was thematized in late antique Egypt. In this cultural context the older tradition that Enoch is a scribe becomes the basis of his acquisition of an important duty, namely recording the sins of humans that will be accorded recompense during judgment.<sup>56</sup> In the *Pierpont Coptic Enoch Apocryphon* Enoch is taken up to heaven and shown heavenly writings (2v ll. 1–4; 3v ll. 1–5).<sup>57</sup> In a fragmentary passage the sister of Enoch speaks (6r ll. 8–12; 6v ll. 3–12); this likely attests the tradition that the sibyl is his

53 NHC II 20.17–28; III 25.7–23; BG 53.5–54.4.

54 NHC II 29.30–30.2; III 38.25–39.3; BG 74.16–75.3.

55 Irenaeus makes the same basic point in a caustic manner regarding the Christian groups he polemicizes against: “they find anything in the multitude of things contained in the scriptures which they can adopt and accommodate to their baseless speculations” (*Haer.* 1.3).

56 Pearson, “Enoch in Egypt,” 146; Frankfurter, “Legacy,” 188. This understanding of Enoch may explain why, in this period in Egypt, a man was buried with a copy of the *Book of the Watchers* (the Panopolitanus manuscript).

57 Citations of this text follow Pearson, “Coptic Enoch Apocryphon.”

sister, conflating two archaic figures.<sup>58</sup> The manuscript clearly emphasizes that Enoch is to write down sins (cf. *Jub.* 4:18–19; 10:18). Folio 1 reads “If he sees them in all their iniquities which they do, he will write them immediately and your entire image will go to perdition” (1r ll. 3–12). One text even urges that Enoch not write down the sins of humanity too hastily, showing some anxiety about the role he plays in divine judgment. In the Munier fragments I mentioned at the outset Enoch is three times referred to as a scribe (verso ll. 4, 12, 20), the two latter instances as a “scribe of righteousness” (partially reconstructed), resonating with an important epithet for Enoch in the *Book of the Watchers* (1 *En.* 12:4; 15:1).<sup>59</sup> Enoch is also referred to as a “scribe of righteousness” in two late antique Coptic apocryphal texts, the *Investiture of the Archangel Michael* and the *Investiture of the Archangel Gabriel*.<sup>60</sup> In the Munier text one of the four creatures from Revelation 4, urges him, not unlike the *Piermont Enoch Apocryphon*, to “not be hasty in writing down [the sins of the children] of men” (verso ll. 21–22). He has a similar scribal function in the *Testament of Abraham*, which circulated in Greek and Coptic.<sup>61</sup> The iconography of a building with Christian paintings (dated to the tenth century) excavated in Tebtunis in the Fayyum (Lower Egypt) offers extensive depictions of the punishment of sinners. In one icon Enoch holds a red pen in his right hand and an open scroll in his left that reads “Enoch the scribe who records the sins of mankind.”<sup>62</sup> This material stresses judgment after the death of the individual more than

58 The association of Enoch and the Sibyl occurs in several other Coptic texts. For review of the evidence, see Pearson, “Coptic Enoch Apocryphon,” 160, 163–64; Milik, ed. and tr., *Books of Enoch*, 96–97. Consult also Gero, “Henoch,” 148–50.

59 Citations of these fragments are from Pearson, “Fragments.” There are slight variations in the versions of *Watchers* regarding the epithet “scribe of righteousness.” The Ethiopic of these two verses reads *ṣahāfē ṣedq*. The Greek (Codex Panopolitanus) 12:4 has ὁ γραμματεὺς τῆς δικαιοσύνης, and in 15:1 Enoch is called ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὁ ἀληθινός, ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀληθείας, ὁ γραμματεὺς. The latter is likely a dittograph. See Nickelsburg, 1 *Enoch* 1, 268; Frankfurter, “Legacy,” 188.

60 I thank Hugo Lundhaug for these references. See Müller, ed. and tr., *Einsetzung der Erzengel*, 1:54, 56, 73. The *Investiture of the Archangel Gabriel* also records the tradition, mentioned above, that the sibyl is Enoch’s sister (see *ibid.*, 1:73). See also Suciū, *The Berlin-Strasbourg Apocryphon*.

61 The key passage of the *Testament of Abraham* reads: “And Abraham answered and said to Michael, ‘Lord, who is this judge? And who is the other one, who makes sins known?’ And Michael said to Abraham, ‘Do you see the judge? He is Abel ... This (other) one, who makes (sins) known, is Enoch, your father. He is the teacher of heaven and scribe of righteousness. And the Lord sent him here that the sins and the righteous deeds of each might be inscribed’” (11.1–4 [short recension]). For this translation, see Allison Jr., *Testament*, 274; Pearson, “Enoch in Egypt,” 171, 175.

62 That Enoch was important in late antique Egypt is also evident from the fact that he was the patron saint of the monastery of Apa Jeremias in Saqqara (Lower Egypt), which

eschatological judgment at the end of history.<sup>63</sup> Enoch does however play an important eschatological role as an opponent of the Antichrist (“the Lawless One”) in a fourth-century Coptic text, the *Apocalypse of Elijah*. Elijah and Enoch kill the Antichrist in this composition (5.32–35).<sup>64</sup> This evidence suggests that Enoch was considered important in the cultural milieu in which the Nag Hammadi texts were transmitted and circulated. How Enoch was accorded importance, by being associated with final judgment and the end of history, did not lend itself to the attribution of revelations about the beginnings of history and the cosmos to this figure.

## 6 Conclusion: The Watchers Myth in Nag Hammadi Literature vis-à-vis Jewish Tradition

I conclude by reflecting on what we can learn from the watchers myth in the *Apocryphon of John* about how to think about Nag Hammadi texts in relation to Judaism and Second Temple Jewish traditions. Pearson understood the cosmic myth in the *Apocryphon of John*, of which an iteration of the watchers myth forms a part, as testimony to the existence of Jewish Gnosticism, a radical Jewish movement from Alexandria from the first century CE.<sup>65</sup> In this formulation this myth becomes an example of *Protestexegese*, to use the terminology of Kurt Rudolph, produced by heterodox Jews who were expressing antagonism towards mainstream Jews and Jewish traditions.<sup>66</sup> Pearson also presented a redaction-critical understanding of the *Apocryphon*, arguing that the revelatory frame attributed to Christ was secondarily attached to this originally Jewish myth.<sup>67</sup> Jewish Gnosticism according to this model is embedded within Christian Gnosticism.

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operated from the end of the fifth to the ninth century. See Pearson, “Enoch in Egypt,” 149–51; Walters, “Christian Paintings,” 201, pl. 27.

63 Enoch’s scribal role in the final judgment of the individual is also evident in a late antique Coptic healing spell inscribed on a wooden tablet in which a wounded deer states: “Enoch the scribe, don’t stick your pen into your ink until Michael comes from heaven and heals my eye!” (Anastasi 29528). See Frankfurter, “Legacy,” 187; Pearson, “Coptic Enoch Apocryphon,” 168.

64 Frankfurter, *Elijah*, 103–25, 327.

65 See, for example, Pearson, “Gnosticism as a Religion,” 217–18; idem, “Jewish Sources,” 443–45. Lahe, *Gnosis und Judentum*, 394–95, offers a similar perspective.

66 Kurt Rudolph, “Randerscheinungen,” 117; Losekam, *Sünde*, 6–7.

67 Important for this perspective is that Irenaeus’s iteration of the myth found in the *Apocryphon of John* (*Haer.* 1.29) never presents it as a revelation disclosed by Jesus. See, for example, Pearson, “Use,” 648. But such an absence is not necessarily an indication that

Also for Pearson, the myth's inclusion of a form of the watchers episode helps identify the mode of exposition evident in the *Apocryphon of John*—rewritten scripture.<sup>68</sup> So understood, the *Book of Watchers* becomes valuable not simply because of its content but also its genre, with *1 Enoch*, along with other Second Temple texts such as *Jubilees* or the Qumran *Genesis Apocryphon* understood as attesting a textual category—rewritten scripture—that is then used to classify the *Apocryphon of John*. The category of “rewritten scripture” is foundational for Losekam, who describes the remythologization of the watchers myth in Nag Hammadi texts as “re-rewritten scripture”—a neologism that suggests that the producers of these later writings were familiar with and continued the “rewritten scripture” model attested in Second Temple Jewish literature.<sup>69</sup> It is a literary analogue to the social model that Christian Gnostic groups developed and reworked traditions from an older, Jewish Gnostic community.

The problems with identifying Nag Hammadi texts that reformulate Genesis material as stemming from Jewish Gnosticism are manifold and already much discussed.<sup>70</sup> It is not something I need to refute. The problem with “rewritten scripture” as a category of Second Temple Jewish literature, as is well-known in that field of study, is that while the term was coined by Geza Vermes in 1961 to denote a broad category of Jewish texts (a usage uncritically adopted by Pearson), his thesis has triggered a vast amount of scholarship debating the viability of the term, with some scholars rejecting it outright, others restricting it to some texts, and still others recasting “rewritten scripture” more as an interpretive technique than a textual category.<sup>71</sup> Part of the problem stems from the ambiguity of scripture as a literary category of Second Temple Judaism, since the “rewritten scripture” model often presumes a fixed textual base that is then rewritten. Nevertheless, putting aside the “rewritten scripture” moniker, the *Apocryphon* displays a reading strategy—understanding the watchers myth primarily as part of the story told by Genesis—that is also attested in Second Temple texts attested at Qumran, namely the *Animal Apocalypse* or the *Book of Jubilees*. This is not necessarily evidence of direct continuity between fourth-century Christian circles and first-century Jewish groups, heterodox or otherwise. *Jubilees* was itself adapted to a Christian milieu, as is evident from

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such a revelatory frame is a secondary addition. Irenaeus given his polemical view of the material he was reviewing had a powerful incentive not to associate these myths with Jesus. Moreover, there is no understanding in Irenaeus that the group he rails against in the relevant passage is Jewish.

68 See, for example, Pearson, “Use,” 647–51; idem, “Apocryphon Johannis,” 162.

69 Losekam, *Sünde*, 183, 359.

70 See, for example, Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism*.

71 The scholarship on this topic is vast. See Zsengellér, *Rewritten Bible*.



citations of it in Syncellus and its inclusion in the Ethiopian Old Testament. It may simply be that the view that the watchers myth fills out material in Genesis may be one example of the larger phenomenon that the Jewish heritage out of which Christianity eventually emerged as a distinct tradition should be understood not only as a corpus of authoritative texts, but also numerous exegetical presuppositions and perspectives about how that material should be understood.

Underneath both of these theses—reformulation of Genesis as evidence for Jewish Gnosticism and late Egyptian continuity with the Second Temple Jewish genre “rewritten scripture”—is the assumption that Judaism has value for the interpretation of Nag Hammadi material primarily as something chronologically prior to this Egyptian textual corpus. The dominance of this perspective shapes how scholars relate the watchers myth in the *Apocryphon* to Jewish tradition. For example, the transformation of the angels’ form in this composition is often compared to the *Testament of Reuben* as evidence that the *Apocryphon* draws on older Jewish exegetical traditions.<sup>72</sup> In *T. Reuben* the watchers transform into human males, not unlike the *Apocryphon*.<sup>73</sup> But the *Testament* is interpreted in a way similar to Pearson’s redaction-critical understanding of the *Apocryphon*: the portions that seem Jewish on the basis with parallels with Second Temple texts are understood as older than sections that have explicitly Christian content. Chapter 5 of the *Testament of Reuben* cannot be confidently dated as significantly older than the *Apocryphon*. The *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* is regularly understood today as a Christian document compiled in the fourth century CE that has numerous points of contact with older Jewish traditions but that it is not clear that older, Jewish strata can or should be postulated.<sup>74</sup> Both the *Testament of Reuben* and the *Apocryphon of John* attempt to answer the same question produced by reflection on the watchers myth—if the angels are spiritual beings, how could they have had sex? Imagining that the producers of each text asked this question does not require positing direct continuity between them.

72 So, for example, Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, 37; Lahe, *Gnosis und Judentum*, 310. See also Pearson, “Jewish Sources,” 454; Perkins, “Watchers Traditions,” 142. Consult further Rosen-Zvi, “Billah,” 65–94; Kugel, “Reuben’s Sin,” 525–54.

73 The core passage of the *Testament of Reuben* reads: “Accordingly my children, flee from sexual promiscuity, and order your wives and your daughters not to adorn their heads and their appearances so as to deceive men’s sound minds ... For it was thus that they charmed the watchers, who were before the flood. As they continued looking at the women, they were filled with desire for them and perpetrated the act in their minds. Then they were transformed into human males and while the women were cohabiting with their husbands they appeared to them. Since the women’s minds were filled with lust for these apparitions, they gave birth to giants” (5:5–6; tr. Kee in Charlesworth, ed., *OTP*, 1:784).

74 De Jonge, “Main Issues,” 147–63.

It is certainly true that one can find parallels in Nag Hammadi literature regarding Enochic literature with indisputably older Jewish texts. For example, it is quite helpful for Losekam to compare the watchers myth in Nag Hammadi texts to its iteration in Philo.<sup>75</sup> In his treatises *Quod Deus sit immutabilis* and *de Gigantibus* he interprets Gen 6:4 such that the verse is not understood as describing the birth of “giants” (גבורים; γίγαντες) but rather the development of different types of souls, as a way to explain why some people have a disposition towards vices. The watchers myth in the *Apocryphon of John* likewise seeks to elucidate, in a mythic idiom Philo would very much disagree with, the same basic issue the Jewish philosopher addresses—why some people are naturally inclined towards darkness and ignorance.

The question becomes what sort of continuity should be posited between the philosophical exegesis of Philo and the reformulation of Genesis in Nag Hammadi texts. It is not impossible that there is direct continuity between Philo and Nag Hammadi literature but this is not a necessary conclusion. Philo’s writings were of course taught and studied within an early Christian context.<sup>76</sup> Christian interpretative traditions around Genesis 6 could have been informed by Philo’s writings in that milieu. Philo and the authors of Nag Hammadi texts are both shaped by similar intellectual currents involving the interpretation of Platonic tradition in Egypt.<sup>77</sup> This fact also helps explain affinities between the Philonic and Nag Hammadi corpora.

When understanding possible relationships between Nag Hammadi literature and Second Temple writings, it is perhaps helpful to make a distinction between influence and background. There is clear evidence for the latter (that Enochic texts and traditions comprise part of the Jewish textual heritage that was reformulated within a Christian milieu), not the former (that there are direct lines of influence between pre-Christian Jewish communities and the fourth-century tradents of the Nag Hammadi texts). Also, the prioritization of Judaism as something prior to late antique Christianity hinders analysis between forms of Judaism that are contemporary or even later than the Nag Hammadi library. The claim in the *Apocryphon of John* that Yaldabaoth is also called Samael, a major Satan-like figure in rabbinic Judaism (e.g., *Pirq. R. El.* 46; *Deut. Rab.* 11.10; *Tg. Ps.-Jon.* Gen 3:6), for example, invites such explorations.<sup>78</sup>

75 Losekam, *Sünde*, 357. See also King, “Body and Society,” 82–97.

76 Runia, *Philo*.

77 Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*. Consult also Bagnall, *Egypt*.

78 There is also a rich vein of comparative material between this corpus and Merkabah mysticism and related Jewish texts such as *3 Enoch*. The *Pistis Sophia* for example mentions “Little Jao” (1.7; 2.86), which Alexander, “Jewish Elements,” 1060, has justly compared to the epithet “Little Yahweh” for Metatron/Enoch in *3 Enoch* (12:5), as had Odeberg before

Stressing care with regard to how we assess continuity—and what sort of continuity should be postulated—between Second Temple Judaism and the Nag Hammadi library raises the issue of the value of this late antique Christian material for scholars of Second Temple Judaism, in particular experts of the Dead Sea Scrolls, whose core textual data is clearly rooted primarily in the second and first centuries BCE. Continuities between late antique Egypt and Second Temple Judaism with regard to exegetical traditions or with regard to genre—such as the apocalypse—are possible and merit further investigation. But this should be done along with situating the Nag Hammadi material within its own cultural and intellectual context. Apparent affinities with older Jewish texts may be wholly explainable within the milieu of late antique Egypt. The value of comparing texts from the two corpora or the communities that produced them can result in new questions and perspectives even if no direct lines of continuity of tradition are delineated between the two.

The case of the *Apocryphon of John* suggests, even though the text does not give prominence to the figure of Enoch himself, that the gradual process of this composition's formation involved engagement with a form of the *Book of the Watchers*. This illustrates that the contents of this originally Jewish composition could take on new significance within the cultural milieu of late antique Egyptian Christianity. When scholars of Second Temple Judaism assess the reception of Enochic traditions in Early Christianity, they should not ignore the Nag Hammadi Codices.

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him. It should also be stressed that the iteration of the watchers myth in *Hypostasis of the Archons*, with its emphasis on Norea who ascends to heaven to escape the sexual advances of the archons, has more in common with the medieval *Midrash of Shemḥazai and Azazel* than any form of the watchers myth from the Second Temple period. In this Jewish text a woman likewise escapes the watchers on earth by going up to heaven. See Losekam, *Sünde*, 360; Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, 56; Odeberg, 3 *Enoch*, 188–92 (part 1). Note also Lahe, *Gnosis und Judentum*, 391.

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# Enochic Literature in Nag Hammadi Texts: The Enochic Myth of Angelic Descent as Interpretative Pattern?

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## 1 Introduction

The first chapters of Genesis comprise a remarkable set of narratives that explain very basic conditions of human life: the origin of humankind, differentiation of the sexes, hard work and painful births, and of course mortality. The creation of male and female (Gen 1–2), the violation of God’s commandment by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and their subsequent removal (Gen 3), and the origin of the second generation of humanity and the first murder (Gen 4) all belong to the most popular narratives. Often overlooked and mostly unknown to a broader public, however, is another passage in the first chapters of Genesis, consisting of only four verses often characterized as obscure: the story about the sons of God (*Bene Elohim*) who saw the beautiful daughters of men and took as wives whoever they liked in the antediluvian time when men began to multiply (Gen 6:1–4). The *Bene Elohim* in the biblical context can be understood as gods and have been interpreted in later times as referring to angels or humans. Codex Alexandrinus, an important witness of the Septuagint, translates “angels” (ἄγγελοι) instead of “sons of God” (υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ). Since these supernatural beings took human women, as a response God diminished the time his spirit is present in humans to 120 years because they are flesh (Gen 6:3). This myth is often interpreted as a restriction of the human lifespan. Strictly speaking it approves the human nature of the hybrid offspring by setting an ideal limit for human life, since they are flesh.<sup>1</sup> The offspring of the sons of God and their human wives are giants and famous heroes, figures

1 Bühner, “Göttersöhne und Menschentöchter,” 511. Gertz tries to solve the *crux interpretationis* (that the lifespans in Genesis after the flood are partly longer than 120 years) by hinting at the lifespan of Moses (Deut 31:2; 34:7) as the end point of the Torah. Thus, on this reading, the author of Gen 6:1–4 might have been more interested in indicating the connection between the beginning of humankind and the end of the Torah than in correct chronology (see Gertz, *Das erste Buch Mose*, 215).

that hold no negative connotation in Gen 6:4. Immediately following these incidents, God realizes that human evil had increased and decides to wipe out all living creatures by a flood (Gen 6:5).<sup>2</sup>

These verses find a more elaborated form with a clear indication of the angels' faults in the *Book of the Watchers* of *1 Enoch* (*1 En.*). The *Book of the Watchers* comprises the first 36 chapters of *1 Enoch*. The main topic and core of the narrative consists of the offense of heavenly watchers (ἐγγρήγοροι) who decided to take for themselves human women as wives and beget children. They descended from heaven to Mount Hermon, took human wives with whom they defiled themselves (*1 En.* 6:1–7:1), and taught them forbidden secrets like sorcery, charms (*1 En.* 7:1, 8:1c) and the production of weapons (8:1a); they produced offspring of enormous size and extraordinary appetite (7:2–3). After the situation on earth escalated and humans could not endure the gigantic offspring any longer, God caused a flood to destroy the hungry creatures and all humans except Noah and his family (*1 En.* 10:1–3). God banished the watchers from heaven, who had plotted against him and who, contrary to their nature, had mixed with human women. He instructed the archangels Raphael and Michael to tie them up and cast them into the depths of the earth (10:4–8, 11–13). Such is the interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 in *1 En.* 6–11.<sup>3</sup>

These chapters in *1 En.* 6–11 illustrate a remarkable interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 and the biblical story of the flood (Gen 6:5–9:28). They combine the enigmatic pericope about the *Bene Elohim* (Gen 6:1–4) and the corruption of humankind (Gen 6:5) that led to the flood. In stark difference to Genesis 6, evil on earth according to the *Book of the Watchers* primarily relies not on humans, but on the activity of angelic figures who descend to earth, their illegitimate marital unions with women, and the introduction of cultural knowledge and technology.<sup>4</sup> The myth of the fallen watchers, which belongs to the

2 For a literary analysis of the text of the Hebrew Bible, see Bühner, "Göttersöhne und Menschentöchter," 495–515. A more recent study on Gen 6:1–4: Doedens, *Sons of God*. This study, which is a revised edition of the author's dissertation from the Theological University Kampen (2013), offers besides the analysis of the biblical text also a history of exegesis. See also the recent commentary on Genesis by Gertz, *Das erste Buch Mose*, 202–17.

3 Chapters 12–16 offer an interpretation of the watchers through an account of Enoch's heavenly mandate as messenger of God's judgment. Nickelsburg (*1 Enoch* 1, 7) describes the following chapters *1 En.* 17–19 and 20–36 as "dual accounts of Enoch's cosmic journeys, in which he sees" the places of divine judgement.

4 Humans are not fully acquitted of sin, since they are practicing newly-learned technologies, such as the manufacture of weapons, or using sorcery or cosmetics for seduction.

broad context of biblical literature and its reception, is revised and modified on numerous occasions within Enochic Literature.<sup>5</sup>

The large number of Aramaic fragments of Enochic books discovered in Qumran<sup>6</sup> is strong evidence for the popularity of Enochic texts in Second Temple Judaism. Of all the Enochic books that are available in Aramaic fragments, the *Book of the Watchers* is not only found in various versions, but also equally influenced other writings of Second Temple Judaism like the so-called *Book of Giants*,<sup>7</sup> the *Book of Jubilees*,<sup>8</sup> as well as Christian texts of the time of the New Testament.<sup>9</sup> The tradition of the fallen angels according to *1 En.* 6–11 had an especially influential *Nachleben* in Jewish literature,<sup>10</sup> in writings of

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- 5 So in the *Animal Apocalypse* (*1 En.* 83–90), here *1 En.* 86:1–88:3; in the *Epistle of Enoch* (*1 En.* 92–105); the *Birth of Noah* (*1 En.* 106–7) especially in *1 En.* 106:1–3 and also in the *Book of Parables* (*1 En.* 37–71) at *1 En.* 39:1–2, 65 and 69:2–14.
- 6 In Cave 4 there is evidence for eleven manuscripts of various parts of *1 Enoch*. Besides the *Book of Parables*, fragments of all parts of *1 Enoch* (*Book of the Watchers*, *Book of the Luminaries*, *Animal Apocalypse* and the *Epistle of Enoch*) are found at Qumran (Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 9–11, 76–78).
- 7 A complete version of this book is not preserved but it is distributed among fragmentary Aramaic manuscripts found among the Qumran scrolls. For a critical text, translation and commentary on the Aramaic fragments: Stuckenbruck, *Book of Giants*; idem, “4Q201 2; 1Q23–24; 2Q26; 4Q203; 6Q8”; Puech, “4Q530; 4Q531; 4Q533 [and 4Q206a 1–2], 4QLivre des Géants.” The *Book of Giants* seems to be an expansion of *1 En.* 6–16. For a discussion of the influence of the *Book of the Watchers* on the *Book of Giants*, see Stuckenbruck, *Book of Giants*, 24–25.
- 8 See especially *Jub.* 4:22, 5:1–2, 7:20–25. Further, Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 72–76; Reed, *Fallen Angels*, 86–95; Losekam, *Sünde*, 86–92; Götte, *Von den Wächtern zu Adam*, 94–102.
- 9 Besides the well-known passages in *1 Pet* 3:19–20; *Jude* 6; and *2 Pet* 2:4–7, scholars have also argued for allusions to the Enoch tradition in the Synoptic Gospels, the Johannine tradition, and in Pauline writings (*1 Cor* 11:2–7); see Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 123–24. Almost half of the essays in Stuckenbruck’s volume of collected essays (*Myth of Rebellious Angels*, 142–325) refer to various New Testament passages (chapters 8–14).
- 10 The Enochic tradition at Qumran is also evident in the *Genesis Apocryphon* (1Q20), a fragmentary Hebrew text in 1Q19, a peshet *Ages of Creation* (4Q180–81) and the *Damascus Document* (4Q266–73; 5Q12; 6Q15). Besides the *Book of Jubilees* that has already been mentioned, traces of the Enochic tradition of the fallen angels in ancient Jewish literature are detectable in Ben Sira (*Sir* 16:6–10, 44:16, 49:14), *2 Enoch* (*2 En.* 7, 18); *2 Baruch* (*2 Bar.* 56:10–14); the *Apocalypse of Abraham* (*Apoc. Ab.* 14:2). Furthermore, the Enochic myth of angelic descent is evident in writings of Philo (*Gig.* 6–18, 58–67; *Deus* 1–4; *Q. Gen.* 1.92), Josephus (*Ant* 1.72–76), *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* (*LAB*) and also in rabbinic literature. A short overview on the Enoch tradition in context of ancient Jewish writings is given by Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 71–82. For detailed inquiry of these sources: Reed, *Fallen Angels*, 95–121, 136–47; Götte, *Von den Wächtern zu Adam*, 78–110, 114–28.

early orthodox Christianity,<sup>11</sup> and even Manichaean texts,<sup>12</sup> as various studies of its reception history have shown. Late ancient Egypt witnessed a particular popularity of Enochic texts and traditions in Christian circles of the second and third century CE (as attested by the Alexandrines, Clement and Origen), a popularity that persisted even after the books of Enoch had been rejected as non-canonical (as by Athanasius of Alexandria) in the fourth century CE. This special prominence of the *Book of the Watchers* in early Egyptian Christian literature is also attested by a Greek manuscript (Codex Panopolitanus) supposedly found in a grave in the Coptic cemetery in Akhmim.<sup>13</sup> Contributions from Enochic Literature to Nag Hammadi texts, which are transmitted in manuscripts most often dated to the fourth century CE and found in the monastic context of Egyptian Christianity, is, given the strong interest in Enochic literature in Christian Egypt, only to be expected.

Meanwhile, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Milik's *editio princeps* of the Aramaic fragments of the Enochic books has led to a great deal of scholarly activity concerning Enochic literature and its reception. The investigation of the reception of Enochic traditions in Judaism and Christianity

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- 11 Aside from the New Testament the watchers' mytheme occurs in a wide range of Christian literature in the first and second century CE, and was referred to in different forms. For a brief overview of the references in early Christian orthodox tradition: Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 87–95. A more detailed analysis of the sources is provided by VanderKam, "1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs." For a detailed analysis see Reed, who reflects on the use of different motifs of the fallen angels' myth in proto-orthodox Christian Literature and their function to establish a Christian identity and at the same time serve as demarcation from Jewish and pagan background. Reed, *Fallen Angels*, 160–89, 194–205, 218–32; Götte, *Von den Wächtern zu Adam*, 129–53.
- 12 The *Kephalaia* alludes to different motifs of the Enochic tradition of angelic descent, for example the motif of forbidden instruction in 92.27–93.3; the descent of the four archangels (*1 En.* 10) to imprison the watchers (93.24–29); and the fate of the children of the watchers and human women (117.5–9). More interest has been drawn to the Manichaean use of material from the Enochic *Books of Giants*: Reeves, *Jewish Lore*. For more recent studies on the *Book of Giants* in Manichaean literature: Goff, Stuckenbruck, and Morano, eds., *Ancient Tales of Giants*.
- 13 The codex contains *1 En.* 11–32:6 together with the *Apocalypse of Peter* and *Gospel of Peter*, and has been dated to the sixth century CE (Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 12). See the thorough survey of the use of *1 Enoch* in early Christian Literature by Lawlor, "Early Citations," 201–7. Brent Nongbri has recently argued that "the suggestion that the book came from a tomb in Akhmim seems more than a little speculative," given discrepancies in the accounts of the discovery and trafficking of the codex given by Carl Schmidt, who acquired it in Cairo on behalf of the Berliner Papyrussammlung (Nongbri, *God's Library*, 92).

in recent years has been advanced by the studies of Annette Yoshiko Reed,<sup>14</sup> Loren Stuckenbruck,<sup>15</sup> and others.<sup>16</sup> The majority of these studies delineate the *Nachleben* of Enochic texts in Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity up to the Byzantine period, without paying much attention to the Nag Hammadi texts.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, the aforementioned popularity and widespread *Nachleben* of the *Book of the Watchers* in writings of different religious provenances up to the fifth century CE or later—and especially the transmission of the Greek text of the *Book of the Watchers* in Egyptian papyri from the fourth century (Codex Panopolitanus)<sup>18</sup>—give us good reason to investigate the contribution of Enochic literature to the Nag Hammadi texts.

Despite the paucity of scholarly attention paid towards the Nag Hammadi texts in the reception history of the Enochic books, interpreters of the Nag Hammadi texts have analyzed and widely accepted the contribution of the *Book of the Watchers* to the *Secret Book of John* (on which see below),<sup>19</sup> even as they have come to differing emphases and conclusions in their analyses. For Gedaliahu Stroumsa the conception of evil is one of the most important topics in the Nag Hammadi texts and presents a “radical transformation” of the Enochic myth of the watchers, turning it into a core myth of the Nag Hammadi texts.<sup>20</sup> Others simply acknowledge the adaptation of the *Book of the Watchers* in the *Secret Book of John*.<sup>21</sup> Different scholars maintain skepticism about the relevance of Enoch and the Enoch tradition in gnostic literature.<sup>22</sup> Reed, who

14 See her important study of the reception-history of the *Book of the Watchers* from the third century BCE up to the early Middle Ages: *Fallen Angels*; Reeves and Reed, *Enoch from Antiquity*.

15 Stuckenbruck, “Origins of Evil,” 87–118 (reprinted in idem, *Myth of Rebellious Angels*); idem, “Book of Enoch.”

16 Wright, *Origin of Evil Spirits*; Harkins, Coblenz Bautch, and Endres, *Watchers in Jewish and Christian Traditions*; Götte, *Von den Wächtern zu Adam*.

17 Besides the short survey of Enoch traditions in Nag Hammadi texts by VanderKam, “1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs,” 70–76, Nickelsburg mentions some of the Nag Hammadi texts with parallels to the *Book of the Watchers* in his commentary (*1 Enoch* 1, 98–99).

18 Christian H. Bull rightly draws attention to the manuscript context of the Greek text from the *Book of the Watchers* (“Women,” 82–84).

19 Janssens, “Fornication des Anges”; Scopello, “Le mythe de la « chute » des anges,” 220–30 (revised in eadem, “Ils leur enseignèrent les charmes”); Pearson, “1 Enoch”; Losekam, *Sünde*, 151–83; Perkins, “Watchers Traditions”; Bull, “Women”; Vítková, “Gnostic Rewriting.”

20 Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, 19.

21 Even Reed, who doubts the importance of the Nag Hammadi texts for the reception-history of Enochic traditions, values the *Secret Book of John* as “retelling of the Enochic myth of angelic descent” (*Fallen Angels*, 201, n. 27).

22 Reeves, *Heralds*, 41: “Classical Gnostic literature maintains a deafening silence on the subject of Enoch.” See also Brakke, “Seed of Seth”; Reed, *Fallen Angels*, 149, n. 92, 276.

observes “the surprising lack of references to Enoch and the fallen angels in the Nag Hammadi literature,” nevertheless pleads for further exploration considering the Egyptian provenance of the texts.<sup>23</sup>

The present contribution examines the myth of the fallen angels from the *Book of the Watchers* (1 En. 6–16) within Nag Hammadi texts, reflecting upon it as interpretative pattern and associational frame. This study examines traces of the fallen angel myth as well as transformations of the tradition in Nag Hammadi texts, in particular the works from Nag Hammadi Codex II that offer an interpretation, adaptation, or a loose dependence of the first chapters of Genesis: *Secret Book of John* (*Ap. John*), the *Nature of the Rulers* (*Nat. Rulers*) and *On the Origin of the World* (*Orig. World*). My analysis focuses on the theological import of the use, adaptation, and alteration of the myth of the watchers in these three texts, especially regarding the relationship between sexuality, desire, and sin. In addition, I point to some allusions to the fallen angel tradition outside of this main scope of interest.

## 2 Secret Book of John

Within the Nag Hammadi Codices from the fourth century CE, the *Secret Book of John* is transmitted in three manuscripts (NHC II,1; III,1 and IV,1).<sup>24</sup> Another manuscript is preserved in the Berlin Gnostic Codex (BG 2), which was discovered in 1896 and has been dated to the fifth century CE.<sup>25</sup> The *Secret Book of John* is considered the most prominent Nag Hammadi text, which becomes obvious in its multiple copies, which provide short (NHC III,1 and BG 2) and

23 Reed, *Fallen Angels*, 276. The new survey of Enochic traditions by Reed and John Reeves takes *Pistis Sophia* into account but not the Nag Hammadi literature (Reeves and Reed, *Enoch from Antiquity*, 220–21).

24 For the Coptic text and translation of all four manuscripts, see Waldstein and Wisse, eds. and trs., *Synopsis*; For the short versions: Barc and Funk, eds. and trs., *Recension brève*. For English translations, see Turner and Meyer, trs., “Secret Book of John,” 103–32; Layton, tr., *Gnostic Scriptures*, 23–54. For German translation, see Waldstein, “Apokryphon des Johannes,” 75–123. See also the volume in the present essay by Goff.

25 The *editio princeps* of the Berlin Papyrus Codex 8502 was edited by Carl Schmidt, but revised and published long after his death by Till, *Papyrus Berolinensis 8502*, 78–193. See also Schenke, “Bemerkungen,” 293–304. Recently the fifth-century dating of the Berlin Codex (BG) has been questioned by Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 163, n. 82. Drawing on the investigation of the cover of BG by Krutzsch and Poethke (“Einband”), they date the cover of the codex to the sixth or seventh century. The short recension of the *Secret Book of John* in the Berlin Codex will be referred to as BG, with codex page numbers and lines following.

long recensions (NHC II,1 and IV,1) of the text. The short recension includes two different translations into Coptic, while the long recension originates from the same translation. Thus, two different recensions were translated from Greek into Coptic by three different translators. Both recensions of the *Secret Book of John* contain the tradition of the fallen angels, so the question of the earliest recension is less interesting than examining meaningful differences between the recensions. Rather, the theological differences between the versions can be explored in a way that discloses religious receptions and contexts, without being detained by the question of priority.<sup>26</sup>

The *Secret Book of John* as a whole has a twofold structure which is framed by a revelation dialogue between the resurrected Jesus and John, the son of Zebedee (NHC II 1.6–2.26 and 31.27–32.5; BG 19.6–22.17 and 75.15–77.5).<sup>27</sup> The first part of Christ's revelation to John comprises a treatise about the formation of the non-physical cosmos featuring an upper and a lower theocracy (NHC II 2.26–13.13; NHC III 5.1–18.25; BG 22.17–44.19). The second part is characterized by a critical explanation of Gen 1–8 from a Platonic perspective, partly presented in a dialogue considering soteriological and anthropological issues (NHC II 13.13–30.11; NHC III 21.1–39.11; BG 44.19–75.8).<sup>28</sup> Briefly summarized, the first part of the *Secret Book of John* explains the invisible world before creation or pre-Genesis realities and the second part refers to the material world according to the first chapters of Genesis and offers a rereading of Gen 1–8 from a Platonic perspective.

The transition from the immaterial invisible world to the material visible world within the narrative is caused by the fall of the spiritual emanation Sophia (NHC II 9.25–13.4; NHC III 14.9–18.25; BG 36.16–44.9). Sophia engenders a malformed creature, named Yaldabaoth, who creates the material world (NHC II 13.5–25.16; NHC III 21.19–32.22; BG 44.10–64.13). His appearance is described as a lion-faced serpent with eyes shining with fire (NHC II 10.9–10; NHC III 15.11–12; BG 37.20–38.1).<sup>29</sup> The enterprise of world-making by Yaldabaoth and his rulers constitutes the lower theocracy to whom the role of

26 This is not to say that the issue of priority is negligible.

27 In NHC III,1 the first three pages are missing; the end part of the frame is found in NHC III 39.15–40.9. Since the long recension in NHC IV,1 corresponds very closely to NHC II,1 and offers a highly lacunose text, it will not be discussed.

28 John asks Jesus seven questions that focus on the salvation of the souls (NHC II 25.16–30.11; NHC III 32.23–39.4; BG 64.14–75.14).

29 The long and the short recension differ in the description of Yaldabaoth's theriomorphic appearance. While the short recension refers to him having both the face of a lion and the face of a serpent, the long recension distributes the semblances of lion and serpent to head and body, respectively. Yet both recensions represent Yaldabaoth as a "demonic hybrid of a snake and a lion" (Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 107).



the biblical god and heavenly creatures are assigned to in the text's explanation of Gen 1–8. The critical interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis in the *Secret Book of John* displays a constant struggle between the upper theocracy or the powers of light and the lower theocracy who created the material world. The main events of primordial times—like the creation of Adam, Adam and Eve's stay in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3), the birth of Cain and Abel (Gen 4), and the flood (Gen 6–9)—are all explained as a continuous confrontation between the two theocracies, with Yaldabaoth trying to keep humans in ignorance and under his own authority, or even to destroy them.<sup>30</sup>

The explanation of the biblical flood story, followed by an adaptation of the watchers' myth of the fallen angels, is part of Jesus' answer to John's last question in the dialogue about the salvation of human souls (NHC II 25.16–30.11; NHC III 32.22–39.11; BG 64.13–75.10). John asks: "From where did the counterfeit spirit (ἀντίμιμον πνεῦμα) come?"<sup>31</sup> In his lengthy answer Jesus illuminates different instances that prevent humans from gaining knowledge, including "fate," Yaldabaoth's attempt to wipe out creation through a flood, and the defilement of women by angels. Within this context the retelling of the Enochic myth of angelic descent in the *Secret Book of John* (NHC II 29.16–30.11; NHC III 38.10–39.11; BG 73.18–75.10) answers the question concerning the origin of the ΠΑΝΤΙΜΙΜΟΝ ΜΠΝΔ (ἀντίμιμον πνεῦμα) or ΠΕΠΝΔ ΕΤΩΗΣ (despicable spirit) or ΠΕΠΝΔ ΕΤΩΒΒΙΔΕΙΤ (contemptible spirit) after the deluge sent by the Chief Archon failed to kill all humans. In a new attempt to seize humans he made a plan with his powers and sent his angels to the daughters of men to take women and procreate children for their enjoyment (NHC II 29.16–20; NHC III 38.10–15; BG 73.18–74.5). After this plan failed, they assembled again,

30 Creating Adam's material body out of dust (Gen 2:7) becomes an imprisonment into matter (NHC II 20.35–21.13; NHC III 26.8–25; BG 54.15–55.12); bringing Adam into the garden of Eden and feeding him fruits of death becomes a trick to keep humans in ignorance (NHC II 21.16–22.2; NHC III 27.4–28.6; BG 55.19–57.7). Cain and Abel are interpreted as righteous and unrighteous, animal-faced offspring of Yaldabaoth's defilement of Eve, introducing the distraction of sexual intercourse (NHC II 24.15–25; NHC III 31.10–21; BG 62.8–63.1). The flood does not destroy the wicked, as in the biblical context; rather, it is sent against the so called "immovable race," humans who are superior and whom Yaldabaoth and his rulers do not dominate (NHC II 28.34–29.15; NHC III 37.16–38.10; BG 72.14–73.18).

31 The two short versions (NHC III 36.16–17; BG 71.4–5) use the term ἀντίμιμον πνεῦμα (ΠΑΝΤΙΜΙΜΟΝ ΜΠΝΔ), translated as "counterfeit spirit," while in the long recension (NHC II 27.32; NHC IV 43.7–8) the term is translated into Coptic: ΠΕΠΝΔ ΕΤΩΗΣ or ΠΕΠΝΔ ΕΤΩΒΒΙΔΕΙΤ which in the English translation means "despicable or contemptible spirit"; see Böhlig, "Antimimon Pneuma." Unless otherwise noted, the translations from the Coptic are my own.

arranged a new plan, and created a despicable “spirit” which resembled the spirit from above, so as to pollute human souls through it. The angels changed their likeness into the appearance of the women’s mates, filling them “with the spirit of darkness ... and with evil” (NHC II 29.21–29; NHC III 38.16–24; BG 74.6–16). In addition to this deception, Yaldabaoth’s angels brought all sorts of metal and all kind of things to the people.<sup>32</sup> Whoever followed the angels fell into great troubles and were led astray by various deceptions. By means of the counterfeit “spirit,” the powers begot “children out of the darkness” and humans hardened their own hearts, not knowing the true God (NHC II 29.30–30.11; NHC III 38.25–39.11; BG 74.16–75.10).

Let us now examine the details of this myth. *Ap. John’s* allusion to the tale of the fallen angels from the *Book of the Watchers* is obvious: Yaldabaoth’s plan he made with his powers; the sexual union of his angels with human women; and the gifts of metal they offer. The detail that the angels change their own appearance and imitate the likeness of the women’s mates alludes to the reception of the fallen angels’ tradition in *T. Reu.* 5.6–7.<sup>33</sup> Since there is a broad scholarly consensus concerning these allusions to the *Book of the Watchers* in the *Secret Book of John*, I will focus upon how the tradition is altered and changed in the latter, Coptic work.<sup>34</sup> Contrary to the biblical sequence and its interpretation in the *Book of the Watchers*, in *Ap. John* the flood is not caused by the angels’ violation of nature. Rather, the Chief Archon’s plan to defile the women is a consequence of the (failed) flood, when Noah and other members of the immovable race were saved from the flood in a luminous cloud (NHC II 29.10–12; NHC III 38.3–5; BG 73.10–12). The relocation of the *Watchers* material to the

32 The formulation of the lists of metals and gifts the angels provide to humans in the short versions (NHC III 38.25–39.2; BG 74.16–19) slightly differs from that within the long version (NHC II 29.30–33). The short versions convey the impression that the generalized last item signifies every type of metal that has not been listed before: NHC III 39.2: ΜΝ ΕΙΔΟC ΝΙΜ ΝΓΕΝΟC; BG 74.19: ΜΝ ΓΕΝΟC ΝΙΜ. In the long version, the last item in the list might refer to every kind of item besides metal, indicated by means of changed word position: NHC II 29.32–33: ΜΝ ΓΕΝΟC ΝΙΜ ΝΓΕ ΝΕΙΔΟC. This could be a redactional change intended to expand the number of objects.

33 In the *Testament of Reuben*, the angels take the shape of humans and appear to the women while they are having sexual intercourse with their husbands. This causes them to conceive children who look like the angels. A stark difference in the *Secret Book of John* is that in *T. Reu.*, the angels in the shape of humans do not actually have intercourse with the human women. The idea behind the presentation of *T. Reu.* 5.6–7 is that thinking about somebody else during intercourse will make the offspring resemble this person (Küchler, *Schweigen, Schmuck und Schleier*, 445–55; Losekam, *Sünde*, 97–98, 173).

34 In addition to the studies already mentioned in footnote 19, see Pearson, “Jewish Sources,” especially 451–56; King, *Secret Revelation*, 109; Creech, *Use of Scripture*, 61; Denzey Lewis, *Introduction*, 161.

age *after* the flood shows that the Chief Archon's intent is to corrupt the people who survived the flood. As much is also proven by the absence of the factor of passion or desire in the story of the Chief Archon's intention and action. While in the *Book of the Watchers* the angels' sexual unions with women is caused by sexual desire, in *Ap. John* it is simply an additional plot of the Chief Archon against humankind.

The angels' first attempt to sexually assault the women fails, which also demonstrates the strength and resistance of the human women. I agree here with Christian Bull, who perceives that the women of the immovable race are the targets of the attack brought by the Chief Archon and the angels, whose aim is to implant the counterfeit spirit into the women.<sup>35</sup> This attempted but failed sexual assault indicates that women of the immovable race of Seth are not easily deceived.<sup>36</sup> After the women resist the first attempt of the powers to defile them, the Chief Ruler and his powers must resort to a different trick: the creation of an evil "spirit." The "despicable" or "counterfeit" spirit in the short recension is a negative counterpart to the "Epinoia of light," for its aim is to prevent humans from true knowledge, while the figure of Epinoia gives knowledge.<sup>37</sup> Only by fraud—such as the invention of the counterfeit spirit or the imitation of the women's intimate partners—can Yaldabaoth's angels succeed in defiling the women.

That the counterfeit spirit is introduced to human women by the angels through intercourse is one of the main differences in the retelling of the myth of the fallen angels in the *Secret Book of John* compared to the *Book of Watchers*. The sexual intercourse between the archontic angels and human women presents the way in which the wicked spirit becomes an internal part of humans in post-diluvian times. Unlike the *Book of the Watchers* (1 En. 15:8–16:2) and the *Book of Jubilees* (Jub. 10:1–9), the *Secret Book of John* presents the continuity of

35 Bull, "Women," 89, 96.

36 Perkins, "Watchers Tradition," 141; Bull, "Women," 89, 106.

37 The counterfeit spirit in the *Secret Book of John* appears on different occasions. When the archons create Adam's material body, the counterfeit spirit is part of the ingredients (NHC II 21.4–9; BG 55.2–9; NHC III 26.13–19). It is also in the archons' (false) tree of life in the midst of Paradise (BG 56.10–19; NHC III 27.14–22), at least according to the short recension. Thirdly, the procreation out of desire—first established through Yaldabaoth's defilement of Eve, which produces copies of the bodies—is initiated by the counterfeit spirit and persists up to the present day (NHC II 24.28–31; BG 63.5–9; NHC III 31.21–32.3). The theme of this evil spirit furthermore occurs in the second question of the dialogue between John and Jesus, regarding the souls who are not perfect (NHC II 26.10–22; BG 67.1–18; NHC III 34.3–18); the question concerning the origin of the spirit (NHC II 27.32; BG 71.4–5; NHC III 36.16–17); and the answer to this question, as discussed presently. See Losekam, *Sünde*, 161–63.

evil not as the persistent harassment of humans by evil spirits after the flood, but as an intrusion of the counterfeit spirit into human beings, corrupting them from within. The evil spirit fills humans with darkness, pollutes their souls, and keeps them away from knowledge of the true God. Bull rightly stresses the difference of exterior evil spirits and the counterfeit spirit “as an intrinsic part of their post-diluvian and pre-salvific being.”<sup>38</sup>

As noted above, the archons’ introduction of several kinds of metal is a clear reference to the *Book of the Watchers* (1 En. 8:2) and the latter’s explanation how the watchers taught humans the skills of processing metals, decoration (1 En. 8:2–3), or sorcery (1 En. 7:2). Contrary to the *Book of the Watchers*, the element of teaching is missing in all recensions of the *Secret Book of John*. Rather, the watchers’ offering of different kind of metals is understood as a gift to influence people to follow the archons (NHC II 29.33–34).<sup>39</sup> The gift of metal as well as the illusion of assuming a human form both function as part of the angels’ effort to lead women of the immovable race astray in order to sexually assault them.<sup>40</sup> The short recension clearly emphasizes the metallic gifts as means to distract especially women: “that they could not remember their immovable Providence” (NHC III 39.2–4; BG 75.1–3). The sequence that immediately ensues in the short recension, describing the angels’ efforts and success to take women and beget children, is strong evidence for the correlation between metallic gifts and seduction.<sup>41</sup> Bull correctly points out that in contrast to the long recension—where the angels’ gifts are given to people in general (NHC II 29.30–30.1)—in the short recension, women are explicitly blamed for being susceptible to the material gifts of the angels, lending an additional, misogynistic connotation.<sup>42</sup>

38 Bull, “Women,” 88.

39 Cf. Bull, “Women,” 92, rightly pointing to the long recension (NHC II 29.33–34) with the implied meaning “that the gifts of metal made people (ῥῶμῆ) follow the angels (καὶ ἐνταῦθα τοῦ ἀποστόλου Ἰωάννου).” However, I am not quite convinced about Bull’s inference that this could also indicate that people who followed the angels became their students, “learning their crafts.”

40 King, *Secret Revelation*, 109 chooses a more neutral expression, calling the gifts of metal “material wealth,” which “like sexual desire, is an evil masquerading as a supposed good, and both are intended to lead people astray by deception.” See also Losekam, *Sünde*, 175–76.

41 NHC III 39.5–7: ἀγῶ ἀγενᾶστε ἦμο[οῦ ἀ]γῆπο ἡγενῶμῆρε ἐβολ εἶν [πικ]ᾶκε “And they seized them and begot children out of the darkness.” Cf. BG 75.4: ἀγῶ ἀγῆπτοῦ “and they took them ...” (i.e., the women).

42 See Bull, “Women,” 92; cf. King, *Secret Revelation*, 106. Accordingly, Bull questions King’s thesis attributing to the short recension a less patriarchal attitude.

Unlike the short recension, the long recension expands the list of metallic gifts and adds the consequences of deception and ignorance on peoples' life (NHC II 29.30–30.2). People who are led astray by the angels become old without leisure (NHC II 30.2–3), they die without knowing any truth and the God of Truth. In short, the long recension outlines the enslavement of the whole creation under the authority of the Chief Archon and his rulers up to the present day (NHC II 30.3–7). The counterfeit spirit initiates sexual intercourse resulting from deception<sup>43</sup> which leads to the hardness of human hearts, leaving them in ignorance of the true god and distraction. The hardness of heart, which Yaldabaoth applied to Adam by quoting Isa 6:10 when he created Eve in order to let Adam stay in ignorance (NHC II 22.26–28; NHC III 29.8–11; BG 59.1–5), could also be a further indication for the elaboration of the fallen angels' myth of the *Book of the Watchers* in the *Secret Book of John*.<sup>44</sup> In 1 *En.* 16:3 God accuses the watchers of having taught secret knowledge to women out of their "hardness of hearts."<sup>45</sup> The expression "hardness of heart" refers within the biblical context to the rejection of God's will.<sup>46</sup> In the present context it signifies the *conditio humanae* in the state of ignorance, not knowing the God of Truth, up through the day when Pronoia (Grk. "providence, forethought") shall descend for the third time and salvation becomes possible;<sup>47</sup> for then the power of the

43 Sexual intercourse and reproduction in the *Secret Book of John* are not *per se* evil and to be rejected, but sexual unions that are caused by deception, passion, or the intention of domination that draw humans away from the knowledge of the true God are described as sexual acts which lead to ignorance and the production of counterfeit copies. See King, *Secret Revelation*, 5: "In contrast to the sexual violence and lust of the false world rulers, true sexuality consists in spiritual generation following the pattern of the Divine Realm." Further, King, *Secret Revelation*, 107, 128–29. The existence of a pure form of procreation for humans in the *Secret Book of John* is also cautiously implied by Gilhus, "Sacred Marriage," 499. See further Bull, "Women," 89, n. 56.

44 Pearson, "1 Enoch," 363; Losekam, *Sünde*, 177–79.

45 Nickelsburg, 1 *Enoch* 1, 267: "You were in heaven, and no mystery was revealed to you; but a stolen mystery you learned; and this you made known to the women in your hardness of heart."

46 The biblical use of this idiom to express intentional rejection of God's will as well as of messages from humans is phrased in many ways, but always in respect to the heart, for example: to make the heart firm (Exod 4:21; 7:13, 22; 9:12; Deut 2:30; 2 Chr 36:13); to harden the heart: (Exod 7:3; Isa 63:17; Mark 10:5; Heb 3:8), to make the heart heavy or fat (Exod 8:11, 28; 9:7; 10:1; Isa 6:10). The hardness of heart refers to individual humans like the Pharaoh or the people at large, whether Israelites (Isa 6:9–10; Ezek 2:4; 3:7), Jews (Heb 3:8), or pagans (Eph 4:18).

47 The Pronoia hymn (NHC II 30.12–31.27) is missing in the short recension. Besides the absence of the Pronoia hymn, Pronoia is far more active in the long recension than in the short recension. According to Waldstein ("Providence Monologue," 392), half of the occurrences of Pronoia in the long version have no parallel in the short ones. Based on

Chief Archon and his angels shall be dissolved by means of the baptism of five seals. Pronoia encourages the one imprisoned in the body to empower himself “against the angels of poverty and the demons of chaos” (NHC II 31.17–19).

The *Secret Book of John* utilizes, in a free and creative way, the mytheme of the watchers to illustrate human life under the condition of ignorance of the true God. The negative understanding of the angels’ descent and their illegitimate sexual unions with women as well as the angels’ transmission of cultural and technical knowledge that causes evil on earth constitute an interpretative pattern that is a good fit for the rhetorical and theological interests of the *Secret Book of John*. Sexual intercourse that follows from deception, violence, or distraction by precious metals or other luxury goods prevents humans from obtaining spiritual knowledge and opens them up to domination by the false world-ruler. The sexual behavior of Yaldabaoth’s angels, who are identified with the watchers, causes evil by preventing humans from knowing the God of Truth.

### 3 ‘Nature of the Rulers’ (NHC II,4) and ‘On the Origin of the World’ (NHC II,5; XIII,2\*)

Nag Hammadi Codex II contains two texts right next to one other that show striking similarities in content, the so-called *Nature of the Rulers* (NHC II,4)<sup>48</sup> and *On the Origin of the World* (NHC II,5).<sup>49</sup> The *Nature of the Rulers* is a work that is extant only in this single manuscript. In content and form, it is divided into two main parts. The first part (*Nat. Rulers* 87.11–93.2) is characterized by a retelling and a commentary on Genesis 1–6; the second part (*Nat. Rulers* 93.2–96.17), by a revelation dialogue between the angel Eleleth and Eve’s daughter Norea. The dialogue provides the cosmogonic and theological backstory to the narration which precedes the dialogue. The rhetorical disparity between

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Waldstein’s work, Barc and Painchaud show how the three descents of Pronoia have been worked into the text of the long version and signify a redaction and theological reworking of the shorter version (“Réécriture de l’Apocryphon”).

48 For the Coptic text and translation, I use the following editions: Barc and Roberge, eds. and trs., *L’Hypostase*; Layton, “Hypostasis of the Archons,” 234–59; Kaiser, *Hypostase*, 46–87. For a detailed overview of older and newer editions and translations, see Kaiser, *Hypostase*, 420–21. To be added are the English translation by Meyer (“Nature of the Rulers”) and the German translation by Kaiser (“Hypostase der Archonten”).

49 For the Coptic text and translation, I use the following editions: Layton, Bethge and Societas Coptica Hierosolymitana, “Treatise without Title,” 28–93; Painchaud, *L’Écrit sans titre*, 145–217; Bethge, *Ursprung der Welt*; Bethge, “Vom Ursprung der Welt”; Meyer, “On the Origin of the World.” For a detailed discussion of editions, see Losekam, *Sinde*, 302, n. 1.

the two parts—narration in the first part and dialogue in the second—has given rise to the scholarly hypothesis that the text has been compiled from two different sources.<sup>50</sup> *On the Origin of the World*, meanwhile, is a very long (NHC II 97.24–127.17) and learned composition that is characterized by allusions to other texts, summaries, systematizations, etymologies, and explanations subordinated to an overarching narration. The text addresses the topic of the beginning of the world, but without much reference to the unfolding of the upper world, the formation of humanity, and the end of time. Given the predominance in the text of Egyptian themes and elements (*Orig. World* 122.1–123.2), it is generally taken to have been composed in Alexandria.<sup>51</sup> Besides the complete Codex II version, the text is known from a very short fragment from Nag Hammadi Codex XIII and some fragments from a Coptic manuscript in the British Library.<sup>52</sup> *On the Origin of the World* has a threefold structure: a main part, namely a lengthy and elaborate description of the primeval era (*Orig. World* 98.11–121.35), and a shorter outline of the end of time (125.32–127.14), while the intermediate section—covering terrestrial history (*Orig. World* 123.4–125.32)—is brief and less detailed.

Moreover, these two texts are particularly important for understanding the reception of the mytheme of the watchers in Nag Hammadi literature, although there is scarce recognition of this fact in the attendant scholarly literature. Like the *Secret Book of John*, the *Nature of the Rulers* and *On the Origin of the World* both comprise interpretations of the first chapters of Genesis and offer—though in different ways—traces of the Enochic myth of angelic descent. The striking similarities in content between the latter two writings have led many to postulate a common source (such as a Genesis paraphrase),<sup>53</sup> but, despite the many parallels between both writings, “the precise nature of their relationship”<sup>54</sup> has yet to be discerned. It remains a possibility that these two writings make common use of the same source(s), but any firm reconstruction of such sources remains beyond us.<sup>55</sup> In looking at traces of the Enochic

50 For a detailed discussion of source-critical considerations concerning *Nat. Rulers* in scholarship, see Kaiser, *Hypostase*, 18–27.

51 Bethge, “Vom Ursprung der Welt,” 237; Painchaud, *L'Écrit sans titre*, 117.

52 For these texts see Layton, “Appendix One,” 94, and idem, “Appendix Two,” 95–134. Both sets of fragments are not considered in the present essay due to their lack of relevant material.

53 Bethge, “Vom Ursprung der Welt,” 239.

54 Denzey Lewis, *Introduction*, 133. In very similar words also Meyer, “On the Origin of the World,” 200.

55 Kaiser, *Hypostase*, 21: “Die offensichtliche Schwierigkeit, eine überzeugende Rekonstruktion dieser Quellen zu leisten, verweist aber darauf, dass hier ein sorgfältiger Verfasser am Werk war, der mit Hilfe von vorhandenem Material etwas Neues, Eigenes gestaltet hat,

descent myth in *Nat. Rulers* and *Orig. World* I will first focus on the anthropogonic narratives in both texts (*Nat. Rulers* NHC II 87.11–89.31; *Orig. World* NHC II 108.5–117.18), which share many parallels. I will then turn attention to the specific explanations of Norea's encounter with the archons in *Nat. Rulers* (NHC II 92.18–93.2) and the life of humans in error and ignorance according to *Orig. World* (NHC II 123.2–31).

### 3.1 *Enochic Descent Myth and Eve's Rape in the 'Nature of the Rulers' and 'On the Origin of the World'*

The interpretation of Genesis in the first part of the *Nat. Rulers* is triggered by the boast of the blind, ignorant, and arrogant Chief Archon: "It is I who am God, there is none apart from me" (NHC II 86.27–31). Despite an immediate denial of his blasphemous claim from a voice that comes forth from the divine Incorruptibility (on whom see below), the archons nonetheless attempt to become more powerful and to verify the Chief Archon's boast. The archons' attempts to gain power and knowledge are presented in sexualized images and language. When Incorruptibility, a sort of a pneumatic spirit, looks down from the upper world into the world of chaos where the Chief Archon Samael has gone, "her image appeared in the waters" (*Nat. Rulers* 87.13).<sup>56</sup> The image in the water attracts the authorities of darkness and they fall in love with her (87.14:  $\alpha\lambda\omega\ \alpha\lambda\epsilon\zeta\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\alpha\ \bar{\iota}\pi\kappa\alpha\kappa\epsilon\ \mu\epsilon\rho\iota\tau\bar{\iota}\bar{\varsigma}$ ), but fail to capture the image. The explanation for their failure turns out to be very simple (*Nat. Rulers* 87.15–20):

But they could not take hold of that image, which had appeared to them in the waters, because of their weakness—since beings that merely possess a soul cannot lay hold of those that possess a spirit—for they were from below, while it was from above.

Their ontological condition and origin from the lower world led them to failure. As soul-endowed beings they are driven by emotions, and are inferior to spiritual beings. Whenever the authorities or archons try to take possession of spiritual elements, their actions and ideas are described in sexualized imagery and language. Such sexualized descriptions occur when they form Adam out of earth using him as bait for his spiritual counterpart (NHC II 87.23–88.3); when

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was auch in erster Linie als solches—i.e. in seiner vorliegenden Form—wahrgenommen werden sollte."

56 Layton, "Hypostasis of the Archons," 237; cf. Meyer's translation, "Nature of the Rulers," 191: "Her image appeared as a reflection in the waters." Meyer's translation stresses the logical meaning of  $\epsilon\iota\bar{\nu}\epsilon$  in the present context.



the spiritual woman talks with Adam (NHC II 89.17–31); and in the archons' encounter with Eve's daughter Norea after the flood (NHC II 92.18–93.7).

All of these passages exhibit the archons as confusing spiritual knowledge with sexual knowledge. The archons' first attempt to reach or get hold of the spiritual element in NHC II 87.13–14 already presents a sexualized desire for the spiritual element as a quest for spiritual power. These passages displaying the archons' longing for the spiritual element offer a similar structure:

- a) The archons or authorities notice a spiritual figure or image from the upper world (usually female).
- b) The image or figure they see triggers their emotions: they are sexually attracted by it, desire it, and fall in love.
- c) They assault the image or figure sexually by attempting to seize or trick her, but fail for various reasons.

Whence the sexualized language in the aforementioned passages of *Nat. Rulers*? Was the slogan "sex sells" already a truism in the ancient world of religious literature? An alternative explanation is offered by Ingvild Gilhus, who argues—with recourse to *Ap. John*—that in *Nat. Rulers*, sexuality and procreation are metaphors for attaining spiritual knowledge.<sup>57</sup> Either way, the Enochic watchers' myth offered the author(s) of *Nat. Rulers* much suitable material. Traces of the angelic descent myth in *Nat. Rulers* are far less obvious than in *Ap. John*—but they are not absent.

I will presently consider possible traces of and allusions to the Enochic watchers' myth in the attempted rapes of the spiritual and earthly Eves in *Nat. Rulers* NHC II 89.18–31 and *Orig. World* NHC II 116.11–117.15. For the facility of the reader, I quote the relevant passages in a synopsis.

*Nat. Rulers* NHC II 89.18–31

<sup>18</sup> The authorities came to their Adam. <sup>19</sup> When they saw his female partner speaking with him,

*Orig. World* NHC II 116.11–19

<sup>11</sup> They came <sup>12</sup> to Adam, and when they saw Eve speaking with him,  
<sup>13</sup> they said to each other, "Who is this luminous woman?  
<sup>14</sup> She looks like what appeared to us  
<sup>15</sup> in the light. Now come

57 "Sacred Marriage," 501: "We can now see reasons for choosing certain metaphors. For example, when sexuality and procreation are used to explore processes of spiritual begetting and attaining knowledge and salvation, an abstract and difficult process is simplified by the use of something that is more concrete and comprehensible. It is thus a pedagogic point to combine these domains."

<sup>20</sup> they became restless with great  
 agitation  
<sup>21</sup> and they fell in love with her. They  
 said to each other,  
<sup>22</sup> "Come, let's throw our semen  
<sup>23</sup> down on her," and they chased her.

<sup>24</sup> But she laughed at them for their  
 foolishness  
<sup>25</sup> and their blindness.

And she became  
<sup>26</sup> a tree in their hands, and she left  
 them her shadow resembling her.

<sup>16</sup> let's seize her and throw our semen  
 into her.  
<sup>17</sup> so that she may become unclean  
<sup>18</sup> and unable to ascend to her light.  
<sup>19</sup> Rather, those whom she will bear,  
 will serve us.

*Orig. World* 116.20–25  
 (cf. Gen 2:21–22)

<sup>25</sup> Then Eve  
<sup>26</sup> being a heavenly power laughed  
 about their decision.  
<sup>27</sup> She blinded their eyes, left  
<sup>28</sup> secretly her likeness there with  
 Adam.  
 She entered  
<sup>29</sup> the tree of knowledge and  
 remained there.  
<sup>30</sup> But they pursued her, and she  
 revealed  
<sup>31</sup> to them that she had gone into the  
 tree and had become  
<sup>32</sup> a tree. When they fell into great  
 fear, the blind powers fled.

*Orig. World* NHC II 116.33–34

<sup>35</sup> ... they came to Adam, seeing the  
 likeness of this woman  
<sup>117.1</sup> with him, they were worried and  
 thought this  
<sup>2</sup> was the true Eve. And they dared,  
 they came  
<sup>3</sup> up to her, seized her and threw  
<sup>4</sup> their semen upon her. They acted so

<sup>27</sup> And they defiled it  
 (the shadow)  
<sup>28</sup> foully. And they defiled the seal  
<sup>29</sup> of her voice.  
 Therefore, they convicted  
 themselves  
<sup>30</sup> through their creature and its  
<sup>31</sup> image.

<sup>5</sup> wickedly, defiling her not only  
<sup>6</sup> in natural ways but also  
 in foul ways, <sup>7</sup> defiling first the seal  
 of her voice ...  
<sup>12</sup> And they erred, not knowing  
<sup>13</sup> that it was their own body that  
 they had defiled. It was the  
 likeness that  
<sup>14</sup> the authorities and <sup>15</sup> their angels  
 defiled in every way.

The authorities' confrontation with the spiritual Eve corresponds in structure and wording with their aforementioned encounter with the image of Incorruptibility (*Nat. Rulers* NHC II 87.13–14). They react as emotionally as they did when they first saw the image from the upper world in the waters (*Nat. Rulers* NHC II 87.13). The parallel text in *Orig. World* (NHC II 116.13–15), meanwhile, explicitly relates the luminous woman speaking to Adam, to the Adam of light the authorities saw before (NHC II 112.25–29). A number of details in the ensuing narrative represent implicit allusions to the Enochic watchers' descent in the archons' behavior regarding the spiritual Eve. These are, first, the falling in love with Eve versus love with human women; second, the structure of the reasoning behind the archons' assault on the spiritual Eve in *Orig. World* ([a] the degradation of the spiritual through mixing with the material and [b] the gain of control over the victim and offspring) and the reasoning behind the watchers' descent; third, the desire to beget/procreate; fourth, that the authorities and watchers both defile themselves; and fifth, the punishments of the authorities and the watchers.

For instance, the authorities' falling in love with the spiritual Eve corresponds closely the described reactions of the watchers seeing the beautiful daughters of men according to *1 En.* 6:2. When the watchers, the sons of heaven, saw the beautiful daughters of men, they desired them and said to one another: "Come, let us choose for ourselves wives from the daughters of men, and let us beget for ourselves children."<sup>58</sup> While the objects of sexual desire are different—the spiritual Eve speaking with Adam in *Nat. Rulers*, and the beautiful daughters of men in *1 En.* 6:2—both descriptions share structural similarities. Just as the watchers see, desire, and plan to take for themselves women, the authorities according to the *Nat. Rulers* do the same.

58 Translation according to Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 174.

The negative connotation of the watchers' descent caused by their sexual attraction to women lends itself easily to an identification of Yaldabaoth's rulers with the watchers. According to *Orig. World* NHC II 116.10, the authorities send seven archangels to Adam after they discover that he is alive. While the watchers plan to take wives and beget children (*1 En.* 6:2), the authorities' behavior seems to be motivated solely by sexual lust, at least according to the *Nat. Rulers*, where the authorities become restless and fell in love with the spiritual Eve (NHC II 89.20–21).

The reaction of the archangels in *Orig. World* differs from the authorities' emotional outburst in *Nat. Rulers*. The archangels do not seem seduced or overwhelmed by sexual desire for the spiritual Eve. Instead of losing their emotional control due to sexual lust, they recognize her spiritual character by identifying her with the luminous image that had appeared to them before, and come to a—by their standards—logical decision (NHC II 116.15–20):

Now come, let's seize her and throw our semen into her, so that she may become unclean and unable to ascend to her light. Rather, those whom she will bear, will serve us.

Their plan to assault the spiritual Eve sexually offers the motive behind the assault, which is missing in the *Nat. Rulers*. The authorities' reasoning in *Orig. World* deals with two, related notions: the diminishment of the perfection of a heavenly or spiritual being by sexual union with an earthly being, and the acquisition of power over their mixed offspring.<sup>59</sup> The insemination of the spiritual Eve will prevent her ascent into light; the children to whom she will give birth will be dominated by the archons. The structure of the authorities' reasoning in *Orig. World* parallels, albeit in reverse, the reasoning of the watchers. The watchers see the beautiful daughters of men and descend from heaven to take themselves wives and procreate children (*1 En.* 6:1–2). In doing so they violate God's rules of creation. With respect to these rules for the watchers as heavenly beings, reproduction is not intended, because they do not die, unlike humans (*1 En.* 15:4–6). Having defiled themselves as spiritual beings with human women, the watchers are imprisoned in the depth of the earth

59 The concept of reducing or leaving spiritual power by coming into contact with less pneumatic beings affects for example the Adam of Light in *Orig. World* NHC II 111.29–33; 112.11–14. The Adam of Light, who appeared in the first day on earth and stayed for two days, was prevented from returning to his light, the eighth heaven, because the poverty of the lower world mingled with his light.

(1 *En.* 10:11–13; 19:1), banished from their heavenly dwelling, and their offspring and the evil spirits coming forth from them will stay on earth (1 *En.* 15:8–9).<sup>60</sup>

The authorities' reference to children as result of their sexual relations with the spiritual Eve (*Orig. World* NHC II 116.19) might correspond to the watchers' proclamation in 1 *En.* 6:2: "let us beget for ourselves children." While the watchers' plan to beget children indicates the intention to generate their own dynasty, the authorities' plan in *Orig. World* to have children with the spiritual Eve represents an intentional strategy to control and dominate her and her progeny. Compared to this strategy, the author of *Nat. Rulers* stresses the authorities' uncontrolled, passionate, and violent behavior, although their intention to beget children is obvious in their request: "Come, let's throw our semen down on her" (*Nat. Rulers* 89.22–23).

Yet, unlike *Orig. World*, the authorities' sexual assault of the spiritual Eve in *Nat. Rulers* is not part of a strategic plan; it is the expression of the emotions and lust that characterizes them as violent creatures of the material world who will never be able to possess the pneumatic elements of a spirit-endowed female figure (as the reader already knows from *Nat. Rulers* NHC II 87.15–20).<sup>61</sup> The emphasis on the authorities' violence in *Nat. Rulers* also becomes apparent in the narration of the spiritual Eve's escape and the pursuit of her by the authorities until she becomes a tree in their hands. This allusion to the Greek myth of Apollo and Daphne, so well-known in ancient Graeco-Roman literature,<sup>62</sup> is obvious and has been recognized by various scholars.<sup>63</sup> Ursula Ulrike Kaiser recently referred to the parallel myth of Pan who pursued the nymph Syrinx with a clear sexual intention. She was saved by being transformed into reed.<sup>64</sup> Pan—half-human and half-goat, and famous for his sexual lust—is a much stronger parallel than the god Apollo to the lust-driven, theriomorphic authorities of *Nat. Rulers*. On the one hand, the allusion to Greek mythology

60 1 *En.* 14:5: "that from now on you will not ascend into heaven for all the ages; and it has been decreed to bind you in bonds in the earth for all the days of eternity" (tr. Nickelsburg, 1 *Enoch* 1, 251).

61 See also Marjanen, "Neuinterpretation der Eva-Tradition," 48: "In der *Hypostase der Archonten* scheint die Vergewaltigung keinem anderen Zweck zu dienen, als den gewalttätigen und brutalen Charakter der Mächte der materiellen Welt zu betonen."

62 Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius* 1.16; Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 8.20.1–4; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.452–567 and Lucian, *A True Story* 1.8.

63 Nagel, *Wesen der Archonten*, 40; Böhlig, "Griechische Schule," 19 and 31; Böhlig and Labib, *Koptisch-gnostische Schrift ohne Titel*, 82; Pearson, "She Became a Tree," 414; King, "Ridicule and Rape," 12–15.

64 Kaiser, "Baum," 137. In a similar but less detailed fashion, see also idem, *Hypostase*, 228, n. 416. Pearson already referred to the pagan motif of the Hamadrayad or tree-nymph escaping from sexual assaults of Pan, displayed on a mosaic ("She Became a Tree," 414).

emphasizes the violent lower instincts of the authorities; on the other, it furnishes the occasion of a split in the figure of Eve, and of the spiritual Eve's rescue and transformation into a tree, so that the authorities cannot reach her. According to *Orig. World* (NHС II 116.29), the spiritual Eve enters the tree of knowledge, signifying the narrative transition to Gen 3.<sup>65</sup>

The authorities fail to rape the spiritual Eve, but succeed in defiling her image or shadowy reflection. Her reflection is associated with the material or physical Eve, whom they defile, thus making themselves liable to condemnation (*Nat. Rulers* NHС II 89.28–30). Seeking to defile the spiritual Eve, the authorities do not recognize that they defile the likeness of their own creation: the material Adam, whom they formed according to their own body.<sup>66</sup> Their act of self-harm is expressed more clearly in *Orig. World* (NHС II 117.12–15):

ΑΥΩ ΔΥΡ̄ΠΛΑΝΑ ΕΝΣΕΟΟΥΝ ΔΝ ΔΕ Ν̄ΤΑΥΧΑΔΖ̄Μ ΠΟΥΣΩΜΑ ΠΙΝΕ ΠΕ  
Ν̄ΤΑΥΧΑΔΖ̄ΜḲ̄ Ν̄ΒΙ ΝΕΖΟΥΣΙΑ Ζ̄Ν̄ ΣΜΟΤ̄ ΝΙΜ Μ̄Ν ΝΟΥΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ

And they erred, not knowing that it was their own body that they had defiled. It was the likeness that the authorities and their angels defiled in every way.<sup>67</sup>

By defiling the material Eve, the authorities defile themselves. Here too, we see traces of the mytheme of the watchers. According to the *Book of the Watchers*, the watchers (who are considered spirits) defile themselves when uniting with women (1 *En.* 7:1): “These and all the others with them took for themselves wives from among them such as they chose. And they began to go into

65 The tree into which Eve is transformed in *Nat. Rulers* NHС II 89.25–26 is not named. Scholarship is divided between assuming it to be the tree of life (Layton, “Hypostasis of the Archons,” 57 n. 60; Gilhus, *Nature of the Archons*, 24 and 69–70; Pagels, “Exegesis and Exposition,” 271) or the tree of knowledge (Gero, “Seduction of Eve,” 301; Kaiser, *Hypostase*, 229–30). Considering that it is the spiritual Eve who gives life to Adam (*Nat. Rulers* NHС II 89.14: ΠΕΧΔΑΥ ΔΕ Ν̄ΤΟ ΠΕΝ̄ΤΑΖ̄Τ̄ ΝΔΕΙ Ḳ̄ΠΩΝΕ) and the meaning of life as knowledge about the upper world in the text, both trees are possible. The lack of restriction between one tree or another in the metaphor corresponds to the spiritual Eve's function to give life through knowledge (Losekam, *Sünde*, 233). Barc (in Barc and Roberge, eds. and trs., *Hypostase*, 89, 93, 95) combines both trees into one. Kaiser (*Hypostase*, 229) opts for the tree of knowledge, considering the parallel in *Orig. World*, explaining the lack of the name of the trees as owing to difficulties in the adaptation of the Greek myth.

66 *Nat. Rulers* NHС II 87.29–31: “They took [dust] from the earth and formed [their human] after their own body and [after the image] of God that had appeared [to them] in the water.”

67 Coptic text according to Painchaud, *L'Écrit sans titre*, 192.

them and to defile themselves through them [...].<sup>68</sup> The self-defilement of the watchers is more precisely described in God's negative judgement of the sexual union between them and earthly women in *1 En.* 15:4: "You were holy ones and spirits, living forever. With the blood of women, you have defiled yourselves."<sup>69</sup>

The archons and the watchers are both appraised as guilty or liable to condemnation for their deeds. The watchers, who after their coupling with women had to live on earth, were drastically punished.<sup>70</sup> Asael as well as Shemihazah, both leaders of the fallen angels, were bound by the archangels Raphael and Michael and thrown into darkness under the earth (*1 En.* 10:4–5, 11–12). The archons' punishment, announced in *Nat. Rulers* NHC II 89.29–30, is established to take place at the end of days with their complete destruction (NHC II 97.10–13). Moreover, Yaldabaoth's punishment after having addressed himself as "God of all" to his children may allude to the watchers' punishment according to *1 En.* 10: like them, the Chief Archon is bound by an angel and thrown into Tartaros (*Nat. Rulers* NHC II 95.8–13). The punishment of the "gods of chaos" in *Orig. World* (NHC II 126.20–25) also recalls distinctive features of the watchers' punishments, such as being cast into the abyss and consumed by fire.<sup>71</sup>

The authorities' plan to get hold of the spiritual element by sexually assaulting the spiritual Eve fails but they succeed in raping the physical Eve and begetting offspring by her. Although they are portrayed as violent beings driven by sexual lust and passion without knowledge, raping the physical Eve in unnatural and horrible ways, they manage to beget their own offspring. According to *Nat. Rulers* (NHC II 91.12), Cain's birth results from the authorities' rape of the physical Eve. In *Orig. World* (NHC II 117.15–18), the report of the physical Eve's rape ends with mention of her pregnancies: she became pregnant with Abel by the Chief Archon and had even more children by the authorities and their seven archangels.

Against the present argument that the tradition of the fallen angels contributes to the narration of the authorities' sexual assaults on Eve in *Nat. Rulers* and *Orig. World*, one might object to its contextualization within the anthropogonic exposition, as related here: while *Ap. John* changed the timing of the

68 Translation according to Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 182.

69 Translation according to Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 267.

70 *1 En.* 10:4–6, 11–13; 18:11, 19; 21:7–10, 88:1–3; 90:23.

71 *Orig. World* NHC II 126.20–25: "Then she will pursue the gods of chaos, whom she had created together with the Archigenetor. She will throw them down into the abyss. They will be wiped out through their injustice. For they will be like Volcanoes and they will consume one another..." The punishment of the archons resembles very much the punishments of the watchers in *1 En.* 10:11–13.

angels' descent relative to the flood, can we really assume that *Nat. Rulers* and *Orig. World* utilize themes from the story of the watchers to relate a far more primaeval story, that of the origins of the human race? One may simply answer that the accentuation of a specific motif as well as the change of context are also means of interpretation. The sexual attraction of a group of authorities or angels to the spiritual Eve, the wish to beget children, the diminution of spiritual power by sexual pollution, and the self-condemnation and subsequent punishment of the authorities represent elements that are also present in the Enochic myth of the watchers. The myth of the watchers in Gen and 1 *En.* is situated right before the flood, so that the watchers' deeds indicate the beginning of evil on earth that lead to the flood. In *Nat. Rulers* and *Orig. World* the aforementioned allusions to the watchers' myth are situated immediately following Adam's address of the spirit endowed woman (Eve) as "mother of the living" (cf. Gen 3:20) because she gave him life (*Nat. Rulers* NHC II 89.11–15; *Orig. World*: NHC II 116.1–8). The authorities' sexual assault on Eve within the Genesis interpretation of both Nag Hammadi texts is situated at the dawn of humankind, prior even to the incident in Paradise. What sort of interpretation does this situating of the story of Eve and the archons invoke?

Both texts hold a positive interpretation of Adam and Eve's eating from the fruit in the garden of Eden, since the fruit opens their mind (*Nat. Rulers* NHC II 89.31–90.19; *Orig. World* NHC II 118.6–119.19)—a famously stark contrast with the so-called Fall of Adam and Eve, which served as explanation for all sin and evil on earth in so much ancient Jewish and Christian Literature from the first centuries CE onward.<sup>72</sup> Adam and Eve's transgression and expulsion from Paradise, popularized by Paul's influential Adam-Christ typology, over the centuries replaced the watchers' myth as the primary etiology of evil in late ancient Christianity, stressing the responsibility of humans for sin and evil. *Nat. Rulers* and *Orig. World*, on the other hand, consider Adam and Eve's eating from the fruit to be positive, in contrast to the authorities' attempted sexual assault against "the mother of all living" and their rape of physical

72 While Christian and Jewish writings of the first century CE dealing with Adam's sin attest consistent interest in the topic of sin and redemption (see e.g. 4 *Ezra* 3:7, 7:118; 2 *Bar.* 23:4; regarding ancient Christian literature the letters of Paul, especially his Adam-Christ typology Rom 5:12–19; 7:1–25), rabbinic interpretations present multiform perspectives on Gen 3 and refrain from the idea that human condition and mortality are a result of Adam's sin (*Gen. Rab.* 9:5; *b. Shabb.* 55b). A rough summary of interpretations on Adam's fall in Second Temple Jewish literature is offered by Ego, "Adam und Eva im Judentum," 29–69. Christian authors mainly adopted the fall tradition and emphasized the fall of humanity as counter pole to the salvation through Christ. For a survey of Christian and Jewish interpretations on Adam, see Reuling, "Christian and Rabbinic Adam," 64–74 and Götte, *Von den Wächtern zu Adam*, 166–285.



Eve. One may hypothesize, then, that these Nag Hammadi texts reframe the tradition of the watchers in order to distance responsibility for sin from humans. Moreover, when they connect the physical Eve's rape to the birth of Cain (*Nat. Rulers* NHC II 91.12), and distinguish her pregnancy by the Chief Archon from the pregnancies by the authorities and their angels in *Orig. World* (NHC II 117.12–15), they blend two traditions: first, the watcher's myth, and second, Eve's temptation and sexual abuse by the snake or Satan (on which see immediately below).<sup>73</sup> The ambiguous passages in the Nag Hammadi texts *Apoc. Adam* (NHC V 66.24–67.12) and *Nat. Rulers* (NHC II 91.11–14) indicating the Chief Archon/evil demiurge as fathering Cain, and Eve's mating with the serpent resulting in the birth of Cain in *Gos. Phil.* (NHC II 61.5–10), construe the origin of the first murderer from malicious superhuman beings. The theological intent of the Enochic myth of angelic descent mingled with the tradition of Eve's temptation by malevolent superhuman figures (Satan, serpent) is to locate the source of evilness outside of human responsibility.

The structural elements outlined above support the hypothesis that *Nat. Rulers* and *Orig. World* allude to the angelic descent myth of 1 *Enoch* in their descriptions of the authorities' sexual assault against the spiritual Eve and their rape of the physical Eve (NHC II 89.18–31 and 116.11–117.15, respectively). Their transposition of traditions from the myth of the watchers onto an anthropogonic context stresses the lower theocracy's responsibility for sin in human experience. Yet both Nag Hammadi texts differ slightly in emphasis. While *Nat. Rulers* stresses the elements of desire, sexual seduction, and self-condemnation, thus characterizing the authorities as violent creatures of the material world,<sup>74</sup> *Orig. World*, on the other hand, underlines the archons' intentional strategy to oppress mankind and dominate them by various means.

### 3.2 *The Attempted Rape of Norea in the 'Nature of the Rulers'*

At first glance, the attempted rape of Eve's daughter Norea in *Nat. Rulers* (NHC II 92.18–93.2) does seem to parallel the authorities' first sexual assault against the daughters of men in *Ap. John*. Unlike the daughters of men in *Ap. John*, Norea has not been seduced; she remains the "Virgin whom the Forces did not defile" (92.2–3: τὰ εἰ τε τῶν ἀρχόντων ἐτεμπεῖν ἀνὰ μὴν ἁδρῆς), for

73 Losekam, *Sünde*, 326. Kaiser ("Baum," 135) also hypothesizes with respect to *Orig. World* NHC II 116.25–117.15 a connection "mit frühjüdischen Traditionen von der Schändung Evas durch die Schlange bzw. den Teufel." In contrast Oded Yisraeli, in his study of the development of this tradition in the Jewish-mystical writings of the *Zohar*, refers to passages from the Nag Hammadi texts as the earliest explicit sources of the tradition of Cain as the son of Satan ("Cain as the Scion of Satan," 61).

74 Losekam, *Sünde*, 247–48, 298–99.

she escapes thanks help from the angel Eleleth. The parallel to the descent of the angels in *Ap. John* then consists mainly in the time of the incident: after the flood.

Norea or Orea, who is mentioned only a few times in the Nag Hammadi corpus, is an interesting “and compelling”<sup>75</sup> figure in gnostic literature who appears as sister of Seth and wife of Noah in Jewish literature of the Second Temple.<sup>76</sup> In *Nat. Rulers*, she is the daughter of Eve and together with her brother Seth represents the elected ones. The birth stories of Seth and Norea both indicate, in addition to their descent from Adam and Eve, a divine initiative of God. Eve introduces Norea with the words (NHC II 91.35–92.2): “He (God) has begotten for [me a virgin] as help [for] many generations of men.”<sup>77</sup> Norea is generated by God, while Seth was born through God.<sup>78</sup> Together with Seth she belongs to the second generation of humankind and her main activity seems to be located in the future, beginning after the flood (NHC II 92.3–93.2) as the one who will receive the redeeming knowledge. When humankind begins to multiply (Gen 6:1) and improve, the archons plan to cause a flood to destroy all flesh on earth (Gen 6:5). Notwithstanding the allusions to Gen 6:1 and 6:5 their intention here is (contrary to the biblical context) to destroy those who have improved and are potential recipients of knowledge, and not the wicked.<sup>79</sup> Norea, who has been announced as “help for many generations of men,” is not tolerated by Noah on the ark—a fact indicating her to be one of the elected ones. After the flood, the archons come to Norea in order to lead her astray (NHC II 92.19: ἀΥΓΩΜΤ΄ ΕΡΟΣ ΝΒΙ ΝΑΡΧΩΝ ΕΥΟΥΩΩ) ἀΡΑΠΑΤΑ ΪΜΟΣ),

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- 75 An apt characterization by Dylan Burns (“Gnostic,” 458) in his summary of traditions about Norea.
- 76 For a compilation of traditions related to Norea in Jewish literature and their impact in Coptic sources see Burns, “Gnostic,” 457–59; Uwe-Karsten Plisch, “Sophia und ihre Schwestern,” 56–59; and idem, “Norea,” 1129–33. On various etymological approaches explaining the name, see Kaiser, *Hypostase*, 269–70, 276–81, and Losekam, *Sünde*, 249–53. For earlier discussions about Norea, see Pearson, “Figure of Norea,” 143–52; idem, “Revisiting Norea,” 265–75, and Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, 54–60.
- 77 I follow here Kaiser’s hypothesis that the third person singular does not refer to Adam but to God: idem, *Hypostase*, 69. 268; Losekam, *Sünde*, 259; cf. Burns, “Magical, Coptic, Christian,” 148 n. 35; Marjanen, “Neuinterpretation der Eva-Tradition,” 51.
- 78 “After having had sex with Adam, Eve became pregnant and gave birth to Seth and said (*Nat. Rulers* NHC II 91.32–33): ‘I have borne [another] man through God, in place [of Abel].’”
- 79 The archons’ plan is virtually the same as in *Ap. John* NHC II 28.34–29.15; NHC III 37.16–38.10; BG 72.14–73.18. The difference is that according to all three versions of *Ap. John*, Noah belongs to the immovable race and was saved together with them in a luminous cloud, but according to *Nat. Rulers* (NHC II 92.4–14), he seems to belong to the wicked, because he has been saved by Sabaoth in the ark.

pointing to her mother Eve, whom they had mistakenly understood to be at their service (NHC II 92.20–21). Norea resists their sexual assault by unmasking them, revealing their identity as forces of darkness bereft of knowledge and understanding, who did not know her mother but their own image (ⲠⲃⲢⲈⲒⲚⲈ) (NHC II 92.22–25). She reveals herself as clearly belonging to the elected ones, not to the world of the archons.<sup>80</sup> After she says all this and curses the archons, the Chief Archon turns to her in anger, insisting that she has to serve them sexually like her mother Eve did; but before he is able to catch her, she is saved by “the great angel Eleleth,” after having cried for help to the God of the All (NHC II 92.33–93.2).

The structural similarities with the attempted rape of the daughters of man in the *Secret Book of John* and the rape of Eve (*Nat. Rulers* and *Orig. World*) regarding the archons’ sexual assault of Norea do not suggest an allusion to the watchers’ myth apart from the implied sexual intercourse. The archons come to Norea after the flood, wishing to seduce her. Their plan lacks allusions to the Enochic watchers’ descent, such as the attraction to a female or the motivation to beget children.

The watchers’ descent that is provoked by seeing the beautiful daughters of men on earth and their wish to procreate children might not be a suitable frame of reference for the encounter between Norea and the archons. Rather, several details in the clash between Norea and the archons point to Eve’s seduction by the snake in Gen 3:13, and to its sexual interpretation as a possible associative frame and intertext. These details include the archons’ wish to tempt Norea; the use of the verb  $\bar{\rho}\alpha\pi\alpha\tau\alpha$ ; and the major role of the Chief Archon, who continues the discussion with Norea (NHC II 92.20–32) after the archons approach (92.18–19). The Chief Archon himself opens the frame of reference towards the time of Eve, referring to their sexual experience with Eve—which, as the reader and Norea know, refers specifically to the fleshly Eve. The archons’ intention to seduce Norea, is expressed by a verb of Greek origin:  $\bar{\rho}\alpha\pi\alpha\tau\alpha$ . The Greek  $\acute{\alpha}\pi\alpha\tau\acute{\alpha}\nu$  is the same verb used in LXX Gen 3:13 to denote the serpent’s behavior towards Eve, meaning “to deceive” as well as “to seduce”—whence the sexual interpretation of Gen 3:13.<sup>81</sup> The interpretation of Eve’s seduction through the serpent in Gen 3 as sexual seduction and the serpent’s identification with negatively connoted angels like Gaderēl (1 *En.* 69:6), Azazel (*Apocalypse of Abraham* 23) or Satan (2 *En.* 29:4–5, 31:3–6; *LAE* 12–14) is known in ancient Jewish as well as

80 *Nat. Rulers* NHC II 92.25–26:  $\delta\alpha\kappa\omicron\upsilon\kappa\prime\ \omicron\upsilon\gamma\epsilon\beta\omicron\lambda\ \gamma\alpha\rho\ \delta\alpha\iota\prime\ \rho\eta\ \tau\eta\eta\epsilon\ \delta\lambda[\lambda]\lambda\alpha\ \bar{\eta}\tau\alpha\epsilon\iota\langle\epsilon\iota\rangle\ \epsilon\beta\omicron\lambda\ \rho\eta\ \bar{\eta}\lambda\ \pi\epsilon\sigma\alpha\eta\tau\tau\epsilon$ : “for I am not one of you, but I have come from those who belong above.”

81 This verb occurs in *Nat. Rulers* only in the current passage and as a quotation of Gen 3:13 in NHC II 90.31.

in Christian literature (Rev 12:9) of the first century CE.<sup>82</sup> In a list of angels who descended to earth and took women, the following deeds of an angel named Gaderēl are mentioned in the *Book of Parables* from the first century CE (69:6):

The third was named Gaderēl; this one is he who showed the children of the people all the blows of death, who seduced Eve, who showed the children of the people (how to make) the instruments of death (such as) the shield, the breastplate, and the sword for warfare, and all (the other) instruments of death to the children of the people.<sup>83</sup>

Here the myth of the serpent is transferred to the myth of the fallen angels. The *Apocalypse of Abraham* attributes the temptation of Adam and Eve to Azazel, who shares similarities with a serpent and alludes to one of the watchers. And finally, in 2 *Enoch* the fallen angels become associated with Satan.<sup>84</sup> The attempted rape of Norea reflects the Jewish-Christian interpretative tradition of Eve's sexual seduction by Satan. This assumption is further supported by the dominance of the Chief Archon during the argument with Norea instead of a crowd of archons, and the seduction motif that is used in contrast to the watchers being attracted to the daughters of men. *Nat. Rulers* also uses the devil's name, Samael, for the Chief Archon, Yaldabaoth.<sup>85</sup> The discussion between Norea and the Chief Archon may allude to the serpent's discourse that convinces Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. Karen King, however, suggests an allusion to Apollo's efforts to convince Daphne to abort her escape from him, assuming a correspondence to the Greek myth of Apollo and Daphne also on account of the similarity of Norea's cry for help.<sup>86</sup>

The sexual assault against the spiritual Eve and the attempted rape of Norea, her daughter, are both examples showing the archons and their leader to be negative figures who belong to the material world and bring about evil

82 For a detailed examination on the motif of the fall of Satan in ancient Jewish and Christian traditions, see Dochhorn, "Sturz des Teufels."

83 Tr. Isaac, "1 Enoch," 47.

84 Goff ("Enochic Literature and Persistence of Evil," especially 54–57) convincingly argues for a mingling of different types of negative connoted angels after the first century CE.

85 After the Chief Archon first boasts that he is God and no other exists (LXX Isa 46:9), the voice of Incorruptibility comes forth, addressing him as "Samael, which means God of the blind" (*Nat. Rulers* NHC II 87.1–4). Similarly, *Nat. Rulers* NHC II 95.21–26.

86 King, "Ridicule and Rape," 15–16: "Rather than simply overpower her, they begin by trying persuasion as Apollo does with Daphne." According to King, Norea's cry for help to the true deity resembles Daphne's call to her Father. See also Kaiser, "Baum," 138. Despite some similarities, the motif of sexual attraction and chasing the female figure is missing in the attempted rape of Norea.

for those who have knowledge. The author uses the tradition of the angels' descent and the tradition of Eve's temptation by Satan in a very creative way to delineate the manifestation of evil in the material world, without assigning responsibility for it to humanity.

### 3.3 *The Instruction Motif in 'On the Origin of the World'*

Aside from the motif of attraction and seduction through beautiful women, *Orig. World* also offers traces of the descending watchers' instruction of various kinds of forbidden secrets (1 *En.* 7:1; 8:1–3). As stated above in relation to *Ap. John*, the metallic gifts of the archons lead humans astray with many deceptions. Similar to *Ap. John*, the angelic instruction motif in *Orig. World* explains the oppression of men as resulting from the distractions demons teach, keeping them in error of the true god.

After the archons realize Adam's and Eve's superiority following their eating from the tree of knowledge (*Orig. World* NHC II 119.19–120.35), they become afraid that the humans also could eat from the tree of life and might despise them and disregard their glory (NHC II 120.31–35). Accordingly, they cast Adam and Eve out of Paradise down to earth, shorten their lifespan, and let human life be determined by grief, weakness, and evil distraction.<sup>87</sup> From that day forward, the author maintains, human life shall so remain (NHC II 121.25–27). Reacting to the archons' deed, Sophia Zoë descends from the first heaven and with all her power chases the archons out of their heavens, casting them down into the sinful world, so that they should stay on earth as evil demons (NHC II 121.28–35).<sup>88</sup>

The following passage in NHC II 123.4–12, describing the activities of demonic angels on earth, contains several allusions to the watchers' myth:

When the seven archons were thrown from their heavens down to earth, they created for themselves angels, that is, many demons, to serve them. But these instructed people many kinds of errors and magic and potions and idolatry and bloodshed and altars and temples and sacrifices and libations to all the demons on earth.

87 *Orig. World* NHC II 121.23–25: “and these are in sadness and weakness and evil distractions” (ΔΥΩ ΝΑΕΙ ΖΝ ΟΥΛΥΠΗ ΜΝ ΟΥΜΗΤΣΩΒ ΔΥΩ ΖΝ ΖΗΠΕΡΙΣΠΑΣΜΟΣ ΞΠΟΝΗΡΟΝ, text in Layton, Bethge, and Societas Coptica Hierosolymitana, “Treatise without Title,” 78).

88 *Orig. World* 121.31–35: “she chased the archons out of [their] heavens and cast them down into the sinful [world] so that there they should stay as bad demons on earth” (ΔΣΡΔΙΩΚΕ ΝΝΙΑΡΧΩΝ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΝ [ΝΟΥΪ]ΠΗΥΕ ΔΥΩ ΔΣΝΟΧΟΥ ΕΠΙΤΝ ΕΠΚΟ[ΣΝΟ]Σ ΝΡΕΦΡ ΝΟΒΕ ΩΙΝΔ ΕΥΝΑΩΩΠΕ ΞΜΑΥ ΞΘΕ ΞΜΙ[Δ.]ΔΙΜΩΝ ΞΠΟΝΗΡΟΣ ΖΙΧΜ ΠΚΑΖ, text in Layton, Bethge, Societas Coptica Hierosolymitana, “Treatise without Title,” 78).

The manner in which the archons have changed places from heavens to earth gives impetus to the hypothesis that the passage alludes to the tradition of the fallen Satan, instead of the Enochic myth of angelic descent. Sophia Zoë, full of anger, casts them out of their heavens because of their expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise and a subsequent human life in evil distraction. Hans-Gebhard Bethge envisions the Jewish tradition of Satan (who is thrown out of heaven, inter alia because of his conflict with Adam) as the primary scriptural intertext for NHC II 121.28–35.<sup>89</sup> There is some evidence in favor of this hypothesis. However, the instruction motif in *Orig. World* NHC II 123.8–9 displays clear references to the watchers' teaching magic to humans in 1 *En.* 7:1. Moreover, elements of the archons' judgement at the end of times (NHC II 126.24–25),<sup>90</sup> such as being kept in the depths of earth, destruction by fire, and their devouring of one another, all point to the Enochic myth of angelic descent as the main referential background for the demons' activity on earth.

Further, the creation of angels through the archons which are identified with demons (*Orig. World* NHC II 123.6–7) is a clear reference to the myth of the watchers.<sup>91</sup> The discrepancy regarding the archons' transformation into demons on earth in *Orig. World* NHC II 121.35 could be explained either by different underlying traditions—namely the fall of Satan in 121.35 and the watchers' myth in 123.6–7—or simply express different intentions. The most reasonable and comprehensible explanation is that the first reference aims at the archons' change of location from the upper to the earthly world, and the second one focuses on their negative impact on earth; both relate to the watchers' myth and its reception. The hypothesis of two different traditions as an intertext is not convincing but cannot be completely excluded.<sup>92</sup>

While the demons' or demonic angels' teaching of magic and potions reflect the watchers' teaching of sorcery in 1 *En.* 7:1 and 8:1, the listing of altars, temples, sacrifices, and libations refers to the connection of demons to idolatry and sacrifices. In the Septuagint, demons represent idols, particularly the gods

89 Bethge, *Ursprung der Welt*, 403–4; cf. Painchaud, *L'Écrit sans titre*, 457; and Losekam, *Sünde*, 336. The tradition where Satan belonged to God's angels in heaven and refused to worship Adam, for which reason God removed him together with other angels from heaven, is transmitted in detail by LAE 11–17. 2 *Enoch* 31:1–6 refers to a conflict between Satan and Adam that prompted Satan to seduce Eve. In 2 *En.* 29:4–6, God throws one of the angels down because he demanded in his arrogance to be equal with God's power. For an overview, see Dochhorn, "Sturz des Teufels," 19–23.

90 See above, n. 71.

91 Painchaud, *L'Écrit sans titre*, 483.

92 Losekam, *Sünde*, 334–39.

of the nations.<sup>93</sup> The connection between idolatrous or pagan worship and demons is also asserted to in *1 En.* 19:2, *Jub.* 11:4–5, and *1 Cor* 10:20. The accusation against the spirits of the watchers in *1 En.* 19:1 to cause humans to sacrifice to the demons already combines the watchers' myth with idolatry and pagan cults. When the angel Uriel shows Enoch the prison of "the angels who mingled with the women" he tells him that their spirits, who may take many forms, "bring destruction on men and lead them astray to sacrifice to demons as to gods."<sup>94</sup> While *1 En.* 19:1–2 differentiates between the fallen angels, their spirits, and the demons/idols humans falsely worship, the *Book of Jubilees* equates evil spirits and demons (*Jub.* 10:1–5), seen as offspring of the watchers.<sup>95</sup> Similarly to the *Book of Jubilees*, Justin equates evil spirits with demons. In his *Second Apology* (mid-second century CE) he attributes astrology as well as the offering of sacrifices, incense, and libations to teachings of the demons: the offspring from the angels and the daughters of men, who wish to dominate humankind.<sup>96</sup> Further, Justin claims that these angels and demons are responsible for murder, adulteries and wickedness in mankind, deeds the poets attributed to Zeus and his descendants.<sup>97</sup> Religious worship to "all the demons on earth" as means of distraction in *Orig. World.* NHC II 123.11–12 may refer to pagan gods and indicates the author's familiarity with the role of the fallen angels and their offspring in Christian demonology.<sup>98</sup> Such an anti-pagan connotation in *Orig. World* calls for further examination.

93 So in LXX Ps 95:5. Here following the discussion of Martin, "When Did Angels," 658–65.

94 Translation according to Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 276.

95 Martin, "When Did Angels," 667–69; Losekam, *Sünde*, 337–38.

96 Justin, *2 Apol.* 5.4, quoted by VanderKam, "1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs," 64, and Reed, *Fallen Angels*, 164–65. Tertullian also refers in his explanation of idolatry (*De idololatria* 4.3) to the worship of demons in temples instead of serving the god of creation. Reed hints at Justin's "equation of the fallen angels and demons with the pagan pantheon."

97 Justin, *2 Apol.* 5.4: "Whence also the poets and the mythologists, not knowing that it was the angels and those demons who had been begotten by them that did this things to men and women, and cities, and nations, which they related, ascribed them to god himself, and to those who were accounted to be his very offspring, and to the offspring of those who were called his brothers, Neptune and Pluto, and to the children again of these their offspring." Quoted according to ANF 1:190 in VanderKam, "1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs," 64.

98 In addition to Justin's equation of the fallen angels with the gods of pagan mythology, several Christian writers of the second and third centuries CE claim that the fallen angels introduced pagan religion, particularly idolatry. See Athenagoras, *Embassy for the Christians* 25–26 (quoted by VanderKam, "1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs," 65–66); Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* 2.14 (quoted by VanderKam, "1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs," 84–85); Commodian, *Instructions* 3 (quoted by VanderKam, "1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs," 82) and Tatian and Minicus Felix (*Octavius* 26.8–9), dependent on Justin's interpretation.

In any case, the short passage in *Orig. World* 123.4–12 clearly alludes to the instruction motif of the *Book of the Watchers* and indicates acquaintance with contemporary, Christian hermeneutical engagement with this motif. The Nag Hammadi texts' engagements with the Enochic myth of angelic descent could expand our knowledge of the history of reception of biblical literature.

#### 4 Elements of the Watchers Myth in Various Nag Hammadi Scriptures

There do exist short references to the Enochic myth of angelic descent in various other works from Nag Hammadi, referring either to the angels' sexual lust or the instruction motif. Very short passages which allude to sexual lust and desire as being inspired by the angels who are identified with demonic forces and their ruler, the Chief Archon, appear in the *Testimony of Truth* (NHC IX 29.15–18) and the *Apocalypse of Adam* (NHC V 83.15–17). The *Concept of our Great Power* (NHC VI 38.13–19) refers to the angelic descent myth as illustrating different stages of salvation history. The antediluvian time of the watchers and giants leading to the flood designates the age of flesh (ΠΑΙΩΝ ἸΤΣΑΡΑΖ). In *Pistis Sophia* (from the Askew Codex) various brief references to the instruction motif of 1 *En.* 7:1 and 8:1–3 occur, while the same motif, in the Coptic Hermetic *Asclepius* (NHC VI 73.5–12), explicates how the wicked angels corrupt humans by atheism, wars and through teaching “them things contrary to nature.” The *Valentinian Exposition* (NHC XI,2) offers an interesting retelling of primordial times that combines the fall of Satan and the fall of the angels in a unfortunately poorly-preserved textual passage.<sup>99</sup>

#### 5 Conclusion

The present contribution has examined several Nag Hammadi texts that display influence of the *Book of the Watchers*. Texts recalling an interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis in particular, such as *Ap. John*, *Nat. Rulers* and *Orig. World*, present various elements that allude to the Enochic myth of angelic descent. These elements include the archons' lust and mating with human women (*Ap. John*, *Concept of our Great Power*, *A Valentinian Exposition*) or fleshly Eve (*Nat. Rulers*, *Orig. World*) and the transmission of gifts (*Ap. John*) by

99 See Losekam, *Sünde*, 341–54.



the archons as well as the introduction of sorcery and idolatry to humans (*Orig. World, Pistis Sophia, Asclepius*), which alludes to *1 En.* 7 and 8. Furthermore, *Nat. Rulers* and *Orig. World* offer numerous allusions to the watchers' punishments.

In sum, interpretative patterns or structural elements in Nag Hammadi texts that derive from the fallen angel tradition comprise:

- The identification of the archons as superhuman beings who are nonetheless subordinate to the god of the upper world. Just as the watchers represent downgraded supernatural beings because of their human behavior (which is not related to their ontological status), the rulers or archons in the context of the Nag Hammadi texts represent a lower theocracy acting on earth.
- The theme of sexual connection between angels and humans in the watchers' myth fits the metaphorical use of sexuality and procreation expressing the processes to attain true knowledge and to fail at the same time. However, the sexual motif as a quest for knowledge in the analyzed texts is ambiguous. On the one hand, it expresses the intention to gain knowledge, and on the other hand, the intention to suppress the chosen ones. The latter is comparable with grief and destruction as a result of the watchers mating with human women.
- Transmission of gifts and introduction of forbidden knowledge by the archons in the Nag Hammadi texts illustrate means of oppression of humankind by distraction. This corresponds to the basic aim of the myth of the watchers, namely that responsibility for earthly evil primarily falls to supernatural beings, and only then to humans.

The theological significance of the watcher's myth or parts of it, which function as an intertext in the Nag Hammadi Scriptures is due to the fact that sin originally does not rely on humans. More precisely: the fallen angel myth of the *Book of the Watchers* functions as a model to explain the *conditio humanae* as a constant distraction and temptation by the power of evil, a power whose origin and nature lie beyond the scope of human nature. In order to achieve their aim, the authors of the Nag Hammadi texts use creative interpretation techniques, such as the changing of settings in *Ap. John*, or the blending of the traditions—i.e., Eve's temptation by malevolent superhuman figures (Satan, serpent) and the Enochic myth of angelic descent through contextualization, as in the *Nat. Rulers* and *Orig. World*.

## Acknowledgments

I thank Dylan Burns and Matthew Goff for their endless patience and manifold help with the English manuscript of this paper.

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## Blenders of the Lost Arks: Noah's Ark and the Ark of the Covenant as One in Gnostic and Other Judeo-Christian Literature

*Tuomas Rasimus*

Two Classic Gnostic<sup>1</sup> texts from the Nag Hammadi collection, the *Nature of the Rulers* (NHC II,4) and the *Apocalypse of Adam* (NHC V,5), each narrate the story of Noah's ark in a distinctive way.<sup>2</sup> In *Nature of the Rulers*, Noah is given instruction regarding the construction of the ark that differs from that of Genesis and he rebuilds the ark after a woman named Norea destroys it with fire. In the *Apocalypse of Adam*, great angels descend on clouds to rescue additional survivors, which forces Noah to assert before the furious creator that he had nothing to do with their deliverance. These distinctive aspects that appear to be strange additions to the story of Noah's ark, however, become intelligible when we acknowledge that the producers of these compositions have blended Noah's ark with the ark of the covenant. The blending of these two arks occurs surprisingly often in ancient Jewish and Christian literature. We find examples of such blends in the Qumran and Nag Hammadi corpora, as well as other texts. To blend the arks, or to construe that the two arks are somehow the same ark, is a utilization of metaphorical language. Because of advances in cognitive sciences, today metaphors can be productively examined as a form of conceptual integration, which is also known as conceptual blending (discussed below).

To first outline the present essay, we will begin by examining key elements of the biblical stories of the two respective arks. We will then analyze several examples from ancient Jewish and early Christian texts in which the two arks have been linked and blended in various ways. This essay argues that the two arks are indeed blended in the Nag Hammadi texts mentioned above, the *Nature of the Rulers* and the *Apocalypse of Adam*.

1 By "Classic Gnostic" I mean an enlarged Sethian (Schenke, "Phenomenon") corpus. For Sethianism or Classic Gnosticism, see Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*. See also Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 5–214; Pearson, *Gnosticism*, e.g., 24–135; Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 57–301; and Brakke, *The Gnostics*.

2 For the editions of these two texts, see Layton "Hypostasis of the Archons," and MacRae, "Apocalypse."

But before delving into the stories of the two lost arks, a few words concerning metaphors and conceptual blending are in order. Roughly from Aristotle to the 1980s, literary metaphors were generally understood to be mere rhetorical embellishments. Yet, as George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, and others have shown, literary metaphors are linguistic expressions of underlying conceptual metaphors that form the very basis of human thinking.<sup>3</sup> In a conceptual metaphor, we understand one thing in terms of another. In theoretical terms, this involves two conceptual domains with features from one domain (source) being mapped upon the other (target).

However, a conceptual metaphor can also be treated as a subtype of a more complex cognitive phenomenon, namely, conceptual integration. This is another basic operation in human cognition. We create conceptual integration networks every time we think, talk, write, and read. This happens unconsciously, automatically, and effortlessly. By using these networks, our minds organize metaphorical and other thought into a minimum of four mental spaces and create cross-space mappings and projections between them.<sup>4</sup> In this theory, championed by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, the source and target domains become inputs to a third mental space, the blend, where our minds selectively project features from both inputs. For example, Noah's ark may be one input (source) and the ark of the covenant another (target) resulting in a blended image of, say, a huge floating ark upon which the cloud of God's presence descends (as it does on the ark of the covenant, according to Exodus). In a metaphoric blend, the source input still dominates as the blend inherits its organizing structure chiefly from the source, though some structure from the target may also seep in.<sup>5</sup> In a more complex "hybrid" blend, both (or all) inputs contribute more equally to the blended result.<sup>6</sup> The blending, in any case, produces a new entity which often has emergent properties and cannot be predicted based on the inputs alone. The blended entity has vast potential for meaning, and only a small part of it may unfold in the ensuing narrative context.<sup>7</sup>

3 See, in particular, the ground-breaking study by Lakoff, and Johnson, *Metaphors*. See also Kövecses, *Metaphor*.

4 For a basic explanation, see Fauconnier and Turner, *Way We Think*, 39–50. Thought other than metaphorical is also processed with such networks.

5 According to Turner ("Frame Blending," 16), single-scope metaphoric networks "sit atop a very slippery slope and slide easily into double-scope structures."

6 There is no upper limit to the number of input spaces. Some examples given by Fauconnier and Turner (*Way We Think*) are complex and involve several input spaces that can, in turn, be themselves blends from previous networks.

7 Nielsen, "Lamb of God," 218–25.

The network includes, finally, a generic space which contains an abstract structure common to the other mental spaces, for example, that each of the arks is a container. Once the network is set up, our minds fill in gaps based on what we already know about the inputs. We then “run the blend,” that is, elaborate upon the results by mentally simulating the blend in various situations (authors often elaborate in the ensuing narrative context). As readers, our initial mental picture may be confirmed by the ensuing narrative context, or we may need to rethink the blended metaphor we encountered and re-read the text in order to gain a more satisfactory understanding.

Relating to this, metaphors and more complex blends in ancient Jewish and Christian texts are often intertextual in nature. Elements in the input spaces can come from particular biblical stories. Not only do these known stories structure the respective input domains as organizing frames; the stories themselves can be taken as inputs. An important feature of the blending theory is that running the blend can modify the whole network.<sup>8</sup> The emerging blend may cause us to picture the inputs differently which can then cause a slightly different blend to arise and so on. This is essentially how intertextuality, too, works. For when we encounter an intertextual allusion in a given writing, that allusion begins to affect our interpretation of both texts involved. As Hugo Lundhaug has demonstrated, intertextual relations can be fruitfully analyzed in light of the conceptual blending theory.<sup>9</sup> The material analyzed in the present essay consists mostly of intertextually motivated blends.

What is important to remember is that the projection of features from the input spaces into the blend is always selective and partial and rarely consistent or completely logical. Such projections and blends are, of course, subjective and culturally grounded. Nonetheless, fruitful and promising results have already been gained in the area of biblical studies with this methodology.<sup>10</sup> My aim here is to show that the peculiar stories of Noah’s ark in the two aforementioned Nag Hammadi texts result from conceptual blends between the two arks. Yet to properly demonstrate this thesis, a certain amount of background knowledge about Noah’s ark and the ark of the covenant is first required.

8 Fauconnier, and Turner, *Way We Think*, 44, 49.

9 Lundhaug, *Images*, 21–64.

10 See, for example, Nielsen, “Lamb of God”; DesCamp, *Metaphor and Ideology*; Lundhaug, *Images*; and Gomola, *Conceptual Blending*.

## 1 The Stories of the Two Arks

The legend of a huge ark built to survive a cataclysmic flood has fascinated minds for thousands of years. The biblical story itself has ancient Mesopotamian and Greek precedents and parallels,<sup>11</sup> and the theme lives on in science fiction film adaptations such as *2012* and *Salvation*. What is more, people are still searching for the remains of Noah's lost ark in the Turkish and Iranian mountains.<sup>12</sup> Let us begin by taking a closer look at the influential story of Noah's ark as it is told in Genesis 6–9 (and elaborated in later Jewish literature).

After wickedness and violence had overtaken the earth, God decided to wipe out all living creatures (“all flesh”) in a great flood (Gen 6:11–13). The Genesis story of the flood is preceded by a brief mention of the sons of gods begetting *nephilim* with the daughters of men (6:1–4). The relationship of these characters and events to the wickedness and violence that plagued the earth remains unclear in the biblical account. Later literature, however, developed this theme. The watchers myth of *1 Enoch* 6–11, in particular, paints the sons of gods as fallen angels who not only practiced adultery with earthly women but also introduced humanity to forbidden sciences and practices such as metallurgy, weaponry, and cosmetics.<sup>13</sup> Their hybrid offspring, the *nephilim* (or giants), are depicted as incredibly violent and, literally, blood-thirsty.<sup>14</sup> In other words, the fallen angels are directly responsible for the reasons that led to the flood. It must finally be mentioned that, according to the *Book of the Watchers*, one of the leaders of the fallen angels is Azazel; this name has a connection to the ark of the covenant (see below).

Back to Genesis. With violence and wickedness having engulfed the earth, only Noah was found blameless. Therefore, God decided to spare Noah and his family and make a covenant with them. Before sending the flood, God informed Noah of his decision and instructed him to build an ark (*tebah*) of *gopher* (possibly cypress) wood and cover it inside out with bitumen. Noah was also instructed to make rooms and three decks in the ark and to put a door on the side. As for the roof, he had to leave a one-cubit gap below it, presumably

11 See, for example, Tümpel, “Deukalion”; Cassuto, *Genesis: Part II*, 3–47; and George, *Babylonian Gilgamesh*, 152–55.

12 See Cline, “Raiders”; idem, *Introduction*, 71–75.

13 A narrative related to the watchers myth is found in the Qumran *Book of Giants*. There are related Manichaean fragments and *testimonia*. See Henning, “Book of the Giants”; Stuckenbruck, *Book of Giants*; Goff, Stuckenbruck, and Morano, *Ancient Tales of Giants*, and Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*.

14 See *1 En.* 7.

for sufficient light to enter (Gen 6:14–16). The word for the ark, *tebah*, is probably of Egyptian origin (*tba*; Coptic ΘΗΒΙ) and means a box or a chest. The usual word for a navigable boat is not used.<sup>15</sup>

Four pairs (male and female) of humans, seven pairs of clean animals, and one pair of all other animals were to enter the ark so that every species could survive the flood. The four pairs of humans are obviously Noah and his three sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—together with their respective wives. Once Noah, his family, and all the animals had entered the ark, God shut the door and let it rain for 40 days and 40 nights. The waters kept rising for an additional 150 days until God sent a wind to blow over the earth and shut the floodgates of heaven and the fountains of the abyss. The waters receded slowly, however, and the ark's passengers ended up spending more than a year in the floating box until the surface of the earth was dry enough for a safe exit. By that time, the ark had come to rest somewhere in the mountains of Ararat (Gen 8:4).

Noah then built an altar and sacrificed burnt offerings to the Lord. God smelled the sweet savor of sacrificial smoke and swore he would never again send a flood to destroy all life.<sup>16</sup> God prohibited blood consumption and warned Noah and his descendants against even shedding human blood—violence should not return after having been eradicated from the face of the earth. God finally ratified a covenant with Noah and all life on earth, and put a rainbow in the clouds as a sign (Gen 8:20–9:17). Having thus been saved from total annihilation, Noah planted a vineyard, got drunk, and accidentally exposed himself. When his second son, Ham, witnessed his father's nakedness, he hurried and told his brothers about it. They, however, had the decency of covering Noah's naked body without looking at the shameful sight. Noah blessed them for their kind deed but cursed Ham (the ancestor of Canaanites) for his action (Gen 9:20–27). It should be noted that the motif of Noah's drunkenness may have played a role in the later, negative evaluation of Noah in some Nag Hammadi texts that were cherished (and perhaps even written by) ascetic monks.<sup>17</sup>

If Noah's ark has fascinated and inspired peoples' minds for millennia, so has the ark of the covenant. This ark was once housed in Solomon's temple in Jerusalem, but was lost at one point in history. Propositions as to the events

15 See Zobel, "arôn," 550–52; Cassuto, *Genesis: Part I*, 58–61; Whybray, "Genesis," 46. See also Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 397a; BDB 1061b.

16 Cf. Gilgamesh Epic, Tablet 11.161–163: "The gods smelled the savour, the gods smelled the sweet savour, the gods gathered like flies around the sacrifice." (George, tr., "Babylonian Gilgamesh"). The sacrifice here, too, follows immediately upon the end of the flood.

17 For a monastic provenance of the Nag Hammadi Codices, see Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*.

that led to its disappearance range from Pharaoh Shishak's raid in the tenth century BCE (an idea popularized by the film, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*) to the prophet Jeremiah or king Josiah having hidden the ark prior to the Babylonian destruction of the temple in 586 BCE (an idea recorded in ancient Jewish lore).<sup>18</sup>

Now lost, the ark of the covenant enters biblical history at Sinai. After Moses had ratified the new covenant at the foot of the mountain with sacrificial blood, he climbed to the top where God gave him the tablets of the ten commandments, together with additional rulings. These included divine instructions for making not only the ark of the covenant that was to house the stone tablets but also the tabernacle that was to house the ark itself. The tablets were the "sign" or testimony of the covenant,<sup>19</sup> and one of the ark's most common names in the Hebrew Bible is the ark of testimony (*arôn hā'ēduṭ*, e.g. Exod 25:22). The word for the ark itself, *arôn*, signifies a box or a chest, and it is elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible used of Joseph's burial coffin (Gen 50:26) and of a collection box in the temple (2 Kgs 12:10–11 [MT]; 2 Chr 24:8, 10–11).<sup>20</sup>

God told Moses to build the ark of acacia (*šittîm*) wood, to overlay it with gold inside out, to make a decorative border surrounding the top,<sup>21</sup> and to make a cover (*kapporet*) of solid gold for the whole ark. As a matter of fact, Moses was told to have inspired craftsmen led by Bezalel to carry out the actual handiwork, Exod 31:1–11.

The ark's golden cover, the *kapporet*, came to have huge significance. At its ends were two kneeling cherubim facing each other with bowed heads and stretched wings that covered the ark. It was between these two cherubim that God would manifest himself in a cloud to speak with Moses.<sup>22</sup> The wings of the cherubim formed God's throne (1 Sam 4:4; Pss 80:1; 99:1) while the ark itself functioned as his footstool (1 Chr 28:2; Pss 99:5–6; 132:7–9).<sup>23</sup> On Yom Kippur, the high priest sprinkled blood on the ark's cover to cleanse the sanctuary and the land, and to obtain collective atonement for the whole nation (see

18 Meyers, *Exodus*, 229. See 1 Kgs 14:25–26; 2 Macc 2:4–8; *b. Yoma* 52b.

19 Properly speaking, the Mosaic covenant does not come with a specific covenant sign (*'ôt habberîṭ*) unlike the Noahide (rainbow, Gen 9:12, 13, 17) and Abrahamic (circumcision, Gen 17:11) ones.

20 Zobel, "arôn."

21 This is somewhat similar to the gap Noah had to leave beneath the roof of his ark.

22 Exod 25:22; Lev 16:2, 13. Whether the cloud was the cloud of incense the high priest started himself just outside the veil behind which the ark was hidden, or the divine fire-cloud that accompanied Israel in the wilderness, is unclear in the biblical text. Later rabbinic opinion was divided on this question. See Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1014.

23 Cf. Cassuto, *Book of Exodus*, 331: "It was the custom in the ancient East to deposit the deeds of a covenant made between human kings in the sanctuaries of the gods, in the footstool of the idols that symbolized the deity."

more on this below). The cloud on the ark was a divine precaution whose purpose was to protect Moses and high priests from death, for “no one can see me and live” (Exod 33:20). This precaution seems to extend from God’s face to the ark itself, for the ark was hidden behind a veil (*p̄āroket̄* < *καταπέτασμα*) in the holy of holies, and when it was moved to a new location, it had to be covered with the same veil; to see the uncovered ark was lethal.<sup>24</sup> In fact, some traditions recorded in the Torah practically identify God with the travelling ark: “And when the ark traveled, Moses would say, ‘Rise up, O Lord! May your enemies be scattered, and may those who hate you flee before you!’ And when it came to rest he would say, ‘Return, O Lord, to the many thousands of Israel!’” (Num 10:35–36, New English Translation).

When it was time to move the ark and the tabernacle to a new location, the fiery cloud of divine presence would lead the way, being visible as a pillar of smoke during the day and as a pillar of fire during the night (Exod 40:38; Num 9:16). This is probably a mythologization of the continuously burning altar fire (just outside the tabernacle) that was visible as smoke during the day and fire during the night. Both God himself and his angel were associated with these clouds.<sup>25</sup> While on the move, levitical priests carried the ark with gilded poles (Exod 25:12–15; Deut 10:8; 31:9).

In biblical legend, the ark was also weaponized. Apart from being lethal to unauthorized touch and look (Num 4:20; 1 Sam 6:19; 2 Sam 6:6–7), the ark was believed to guarantee military victory. The ark played a decisive role in bringing down the walls of Jericho (Josh 6), but when the Israelites forgot to take the ark with them on a campaign, they lost (Num 14:44–45). In the newly conquered land, the ark wandered from one cult place to another (e.g., Bethel, Shiloh, Kiriath Jearim).<sup>26</sup> It was taken to battle, too, but suffered from a temporary exile in the territory of the Philistines (1 Sam 4–6). Eventually, King David brought the ark to his newly conquered city, Jerusalem (2 Sam 6:1–19; 2 Chr 1:4), where his son Solomon built a temple for it (1 Kgs 6–8). As in the tabernacle, so in the temple the ark was hidden in the holy of holies. In Solomon’s temple, however, there was a gilded cedar wall (with double doors) in addition to the protective veil to separate the holy of holies from the rest of the sanctuary. Moreover, there were two huge cherubim to cover the ark with their wings in Solomon’s temple; these were gigantic, gilded olive-wood statues that stood some 15 feet (4.5 meters) tall (1 Kgs 6:23–28). The presence of these huge cherubim above the ark and its lid—which, according to a different

24 Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1014. See Num 4:5–15; 1 Sam 6:19.

25 See Exod 13:21–22; 14:19–20.

26 For the importance of Shiloh in this regard, see Schley, *Shiloh*.

tradition recorded in Exodus, had two small cherubim on it—may account for Ezekiel's description of God's throne consisting of *four* winged cherubim that left Solomon's temple at the eve of its destruction (Ezek 10; cf. also the initial vision at Ezek 1).

After the Babylonians destroyed the temple in 586 CE, it was rebuilt 70 years later on a smaller scale (Hag 2:3). The ark had been lost at one point in history, and the holy of holies of the Second Temple was empty (Josephus, *B.J.* 5.219; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.9). According to one legend, the ark had stood directly on the foundation stone of the first temple, and according to another, creation itself had begun from this stone.<sup>27</sup>

In the Second Temple period, the foundation stone took on some of the significance of the ark on Yom Kippur. When the high priest sprinkled atoning blood on the empty spot that should have housed the ark, the blood fell on the foundation stone.<sup>28</sup> The Yom Kippur collective atonement ritual consisted of several complementary parts, some of which included sprinkling sacrificial blood on the ark (or the stone). Yom Kippur was the one day of the year the high priest was allowed to enter the holy of holies. As described in Leviticus 16, he wore special clothes for the occasion and protected himself with a cloud of incense. He sprinkled the ark/stone with the blood of a bull to atone for his own sins, after which he re-entered with the blood of a goat to atone for the nation's sins. The blood acted as a "ritual detergent," as Jacob Milgrom puts it, cleansing the sanctuary, the nation, and the land itself of the accumulated stain of sin.<sup>29</sup> However, the disinfected sins still needed to be physically removed. This task fell upon another goat—identical to the first one—that was chosen as the *scapegoat* to carry the sins to the demon Azazel in the wilderness. The high priest symbolically transferred the collective sins onto the head of the scapegoat which was then taken to the desert by another man. In a way, then, the removal of the collective sin began at the ark in the holy of holies and concluded in the desert where the scapegoat was taken to Azazel. While Leviticus 16 itself does not specify what ultimately happened to the scapegoat, later tradition elaborated upon its gruesome fate. With a piece of scarlet wool tied to its horns, the scapegoat was brought to the edge of a cliff in the wilderness (called Beth Hadudo or Hadduri), and hurled down to a certain death.<sup>30</sup>

27 See *b. Yoma* 54b; *Mid. Tanh.*, *Qedoshim* 10.

28 Cf. *m. Yoma* 5.2.

29 Milgrom, *Leviticus*, e.g., 254, 1036. Somewhat similarly, Greek temples were disinfected with sacrificial blood. See Ekroth, "Animal Sacrifice," 327–28.

30 The spelling varies. See, for example, *Tg. Ps.-Jon.* Lev. 16:10, 21–22; *m. Yoma* 6.6–8. Maher, "Pseudo-Jonathan," 167 n. 31. For the scapegoat's fate, see also Barn. 7; as well as Orlov, *Atoning Dyad and Divine Scapegoats*.



Now that we have studied the main features of the two respective arks, let us see how they became linked and even blended in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

## 2 Hebrew Bible

While there are no clear-cut connections between the two arks in the Hebrew Bible, there are several links between the respective stories about them. These links may well have given rise to later traditions that blended the two arks. In this section of the essay, we will first look at links between the arks in the Hebrew Bible itself before engaging with those later Judeo-Christian texts that actually do blend the two arks.

The Hebrew word for Noah's ark is *tebah*, which, as we have seen, means a chest or a box. The word is elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible used only of the basket in which baby Moses was put according to Exodus 2:3, 5. The instructions to build the ark of the covenant were, of course, later given to Moses.<sup>31</sup> As Keith Bodner points out, there are further links between the story of the flood and that of baby Moses. Both episodes are preceded by an escalation of violence and lead to salvation in a floating ark. Violence on earth had caused the flood (Gen 6:11–13), and the violence of slavery (Exod 1:11–14) and the pharaoh's consequent order to kill all newborn Hebrew male children (Exod 1:22) necessitated baby Moses' ark. The divine command at creation, "be fruitful and multiply," is also connected with both stories. The humans and animals that survived the flood were told to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 8:17; 9:1–7) and similar language is used of the maltreated and enslaved Hebrews in Exodus 1:7–12.<sup>32</sup>

Other scholars have noted interesting links between the stories of Noah's ark and the tabernacle/temple (which housed the ark of the covenant). The waters of the flood dried up on the same day the tabernacle was dedicated: the first day of the first month (Gen 8:13; Exod 40:2).<sup>33</sup> Noah's ark came to rest and the temple was built on top of a mountain (Ararat, Zion).<sup>34</sup> Finally, Noah's ark and the storehouse of Solomon's temple both had three decks, inner chambers, and a door on the side (Gen 6:14–15; 1 Kgs 6:8). These commonalities have led some scholars to suspect the presence of intentional intertextual links that

31 This connection between the ark of Noah and the basket of Moses is, however, lost in the LXX that uses two different Greek words for them (κιβωτός and θίβις, respectively). Nonetheless, both are still said to be covered with bitumen (ἄσφαλτος, ἀσφαλτόπισσα).

32 See Bodner, *Ark on the Nile*, 95–96.

33 Holloway, "What Ship Goes There," 334.

34 Crawford, "Noah's Architecture," 22.

paint Noah's ark as a floating sanctuary and a precursor to the temple.<sup>35</sup> At the very least, such a blended image of a floating temple can easily arise in the mind of a reader who has become aware of the noted links.

There are still further links between the two arks in the Hebrew Bible. The lid on the ark of the covenant is the famous *kapporet* from the Hebrew root *k-p-r* (Exod 25:17). Incidentally, Noah is told to cover (*w-kp̄rt*) his ark inside out with tar (*b-kp̄r*) (Gen 6:14). Ibn Ezra pointed out that some saw here a connection to the *kapporet*.<sup>36</sup> This is indeed what we find in Symmachus' translation, and Philo of Alexandria also engaged in speculation about the respective covering materials (for Symmachus and Philo, see below).

Both arks are connected with the theme of a covenant. After the flood, Noah thanks God with sacrifices. God smells the sweet savor of smoke and, as a result, confirms his covenant with Noah and all life. God further places a rainbow as a sign of the covenant in the clouds (Gen 9:9–17). According to Exodus, God establishes a new covenant with Moses at Sinai, and Moses ratifies the covenant with blood sacrifices (Exod 24:4–11). The "sign" of this covenant is the law, the tablets of the ten commandments, that are placed inside the ark of the, well, covenant.

The theme of 40 days and 40 nights is also found in connection with both arks. To bring about the flood, God let it rain for 40 days and nights (Gen 7:4, 12). Moses, for his part, spent 40 days and nights on Mount Sinai to write down the words of the covenant, the ten commandments (Exod 34:28). In so doing, Moses was said to have entered a cloud of God's presence (Exod 24:18). Similarly, God would later manifest himself above the ark of the covenant in a cloud (Lev 16:2). A cloud was also associated with Noah's ark, since it was from clouds that the rain fell and God also set his rainbow in the clouds. Yet, the cloud of God's presence, associated with the ark of the covenant, is different because it is not only a non-natural cloud but also a descending and ascending cloud that accompanied Israelites in the wilderness and kept them safe (Exod 13:21–22; 14:19–24).

At any rate, these links between the various stories about the two arks may well have inspired various blends attested in later tradition. Such blends are attested in both Jewish and Christian literature, although they have arisen for different reasons. We start with Jewish texts.

35 Holloway, "What Ship Goes There," 349; Crawford, "Noah's Architecture," 6–7; Bodner, *Ark on the Nile*, 96–100.

36 Ibn Ezra's commentary on Gen 6:14: "Some say that *ve-khafarta* (and shalt pitch) comes from the same root as *kapporet* (cover) (Ex. 25:17), the meaning of *and shalt pitch it being you shall cover it by coating it*" (tr. Strickman, and Silver, *Ibn Ezra's Commentary*, 100).

### 3 Jewish Texts

While the MT of the Hebrew Bible uses two different terms for the two arks—*tebah* for Noah's ark, *'arôn* for the ark of the covenant—the translators of the LXX settled on a single term: *κιβωτός*. The basic meaning of this word, as well as of each Hebrew term, is “box, coffin, chest.” The English term, ark, derives from the Latin *arca* which has a semantic range similar to that of the Greek *κιβωτός*.<sup>37</sup> The choice to settle on one single word for both arks in the LXX remains unknown but it may have been inspired by some of the above-mentioned links. Significantly, the terms for Joseph's burial coffin (*'arôn* at Gen 50:26) and baby Moses' basket (*tebah* at Exod 2:3, 5) are translated with different Greek words (*σορός* and *θίβις*, respectively). This strengthens the remaining link between the ark of Noah and the ark of the covenant. The common term alone can create an intertextual link between the two arks in the mind of a reader. This can then invite one to interpret the respective stories about the arks in light of one another.

There is a minority reading of LXX Gen 6:14, where the instructions Noah receives have been blended with those given to Moses concerning the ark of the covenant (Exod 25:10). The majority reading of LXX Gen 6:14 is: *ποιήσον οὖν σεαυτῷ κιβωτὸν ἐκ ξύλων τετραγώνων* (“Make for yourself an ark of square timber”), and the one of LXX Exod 25:10: *ποιήσεις κιβωτὸν μαρτυρίου ἐκ ξύλων ἀσῆπτων* (“you will make the ark of testimony of incorruptible wood”). The minority reading (which comes with a couple of variants), however, either replaces the “square” (*τετράγωνος*) of LXX Gen 6:14 with the “incorruptible” (*ἄσκητος*) of LXX Exod 25:10, or adds the word *ἄσκητος* alongside *τετράγωνος*.<sup>38</sup> Epiphanius of Salamis in the fourth century may also have known this reading of Gen 6:14 (*ξύλων ἀσῆπτων*; *Pan.* 69.55.5 [Holl, *Epiphanius*, 202.18]), although the manuscript that contains his work dates itself to the 13th century.<sup>39</sup> A tenth-century manuscript (MS Athos *Laura* 352) also attests this reading.<sup>40</sup> What caused this blended reading to arise is unknown, but it may have been prompted by the common LXX term for both arks, *κιβωτός*. On the other hand, this reading is attested only of late and may have resulted from knowledge of elaborate conceptual blends between the two arks. Such blends are attested much earlier in both Jewish and Christian tradition.

37 See Glare, *Latin Dictionary*, 161.

38 See Wevers, *Genesis*, 111.

39 Dean, *Epiphanius' Treatise*, 4.

40 See Layton, “Conclusion,” 62–63.

Interestingly, Symmachus calls Noah's ark a ἰλαστήριον (the Greek term for the *kapporet*) at Gen 6:15. Here is, first, the usual rendering of Gen 6:14–15 with the relevant MT and LXX terms inserted:

<sup>14</sup> ... and cover (תּרפּוּ/ἀσφαλτώσεις) it with pitch inside and out. <sup>15</sup> This is how you should make it/the ark (הַתֵּבָה/τὴν κιβωτόν): The ark (הַתֵּבָה/τῆς κιβωτοῦ) is to be 300 cubits long ...

But where the LXX uses the term κιβωτός in verse 15, Symmachus has ἰλαστήριον instead: “This is how you should make the lid (ἰλαστήριον): The lid (ἰλαστηρίου) is to be 300 cubits long ...” He has probably read/understood the Hebrew *wkprt* (“and cover [it]”) in the previous verse as a noun and thus as an allusion to the lid above the ark of the covenant.<sup>41</sup> At any rate, Symmachus’ translation is a linguistic manifestation of a conceptual blend where Noah’s ark (or its roof) has become a huge *kapporet*! It would be fascinating to know how Symmachus or his ancient readers pictured this gigantic *kapporet*. Did the ark’s roof include huge wings? Was the ark accompanied by cherubim on the waves?

Whereas Symmachus fused the arks and saw both in a positive light, Philo of Alexandria interpreted their relationship along different lines. In his *Questions and Answers on Genesis*, Philo compares the arks in a way that is somewhat unflattering to Noah’s ark. Philo creates a blended space where the two arks exist side by side, as it were, so that they can be easily compared to one another. In the two inputs, namely, the biblical stories about the respective arks Philo evokes, the arks of course never existed side by side.

Philo’s comparison is triggered by perceived similarities between the arks: the common Greek term, κιβωτός, and the fact that both arks are covered with a special substance. While he cannot deny these similarities, Philo chooses to highlight the differences. Commenting on Gen 6:14, Philo first asks, “Why does He command that the ark be tarred inside and outside?” Because bitumen is a good, natural glue, Philo reasons. He continues,

But that other ark in the temple, which is overlaid with gold, is a likeness of the intelligible world ... For in the measure that gold is more valuable than bitumen, in the same measure is the ark which is in the temple more excellent than Noah’s ark.

41 Thus Stökl Ben Ezra, *Impact*, 199. See also Field, *Origenis Hexaplorum*, 23–24.

In order to drive home his point about one ark's superiority over the other, Philo conveniently forgets that the ark of the covenant was once mobile and bashes Noah's ark for being just that, mobile:

And this ark [of Noah's] is carried about here and there, but the other one has its position firmly in the temple. But that which is stable is related to the divine nature, just as this ark [of Noah's], which turns now in one direction and now in another and changes, is related to that which is generated. And this ark of the flood is held up as a type of corruptibility. But the other one in the temple follows the condition of the incorruptible.

QG 2.4, tr. MARCUS in LCL 380:72, slightly modified

Philo has thus *very* selectively projected features from the ark of the covenant input into the blend. Apart from having been stationary and gilded, instead of mobile and tarred, the ark of the covenant also had a heavenly prototype (παράδειγμα; LXX Exod 25:9), which must have further enhanced its status in Philo's Middle Platonic eyes. Noah's ark is not depicted negatively in the biblical story, and it is only in the blended space where its unflattering nature is revealed as the two arks are placed side by side.

Another early rapprochement is found in the *Damascus Document*. This text, known from both the Qumran and Cairo Genizah finds, contains a section (CD IV, 20–V, 6), where polygamy is discussed. Even remarriage is defined as polygamy and fornication, and several prooftexts are brought in to justify this strict interpretation. One of the prooftexts concerns the story of Noah's ark: "Those who entered the ark came in pairs to the ark" (Gen 7:9). Interestingly, David's infamous polygamy is defended on grounds that he had not been able to read the law book where these prooftexts originate because it had been sealed in the ark:

They are ensnared by two (abominations): (the first) by whoredom through marrying two wives while (the first wife) is still alive. But the (divine) principle of creation is, "as a male and female He created them" (Gen 1:27). Moreover, those who entered the ark (*ha-tebah*) came in pairs to the ark (Gen 7:9). And concerning the leader (of the tribes and the head of the priests) it is written, "He shall not multiply wives for himself" (Deut 17:17). As to David, he could not read in the book of the Torah which had been sealed since it was in the ark (*ʾarôn*), for it (the ark) had not been opened in Israel since the day of the death of Eleazar and Joshua and the elders who worshipped the Ashtaroth. And he (Eleazar)

hid the Niglah until Zadok arose. And the acts of David became acceptable (before God) aside from (the king's guilt pertaining to) the blood of Uriah, as God made him responsible for that.

tr. WACHOLDER, *Damascus Document*, 35–37

The ark in which the law book had been sealed is, of course, the ark of the covenant. But the author uses different Hebrew terms for the two arks and appeals to several prooftexts, only one of which deals with Noah's ark. Although a somewhat close connection is created between the two “boxes” here, there is not much that would invite a reader to interpret them in light of one another or to see them as comparable containers.

However, an interesting blend—albeit of a different kind—is found in another text attested at Qumran, namely, the *Book of the Watchers*. This text deals with the events preceding and leading to the flood, namely, the sin and punishment of fallen angels. One of the leaders of the fallen angels is called Azazel. There is some variation in the spelling of this name,<sup>42</sup> but not only is it very similar to Azazel of Leviticus 16; they were also understood to be the same demon in Second Temple and rabbinic Judaism.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, there is strong evidence that the fate of Azazel in *Watchers* is inspired by the fate of the scapegoat.<sup>44</sup> That is, two stories where an ark plays an important role have become blended (story of the flood featuring Noah's ark; story of the Yom Kippur atonement ritual featuring the ark of the covenant). After Noah had been told about the coming flood, the archangel Raphael was dispatched to deal with Azazel. Here is the version from *1 Enoch*:

The Lord said to Raphael: “Bind Azazel hand and foot (and) throw him into the darkness!” And he made a hole in the desert which was in Dudael and cast him there; he threw on top of him rugged and sharp rocks. And he covered his face in order that he may not see light. And in order that he may be sent into the fire on the great day of judgment. And give life to the earth which the angels have corrupted. And he will proclaim life for the earth: that he is giving life to her. And all the children of the people

42 For example, אַזַּזַּל in both Leviticus 16 and 4Q203 7 (the *Book of Giants*); אַזַּזַּל in 4Q180; אַזַּזַּל in 4QEnoch<sup>c</sup> 1 II 26; אַזַּזַּל in *Tg. Ps.-Jn.* Gen 6:4; Ἀζαζήλ in Syncellus, and both Ἀσεάλ and Ἀζαήλ in Codex Panopolitanus. See Stuckenbruck, *Book of Giants*, 78–9, 100, 111 n. 109.

43 For example, 4Q180, 4Q181, and the *Midrash of Semhazai and Azael*. For the midrash, see Milik, *Books of Enoch*, 321–39, esp. 328. See also Stuckenbruck, *Book of Giants*, 78; and Stökl Ben Ezra, *Impact*, 87.

44 See Stökl Ben Ezra, *Impact*, 85–90; Orlov, *Atoning Dyad*, 49–57.

will not perish through all the secrets (of the angels), which they taught to their sons. And the whole earth has been corrupted by Azazel's teaching of his (own) actions; and write upon him all sin.

*1 En. 10.4–8, tr. ISAAC in CHARLESWORTH, ed., OTP, 117–18, slightly modified*

Several motifs here are known from, or are similar to those in, the scapegoat tradition: the names Azazel and Dudael,<sup>45</sup> punishment in a desert, hurling down, writing/placing all sin upon the one hurled down, the motif of the great day of judgment (Yom Kippur is often referred to as *the* day, and it is routinely connected with the motif of judgment),<sup>46</sup> and vivifying the corrupted earth/land.

The Enochic *Book of the Watchers*, then, has blended the scapegoat and its “master” or destination, the demon Azazel, into one character. This is a fascinating blend, suggestive perhaps of a Pan-like character, a demonic goat-man, who receives the collective sin as his punishment, being ultimately responsible for it.<sup>47</sup> Be that as it may, the author has blended two stories that deal with events associated with Noah's ark and the ark of the covenant, respectively.

#### 4 Christian Texts

Christian texts, too, blend the arks but employ a different logic. Each of the arks was seen as a type of Jesus' crucifixion. In this capacity, the two arks became blended not only with the cross/Jesus, but sometimes also with each other in multi-scope blends with three input spaces (for Noah's ark, the ark of the covenant, and the crucified Jesus). While most of the following examples are simpler blends with just two inputs, they are all, nonetheless, intertextual blends: they evoke a given feature, verse, or a story from the scripture that is supposed to illuminate the crucifixion (or Christ's nature) being discussed and *vice versa*.

For Justin Martyr, Noah's ark was a type of the crucifixion because both offered salvation by wood (*Dial.* 138; Gen 6:14). For Clement of Alexandria, the length of Noah's ark, 300 cubits (Gen 6:15), foreshadowed the crucifixion because the Greek letter *tau*, whose numerical value is 300, is visually indicative of the cross, namely, the T-shaped cross. Clement also set up a tentative multi-scope blend by evoking both arks in the same typological exercise: “let the testimony of geometry be the *tabernacle* that was constructed, and the *ark*

45 For Azazel, see above, n. 42. Dudael is often thought to be related to Ha-Dudo, etc. See above, n. 30.

46 See especially Stökl Ben Ezra, *Impact*, e.g., 91–94, 121–24, 140.

47 See Milik, *Books of Enoch*, 313, who thinks Azazel was thought of as a demonic goat-man.

[of Noah] that was fashioned ... the length of the structure was three hundred cubits" (*Stromateis* 6.11, tr. ANF). Although the ark of the covenant is not explicitly mentioned, it is evoked via its location, the tabernacle.

If the measurements of Noah's ark were interpreted christologically, so were those of the ark of the covenant. According to Exod 25:10, the ark's length was to be 2 ½ cubits, its breadth 1 ½ cubits, and its height 1 ½ cubits. Some Christian authors summed up these numbers and took the resulting figure, 5 ½, as an indication of the 5 ½ thousand years separating Christ's coming from the creation. In other words, Christ's birth in 5,500 *anno mundi* had been foretold in the measurements of the ark.<sup>48</sup>

The earliest known instance of a christological interpretation of the ark of the covenant is found in Paul's letter to the Romans. At 3:25, Paul metaphorically identifies the crucified Christ as the *kapporet*: "God publicly displayed him [Christ Jesus] at his death as the mercy seat (ἱλαστήριον < *kapporet*) accessible through faith." Though the exact meaning of Paul's difficult phrase is debated,<sup>49</sup> the most likely explanation is that, like the author of 4 Maccabees, Paul, too, presents a martyr's death as atoning by evoking *the* physical location of collective atonement, the lid of the ark in the holy of holies.

For Irenaeus, the ark's being gilded inside out (Exod 25:11) served as a metaphor for Christ's body that was likewise adorned: outwardly with God's word and inwardly with God's spirit.<sup>50</sup> The imperishable wood out of which the same ark was built (Exod 25:10) could then be seen as a metaphor for Christ's sinlessness (Hippolytus, *On Psalm 22 or 23*).<sup>51</sup> Hippolytus also depicted Jesus' stretched hands on the cross as eagle wings which once protected Israel (Exod 19:4; Deut 32:11) and now the church in the wilderness.<sup>52</sup> Yahweh's wings are evoked elsewhere in the Tanakh as well (e.g., Pss 17:8; 36:7; 57:2; 61:5; 63:7; 91:4; cf. Ps 18:11; 2 Sam 22:11) and he is enthroned above winged cherubim, which Ezekiel and Revelation further associate with eagles.<sup>53</sup> The protective eagle wings of Yahweh/Jesus could thus easily evoke the lid of the ark in the holy of holies. This is, in fact, precisely the case in the *Gospel of Philip* (NHC II,3), which blends Jesus' cross with both arks:

48 Hippolytus, *On Daniel* 2.5–6; *Gospel of Nicodemus*, part II (Latin) 12 (28) (in James, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 145).

49 See Jewett, *Romans*, 284–90 and the literature cited there.

50 Irenaeus, frg. 8 *apud* Leontius of Byzantium, *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos* 14. See Daley, *Leontius*, 194–95.

51 A fragment preserved by Theodoret of Cyrus. See ANF 5:170.

52 Rev 12:14; Hippolytus, *On Christ and Antichrist* 61.

53 For Yahweh's enthronement above the (winged) cherubim, see, e.g., Exod 25:17–22; 1 Sam 4:4; and Pss 80:1; 99:1. For their eagle-association, see Ezek 1:10; 10:14; and Rev 4:7.



The *veil* (καταπέτασμα) covered at first how God administered the creation, but when the veil is rent and those of the inside are revealed this house will be left behind [as] a desert, or rather, it will be [destroyed], but the entire divinity will flee [from] these places, not into the *holy* [of the] *holies*, for it will not be able to mix with the unmixed [light] and the [fault]less fullness, [but] it will come to be under the *wings* of the cross [and under] its arms. This *ark* (σιβωτος) will [become their] salvation when the *flood* of water bears down upon them. If some happen to be of the priestly tribe, these will be able to enter inside the veil with *the high priest*.

*Gos. Phil.* NHC II 84.23–85.5; tr. LUNDHAUG, *Images*, 225, slightly modified

Jesus' cross is here identified as an ark that not only protects from the flood but is also associated with the holy of holies which is the resting place of the ark of the covenant.<sup>54</sup> Hugo Lundhaug further proposes that,

If we choose to read this passage as an allegory of the eschaton, which is suggested by the imagery of the flood and the destruction of the temple, we get a blend where “this house” (πᾶντα), i.e., the temple, may be mapped onto the material world. It is thus the destruction of this world that is prefigured in this way by Christ's death on the cross.<sup>55</sup>

Such a blend, where the temple/holy of holies is mapped onto the cosmos, may also be found in the *Nature of the Rulers* where the arks have cosmic connotations (see below).

Although the two arks are not always blended with each other in the above examples (such a blend is explicit only in the *Gospel of Philip* and the passage in Clement), the possibility to blend the arks via Jesus' cross remains implicitly present, at least for those Christians who were familiar with typological exegesis. Early Christians also generally used the LXX translation which uses the same term for both arks, κιβωτός (as does the Latin Vulgate, *arca*), and this may have further encouraged some to think of one ark in terms of another.

One final example may be mentioned. Noah's ark is among the most popular motifs in early Christian art from the catacombs. In many pictorial representations, the ark is box-like and very small, hardly larger than the ark of the

54 The holy of holies is evoked here by name as well as via the veil and the entrance of the high priest. Cf. also the excellent analysis of the various blends in the *Gospel of Philip* passage in Lundhaug, *Images*, 225–27.

55 Lundhaug, *Images*, 226.

covenant as described in Exod 25:10.<sup>56</sup> While there may be artistic reasons for the miniature presentation, knowledge of conceptual blends between the two arks may, nonetheless, have influenced such presentations.

Be that as it may, these examples should suffice to demonstrate the existence of a Judeo-Christian tendency to blend the two arks. This could be done in various ways for various purposes. While the motives behind these blends are not always totally clear, their very existence is plentifully attested. And so, we are finally ready to analyze our two Gnostic Nag Hammadi texts and the blending of the arks attested in both.

## 5 Blending of the Arks in the ‘Nature of the Rulers’ and the ‘Apocalypse of Adam’

The *Nature of the Rulers* is a text that survives in one fourth-century manuscript.<sup>57</sup> The author rewrites the early chapters of Genesis and turns much of their meaning upside-down. The creator has been turned into an evil, lion-shaped angel called Yaldabaoth, a.k.a. Sakla (“fool”) and Samael (the devil’s name).<sup>58</sup> He foolishly thinks he is the only god and is punished for his blasphemy. The satanic creator is bound and cast down into Tartarus by an angel of Life in an episode that recalls the punishment of Azazel in the *Book of the Watchers*.<sup>59</sup> Having witnessed the power of the punishing angel, one of Yaldabaoth’s offspring, Sabaoth, repents and accepts that there is a higher god for whom the angel of Life was working. As a result, personified Wisdom and Life elevate Sabaoth above the other archontic angels to rule the cosmos. Sabaoth is installed in the seventh heaven, just below the cosmic veil (καταπετασμα) that separates the cosmos from the odgoad, the realm of the true god and the ultimate destination of the saved ones. Sabaoth creates a throne of cherubim for himself which is characterized as “huge” (νοσ). Wisdom then places her daughter, Life, to the right and an angel of wrath to the left of Sabaoth and his huge cherubim throne (*Nat. Rulers* 95.4–96.3).

The other offspring of Yaldabaoth continue their father’s evil ways and rape Eve. Cain is born out of this unholy union. After Abel and Seth are born to Adam and Eve, Eve gives birth to Norea. The true parentage of Norea remains

56 See, for example, Jensen, “Introduction,” 8–9.

57 Layton, “Hypostasis of the Archons.” See, however, Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, who propose a fifth- to sixth-century date for most Nag Hammadi manuscripts.

58 For these names, see Pearson, *Gnosticism*, 47–50; and Rasimus, “Archangel Michael.”

59 Cf. Stroumsa, *Seed*, 56.

somewhat unclear, but she is certainly not sired by the archons. Norea is characterized as an aid to humanity and a virgin whom the evil archons did not manage to defile (89.17–31; 91.11–92.3).

After Norea is thus introduced into the story, the author remarks: “Then humanity began to multiply and improve” (92.3–4). As this remark immediately precedes the story of Noah’s ark, it is clearly meant to be a complete re-evaluation of Gen 6:1–4 according to which humanity had rather begun to deteriorate. Therefore, when the evil archons decide to send the flood to wipe out, literally, *all* flesh, they appear to be motivated by jealousy. At this point, Sabaoth intervenes. He says to Noah: “Make yourself an ark (ΚΙΒΩΤΟΣ) from some wood that does not rot and hide in it—you and your children and the beasts and the birds of heaven from small to large—and set it upon Mount Sir” (tr. Layton, “Hypostasis of the Archons,” 249). Norea wants to board the ark but Noah refuses. Somewhat surprisingly, then, Norea burns the ark and Noah is forced to rebuild it.<sup>60</sup>

There are motifs here that strongly suggest a blending of the arks. The blend is set up at 92.10, where Sabaoth’s instructions to Noah conflate God’s respective instructions to Noah (Gen 6:14) and Moses (Exod 25:10). The Coptic expression for the “wood that does not rot” (ⲠⲈ ⲈⲙⲁⲚ Ⲡⲭⲟⲗⲉⲥ; *Nat. Rulers* 92.10–11) translates the Greek ξύλον ἄσχηπτος,<sup>61</sup> which is not what YHWH tells Noah; it is what he tells Moses.

Elaboration of this blend then explains the strange motif of Norea burning the ark and Noah rebuilding it. This motif is very likely an allusion to the burning (2 Kgs 25:9) and rebuilding (e.g., Ezra 6:3; 2 Chr 36:22–23) of the temple which here metonymically stands for the ark it once contained.<sup>62</sup> The present reading is further bolstered by the fact that Noah is told to build his ark on a mountain, just as the temple was built on Mount Zion. A conceptual blend between Noah’s ark and the temple is not impossible for an attentive reader of the Torah, as suggested by Bodner and others (see above).

In a further elaboration of the blend, the author characterizes Sabaoth’s cherubim throne as “huge,” which accords better with Noah’s ark than that of

60 According to Epiphanius’ late testimony (*Pan.* 26.1.8), the “Gnostics” taught that Norea burnt the ark three times, which would explain why its construction took so long. Cf. rabbinic lore according to which Noah spent 120 years building the ark (*Gen. Rab.* 30.7). The motif of burning the ark may have begun to live its own life, during the course of which the connection to the temple was lost.

61 E.g., in the Coptic Deut 10:3; see Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 546b.

62 For metonymy, see Lakoff, and Johnson, *Metaphors*, 35–40; Kövecses, *Metaphor*; and Littlemore, *Metonymy*. In a (conceptual) metonymy, one thing stands for another that is closely associated with it.

the covenant (the length of Noah's ark was 300 cubits, whereas that of the covenant mere 2 ½ cubits). To be sure, the ark of the covenant had a heavenly prototype which Moses was to reproduce (Exod 25:9). One could think that the heavenly prototype was massive and the earthly replica its miniature version. But the huge size of Sabaoth's heavenly throne here may also be an indication of the blend between the arks, one of which was indeed huge. Remember that Symmachus identified Noah's ark as a 300-cubit long *kapporet*.

That the two arks here remain separate despite being blended could be due either to the heavenly prototype/earthly replica pattern or, more likely, to the distinction between the ark and its lid. After all, the lid functioned as God's throne and the ark below it as his footstool and a container of the covenant documents. In this blend, then, Sabaoth's throne appears to correspond to the *kapporet* and Noah's ark to the footstool-container which, instead of containing the covenant tablets, contains the very man with whom the Lord Sabaoth made a covenant (cf. Gen 9:8–17).

Finally, Sabaoth's huge throne lies just beneath the veil (καταπέτασμα) that separates the cosmos from the realm of the true god. According to the Tanakh, the purpose of the sanctuary's veil (LXX: καταπέτασμα) was to hide and conceal the ark. Here, in the *Nature of the Rulers*, Sabaoth's huge cherubim throne and the likewise huge ark (of Noah) both exist beneath the cosmic veil. This suggests that, not unlike in the *Gospel of Philip*, the whole cosmos may be here seen as a temple. In fact, this is a theme that is already known from Josephus, albeit in a different form. According to the Jewish historian, the veil (καταπέτασμα) covering the holy of holies was a kind of an image of the universe (ὡσπερ εἰκόνα τῶν ὄλων; *B.J.* 5.212) and the holy of holies behind the veil symbolized God's heavenly abode (*A.J.* 3.181). According to the Gnostic author, however, what lies beyond the veil is the cosmos, the dwelling place and temple/holy of holies of the Hebrew god that is best concealed from the citizens of the ogdoad. In other words, we see here a rather negative evaluation of both the cosmos and the temple. One should finally mention that, according to the *Nature of the Rulers*, the creation of the cosmos began at the veil (94.2–95.5). This is similar to the rabbinic legend according to which creation began at the foundation stone that lied mere six feet from the (future) veil.

Another Classic Gnostic text from the Nag Hammadi collection, the *Apocalypse of Adam*, also blends the arks. In this text, we do not find a distinction between the creator Yaldabaoth and the ruler Sabaoth. There is only one cosmic god, called the Almighty (παντοκράτωρ) and a fool (σακλα). He decides to destroy all flesh in a flood but tells Noah to save himself, his family, and animals in an *ark* (κιβωτός). The stratagem is spoiled, however, when great angels descend on lofty *clouds* (κλοολε < νεφέλη) to rescue others from the

flood. These additional survivors are brought by the angels to the place where the spirit of life dwells (69.19–25). When the Almighty finds out about these additional survivors, he accuses Noah of having created another race. Noah responds: “I will *testify* (ῤ ΜΝΤΡΕ < μαρτυρέω) before your might that the race of these men did not come from me nor my sons” (71.21–26).

This text thus associates a *cloud* and a *testimony* with the *ark*, which combination strongly suggests Noah’s ark is blended with the ark of the covenant. In the Torah, the ark of the covenant is often called the “ark of *testimony*” upon which the *cloud* of God’s manifestation descended.<sup>63</sup> That angels, rather than God, appear in such clouds is also in accordance with Exodus (14:19–20).

Finally, the motif of salvation from the flood in a cloud is also found in the *Apocryphon of John*, another Classic Gnostic text known both from the Nag Hammadi collection and elsewhere.<sup>64</sup> This text, however, has a different evaluation of Noah and the flood altogether. Noah is rescued from the evil Yaldabaoth’s flood by the Providence of the true god. The personified Providence allows Noah and other members of the “immovable race” to shelter themselves in a luminous cloud and *not* in the ark as Moses had mistakenly said.<sup>65</sup> As part of its adaptation of the Enochic watchers myth, the *Apocryphon of John* also reverses the order of the flood and the arrival of the *nephilim*. The sexual union between evil angels and humans is just another one of Yaldabaoth’s attempts at enslaving humanity and occurs after Noah and his kind had already saved themselves.<sup>66</sup>

The author of this text may have been familiar with the blending of the arks, but ignored it in favor of a different, positive interpretation of Noah. The somewhat negative interpretation of Noah in the *Nature of the Rulers* and the *Apocalypse of Adam* may then simply derive from his biblical role as a faithful servant of the god of Genesis. But, if one follows the perspective that these texts were at least transmitted (if not authored) by ascetic monks, Noah’s reputation as the inventor of wine and the legend of his drunken behavior may have additionally contributed towards his debased status. At any rate, for the

63 The clouds that belong to the story of Noah’s ark have a different character: they first destroy life and afterwards serve as the placement of the rainbow. Noah is also not said to have testified to anything in Genesis.

64 The *Apocryphon of John* is attested in four Coptic manuscripts (NHC II,1; III,1; IV,1; BG 8502,2). Irenaeus of Lyons also knew a version of this work (*Haer.* 1.29; cf. 1.30–31). For the respective editions, see Waldstein and Wisse, eds. and trs., *Apocryphon of John*; and Rousseau and Doutreleau, eds. and trs., *Irénéée*. See also the essay in the present volume by Goff.

65 NHC II 28.34–29.12, and par.

66 NHC II 29.16–30.11, and par.

authors of the *Nature of the Rulers* and the *Apocalypse of Adam*, the biblical stories about the ark(s) are simply manifestations of the same, futile promise of a lower-level salvation that does not lead to true salvation in the ogdoad.

## 6 Conclusion

We have investigated here the fascinating phenomenon of conceptual blending between the biblical arks of Noah and the covenant. This has turned out to be a rather persistent theme in ancient Judeo-Christian literature, cropping up here and there and taking different forms for different reasons. Respective stories about the two arks in the Hebrew Bible already contained potential links, some of which may even have been intentional intertextual allusions. Translators of the LXX enhanced these links by settling on a common word for the two arks. Later LXX manuscript tradition further elaborated on these links, and creative conceptual blends arose in the minds of Philo and, in particular, Symmachus. In Jewish literature found at Qumran and other sites, the themes of monogamy and demonic punishment served as occasions for further rapprochements and blends.

On the other hand, early Christian authors routinely found types of Jesus' cross in the scriptures. These included Noah's ark and the ark of the covenant. The rationale behind these typologies ranged from gematric speculation on the dimensions of the respective arks to the nature of their construction materials. Often these typologies were kept apart but occasionally they became blended with each other (and, of course, with Jesus and his cross), as they did in the *Gospel of Philip*.

Classic Gnostic literature, with its strong interest in the early chapters of Genesis and Jewish lore in general, also contains examples of the blended ark. These blends, however, have nothing to do with the crucifixion. The authors of these texts are more interested in connecting both arks with the lowly archontic forces that created and now rule the cosmos. As their cosmos lies beneath a veil, the whole wide world is apparently imagined as an archontic temple, best kept hidden from those who belong to the supra-cosmic regions of the ogdoad. They must ignore the ark(s) and find salvation through other means.

Whether Jewish or Christian, mainstream or sectarian, the lost arks of Noah and the covenant have captured people's minds for a very long time. One indication of this widespread fascination is the variety of conceptual blends encountered and analyzed in the present essay.

## Acknowledgments

I wish to thank Harold Attridge for his insightful response to an earlier version of the paper at the conference. I likewise wish to thank the organizers of the conference, Dylan Burns and Matthew Goff, for their kind invitation.

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**PART 5**

***“Weak Comparison” in Praxis:  
Interdisciplinary Investigations of Themes in the  
Qumran and Nag Hammadi Literatures***





# Revealers and Revelation from Qumran to Nag Hammadi

*Harold W. Attridge*

Two large bodies of ancient texts, one from caves on the shore of the Dead Sea and one from the sands of the Nile valley at Nag Hammadi, have fueled the scholarly conversation on the history of ancient religions over the course of the last 75 years. The Berlin conference of 2018 provided a welcome opportunity to reflect on these corpora, their relations, and the ways in which they have been analyzed. The task is complicated by the fact that each collection is not a uniform body of literary or religious materials. Rather, each represents a spectrum of beliefs and religious expressions from Second Temple Jewish circles and from various strands of not fully orthodox Christians from the second to the fourth century. Nonetheless, there are similarities worth exploring.

One of these similarities is a concern for “revealed truth” and the agents and processes that provide access to it. Each corpus has inherited traditional stories about the way in which the first principle, however conceived, has revealed itself and its designs for humankind, either directly to human beings or through intermediaries. Each body of texts also contains accounts of the experiences of human beings who have had visionary experiences, providing access to truths that shape their current existence. Each corpus inflects this body of traditional stories in its own distinctive way.

## 1 Traditional Revealers and Revelatory Experience in the Dead Sea Scrolls

One strand of Qumran texts echoes the biblical narratives in which patriarchs of Israel receive revelation directly from God. Thus the *Genesis Apocryphon* from Cave 1 rehearses Biblical accounts of God’s appearances to Abram:

*1QGenAp* XXI<sup>8</sup> God appeared to me in a night vision and said to me: “Go up to Ramat Hazor, which is on the North of<sup>9</sup> Bethel, the place where you are living; raise your eyes and look to the East, to the West, to the South

and to the north. Look at all <sup>10</sup> this land, which I am giving you and your descendants forever.”

1*QGenAp* XXII <sup>27</sup> After these events, God appeared to Abram in a vision and said to him: “See, ten years <sup>28</sup> have passed since the day you left Haran; you have spent two years here, seven in Egypt and one <sup>29</sup> since you came back from Egypt. Now inspect and count up all you possess and see how <sup>30</sup> everything which left with you on the day of your move from Haran has increased double. Now, do not fear, I am with you and for you I shall be <sup>31</sup> support and strength. I shall be your shield and your buckler against one stronger than you. Your riches and your flocks <sup>32</sup> shall increase enormously.”<sup>1</sup>

In these revelatory experiences there is no conveyance of a hidden truth but an encounter with the source of all divine power. The encounter offers hope and assurance that God would be with his chosen human partner. That understanding of revelation will appear often.

Biblical characters were also wont to have dream visions and so, again in the *Genesis Apocryphon*, Noah has one:

col VI <sup>11</sup> In a vision I (scil. Noah) saw, was shown and informed of the deed of the sons of heaven and how all <sup>12</sup> .... And I hid this mystery in my heart and did not make it known to anyone. *Blank* <sup>13</sup> [...] ... to me by a great watcher /to/ me by a messenger, by an emissary of the Holy One ... <sup>14</sup> [...] ... and in visions he spoke to me and he was standing before me ... <sup>15</sup> [...] an e]missary of the Great Holy One called out to me: To you, O Noah, they say <sup>16</sup> [...] ... and I considered by myself all the behavior of the sons of the earth

Noah's vision also involves an intermediary, an “emissary of the Holy One” (משלחת קדשא), apparently sent by an even higher heavenly power, a “great watcher” (עירא רבא). The emissary addresses Noah in the vision and delivers a message from the Great Holy One, no doubt about the wickedness of the “sons of the earth.” Here the revelation has some content, the opposite of the word of assurance to Abram, a word of judgment on the wicked.

Some of the revelatory visions in this story are symbols, such as the cedar and palm trees that Abram sees on the night before he enters into Egypt,

<sup>1</sup> Translations of the Scrolls are from García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*.

symbols that Sarah handily interprets for him (*1QGenAp* XIX, 14–21). The content of the symbol is, once again, not an esoteric truth, but a word of assurance that Abram would be saved from Pharaoh's wrath by the presence of his "palm tree," Sarah.

The combination of visions, dreams, and the occasional mediator is familiar from the pages of scripture and from other apocryphal narratives. A similar strand of traditional Jewish literature known to the community of the Dead Sea Scrolls circulated under the name of Enoch. The introduction to the *Book of the Watchers*, the first portion of *1 Enoch*, survives at Cave 4 and reports a vision received by Enoch of an eschatological future, mediated by Watchers:

4Q201 (4QEn<sup>a</sup> ar) 1 I = *1 En.* 1:1–6: 2 ... [Enoch, a just man to whom a vision of the Holy One of heaven was revealed, announced] his oracles [and said]: ["The vision of the Holy One of heaven"] 3 [was revealed to me, and I heard] it all from the words of [the Watchers] and the Holy Ones [and because I heard it from them, I knew and understood everything] 4 [not for thi]s generation but for a [fu]ture genera[tion] I shall sp[eak]. Now I speak about the chosen, concerning them I declare my oracle, saying: 5 The [Gr]eat Holy one shall leave [his] dw[elling and the eternal god will descend upon the earth and will walk to Mount Sinai and will appear] 6 [with his gr]eat [army] and will appear in [the strength of his] might....

Other Qumran fragments report more of Enoch's familiar revelatory experiences. 4Q204 6 contains *1 En.* 13:6–14:16, in which Enoch sees a dream vision in which the doors of the heavenly palace are opened. He views the punishments to come for the wicked watchers and hears a heavenly voice calling him to "Speak to the sons of heaven and admonish them" (line 5). Enoch himself serves as a messenger bringing the revelation and reports that "In front of them I related all [the visions which I had seen in dreams and I began to speak] with words of justice and of vision and to admonish the heav[enly] watchers" (ll. 7–8). The content of the revealed message is one of coming judgment.

Enoch's role as a recipient and conveyor of revelation features prominently in the later chapters of *1 En.* (106:13–107:2), preserved in the same text, 4Q204 5 II:

[Fo]r I know the mysteries of [the Lord which] the Holy Ones have told me and have shown me [and which] I read [in the tablets of] heaven. In them I saw written that [gene]ration after generation will perpetrate evil in this way and there will be evil [until there arise] generations of justice

and wickedness and corruptions come to an end, and violence vanishes from the earth, and un[til goodness comes to the earth] above them.<sup>2</sup>

ll. 26–29

The revelation that Enoch received, written on the heavenly tablets, was like that of Noah, a word of judgment on the wicked.

Other characters in the Enochic tradition receive revelation through dreams. 4Q530 (4QEnGiants<sup>b</sup> ar) tells of the dream visions of ‘Ohyah and his brother Gilgamesh. ‘Ohyah reports “I also saw something amazing in my dream this night: The Ruler of the heavens came down to earth, and thrones were erected and the Great Holy One sa[t down]” (11, 16–17). No mediating revealer figure is part of this visionary experience. ‘Ohyah, like Isaiah and Ezekiel, has a dream vision of God enthroned on earth.

Antediluvian figures and the patriarchs of Israel all fit into familiar biblical and extra-biblical patterns. God can provide a revelatory experience, either directly or through the mediation of a heavenly being. The experience often comes through a dream vision. The content of that dream or revelation is either a display of God’s awesome sovereignty or a prediction of coming judgment.

## 2 Encountering the Mystery of Existence

Another strand of tradition running through some Dead Sea Scrolls has a different tone from the traditional revelatory tales, although it is certainly concerned with how divine truth is to be attained. More indebted to the sapiential tradition, this strand celebrates the ways in which the mysterious plans of God have been made known to the faithful. The means of attaining that knowledge generally consist not of a divine revealer figure, but of the mind and heart of the sage, which, aided by God’s Holy Spirit, learns to encounter the profundity of God’s mysterious plan for the world.

The basic framework of this approach to divine revelation is present in a major scroll, the *Community Rule*, 1QS XI, 3–8:<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For from the source of his knowledge he has disclosed his light, and my eyes have observed his wonders, and the light of my heart the mystery of <sup>4</sup> existence (רז נהיה). For the truth of God is <sup>5</sup> the rock of my steps, and his might the support of my right hand. From the spring of his justice is my

<sup>2</sup> 4Q212 = 1 En. 91:18–92:2, contains a similar portrait of Enoch as revealing messenger.

<sup>3</sup> Also attested in 4Q264.



judgment and from the wonderful mystery is the light in my heart. My eyes have observed what always is <sup>6</sup> wisdom that has been hidden from mankind, knowledge and prudent understanding (hidden) from the sons of man, fount of justice and well of <sup>7</sup> strength and spring of glory (hidden) from the assembly of flesh. To those whom God has selected he has given them as everlasting possession; and he has given them an inheritance in the lot of <sup>8</sup> the holy ones.

The mysterious “I” heard here resembles the voice of the unnamed hymnist in poetic passages such as the *Hodayot*. This voice “sings with knowledge” and his “music” is “for the glory of God” (1QS X, 9). The voice may represent the “Instructor” (משכיל) mentioned earlier in the text (IX, 12), who is to “instruct and teach all the sons of light about the nature of all the sons of man (בתולדות) (כול בני איש) (III, 13). It may be the voice of the Teacher of Righteousness, but whoever it is, it speaks with authority about the knowledge that he has received from God. This knowledge is a result of a revelatory event, something that God has disclosed as light (פתח אורו) (XI, 3). In what follows, the language of vision describes the experience: “my eyes have observed his wonders” (בנפלאותיו) (הביטה עיני). This revelatory event is not something external, not a heavenly journey, nor the sudden appearance of a celestial messenger. No, says the “I” who receives revelation, it takes place in “the light of my heart” (אורת לבבי).

The technical term for the content of divine revelation, the “mystery of existence” (רז נהיה) also appears in this text. That term appears in several scrolls from Cave 4. In one of these, 4QMysteries (4Q299, 4Q300, and 4Q301), it seems to refer to eschatological events. The term also is used throughout the fragments of the long sapiential work 4QInstruction, where it can refer to events of the future. It does so, for instance, when it grounds an admonition not to rejoice when mourning is appropriate:

4Q416 (4QInstruction<sup>b</sup>) 2 I, 5–6:<sup>4</sup> [Do not rejoice when you should mourn, lest you toil] in your life. Consider the mystery of existence [and grasp the birth-times of salvation, and know who will inherit glory and toil].

It is significant that this admonition takes place in the context of a lengthy sapiential sequence not in the midst of an eschatological prophecy. As often

4 Also attested in 4Q417 2 I; 4Q418 7.

noted, apocalyptic and wisdom traditions combine in intriguing ways in 4QInstruction.<sup>5</sup>

Other instances of the use of the term point in a different, non-eschatological direction. 4Q416 2 III, 14 admonishes: “Investigate the mystery of existence, and consider all the paths of truth, and observe closely all the roots of injustice.” This is a call to understand the way things are, not the way things will be. The point is made quite clearly in another fragment, 4Q417 1 I:

<sup>1</sup> [...] you, under[stan]ding one, [...] <sup>2</sup> [...] ... consider the wonder[ful] mysteries [of the God of awe. Pay attention to the principle of ...] <sup>3</sup> ... <sup>4</sup> [...] why] <sup>5</sup> [something existed, and why something exists, through them it will b]e in all [...] work ... [...] <sup>6</sup> [...] day and night meditate on the mystery of exis]tence, and seek continuously. And then you will know truth and injustice, wisdom <sup>7</sup> [...] understand the wor[ld of ...] in all their paths together with their visitations for all eternal periods, and eternal visitation. <sup>8</sup> And then you will know (the difference) between [goo]d and [evil in their] work[s,] for the God of knowledge is the foundation of truth, and through the mystery of existence <sup>9</sup> he expounded its basis.... <sup>11</sup> and in the correctness of understanding are made kno[wn the sec]rets of <sup>12</sup> his thought, while one walks [per]fect[ly in all] one’s [d]eeds. Be constantly intent on these things, and understand [al]l <sup>13</sup> their effects. And then you will know et[ernal] glory [wi]th his wonderful mysteries and his mighty deeds.<sup>6</sup>

Understanding the “mysteries of the God of awe” depends on the intellectual actions of *paying attention* to principles, *meditating* on the “mystery of existence,” on the “*correctness of understanding*,” and being “*constantly intent*.” A related fragment (4Q418 123 II, 5) makes a similar point: knowledge is what the understanding one (מבין) achieves when he “considers all these things” (בהביטכה בכל אלה).

The same perspective on attaining knowledge of things divine also appears in the *Hodayot*, which blesses the “Lord, who puts wisdom in the heart of [your] servant to kn[ow al]l these matters” (1QH<sup>a</sup> VI, 8). The poet also declares “These things I know through your knowledge, for you opened my ears to

<sup>5</sup> A text well known to one of the organizers of the conference. See Goff, *The Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom of 4QInstruction*.

<sup>6</sup> The text is also attested in 4Q418 43, 44, 45 I; 4Q418a 11.

wondrous mysteries although I am a creature of clay" (1QH<sup>a</sup> IX, 21). The poet also describes knowledge as a gift of the Holy Spirit (1QH<sup>a</sup> XX, 11):<sup>7</sup>

And I, the Inst[ructor, have known you, my God, through the spirit which you gave in me, and I have listened loyally to your wonderful secret] through [your holy] spirit. [You have opened within me knowledge of the mystery of your wisdom, the source of your power, ...] according to the abun[dance of kindness].<sup>8</sup>

ll. 12–14

In the Qumran scrolls traditional revealer figures and experiences of dream visions appear in a limited number of texts. The sectarians know that God offered a revelation to the patriarchs, Moses, and the prophets, and such revelatory experiences are well attested in texts probably not created by the Qumran sectarians. At the heart of the piety represented in what are probably their own creations is not a connection to a revealer figure but a meditation on the content of what God has created. The revealer figure is the person of understanding, who uses his heart and mind to probe the mystery of existence.

### 3 Revelation from the Sands of Egypt

Like the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Nag Hammadi collection does not represent a single form of theology or piety. Various traditions have been identified within the collection, including Ophite-Barbeloite,<sup>9</sup> Sethian,<sup>10</sup> Valentinian,<sup>11</sup> Thomasine, Hermetic,<sup>12</sup> and others.<sup>13</sup> Each of these traditions has a history. Not surprisingly, revealer figures are complex. What follows is a typology that

7 The text is also attested in 4Q427 2 + 3 II 12–13 and 4Q428 8.

8 Cf. also the language of 4Q429 (4QH<sup>c</sup>) 1 IV (= 1QH<sup>a</sup> XIII) 5–8: "And you my God,] have [op]ened [a broad space] in my heart, but they have increased the nar[rowness and have wrapped me in darkness. I am eating] the bread of weeping, my drink is tears [without end. For my eyes are blinded by the grief and my soul] [by the bitter]ness of the day."

9 Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered in Gnostic Mythmaking*.

10 Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition*; idem, "Sethian Gnosticism: A Revised Literary History."

11 Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*; Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*; Tite, *Valentinian Ethics and Paraenetic Discourse*.

12 Mahé, *Hermès en Haut-Égypte*.

13 Texts that do not have a direct 'Gnostic' connection of any sort include a fragment from Plato's *Republic* (NHC VI,5) and the *Teachings of Silvanus* (NHC VII,4).

tries to map some of the complexity of the evidence while allowing some comparison with the more limited body of material from the Scrolls.

#### 4 God as Revealer

Despite their diversity, the Nag Hammadi texts generally share a view of the first principle that does not allow for his appearing to patriarchs or prophets. The unknowable, ineffable one, like the God of Philo or of Plotinus,<sup>14</sup> is not to be directly apprehended by any human faculty. Yet this first principle regularly comes into view through a process of emanation. The tractate *Eugnostos* (NHC III,3; v,1) succinctly describes such a process:

The first to appear before the universe in infinity is the one who grows by himself, the self-made Father. He is full of bright, ineffable light. In the beginning he decided to turn his likeness into a great power, and at once the strength of that light appeared as an immortal androgynous Human. The male name of this human being is [conceived] perfect [Mind] and the female name is the all wise mother Sophia.<sup>15</sup>

One “revealer” figure then is the hidden source of all that is, and the process of revelation is simply the story of the unfolding of the cosmos in all its complexity from that ineffable beginning. The details of the process vary considerably, which we shall see again at the very end of the survey.

Remnants of an older scheme of things occasionally surface, when the traditional creator God of Genesis intervenes to provide a “revelation” of sorts. He does so with Adam and Eve in the *Apocalypse of Adam* (NHC v 66.14–25), but that appearance in a dream vision is designed to obscure the truth that Adam and Eve have just received from higher powers. The creator God of this text is not a positive character.

14 See, e.g., the way in which *Eugnostos* NHC III 75.4–9 (cf. *Wis. Jes. Chr.* NHC III 99.3–10) echoes Aristotle’s image of the self-contemplating first principle: “The Forefather sees himself within himself as in a mirror, and his image appears as Father by himself, Parent by himself, and reflection because he reflects unconceived first existence.”

15 *Eug.* NHC III 76.14–77.4. Translations of the Nag Hammadi texts are from Meyer, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*.

## 5 Biblical Characters as Revealers

Following the Hebrew Bible, the Scrolls described the revelatory experience of various biblical characters. These are generally absent from the Nag Hammadi Codices. Nonetheless, biblical stories can be loci for revelatory encounters, often in surprising ways. The *Apocalypse of Adam* (NHC V,5) constitutes a testimony or “revelation” by Adam to his son Seth about his own creation and about what the future descendants of Seth can expect. That framework, resembling the genre of “testament,” might itself make Adam a revealer figure, but his revelation contains even more interesting cases. The first thing he tells Seth is a version of the myth of the androgyne. Adam and his wife Eve were created together in an angelic sphere and only later separated into man and woman by the angry ruler of this world. The account reads:

After God created me out of earth, along with your mother Eve, I went about with her in a glory that she had beheld in the eternal realm we had come from. She instructed me in the knowledge of the eternal God. We resembled the great eternal angels, for we were superior to the god who had created us and the powers with him, whom we did not know. God, the ruler of the realms and the powers angrily divided us. Then we become two beings, and the glory in our hearts departs from your mother Eve and me, as did the previous knowledge that breathed in us.<sup>16</sup>

The creator god of the Genesis story is, as often at Nag Hammadi, an inimical force. What is of interest here is the role casually accorded to Eve, as the one who instructs the masculine half of her dyadic self in the knowledge of the eternal God. The spiritual Eve is present, in effect, as a revealer figure, an account with some fairly obvious implications for the relationship between the sexes in the community that might be reading this story.<sup>17</sup>

This version of the story of the fall begs the question of how the inimical creator god came to create humans in the first place. Other texts at Nag Hammadi answer that question, in well-known ways. The story of the *Apocalypse of Adam* also begs the question of how the knowledge lost in the fall from androgynous unity is to be regained. The *Apocalypse* answers that question at some length. In part revelation comes through a dream vision that Adam experiences in

<sup>16</sup> *Apoc. Adam* NHC V 64.6–28.

<sup>17</sup> Eve appears in other Nag Hammadi accounts as a kind of accidental revealer figure. Thus her decision to eat of the tree of knowledge, based upon recognition of its beauty, starts a process of resistance to the inimical powers of creation in *Orig. World* NHC II 118.6–119.19.

which a triad of heavenly beings bids him “Arise from the sleep of death, and hear about the eternal realm and the seed of that human to whom life has come, who came from your partner Eve and you.” It was that vision that the standard creator God tried to obscure (65.26–66.8).

The triad of heavenly revealers, who resurface at the end of the text as Micheus, Michar, and Mnesinous (84.4), takes on more definition in a figure called the Illuminator. The redemptive role of the content of his illumination is clear:

Once again, for a third time, the Illuminator of Knowledge will pass by in great glory, in order to leave behind some of the offspring of Noah and the sons of Ham and Japheth, to leave behind for himself trees that bear fruit. The Illuminator will redeem their souls from the day of death. For all creation that came from mortal earth will be under the authority of death, but those who reflect in their hearts on the knowledge of the eternal God will not perish.<sup>18</sup>

The text catalogues (77.18–83.4) a list of fourteen “kingdoms” with different opinions about the Illuminator. Many can be correlated with legends about charismatic figures, such as Apollonius of Tyana, or deities, such Mithras. Only one group gets it right:

But the generation without a king says, God chose him from all the eternal realms. He made knowledge of the undefiled one of truth to come to be [in] him. He said, “The [great] illuminator has come [from] foreign air, [from a] great eternal realm.” And [he] illumined the generation of those people, whom he had chosen for himself so that they might illumine the whole eternal realm.

82.19–83.4

The Illuminator is whoever it is that has brought this group together.

## 6 Angelic Revealers

The identity of the Illuminator in the *Apocalypse of Adam* is not defined, although a Christian reader might be tempted to think that he is Christ. Other texts identify various heavenly beings who bring saving truth. The *Hypostasis*

<sup>18</sup> *Apoc. Adam* NHC V 76.8–23.

of the Archons, or *Nature of the Rulers* (NHC II,4), provides, in the name of the Great Apostle Paul, a reading of Genesis that makes clear the inimical character of the Demiurge and his minions who rule the created order. One of their opponents is Norea, sister of Cain and Abel, “the virgin whom the forces did not defile” (92.1).<sup>19</sup> Threatened by the Demiurge’s archons, Norea prays to the God of the All. In response the angel Eleleth introduces himself:

I am Eleleth, Understanding, the great angel who stands before the holy spirit. I have been sent to speak with you and rescue you from the hand of the lawless ones. And I shall teach you about your root.<sup>20</sup>

The narrator comments, evoking Daniel’s Ancient of Days:<sup>21</sup>

I cannot describe the power of that angel. Its appearance is like fine gold and its raiment is like snow. My mouth simply cannot bear to speak of its power and the appearance of its face.<sup>22</sup>

Eleleth expands on the self-introduction:

The great angel, Eleleth, spoke to me and said. “I am Understanding. I am one of the Four Luminaries who stand before great invisible spirit. Do you think these rulers have any power over you? None of them can overpower the root of truth, for on behalf of the root of truth a figure has appeared in the last days, and these authorities will be restrained. These authorities cannot defile you and that generation, for your home is with Incorruptibility, where the Virgin Spirit dwells, who is superior to the authorities of chaos and to their world.”<sup>23</sup>

Here Eleleth, one of the “Four Luminaries,” common in Sethian texts, reveals to Norea not only the hopeful message that she is part of the incorruptible

19 Norea is also featured in other texts from Nag Hammadi: *Orig. World* (II,5; XIII,2<sup>\*</sup>; Brit Lib. Or. 4926[1]), which expounds a protology similar to that of *Nat. Rulers*, and *Thought of Norea* (IX,2), an ode to her as one who rests in ineffable insight and who inherits the First Mind and the living Word, praises which might qualify her as a revealer, rather like her spiritual mother.

20 *Nat. Rulers* NHC II 93.9–13.

21 Cf. Dan 7:9; and its echoes in the Son of Man of Rev 1:3–14, or the account of the transfiguration, Mark 9:2 par.

22 *Nat. Rulers* NHC II 93.13–17.

23 *Nat. Rulers* NHC II 93.14–32.

realm; he also informs her of the cosmogonic process represented in the classic “Gnostic” traditions.<sup>24</sup> There, the world we know is the result of the faulty desire of Pistis Sophia to create something (94.5–8), resulting, unfortunately, in the despicable world of the Demiurge.

Eleleth’s self-introduction refers to the Holy Spirit whom he apparently represents. Exactly how this Spirit fits into the cosmology or ontology of this text is not immediately clear. The reference does recall the way in which some Dead Sea sectarians referred to the holy spirit of God as the source of their knowledge and understanding, though they did not need an Eleleth as intermediary.

Another Sethian text, the *Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit* (NHC III,2; IV,2), presents a related, but more clearly defined, scheme. An apocryphon in the strict sense, the *Holy Book* was said to have been hidden in the mountains by its author, Seth. The Great Invisible Spirit here designates the first principle, not perhaps as clearly philosophized as in other accounts. From that principle flows a triad of Father, Mother, and Son, from whom various levels of being emerge, culminating in the Four Luminaries: Harmozel, Oraiael, Daveithe, Eleleth (50.17–52.16). The angelic Eleleth thus reappears, although his role as revealer is not as prominent as in the *Nature of the Rulers*.

Another angelic revealer appears in the *Paraphrase of Shem* (NHC VII,1), an account of Shem’s heavenly journey. As its opening indicates, Shem encountered in heaven a mysterious figure, Derdekeas, who tells him what he needs to know:

The paraphrase about the unbegotten spirit—what Derdekeas revealed to me, Shem. In accordance with the will of the majesty, My thought, which was in my body, snatched me away from my race and carried me up to the summit of creation, close to the light that shone on the whole inhabited world. I saw no earthly likeness there, but only light, and my thought left my body of darkness as though in sleep.

I heard a voice saying to me, “Shem, since you are from a pure power and you are the first being on earth, listen and understand what I am about to tell you first concerning the great powers who existed in the beginning before I appeared. In the beginning there was light and darkness, and spirit between them. Your root, the unbegotten Spirit, fell into forgetfulness, and so I am revealing to you the precise nature of the powers.”<sup>25</sup>

24 Where in the development of Ophite-Barbeloite-Sethian traditions the ideas described here should be placed is a matter for further study.

25 *Paraph. Shem* NHC VII 1.1–32.



The content of the revelation resembles that of the *Nature of the Rulers*, an identification of the recipient of the revelation with his transcendent source, his "root." As the heavenly voice continues to speak there follows a complex account of creation and the means of redemption, involving rebirth and proper baptism, and an eschatological consummation. Stories from Genesis and from Christ's passion are interwoven along with an autobiographical report by Derdekeas. There he tells of his emanation, his intercessory prayer to the primal Spirit, and the response that defines his own revelatory mission.

And when the spirit looked out, I, the son of Majesty, flowed out like a ray of bright light and like a gust of the immortal spirit. I blew from the cloud of the hymen upon the astonishment of the unbegotten spirit, and the cloud separated and shed light on the other clouds. They separated so that the Spirit might return. Because of this Mind took form; his repose was over.<sup>26</sup> ...

I had pity on the light of the Spirit that Mind had taken. I returned to my place in order to pray to the exalted, infinite Light that the power <of the light> of the Spirit might increase on his place and become full not with dark defilement but with what is pure. I said, You are the root of the light. Your hidden form has appeared, and it is exalted, infinite. May all the whole power of the Spirit become pure and may it be filled with its light. The infinite light will not be able to join with the unbegotten Spirit, and the power of astonishment will not be able to mix with Nature. In accordance with the will of the Majesty, my prayer was accepted ...

I shall appear again. I am Derdekeas, the son of undefiled, infinite Light. The light of the infinite spirit came down into feeble nature for a short time until all the defilement of nature was withdrawn. So that the darkness of Nature might be exposed, I put on my garment, the garment of the light of Majesty. That is what I am. I took on the appearance of the Spirit in order to consider all the light, in the depths of the Darkness.<sup>27</sup>

Near the conclusion of his account of intervening into natural and human nature as a fiery spirit, Derdekeas summarizes his accomplishments:

I opened the eternal gates that were shut from the beginning. To those who are perceptive, I disclosed to them all the concepts and the teaching

<sup>26</sup> *Paraph. Shem* NHC VII 6.28–7.10.

<sup>27</sup> *Paraph. Shem* NHC VII 7.31–9.3.

of the righteous. In no way did I become their enemy, but when I endured the wrath of the world, I was triumphant.

36.2–14

The ontological status of Derdekeas is thus somewhat ambiguous. He is the source of the heavenly voice that Shem hears when raptured to heaven, but he is also, and perhaps more importantly, the spiritual light that comes from on high and is present in the midst of the darkness of physical existence, causing that darkness to be removed. All of this language, evocative of the prologue of the Fourth Gospel, is much less about angelic revealers than it is about the inner dynamics of the enlightened self and the travails of the cosmos where light will finally prevail.

## 7 The Mysterious Revelatory Voice

The Nag Hammadi revealers encountered thus far have all been embedded in narratives, usually set *in illo tempore*, when the world and the human race were young. Yet in these narratives, particularly in the lengthy self-disclosure of Derdekeas, the Light from very Light, we hear the revealer's voice speaking at length. Several texts provide a similar encounter with a revealer's voice, often addressed directly to the readers or hearers.

An important case of the Revealer's voice is a declaration by Pronoia or Forethought, at the conclusion of the long recension of *The Apocryphon of John* (NHC II,1; IV,1):

Now I, the perfect Forethought of the All, transformed myself into my offspring.

I existed first and went down every path.

I am the abundance of light,

I am the remembrance of fullness.

I travelled in the realm of great darkness and continued until I entered the midst of the prison. The foundations of chaos shook, and I hid from them because of their evil, and they did not recognize me.

Again I returned, a second time, and went on. I had come from the inhabitants of light—I, the remembrance of Forethought.

I entered the midst of darkness and the bowels of the underworld, turning to my task. The foundations of chaos shook as though to fall upon those who dwell in chaos and destroy them. Again I hurried back to the root of my light so they might not be destroyed before their time.

Again, a third time, I went forth—  
 I am the light dwelling in light,  
 I am the remembrance of Forethought—  
 so that I might enter the midst of darkness and the bowels of the under-  
 world. I brightened my face with light from the consummation of their  
 realm and entered the midst of their prison, which is the prison of the  
 body.  
 I said, Let whoever hears arise from deep sleep.  
 A person wept and shed tears. Bitter tears the person wiped away, and  
 said, Who is calling my name? From where has my hope come as  
 I dwell in the bondage of prison?  
 I said, I am the Forethought of pure light,  
 I am the thought of the Virgin Spirit, who raises you to a place of honor.  
 Arise, remember that you have heard  
 and trace your root, which is I, the compassionate.  
 Guard yourself against the angels of misery,  
 the demons of chaos and all who entrap you,  
 and beware of deep sleep and the trap in the bowels of the underworld.  
 I raised and sealed the person in luminous water with five seals, that  
 death might not prevail over the person from that moment on.<sup>28</sup>

This hymn uses the form of an aretology, the first-person presentation of a divinity's accomplishments, a form familiar from the cult of Isis and adopted by the Jewish sapiential tradition.<sup>29</sup> The poetic text enables the reader to hear directly from Pronoia or Forethought, daughter of Pure Light and the Virgin Spirit, to learn of her multiple attempts to free the captives of dark ignorance, to be reminded of the reader's spiritual "root," to celebrate whatever ritual lies behind the "five seals," and to be warned against the demons that still lurk in the shadows.

The account of Pronoia's efforts at liberation vividly depicts what revelation is supposed to accomplish, although it is not clear how Pronoia herself is to be understood. She may be a messenger from on high, or, more likely, the principle that has "transformed herself into her offspring," i.e., been embedded in all those captives as the divine spark of "Mind" or "light of the infinite Spirit" of which the *Paraphrase of Shem* spoke. Pronoia's truth about the origin of all the little sparks of light, in any case, sets those sparks free.

28 *Ap. John* NHC II 30.11–31.25.

29 See Proverbs 8; Wisdom of Solomon 7. The form also appeared in parts of the self-presentation by Derdekeas in the *Paraphrase of Shem* (esp 36.2–24).

Pronoia's voice in the *Apocryphon of John* finds more mysterious echoes in other Nag Hammadi texts. The most intriguing is no doubt the *Thunder: Perfect Mind* (VI,2), another aretalogy with a mysterious, riddling quality. Like Pronoia, the feminine voice here has been sent on a mission and elicits contemplation:

I was sent from the power  
and have come to those who contemplate me  
and am found among those who seek me.<sup>30</sup>

So far so good, but the rest of the self-disclosure overflows with paradox:

For I am the first and the last.  
I am the honored and the scorned.  
I am the whore and the holy.  
I am the wife and the virgin.  
I am, the mother and the daughter.  
I am the limbs of my mother.  
I am a barren woman  
Who has many children.  
I have had many weddings  
and have taken no husband.<sup>31</sup>

This revealer is a tease, whose revelation challenges listeners to identify who she is. The likely answer is that she is some version of the spiritual principle whom we have encountered emanating from the transcendent One who Is, but let me not steal her thunder.

Also baffling, but in a different way, is the *Three Forms of First Thought* (XIII,1). In this manifesto, the figure of Protennoia ("First Thought") presents herself as do Pronoia and the Thunder.<sup>32</sup> Like her counterparts, Protennoia is a spiritual emanation from the first principle that has come to pervade all that is:

[I] am First [Thought, the] thought that is in [light].  
I am movement that is in the [All]  
[She in whom the] All takes its stand,  
The firstborn among those who [came to be],  
[she who] exists before the All.

30 *Thund.* NHC VI 13.1.

31 *Thund.* NHC VI 13.16–25.

32 On this text now see Halvgaard, *Linguistic Manifestations*.

[She] is called by three names, though she dwells alone,  
[since she is complete.]<sup>33</sup>

Like the other versions of divine wisdom already encountered, Protennoia has a mission to the cosmos and enters into it on multiple occasions in various forms, as the perfect Son, the Word (37.3), as Barbelo, whose actions led to the formation of the non-spiritual world (38.7), as an androgynous principle (45.2), as a triad of voice, speech and word (47.7–13), as one who brings living water of enlightenment (47.34) and a ritual of five seals (48.15–25). The latter claims about living water and five seals were also part of the repertoire of Pronoia in the *Apocryphon of John*. The presence of these notions in several of the Nag Hammadi Sethian texts is evidence of a ritual context in which the rather abstract notions of revelation took shape in the lived experience of a religious community.

The revelatory “First Thought” is also a spiritual presence in those who come to enlightenment. The center of Protennoia’s discourse describes this illuminating presence:

But now I have descended and reached chaos.  
I was [with] my own who were there.  
I am hidden in them, empowering [them], giving them shape.  
From [the first day] until the day [I shall grant] mighty [power] to those  
who are mine, [I shall reveal myself to] those who have heard [my  
mysteries.] The children of light.<sup>34</sup>

The voices of Pronoia, the Thunder, and Protennoia all carry echoes of the spirit of Sophia, found in the Wisdom of Solomon, that subtle pneuma which enters into the souls of people of every generation, making them friends of God and prophets. What the revelatory Spirit at Nag Hammadi, in her various forms, does is similar but distinctive. Discovering the divine principle within the self in the midst of this world’s chaos enables the recipient of “revelation” to connect with the source from which all mind, all being, flows, the ultimate root of all. Coming to awareness of the presence of that interior spirit is a result not of quiet meditation nor of an ecstatic spiritual journey but of a baptismal ritual.<sup>35</sup>

33 *Three Forms* NHC XIII 35.1–7.

34 *Three Forms* NHC XIII 40.29–41.1.

35 For recent exploration of the role of baptismal rituals see Pagels, “Ritual in the Gospel of Philip”; Turner, “Baptismal Vision, Angelification, and Mystical Union,” and Lundhaug, “Evidence of ‘Valentinian’ Ritual Practice?”

## 8 Brief Excursus: Heavenly Ascent

A major framework for reflecting on revelatory experiences in the Nag Hammadi texts is not an appeal to angelic or prophetic apparitions or to some form of ascent mysticism. Rather, encountering revelation is primarily a matter of listening to the spirit within, under the guidance of a community that practices some form of initiation ritual that encourages that process of self-discovery. There are, nonetheless, references to ecstatic or mystical experiences. Some appear in the narrative frameworks that report the “ascent” either by waking or dream visions, to heaven (e.g., the *Paraphrase of Shem*). Texts that rely on heavenly ascents as the major venue for revelation include the *Apocalypse of Paul* (NHC V,2), where the apostle travels to the tenth heaven, exceeding his performance in 2 Corinthians; the *Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth* (NHC VI,6), a text from the Greek Hermetic tradition; and three late Sethian, philosophical texts, *Zostrianos* (NHC VIII,1), *Marsanes* (NHC X) and *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3), texts which one of our hosts, Dylan Burns, has thoroughly explored.<sup>36</sup> How the revelatory experience is understood in these texts is worth discussing, and it may be as much assent as ascent, but that will be a topic for another time and place. To revealers we return.

## 9 Jesus Christ as Revealer

The majority of the texts from Nag Hammadi have at least a superficial Christian veneer, although there are some, as noted, that clearly come from non-Christian traditions. The language and conceptuality of the texts reviewed so far has shown little in the way of explicit Christian motifs. How Christian the Barbeloite-Sethian texts may be has long been a matter of debate, which cannot be settled here. Instead, I now turn to those texts where the revealer is definitely Jesus Christ.

Some references to Christ as revealer are simply formulaic and do not reveal much about the content or method of revelation. Thus the *Treatise on Resurrection* (NHC I,4), concerned with the nature of the resurrection body, begins with a reference to what happened “While he (i.e., Jesus) was in the flesh and after he had revealed himself as Son of God” (44.3). *The Concept of our Great Power* (NHC VI,4) offers a cosmology with a brief reference to an eschatological revealer, a thinly disguised allusion to Christ, “the human who knows the great Power” and who

<sup>36</sup> Burns, *Apocalypse of the Alien God*.

... will speak in parables and proclaim the aeon that is to come just as he spoke in the first aeon of the flesh to Noah. When he uttered his words, he spoke in seventy-two languages. He opened the gates of the heavens with his words. He put the ruler of the underworld to shame, he raised the dead, and he destroyed the dominion of the rule of the underworld.<sup>37</sup>

This Jesus is a little more complicated than the carpenter's son from Nazareth and obviously had a prehistory, but not much more is said about him.

A self-presentation of Jesus in the *Second Discourse of the Great Seth* (NHC VII,2) is more expansive. Here Jesus begins to sound rather like the illuminating spirit prominent in many Barbeloite-Sethian texts:

I am Jesus the Christ, Son of Humanity, exalted above the heavens. You who are perfect and undefiled, I have presented this to you on account of the mystery that is undefiled and perfect and ineffable, that you understand that we ordained these things before the foundation of the world, so that when we appear throughout the world, we may present the symbols of incorruption from the spiritual union with knowledge.... It is I who am the friend of Sophia. From the beginning I have been close to the Father, where the children of truth are, and the Majesty. Rest in me, my friends in spirit, my brothers and sisters, forever.<sup>38</sup>

Here again we know that the exalted Jesus revealed an ineffable mystery, but little more.

## 10 The Risen Jesus as Revealer

In many texts, Jesus does a good deal of work as the Revealer, providing answers to theological questions posed by his disciples. In most cases, it is the Risen Jesus who makes an appearance, but rather than just demonstrating the reality of his resurrection body, as in Luke and John, or giving a brief instruction to the disciples, as in Matthew and John, he does what Luke (24:27) and Acts (1:3) say the resurrected Jesus did:<sup>39</sup> taught his disciples things not treated during his time on earth. Thus the *Apocryphon of James* (NHC 1,2) has Jesus 550 days after his resurrection engage in an extended dialogue with disciples.

37 *Great. Pow.* NHC VI 40.25–41.5.

38 *Disc. Seth.* NHC VII 69.20–70.10.

39 John 14:25–26; 16:12–15 leaves this role for the Paraclete.

The *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* (NHC III,4; BG 8502,3; P. Oxy. 1081), an explicit Christian adaptation of the treatise *Eugnostos*, has Jesus meet his twelve male and seven female disciples on a mountain in Galilee, a mountain called “Prophecy and Joy.” The appearance of the revealer definitely resembles the kinds of angelic revealers encountered previously:

Then the Savior appeared, not in his previous form but in invisible spirit. He looked like a great angel of light, but I must not describe his appearance. Mortal flesh could not bear it, but only pure and perfect flesh like what he taught us about, in Galilee, on the mountain called Olive.<sup>40</sup>

The author’s foggy idea of the topography of Eretz Israel hardly matters for the content of his revelation. The disciples’ concerns relate to “the true nature of the universe, and the plan of salvation, and divine forethought, and the strength of the authorities, and everything the Savior was doing with them in the secret plan of salvation” (NHC III 91.8–9). The Revealer’s story thus offers a framework for a variety of *quaestiones theologiae disputatae*.

Since the *Dialogue of the Savior* (NHC III,5) lacks a formal narrative framework, it is possible that the discussion between Jesus and his disciples could be construed as part of his public ministry. Yet Jesus’s introductory comment (120.1), “Now the time has come, brothers and sisters, for us to leave our labor behind and stand at rest, for whoever stands at rest will rest forever,” sounds like what the risen Christ (or the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel’s farewell discourse) might say. In their dialogue, Jesus and his followers discuss the usual array of questions about cosmology, the inner life, religious epistemology, etc.

The discussion at one point turns to the subject of revelation:

His disciples [said, “Master], who seeks and [who] reveals?”

[The Master] said [to them], “One who seeks [also] reveals.”

Matthew [said to him again, “Master], when I [listen to you] and I speak, who is it who [speaks and] who listens”

The [master] said, “One who speaks also [listens], and one who can see also reveals.”<sup>41</sup>

The enigmatic character of Jesus’s response recalls the discursive style of the *Thunder*, but the final substantive point is that revelation is a constant,

40 *Wis. Jes. Chr.* NHC III 91.10–20.

41 *Dial. Sav.* NHC III 126.5–17.



transitive process. Those who receive revelation, whatever its content, can become tradents of that content.

The conversation later returns to the topic of revelation when Jesus instructs Judas, Matthew, and Mary about the final consummation of heaven and earth. The disciples have a vision in which they see a great height and a profound abyss. Judas wonders, perhaps echoing Rom 10:6–7, about who can ascend to the height or descend to the abyss. The apostles then have a vision of a Word that issues from the height, which prompts Judas to ask why the Word has come down. He receives the reply:

The Son of Humanity greeted them and said to them, “A seed from a power was deficient and it descended to the earth’s abyss. The Majesty remembered [it] and sent the [word to] it. The word brought the seed up into [the presence] of the Majesty, so that the first word might not be lost.”<sup>42</sup>

The characterization of revelation here as a rescue operation is quite compatible with the other portrayals of the activity of revealer figures in the Nag Hammadi corpus, although it does not provide information about the content of the revelation. Yet the Son of Humanity’s formulation seems to equate the deficient “seed” with the “first word.” If so, the Word that has been sent to retrieve the “seed” shares its nature with that seed, and both are thus at home “in the height.” Knowing the equivalent of that fact has regularly been the heart of what the revealer reveals in the texts reviewed here. The setting of the appearance of the revealer as the resurrected Jesus thus can provide the occasion for the “revelation” of a variety of theological claims, but at its core the revelatory experience is about finding one’s original source and final home.

## 11 The Polymorphic Revealer

Several portraits of the risen Jesus as revealer make the point that he is not bound to a simple physical form. In the opening scene of the *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II,1; see also NHC III,1; IV,1; BG 8502,2),<sup>43</sup> John wonders about fun-

<sup>42</sup> *Dial. Sav.* NHC III 135.17–136.1.

<sup>43</sup> For a useful synopsis of *Ap. John*’s contents vis-à-vis Plato’s *Timaeus* and the book of Genesis (LXX), see Pleše, “Intertextuality and Conceptual Blending,” 120–28. Cf. Waldstein and Wisse, eds., *The Apocryphon of John*. Consult also the essay by Goff in the present volume.

damental theological questions after being challenged by a Pharisee. He then encounters the revealer:

At the moment I was thinking about this, look, the heavens opened, all creation under heaven lit up, and the world shook. I was afraid, and look, I saw within the light a child standing by me. As I was staring, it seemed to be an elderly person. Again it changed its appearance to be a youth. Not that there were several figures before me. Rather, there was a figure with several forms within the light. These forms appeared through each other, and the figure had three forms.

The figure said to me, "John, John, why are you doubting? Why are you afraid? Are you not familiar with this figure? Then do not be fainthearted. I am with you always. I am the father, I am the mother, I am the child. I am the incorruptible and the undefiled one. Now I have come to teach you what is, what was, and what is to come, that you may understand what is invisible and what is visible; and to teach you about the unshakable race of perfect humankind. So now, lift up your head that you may understand the things I shall tell you today, and that you may relate them to your spiritual friends, who are from the unshakable race of perfect humankind."<sup>44</sup>

The revealer's polymorphism in part anticipates the complexity of his revelation. It also echoes some of the baffling paradoxes of the self-presentation of Pronoia and the Thunder, and clearly makes the point that the revealer is from a different level of reality.

One of the elements of the revealer's complexity in the *Apocryphon of John* is that he is a child. A similar revealer appears in two other accounts. In the *Apocalypse of Paul* (NHC V,2), before being taken up to heaven, Paul encounters a child, whom he apparently (the opening lines are lost) asks for directions to Jerusalem. Before showing Paul the way, the child asks Paul to tell him his name. The child, however, knew who Paul was and just wanted to engage him. He then says,

I know who you are, Paul, for you have been blessed from your mother's womb. Since I have [seen] that you were [going up to Jerusalem] to your fellow [apostles], that is why [I] was [sent to you]. I am the [Spirit who is with] you. [Awaken your mind, Paul].<sup>45</sup>

44 *Ap. John* NHC II 1.31–2.25.

45 *Apoc. Paul* NHC V 18.14–23.

If the tentative restorations of the lacunas are correct, this child sounds very much like the spiritual powers represented by Pronoia and her kin. However the lacunas are filled, this little narrative may well be an interpretation of Paul's claim to have received his gospel through a revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal 1:12).

Another child appears at the start of the heavenly journey of *Zostrianos* (NHC VIII,1). The seer begins his account by noting that he

was strengthened by a holy spirit higher than God. [It settled] upon me alone as I was improving myself and I saw the perfect Child, [who he is] as well as what [he possesses]. He often and [variously] appeared to me like a consenting [unity] while I was seeking the [male] father of all things.<sup>46</sup>

Whether this is an appearance of Christ is doubtful. The perfect child is soon identified as *Kalyptos*, "the Hidden one," described as "the power in them all" (2.23–24). The text will also later present a heavenly being, the Triple Male Child, part of the Barbelo aeon. It may be that something like the Barbeloite-Sethian spiritual family tree influenced the picture of the child-like revealer in the *Apocryphon of John*, although it is also possible that general second-century interest in the figure of the Christ child was at work in shaping the picture of the *Apocryphon's* risen Jesus.<sup>47</sup>

A combination of speculative traditions is also at work in another depiction of the polymorphic revealer. The *Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles* (NHC VI,1) recounts Peter's encounter with a pearl merchant named Lithargoel, "light bright stone," who invites Peter to come to his city, although the way is demanding and requires personal renunciation (5.19–6.27). After Peter gathers his friends, he encounters Lithargoel again, now as a doctor, "with a medicine case under his arm," followed by an intern with a "bag full of medicine" (8.12–20). Unrecognized by Peter, Lithargoel addresses him by name, much to the apostle's surprise. In the ensuing dialogue Peter reports that Jesus Christ gave him his name, and Lithargoel reveals that he is that Christ (9.1–19). This recognition story has as its bottom line not the revelation of metaphysical truth, but a command to go on the way of ascetic renunciation to which Lithargoel first pointed, a road of hardship that will bring rewards (9.20–10.30).

The polymorphic revealer who is Christ can reveal many and diverse things, not all of them traditional teachings, sectarian or otherwise. One example of a revealer with a distinctive christological point of view appears in the

46 *Zost.* NHC VIII 2.6–14.

47 See Davis, *Christ Child*.

*Apocalypse or Revelation of Peter* (NHC VII,3). The frame story is a dialogue between the Savior and Peter in the Temple in which Jesus tells Peter about various kinds of souls (75.7–76.23), but more importantly about corruption in the church (76.24–79.31). The failure of the church leadership is based not simply on stupidity or personal immorality but on a faulty understanding of Christ and his death. The Savior then shows Peter the scene of the crucifixion of Jesus, whether an event of the past or something yet to happen is unclear. Above the scene of crucifixion Peter sees someone smiling and laughing. The Savior reveals his saving truth:

The one you see smiling and laughing above the cross is the living Jesus. The one into whose hands and feet they are driving nails is his fleshly part, the substitute for him. They are putting to shame the one who came into being in the likeness of the living Jesus. Look at him and look at me.

When I looked, I said, “Lord, no one sees you. Let’s get out of here.”

He answered me “I told you they are blind. Forget about them. Look at how they do not know what they are saying. For they have put to shame the son of their own glory instead of the one who serves me.”

Then I saw someone about to approach us who looked like the one laughing above the cross, but this one was intertwined with holy spirit, and he was the Savior. And there was an unspeakably bright light surrounding them and a multitude of ineffable and invisible angels praising them. When the one who glorifies was revealed, I myself saw him.<sup>48</sup>

The Savior goes on to make his dogmatic point, sharply contrasting the physical Jesus, “the abode of demons, the stone vessel in which they live, the man of Elohim” with the Living Savior (82.21–24). In this case, it is not the risen Christ, but the spiritual Christ who is the revealer and part of what he reveals is that the image of the fleshly Christ is a deceit.

The *Gospel of Philip* (NHC II,3), probably one of the later Nag Hammadi texts,<sup>49</sup> describes the revealer’s shape-changing dynamics as tricky:

Jesus tricked everyone, for he did not appear as he was, but he appeared so that he could be seen. He appeared to everyone. He [appeared] to the great as great, he [appeared] to the small as small, he [appeared to the] angels as an angel and to humans as a human. For this reason his word was hidden from everyone. Some looked at him and thought they

48 *Apoc. Pet.* NHC VII 81.15–82.16.

49 See the important study by Lundhaug, *Images of Rebirth*.

saw themselves. But when he appeared to his disciples in glory upon the mountain, he was not small. He became great. Or rather, he made the disciples great, so they could see him in his greatness.<sup>50</sup>

For the *Gospel of Philip*, the revealer's polymorphism refers not to the variety of forms he used in his post-resurrection state, but to the variety of ways he interacted with people. This kind of polymorphism is a two-edged sword. On the one hand it concealed "his word." In assimilating himself to the recipients of his revelation he acted as a mirror and they only saw themselves. Yet others could be transformed and thereby see his "greatness."

## 12 Celebrating Jesus as Revealer

To conclude this survey of the revelatory Christ at Nag Hammadi we turn to three texts that reflect on Jesus as revealer in more complex and interesting ways. The first is the *Gospel of Thomas* (NHC II,2), perhaps the best known and most widely discussed Nag Hammadi text.<sup>51</sup> This collection of 114 sayings of Jesus invites engaged reflection, promising that "whoever discovers the interpretation of these sayings will not taste death" (Saying 1). Although the revelation is to be sought through a process of meditative discernment, Jesus presents himself as a revealer in several sayings. At one point Jesus challenges his disciples to compare him to something. Peter suggests a "just messenger" and Matthew a "wise philosopher." Thomas demurs, simply calling Jesus a teacher, to which Jesus responds (Saying 13.5), "I am not your teacher. Because you have drunk, you have become intoxicated from the bubbling spring that I have tended." Perhaps Thomas has been meditating too long and hard on what Jesus has to say. In any case, the image that Jesus uses for himself, no doubt related to that used in John 7:37–39, is an apt description of what the Gospel itself provides, an abundant supply of material to contemplate. Doing so realizes the promise that Jesus gives a few sayings later: "I shall give you what no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, what no hand has touched, what has not arisen in the human heart" (Saying 17). This saying of Jesus, like its mysterious parallel in 2 Cor 2:9, promises much, as does Jesus' identification with the

50 *Gos. Phil.* NHC II 57.28–58.10.

51 See the detailed commentaries, with reference to the abundant literature on the text: DeConick, *The Original Gospel of Thomas*; Frey et al., *Das Thomasevangelium*; Plisch, *Das Thomasevangelium* (Eng. tr. Schenke Robinson, *The Gospel of Thomas*); Pokorny, *Commentary on the Gospel of Thomas*, and the monograph of Gathercole, *The Composition of the Gospel of Thomas*.

“light” that is “over all things” and “is all” (Saying 77). There may well be a coherent ontology to be found in these sayings, as various scholars have suggested,<sup>52</sup> but searching for what this revealer might reveal is half the fun.

The most elaborate reflection on what Jesus is as Revealer appears in two major Valentinian texts from Codex I, the *Gospel of Truth* (NHC I,3; see also NHC XII,2) and the *Tripartite Tractate* (NHC I,5). The treatment of revelation in each would merit its own analysis. A brief summary will have to suffice.

The *Gospel of Truth*, an erudite homily that interweaves metaphysical and epistemological reflection with scriptural motifs from the New Testament generally, and the Gospel of John in particular, celebrates the redemptive message of Jesus as a revelation of the Father’s very being. The opening paragraph articulates a clear thesis statement:

The gospel of truth is joy for people who have received grace from the Father of truth, that they might know him through the power of the Word. The Word has come from the fullness in the Father’s thought and mind. The Word is called “Savior,” a term that refers to the work he is to do to redeem those who had not known the Father. And the term “gospel” refers to the revelation of hope, since it is the means of discovery for those who seek him.<sup>53</sup>

A series of striking images suggests the ways in which this revealing Word works. Jesus, hung from a tree, is the fruit of knowledge, whose consumption undoes the effects of an earlier tree of knowledge (NHC I 18.21–31). He is a guide and a teacher of little children (19.17–34). He is a book of the living, or rather a living book, nailed to a tree, a more positive posting than the bill of indictment of Col 2:14. He is a fragrance from the sweetness of the Father (33.33–34.34) that entices people with its alluring aroma. Vivid imagery yields to philosophical principle when the homilist describes Jesus as the Father’s Name (38.7–41.3), the proper name that, in a way not possible for ordinary language, conveys the essence of what is named.<sup>54</sup>

Lyrical prose celebrates what the revealer has done, overcoming all opposition:

52 For one recent effort, see, e.g., Miroshnikov, *Gospel of Thomas and Plato*, who finds a form of Middle Platonism embedded in the sayings.

53 *Gos. Truth* NHC I 16.31–17.4.

54 For a detailed discussion of the trope, see Attridge, “Stoic and Platonic Reflections,” 270–89. See also *Tri. Trac.* NHC I 66.5–67.34.

He appeared, informing them of the Father, the illimitable, and he inspired them with what is in the thought, doing his will. Many received light and turned to him.<sup>55</sup> ...

Light spoke through his mouth and his voice brought forth life. He gave them thought and understanding and mercy and salvation and the spirit of strength from the Father's infinity and sweetness. He made punishments and afflictions cease, for they caused those in need of mercy to stray from him in error and bondage. He destroyed them with might and confounded them with knowledge.<sup>56</sup>

What the revealer reveals in the *Gospel of Truth* is complex. The relationship of spiritual beings to their source is central, but that relationship comes with emotional connection and with the ethical obligation to do the Father's will (33.1–32). The fundamental framework of this revealer traces its roots to the tradition of a spiritual principle of wisdom that lies behind most of the examples of revealers encountered throughout the Nag Hammadi corpus. But here the portrait of that emanation of God most high is painted in rich colors and highly nuanced forms.

The *Tripartite Tractate* (1,5) is a later inflection of the same intellectual and spiritual tradition represented in the *Gospel of Truth*.<sup>57</sup> This most systematic and scholarly of the Nag Hammadi treatises lacks the literary allure of the *Gospel of Truth's* pyrotechnics. Instead it lays out in a comprehensive way the trajectory from the ineffable first principle, through the generation of the cosmos, the fall of parts of the spiritual world into matter and the initiative that makes possible their return. All of this is done with vocabulary that sounds almost "orthodox." The text uses language that would appeal to a broad range of Christians of probably the third century and rejects or corrects many positions to which heresiologists objected. Thus there is no feminine divine figure who produces or corrects the fall of spiritual stuff into the world. There is only the Son (66.23–67.37), who functions in ways analogous to Barbelo in Sethian texts, and the Word (77.11–78.28), who assumes the roles of higher and lower Sophia. Neither is there a suggestion that results of the soteriological process are predetermined. Free will governs both the trajectory of descent and that of ascent of spiritual stuff (74.18–75.17).<sup>58</sup> Nor is there a hint that the fleshly Word is an illusion. He really did become incarnate (114.30–115.23).

55 *Gos. Truth* NHC I 30.31–31.1.

56 *Gos. Truth* NHC I 31.13–27.

57 For more on the *Tripartite Tractate* see the essay in this volume by Burns.

58 On the topic see now Linjamaa, *The Ethics of the Tripartite Tractate*.

What knits every stage of the cosmogonic and soteriological principles together is revelation, as when the Son reveals himself to heavenly powers:

He in whom the Father dwells, and in whom dwell the members of the All, revealed himself first to the one who had lost his faculty to see and showed himself to those who wanted to gain vision, by shining forth that perfect light. He first filled him with inexpressible joy, made him whole and complete, and also gave him that which came from each of the aeons. For this is the nature of the first joy. <He> also sowed in him, invisibly, a word designed for understanding and gave him the power to detach and dispel from himself those who were disobedient to him.<sup>59</sup>

What happens in the highest levels of reality in this text is replicated at lower levels. A principle of analogy holds sway. Hence, the action of the revealer described here is what obtains at every level. The shining of the perfect light of the spiritual world, the world so vividly described in the *Gospel of Truth*, produces joy and provides a powerful motivation to detach oneself from what is inimical to that spiritual world. That process of revelation is what the *Tripartite Tractate* celebrates globally.

### 13 Conclusion

Between the Jewish writings found at Qumran and the collection of texts discovered at Nag Hammadi interest in revealers grew enormously. Ancient ideas about heavenly beings who brought useful or even salvific insight to human beings were known to the Qumran sectarians and are reflected in many of the scrolls. The most interesting treatment of the process of revelation is found in 4QInstruction, a text probably not produced by the sectarians of the *Yahad*, but which was clearly copied, read, and studied by them and thus shaped their understanding of revelation. 4QInstruction favors a more rational, sapiential approach to the knowledge. For this text revelation resulted from meditating on the divine plan, the “mystery of existence” written into the order of the cosmos.

The many speculative strands that contributed to the Nag Hammadi collection had traditions about heavenly beings who revealed hidden truths. Many, perhaps inspired by Jewish sapiential teaching, also had a conviction that the transcendent first principle made itself and our relationship to it

59 *Tri. Trac.* NHC I 88.8–25.



known through a force that emanated from it and that was available to those open to receiving it. While resembling aspects of the Jewish sapiential tradition, this approach to revelation insists on the transcendent source of truth. For the Christian authors of Nag Hammadi texts the transcendent power that produced revelation was understood to be present in the person of Jesus, who exercised that power in many and diverse ways.

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# There Is No Soul in a Sect, Only Spirit and Flesh: Soteriological Determinism in the *Tripartite Tractate* (NHC I,5) and the “Vision of Hagu” (4QInstruction)

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## 1 Introduction: Gnostic Determinism?

One of the first ‘clichés’ one reads about the so-called ‘Gnostics’ is that they were determinists: they believed some people were saved by nature, others damned by nature, and still others somewhere in-between. A representative and influential testimony to this view is given by the heresiographer Irenaeus of Lyons, writing in the later second century CE.<sup>1</sup> According to Irenaeus, the followers of Valentinus, a Platonist teacher of the mid-second century, claim that

There are, therefore, three elements. First the material (ὕλικόν, *materiale*), which they also call the ‘left’ (ἀριστερόν, *sinistrum*), and which they say must necessarily perish, inasmuch as it is altogether incapable of receiving a breath of immortality. Second, there is the animate element (ψυχικόν, *animale*),<sup>2</sup> to which they also give the name ‘right’ (δεξιόν, *dextrum*). Inasmuch as it is between the spiritual and material, it will go over to that element to which it has an inclination. Third, the spiritual (πνευματικόν, *spirituale*), which has been sent forth that here below it might take on form, having the animate element as a consort and having

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- 1 Where possible, I refer to the Greek of *Haer.* (preserved only fragmentarily) as given in the Sources Chrétiennes edition (Rousseau/Doutreleau), otherwise referring to the later Latin translation that survives completely. On dating *Haer.*’s sources somewhat prior to the ubiquitous date of ca. 180, see recently Chiapparini, “Irenaeus.” On the terms ‘Gnostics’ and ‘Gnosticism’ and scholarship about these issues, see Burns, “Gnosticism.”
  - 2 In this paper, I follow Dunderberg in translating “animate” rather than “psychic” (“Valentinian Theories,” 113 n. 2). In a modern context, the latter term misleadingly implies something having to do with extrasensory perception and the like.

been disciplined together with it in conduct. And this spiritual element, they say, is the salt ... and the light of the world.<sup>3</sup>

Irenaeus goes on to explain that animate persons “are made steadfast by works and bare faith, and so do not have perfect knowledge (μη̄ τήν τελείαν γνώσιν ἔχοντες),” and that this is the category into which “we of the Church” fall. The spirituals, meanwhile,

are spiritual, not by conduct, but by nature (μη̄ πράξεως ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸ φύσει), and so will be saved entirely and in every case. For just as the earthly element cannot partake of salvation—for they say it is incapable of receiving salvation—so, on the other hand, the spiritual, which they maintain they constitute, cannot take on corruption, regardless of what practices they may have engaged in.<sup>4</sup>

The Valentinian tripartition Irenaeus here describes has a scriptural basis in 1 Cor 2:14–15.<sup>5</sup> Paul is not alone amongst Jews of the first century CE in making such a tripartition, a version of which is also found in Philo.<sup>6</sup> As George van Kooten writes, “the triad *pneuma*, *psychē* and *sōma* is the Jewish equivalent of the Greek tripartite division of human beings in terms of *nous*, *psychē* and *sōma*, which is read from the perspective of Gen 2:7. Since this passage is explicitly quoted by Philo, Paul and Josephus, their interpretation seems to reflect a common Jewish understanding of LXX Gen 2:7 in the first century CE ... The allegedly Gnostic distinction between the pneumatic, psychic and sarkic human being is not a Gnostic invention, but rather a development of this Jewish-Hellenistic interpretation of Gen 2:7 and its consequent tripartition of humankind.”<sup>7</sup> What is “allegedly Gnostic” about the distinction described by Irenaeus is its connotation of determinism: that some definitely will not be saved, while some definitely will be saved by virtue of their divine nature. The fate of the third, ‘animate’ group remains unclear.

3 *Haer.* 1.6.1, text in SC 264:90–92, tr. Unger, rev. Dillon, 36, slightly modified; italics mine.

4 1.6.2, Unger, rev. Dillon, 37.

5 Dunderberg, “Valentinian Theories,” 114.

6 *Abr.* 124.

7 See Van Kooten, “Anthropological Trichotomy,” 99–100. The philosophical organization of the categories in question is Aristotle’s, “who redefined Plato’s conception of a dichotomy in man, opposing his soul to his body when he opposed the νοῦς or ‘intellect’ to the ψυχή or ‘soul’” (Roig Lanzillotta, “Spirit,” 32)—i.e., it was Aristotle who opposed the νοῦς to the ψυχή-σῶμα (the later, ‘Gnostic’ trichotomous pattern), rather than the νοῦς-ψυχή to the σῶμα (Plato’s more ‘bipartite’ model).

Following a brief digression,<sup>8</sup> Irenaeus continues, and complicates matters:

They say that there are three races (γέννη, *genera*) of people—the spiritual, the animate, and the earthly (χοϊκόν, *choicum*)—as Cain, Abel, and Seth were; and from these [one arrives at] the three natures by considering them no longer as individuals but as a race. The earthly indeed goes into corruption, but the animate, if it chooses the better things, will rest in the Middle; if, however, it chooses the worse things, it too will go to regions similar [to the worse things]. Moreover, they claim 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—because they were sent forth immature—and have finally become worthy of perfection, will be given as brides to the angels of the Savior, while their souls will of necessity rest forever in the Middle, together with the Demiurge. Again, subdividing the souls, they say that some are good by nature and some evil by nature. The good are those that are capable of receiving the ‘seed,’ whereas those evil by nature are never capable of receiving that ‘seed.’<sup>9</sup>

Irenaeus here introduces a bipartite anthropology—people who can receive the seed and people who cannot—immediately following the tripartite one.<sup>10</sup> The problem is compounded by the fact that other Valentinian tripartite models, differing from one another significantly, are found in a smattering of heresiographical sources—Clement of Alexandria’s report on the Valentinian Theodotus, and the anonymous author of the *Refutation of All Heresies* on

8 Irenaeus’s account here veers into accusations of ‘Gnostic libertinism’: the alleged proclivity of the elect to indulge in lascivious behavior, since they are saved anyways (1.6.3–4). Scholars today generally dismiss these charges, for good reason. It was commonplace in ancient polemics to accuse one’s opponents of sexual concupiscence (Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 137–38, following the useful exploration of Knust, *Abandoned*, 15–50), and Irenaeus himself admits that he knows Valentinians who live virtuous lives indeed. He then proceeds to complain that the elect are puffed up with arrogance on account of their great piety (*Haer.* 3.15.2). This means “that the Valentinians Irenaeus knew did not regard immoral acts as an automatic consequence of one’s belonging to the group of spiritual persons,” as noted by Dunderberg (“Valentinian Theories,” 116). On the arrogant gait of the Valentinian elect, see idem, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 130; Kocar, “In Heaven,” 255; idem, “Ethics,” 234–35.

9 *Haer.* 1.7.5, text in SC 264: 110–12, tr. Unger, rev. Dillon, 40, slightly modified.

10 Rightly stressed by Dunderberg (“Valentinian Theories,” 124–25, suggesting as parallel bipartite models *Ref.* 6.32.9, 6.34.6; *Clem. Alex. Exc.* 51.2–3, 56.3; see also Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 140); Kocar also notes *Val. Exp.* ΝΗC XI 38, while rejecting Dunderberg’s reading of *Exc.* (“In Heaven,” 239; “Ethics,” 221). See further below.

Valentinus himself.<sup>11</sup> It is also found in one Nag Hammadi treatise, the fifth tractate of Codex One (the so-called ‘Jung Codex’):<sup>12</sup> an untitled work we dub the *Tripartite Tractate* (henceforth *Tri. Trac.*) since the work divides itself into three parts. The first part of this work deals with protology—the origin and makeup of the heavenly realm—the second with anthropogony, and the third with salvation-history and soteriology. *Tri. Trac.* is a long and difficult text, but it is also our only extant, systematic work of Valentinian theology, and so its importance for reconstructing Valentinian teaching cannot be overstated; here, too, we also find the division of humanity into the spiritual, animate, and material races (or “kinds,” γενος)<sup>13</sup> with respective fates at the eschaton.<sup>14</sup>

This evidence suggests that Valentinians probably did teach tripartite anthropological models and soteriologies that followed from them. What they

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- 11 Theodotus, *apud* Clem. Alex. *Exc.* 54–56, 63–64; Valentinus, *apud* Ref. 6.34.3–8. The tripartition appears to be presumed but is not explicitly spelled out in the surviving fragments of Heracleon, *apud* Orig. *Comm. John*. Surveys of this material include Schottroff, “*Animae naturaliter salvandae*”; Simonetti, “Eracleone”; Dunderberg, “Valentinian Theories”; Thomassen, “Saved by Nature?”; Dunning, “Tripartite Anthropologies”; Kocar, “In Heaven,” 221–78; Dubois, “Once Again.” Focusing on Ir. *Haer.* and Clem. Alex. *Exc.*, see particularly Pagels, “Conflicting Versions” (arguing that the evidence of *Exc.* shows Irenaeus to misrepresent Valentinian views on soteriology), and the response of McCue, “Conflicting Versions” (disputing Pagels’ reading of *Exc.* and defending the veracity of Irenaeus’ testimony).
- 12 On the involvement of Gilles Quispel and the Jung Institute in Zürich in the initial edition, translation, publication, and reception of NHC I, see now Given, “Nag Hammadi,” esp. 94–96.
- 13 Cf. Dubois’s recent reminder that the term γένος need not be translated as “race,” with the (biological) deterministic implications it may carry, but that simply “kinds” will do (“Once Again,” 195). At the same time, the extremely widespread use of ethnic reasoning in early Christian literature (see below) does invite rendering of the term with some kind of ethnic connotation.
- 14 While a *terminus ante quem* of roughly the mid-fourth century CE is generally held for NHC I (like the other Nag Hammadi Codices), there is considerable debate as to the date of *Tri. Trac.*’s Greek *Vorlage*, and thus in precisely what period one may place its thought. For overviews of earlier scholarship, see Attridge and Pagels, “Introduction,” 178; Thomassen, “Introduction,” 11–13, 18. Although it has been suggested that some of the work’s theology responds to the crisis of Arius, furnishing a *terminus post quem* of the early fourth century CE (Camplani, “Per la cronologia”), most scholars debate the work’s place in the third century: Dubois suggests it was known by Origen and perhaps Plotinus (“*Traité Tripartite*”), while Thomassen avers that it in fact responds to Origen and may even cite Gen 3:11 via the Hexapla (“Introduction,” 18–20; for Simonetti, “Eracleone,” 31, this reasoning invites rather a date of the early fourth century). Attridge and Pagels, *op. cit.*, favor the first half of the third century, without ruling out the later third or early fourth century. On the relationship of the text with the school of Plotinus, see now Turner, “Plotinus.” For the purposes of the present study, the dating of *Tri. Trac.* to the third or fourth century is immaterial.

meant and how they worked is a matter of dispute. Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria condemned the Valentinian position as an abrogation of individual responsibility, much in the manner that critics of the Stoic philosophy pilloried Stoic determinism as leaving no room for praise or blame for one's actions.<sup>15</sup> Earlier scholarship more or less repeated these charges of 'Gnostic determinism.'<sup>16</sup> The 1945 discovery near Nag Hammadi of numerous treatises belonging to the 'Sethian' literary tradition and which called the elect the "Seed of Seth" or "the Immovable Race" gave the impression that other, non-Valentinian Gnostic texts described election in fixed, biological terms.<sup>17</sup>

Nonetheless, the cliché of Gnostic determinism was exploded in various ways by scholars over the last fifty years,<sup>18</sup> most recently by Denise Kimber Buell, who located this ethnic jargon in the greater context of early Christian 'ethnic reasoning.' According to Buell, Christians used the rhetoric, widespread in the Roman empire, of the "races" of the "Greeks, Barbarians, and Jews" in order to carve out a new, distinct identity: the "race" of the Christians. (Hence the choice to translate *genos* as "race," rather than simply "class.") Membership in this race was not "fixed" or determined; it was "fluid."<sup>19</sup> Buell devotes a considerable amount of her analysis to *Tri. Trac.*, particularly its teaching on the three races or kinds of people. Most scholars follow her in reading the soteriology of *Tri. Trac.* as "fluid,"<sup>20</sup> assuming that the various deterministic statements the treatise made were of virtually no importance in everyday life.<sup>21</sup> However,

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- 15 So Löhr, "Gnostic Determinism," 382–84, and Kocar, "In Heaven," 203; idem, "Ethics," 226–27, regarding Ir. *Haer.* 2.29, 4.37.2; Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 2.3.11.1–2.
- 16 For a critical discussion, see Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, 189–212, esp. 189–90. More recent invocations of this cliché include Karamanolis, *Philosophy*, 144; Scott, *Journey*, 38.
- 17 E.g. Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, 125–35, passim.
- 18 Luise Schottroff was the first to express real skepticism about the heresiographers' accounts of Gnostic determinism; Williams built on her study, in demonstrating that the 'racial' language of the Sethian treatises is not biological, but figurative. See Schottroff, "*Animae naturaliter sabvanda*"; Williams, *Immovable Race*, respectively.
- 19 "Ethnic reasoning allowed Christians not only to describe themselves as a people, but also to depict the process of becoming a Christian as one of crossing a boundary from membership in one race to another" (*Why*, 139; see also *ibid.*, 84, emphasizing the universalist dimension). Cf. also Reis's discussion of how the terms ψυχή and ψυχικός were employed by the author of the *Epistle to Diognetus*, as well as Tatian and Tertullian, to denote outsiders in articulating emergent Christian identity ("Thinking," 569–89).
- 20 Reis, "Thinking," 598–99; Brakke, *Gnostics*, 72–73; Dunderberg, "Valentinian Theories," 119; Kocar, "In Heaven," 234. Buell's work has also proven to be of great use in understanding the ethnic terminology in Sethian works as well; see Burns, *Apocalypse*, 86–89.
- 21 "There is no substance to Irenaeus's claim [that the Gnostics were determinists]; it is merely a standard critique of an opponent's theological position applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the Valentinians" (Denzey Lewis, *Cosmology and Fate*, 27, quoted in Linjamaa, *Ethics*, 2 n. 6, along with Roig Lanzillotta, "A Way of Salvation," 72–73).

recent studies have found the matter to be more complicated, and the question of soteriological ‘fixity’ versus ‘fluidity’ merits review. Moreover, Buell devotes little attention to the eschatological element of the soteriological question in *Tri. Trac.*: while a fluid ‘ethnic reasoning’ explains how anthropological tripartitions may have functioned *in* this life, the evidence from Irenaeus considered above reminds us that what was at stake was what happens *after* this life, and that here, the picture provided by our sources about Valentinian teachings grows murky indeed.

The present contribution will examine the problem of determinism and individual responsibility in *Tri. Trac.*, beginning with its protology before proceeding to its discussion of the tripartite division of human beings and the fates of the three types of beings at the eschaton. It will be argued that *Tri. Trac.* is a compatibilist text, i.e., that it envisions individual responsibility for behavior as compatible with determinism.<sup>22</sup> While it is clear in this work that at the ‘Restoration’ (ἀποκαταστάσις)—i.e., the end of the cosmos—spirituals will rejoin the aeons in the Fullness while the materials will be destroyed, the fate of the animates is more difficult to appraise, although it is clear that there is no animate substance in the restored, primordial state. In other words, while the tripartite anthropology predominates in this world, the bipartite anthropology will predominate in the next. Why do the anthropological models shift? This question, it will be argued, may be clarified with a look at 4QInstruction, a sapiential, sectarian work with apocalyptic features that also describes a bipartite anthropology with deterministic undertones and an eschatological context. The sectarian character of 4QInstruction’s twofold anthropology illuminates for what precisely the tertiary category of animates was needed—and why *Tri. Trac.* assigns it no part in the ‘Restoration.’

## 2 The Word’s Free-Falling in the ‘Tripartite Tractate’ (NHC 1,5)

As mentioned above, *Tri. Trac.* is so-called because it is divided into three thematic sections, addressing protology, anthropogony, and soteriology, respectively. As is typical of Valentinian and ‘Classic Gnostic’ works, the Hermetic dictum holds: “as above, so below”<sup>23</sup>—and so the treatise has a great deal to say

22 On compatibilism with respect to ancient Greek philosophy, see Bobzien, “Inadvertent Conception,” 136–43, esp. 142–43. Representative passages include Epict. *Diss.* 2.5.10–13; Sen. *Prov.* 5.8.

23 Famously in the *Emerald Tablet*; see Ruska, *Tabula Smaragdina*.



about what the world up there is like, because that matters for us down here.<sup>24</sup> God, the ‘Father,’ is absolutely unknowable, but does possess a ‘Will’ which determines everything, who is the Son.<sup>25</sup> From the Son derives a third entity who completes a Trinity: the pre-existent “Church” of “aeons.” These aeons are heavenly intellects that contemplate the Father; they are begotten sons of the Son, who in turn beget more sons, fellow aeons, and they are called “spiritual,” i.e. made of ΠΝΕΥΜΑ.<sup>26</sup> Together, they constitute the ‘Fullness’ (ΠΛΗΡΩΜΑ).<sup>27</sup> Eventually, one of these aeons, the Word (ΛΟΓΟΣ), attempts to contemplate the Father directly, fails to do so, and falls. The treatise underlines that this aeon made this choice on its own:

The free will (ΠΟΥΘΩΘΕ ἸΝΔΥΤΕΥΖΟΥΣΙΟΣ) which was begotten with the wholes was a cause for this one, so to speak, so that it would do whatever it wanted without anyone holding it back. Therefore, the decision (ΠΡΟΔΙΡΕΣΙΣ) of the Logos was something good. When it advanced, it rendered glory to the Father—even if <it> was adding something greater

24 Similarly, Kocar, “In Heaven,” 208. Although ‘up’ and ‘down’ are misleading notions when heaven is conceived of as purely mental and therefore non-spatial (as is characteristic of Gnostic texts), *Tri. Trac.* persists in using spatial metaphors for distinguishing the divine and mortal realms, and so I employ them here. See e.g. *Tri. Trac.* NHC I 64.28–29, 85.29–30, 86 passim, 89.24–31, 91.19–25, 96.6–16, etc.

In the following, I give my own translations of *Tri. Trac.*, with reference to the following resources and concomitant abbreviations:

Attridge and Pagels, “The *Tripartite Tractate*: Text and Translation” = CGL; Thomassen and Painchaud, “Texte et traduction” = BCNH; Nagel, *Tractatus Tripartitus* = Nagel. The text used is BCNH, noting divergences in reading of the MS ad loc.

25 *Tri. Trac.* NHC I 65.4–66.29, esp. 66.12–22, text BCNH, tr. mine: “He is what I [call] the form of the formless, the body of the bodiless, the face of the invisible one, the Word of [the] inexpressible, the mind of the [unintelligible], the spring which has gushed forth from Him, the root of the planted, the god of the established ones, the illumination of the ones He illuminates, the will of the things He wills, the providential care (ΠΡΟΝΟΙΑ) for the ones for whom He providentially cares ...” On this passage, see Attridge and Pagels, “The *Tripartite Tractate*: Notes,” 269–70; Thomassen, “Commentaire,” 309–10. On the ‘will of the Father’ in *Tri. Trac.*, cf. Smith, “Irenaeus,” 105–7 (deigning to note the identification of the Father’s will with the Son).

26 See NHC I 58.29–59.8, 63.35–64.22. The latter passage emphasizes their ‘spiritual’ quality (ἐπιπροβολή νε ἰππῶτικῆ ... ἀγῶ ἐπιπῶτικῶν νε—63.35–36, 64.6–7). The focus on ‘begotten’ and not ‘adopted’ sonship in the work’s discussion of aeonic production is a topic worthy of further study; cf. Peppard, *Son of God*.

27 An understudied term, despite its widespread usage in early Christian and especially Gnostic literature. For a discussion with focus on its Pauline background, see Bak Halvgaard, “Concept of *Fullness*.”

than (its) ability, and it wanted to bring forth something perfect from a harmony in which it had not been, and it did not have [any] directive.<sup>28</sup>

But just a few lines later, we read that the Father wanted it that way:<sup>29</sup>

It (i.e., the Word) approached what was established around this perfect glory; for it was not without the will of the Father that the Word was begotten—that means, not without Him would it approach; rather, it was He, the Father, who brought it forth for these things which He knows must happen. Therefore, the Father and the wholes pulled themselves back from it, so that the limit which the Father had set could be established—for it does not result from accessing the inaccessible, but by the will of the Father—and also so that these things that happened, happen for the sake of the future dispensation (ΑΥΤΩ ΧΕΚΑΧΕ ΑΝ ΕΥΝΑΦΩΠΕ Ν̄ΣΙ ΝΙΖΒΗΥΕ ΕΝΤΑΥΦΩΠΕ ΑΥΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΑ ΕΣΝΑΦΩΠΕ). If it<sup>30</sup> were to come about, it would not happen [by] the appearance of the Fullness.<sup>31</sup> For this reason, it is not right to blame the movement—namely, the Word.<sup>32</sup> Rather, it is fitting for us to say concerning [the] movement of the Word that it was a cause [of] dispensation ordained to be ([α]λλα πετεφωφε πε ατρ̄νωδεχε α[π]κιμ̄ ν̄τε πλογοc δε ογλαειβε πε [ν̄]ογοικονομια εcτηω ατρεcωφωπε).<sup>33</sup>

The point is that God wants a salvific plan (or “dispensation,” ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΑ) and the Fullness does not suffice for that; something needs to fall to be saved. And fall the Word does, producing a cascade of sub-aeons of two orders of less-than-perfect mental states: the ‘right’ and the ‘left,’ identified in turn with the ‘animate’ and ‘material’ qualities.<sup>34</sup> Eventually, the Word (now redeemed)

28 *Tri. Trac.* ΝΗC I 75.35–76.12, text ΒCΝΗ, tr. with reference to that of Nagel.

29 Noted widely: see Thomassen, “Commentaire,” 333–34; Pleše, “Evil,” 113; Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 166; Kocar, “Humanity,” 202; idem, “In Heaven,” 218.

30 I.e., the future dispensation.

31 So CGL, followed by Nagel.

32 So ΒCΝΗ. Cf. Nagel’s suggested emendation, “movement of the Logos” (*Tractatus*, 40 n. 113b) but I do not see this as necessary to make sense of the passage, despite 77.9.

33 *Tri. Trac.* ΝΗC I 76.21–77.11, text ΒCΝΗ, tr. mine.

34 Their production and organization ‘takes’ more than twenty pages—ΝΗC I 78.8–98.20—but see esp. 98.14–20, text ΒCΝΗ, tr. mine: “On the one hand, those belonging to the thought and those belonging to likeness are named ‘the right ones’ and ‘animate’ and ‘the fiery ones’ and ‘the middle ones.’ On the other hand, those belonging to the arrogant thought and those belonging to imitation are called ‘the left ones,’ ‘material,’ ‘the dark ones,’ and ‘the last ones.’”

appoints a creator-god, the demiurge, to rule over them.<sup>35</sup> It is very important to note that prior to the fall (“movement”) of the Word, the Fullness had a strictly spiritual quality; only after the fall do animate and material things come into being.

Ismo Dunderberg has done much to show how Valentinian protological myths and their descriptions of the emergence and eventual therapeutic treatment of negative mental states reflect ancient Stoic language of the mixture of emotions: to wit, our minds here on earth feel mixed up because the primordial minds in heaven got mixed up. But there is help! Dunderberg’s work has been successfully developed with respect to *Tri. Trac.* by Paul Linjamaa.<sup>36</sup> However, Linjamaa notes a further, key aspect of the text’s description of the Word’s fall: the terminology of ‘free will’ exercised by the Word disappears from the text at this point.<sup>37</sup> As we will see, this treatise does describe human beings as facing choices—but true freedom belongs to the Fullness, the pre-existent intellects from which the Word came and to which it will return.<sup>38</sup>

### 3 Is the Tripartition of Humanity in the ‘Tripartite Tractate’ Deterministic?

The spiritual Word then moves the creator-God to bring the qualities of the right and left together in the first human being (who is not referred to as ‘Adam’ in this text).<sup>39</sup> “Now,” we are told, “the first human being is a form which is mixed, and a creature which is mixed, and it is a composition of the ones of the left and of the right, and a spiritual Word, for its (way of) thinking is divided into each of the two natures from which it obtained its coming to be.”<sup>40</sup> The primordial human partakes in all three essences—therefore, each human being today partakes in all three as well.<sup>41</sup> Yet all this was part of God’s intention: even the Serpent’s temptation of the first human and humanity’s subsequent expulsion from paradise were part of the divine plan: “truly was it a work of providence (πρόνοια), so that it would be found out (that) it is a short period of time until humanity will receive the enjoyment of the eternal, good

35 NHC I 100.18–103.12.

36 Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 95–98, 108–18; Linjamaa, *Ethics*, 71–111.

37 Linjamaa, *Ethics*, 132.

38 On the freedom of the aeons, see NHC I 69.24–27, 74.18–23.

39 NHC I 105.29–106.2.

40 *Ibid.*, 106.18–25, text BCNH, tr. mine. As Thomassen notes, the “two natures” are probably the animate and material ones (“Commentaire,” 407).

41 Attridge and Pagels, “Notes,” 412.

things ..."<sup>42</sup> The complex anthropogony and concomitant 'fall of man,' mirroring the 'fall' of the Word, is in *Tri. Trac. a felix culpa*.

Following a lengthy discussion of the influence of the beings of the 'left' (material) and 'right' (animate) on the development of the "Greek and barbarian" and "Hebrew" civilizations,<sup>43</sup> respectively, *Tri. Trac.* returns to the anthropogony, this time with regards to soteriology:

Humanity came into being in three sorts with respect to nature: the spiritual, the animate, and the material, for it preserves the model of the triple disposition of the Word, from whom the material ones, the animate ones, and the spiritual ones were brought forth. Each one of the natures of the three races is known by its fruit,<sup>44</sup> but they were not known at first; rather, (they were known) at the advent of the Savior,<sup>45</sup> who illuminated the holy ones and revealed what each one of them is.<sup>46</sup>

The text continues, emphasizing that the three natures are revealed by the reaction to the appearance of the savior:

42 *Tri. Trac.* NHC I 107.22–26, text BCNH, tr. mine. Cf. *The Treatise on the Two Spirits*, where it is God who gave humanity the Two Spirits "so that they may know good [and evil]" (1QS IV, 26). Noting the allusion to Gen 2:15 and 3:1–7, Alexander exclaims that while in Genesis it is the serpent who tricks Adam and Eve into receiving knowledge of good and evil, "here it is God who ensures that man acquires it; it is all part of his plan! This is a reading of Scripture against the grain fully worthy of the later Gnostics" ("Predestination," 31).

43 *Tri. Trac.* NHC I 108.13–114.30. These fascinating passages are too extensive and complex to treat presently. See Attridge and Pagels, "Notes," 417–35; Thomassen, "Commentaire," 410–20; Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 176–87; Smith, *Guilt*, 108–21. Cf. also my contribution, "Philosophical Contexts."

44 "You shall know them by their fruit": i.e., the nature to which each person belongs is clear by their reaction to the appearance of the Savior, Jesus Christ: Dunderberg, "Valentinian Theories," 117. Cf. Matt 7:16; Luke 6:43–45, per Kocar, "Humanity," 208. As Kocar has noted, the identification of members of a tripartition of the elect by their reaction to preaching is not distinctly Valentinian; it also appears in *Shepherd of Hermas, Similitudes* 8.7—Kocar, op. cit., 205 n. 48. Cf. also *Teach. Silv.* NHC VII 92.15–18.

45 Taking  $\omega\rho\omicron\upsilon\gamma$  (lines 26–27) as following  $\rho\sigma\eta\epsilon\acute{\iota}$   $\eta\pi\omega\tau\eta\rho$ ' (line 25), Thomassen and Painchaud do not translate it; Nagel emends unnecessarily to  $\rho\alpha\rho\omicron\upsilon\gamma$ . For  $\epsilon\iota$  ...  $\omega\alpha$ -, see Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 542a. The idea is that the natures were recognized when the Savior came to human beings.

46 NHC I 118.14–28, text BCNH, tr. mine:  $\chi\epsilon$   $\tau\eta\bar{\eta}\bar{\eta}\tau\rho\omega\mu\epsilon$  ·  $\alpha\varsigma\omega\omega\pi\epsilon$   $\epsilon\sigma\omicron\epsilon\iota$  ·  $\bar{\eta}\omega\rho\omega\eta\bar{\eta}\tau$   $\bar{\eta}\rho\eta\tau\epsilon$   $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha$   $\omicron\upsilon\varsigma\iota\alpha$   $\Delta\epsilon$   $\tau\pi\eta\epsilon\gamma\mu\alpha\tau\iota\kappa\eta$   $\bar{\eta}\bar{\eta}$   $\tau\bar{\eta}\chi\kappa\langle\kappa\rangle\bar{\eta}$   $\bar{\eta}\bar{\eta}$   $\tau\bar{\eta}\gamma\lambda\iota\kappa\eta$  ·  $\epsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon\chi\omicron$   $\bar{\eta}\pi\tau\gamma\pi\omicron\varsigma$   $\bar{\eta}\tau\bar{\Delta}\iota\alpha\theta\epsilon\varsigma\iota\varsigma$   $\bar{\eta}\pi\omega\omega\eta\bar{\eta}\tau$   $\bar{\eta}\rho\eta\tau\eta$   $\bar{\eta}\Delta\epsilon$   $\pi\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma$  · { $\tau\epsilon$  ·}  $\tau\epsilon\epsilon\iota$   $\epsilon\tau\epsilon$ · $\Delta\beta\alpha\lambda$   $\bar{\eta}\rho\eta\tau\varsigma$   $\lambda\gamma\epsilon\iota\eta\epsilon$   $\Delta\beta\alpha\lambda$   $\bar{\eta}\eta\gamma\lambda\iota\kappa\omicron\eta$   $\bar{\eta}\bar{\eta}$   $\eta\bar{\eta}\chi\iota\kappa\omicron\eta$  ·  $\bar{\eta}\bar{\eta}$   $\eta\eta\bar{\eta}\Delta\tau\iota\kappa\omicron\eta$   $\tau\omicron\gamma\epsilon\iota\epsilon$   $\tau\omicron\gamma\epsilon\iota\epsilon$   $\bar{\eta}\eta\omicron\upsilon\varsigma\iota\alpha$   $\bar{\eta}\pi\omega\omega\eta\bar{\eta}\tau$   $\bar{\eta}\gamma\epsilon\eta\omicron\varsigma$   $\Delta\beta\alpha\lambda$   $\rho\bar{\eta}\tau\bar{\eta}$   $\pi\epsilon\varsigma\kappa\alpha\rho\pi\omicron\varsigma$   $\epsilon\gamma\varsigma\omicron\gamma\omega\eta$   $\bar{\eta}\eta\mu\omicron\varsigma$  ·  $\lambda\gamma\omega$   $\eta\epsilon\bar{\eta}\pi\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma\omega\omega\eta\omicron\gamma$   $\Delta\epsilon$   $\bar{\eta}\omega\rho\omega\bar{\eta}$   $\alpha\lambda\lambda\alpha$   $\rho\bar{\eta}$   $\rho\sigma\eta\epsilon\acute{\iota}$   $\eta\pi\omega\tau\eta\rho$ '  $\pi\alpha\acute{\iota}$   $\epsilon\eta\tau\alpha\bar{\eta}\rho$   $\omicron\gamma\lambda\epsilon\iota\eta$   $\Delta\eta\epsilon\tau\omicron\gamma\alpha\Delta\beta$   $\omega\rho\omicron\upsilon\gamma$   $\lambda\gamma\omega$   $\pi\omicron\gamma\epsilon\epsilon\iota$   $\pi\omicron\gamma\epsilon\epsilon\iota$  ·  $\alpha\phi\omicron\gamma\alpha\eta\bar{\epsilon}\zeta\bar{\eta}$   $\Delta\beta\alpha\lambda$  ·  $\bar{\eta}\pi\epsilon\tau\epsilon\bar{\eta}\tau\alpha\bar{\eta}$   $\pi\epsilon$ .

On the one hand, the spiritual race is like light from light, and like spirit from spirit. When its head appeared, it ran up to him immediately. It immediately became body to its head. It acquired knowledge by revelation, instantly. On the other hand, [the] animate race, as if it were a light from a fire, hesitated to accept knowledge of the one who had appeared to it—much less to run to him with faith. It is by a voice that it is taught, and so it was enough; for it is not far from the hope in accordance with the promise, since it has received—so to speak—the deposit of the confirmation of what is to be. Finally, the material race is foreign in every way, as if it were something dark that will separate itself from rays of light, for its presence nullifies it, because it did not accept his advent—and moreover, it is hatred for the Lord, because he manifested himself.<sup>47</sup>

Finally, their fates are described:

The spiritual race shall receive complete salvation in every way, but the material shall receive destruction in every way, as befits the manner of an opponent! Finally, the animate race, since it is in the middle due to its delivery and also establishment, *is double in its orientation towards good and evil; it accepts the emanation*<sup>48</sup> *that was suddenly established, and the flight, certainly, to the good things* (ϥϩΑΤΡΕ ΚΑΤΑ ΠΕΤΩΩ ΑΠΑΓΑΘΟΝ Μ̄Ν ΠΚΑΚΟΝ ϥΧΙ ΑΡΑϥ Μ̄ΠΙϩΕΤΕ ΔΒΑΛ ΕϥΚΗ ΔΡΗΙ Ζ̄ΝΝ ΟΥΩΝΕ Μ̄Ν ΠΠΩΤ' ΑΖΟΥΝ ΠΑΝΤΩΣ ΔΝ ΔΝΙΠΕΤΝΑΝΟΥΟΥ). Indeed, those whom the Word brought forth in accordance with the pre-existent (substance) of his thought—when he remembered The Exalted One and prayed for salvation—<possess> salvation at once.<sup>49</sup> They shall be saved completely, [thanks to] the thought of salvation.<sup>50</sup>

The treatise specifies that these who are “saved at once” and who “shall be saved completely” are on earth for a reason: they were “appointed for a service—the

47 ΝΗC I 118.28–119.16, text BCNH, tr. mine.

48 ΠΙϩΕΤΕ: Nagel suggests that this word is a mistranslation from the Greek *Vorlage* into Coptic (*Tractatus*, 75 n. 58b). The translator, he avers, mistook ῥύομαι (“to save, redeem”) for ῥέομαι (“to flow, emanate”). Thus, the author of the Greek *Vorlage* probably wrote: “the animate race, since it is in the middle when it is brought forth and also established, is double in its orientation towards good and evil; it receives *salvation* ...” Such an interpretation lends weight to the present argument.

49 Ν̄Δ[ΠC] ΩΝΕ: so GCL, followed by Nagel; cf. BCNH: Ν̄Δ[Τ]ΩΝΕ, “... le salut [sans] être rejetés.”

50 ΝΗC I 119.16–34, text BCNH, tr. mine, modifications noted. Italicized text reflects the lines introduced by *diploi* in the manuscript, which may have been inserted by the scribe for emphasis (also noted by Kocar, “In Heaven,” 218 n. 40).

proclamation of the advent of the Savior that is to be.”<sup>51</sup> These can only be the spirituals, who are here to preach and teach. This is clearly no determinist teaching in the sense that Irenaeus or Clement would have us believe.<sup>52</sup> Some kind of volition is presupposed, since the whole reason the spirituals exist is to help the animates make the right choice when presented with the Gospel (‘the Call’).<sup>53</sup> Similarly, other Valentinian texts describe prayers and ritual practices; their underlying assumption must be that people ought to choose to carry these practices out, and that the choice is significant.<sup>54</sup>

However, it is also important to remember the message of the protology, much earlier in the text: all is determined by God’s Will. Nor is there a faculty of free will described in these passages regarding the three human natures: rather, the spiritual nature goes one way, the material the other, and the animate is in-between: “it is double, in its orientation towards good and evil.” The Coptic word τῶϩ, translated here as “orientation,” can also mean “determine, fix, allot.”<sup>55</sup> The animates are not ‘free’; they are determined to go both ways, i.e., to be both good and bad. “Free will” belongs in the Fullness with the aeons, who are “spiritual.” The implication is clear: only the spirituals are truly free, even though the sole decision they make is to act in perfect harmony with God’s thoughts.<sup>56</sup> This too is good Stoicism, which envisions true freedom as the individual’s harmonious action with the determined chain of causes.<sup>57</sup> In the terminology of modern philosophy, *Tri. Trac.* like Stoicism, is compatibilist.<sup>58</sup>

51 NHC I 119.34–120.14, my tr.

52 Attridge and Pagels, “The *Tripartite Tractate*: Notes,” 446–47, followed by Buell, *Why?*, 84, 127.

53 Kocar, “In Heaven,” 255.

54 See e.g. *Interp. Know.* NHC XI 15–19, per Thomassen, “Saved by Nature?” 146; similarly regarding *Gos. Phil.* NHC II,3 Dubois, “Controverses,” 74. Injunctions to ‘do the will of the Father’ would have been pointless if all action was predetermined (this language is surveyed in Desjardins, *Sin.* 67–116; see also Kocar, “Humanity,” 210; idem, “Ethics,” 232 n. 85, regarding *Gos. Truth* NHC I 33.1–32).

55 Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 449–52. See also *Tri. Trac.* NHC I 77.8–11, quoted above: “it is fitting for us to say concerning [the] movement of the Logos that it was a cause [of] dispensation ordained to be” (οικονομία ἐστίνῳ ἀτρεσῶσαν).

56 Cf. Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 135, on the (Stoic) sage-like quality of the Valentinian spirituals.

57 A recent, very readable account is Frede, *Free Will*, 72–80, largely with reference to Epictetus.

58 Cf. Linjamaa, *Ethics*, 144–45, 149–55, who dubs *Tri. Trac.* a “determinist” Christian text whose ethics are in line with Stoicism, and Kocar, who follows Bobzien in articulating early Stoic responsibility in terms of causality rather than freedom to do otherwise (“In Heaven,” 222, n. 6, 243–44; but cf. *ibid.*, 249; idem, “Ethics,” 223–32, esp. 225; “the anthropogonic section [of *Tri. Trac.*—ed.] has structural parallels to Stoic compatibilism and causal moral responsibility”).

What does this mean for actual people, rather than idealized ‘spirituals’ and ‘animates’? The choice of the animates for the better or worse is determined by the ‘will of the Father,’ but it is only truly ‘free’ insofar as it is in accordance with it and the will of the spirituals—at which point the animates are not really animates anymore, are they?<sup>59</sup> This is precisely the kind of ‘fluidity’ Buell and others have described in *Tri. Trac.*: in the realm of practice, different people make different decisions, and are understood as earning their just reward. Yet the present analysis complicates Buell’s reading somewhat. As Einar Thomassen has highlighted, *Tri. Trac.* simply states that there are three kinds of human beings, and they are as they were made.<sup>60</sup> In other words, Valentinian anthropology was fluid in practice, but it was fixed in theory—and perhaps that mattered, too.<sup>61</sup> Specifically, it mattered in an eschatological context, where all spiritual substance is ‘restored’ to the Fullness: at this time, “the spiritual race shall receive complete salvation in every way, but the material shall receive destruction in every way, as befits the manner of one who fights him!” Yet *Tri. Trac.* does not tell us in straightforward terms what will happen to the animates at the eschaton.<sup>62</sup> At this point, one could supply evidence from Irenaeus or Theodotus to fill in the gap,<sup>63</sup> but the work does offer us a hint that seems to me to be decisive:

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- 59 Cf. Thomassen, “Saved by Nature?” 140. Cf. Pleše, “Evil,” 130: “for the pneumatic race, in short, evil is a transient disposition; for psychics, the matter of rational choice; for material humans, an enduring and irreversible condition.” Kocar highlights rather the problem of ‘internal determinism,’ i.e. the question of the extent to which responsibility incumbent upon one’s predisposition can really be considered ‘responsibility,’ when one’s predisposition is determined by external causes (“Ethics,” 232 n. 82). As Kocar notes, *Tri. Trac.* seems either unaware of this problem or uninterested in it.
- 60 Thomassen, “Saved by Nature?” 132–33, recalling *Haer.* 6.35.3–6; also Pleše, “Evil,” 128.
- 61 Thomassen, “Commentaire,” 428–29; Linjamaa, *Ethics*, 181, *pace* Buell, *Why*, 128 (“if actions determine essence for the *Tripartite Tractate*, then it is not behavior that reveals one’s nature, but behavior that *produces* one’s nature, as a distillation of one of the three natures inherent in all humans,” italics hers; followed by Dunning, “Tripartite Anthropologies,” 182, despite his concerns at *ibid.*, 185). Both Kocar (“‘Humanity,’” 220; “Ethics,” 216–17) and Linjamaa (*op. cit.*, 182–83) have rightly observed that a deterministic anthropology need not have been mutually exclusive with social mobility in practice.
- 62 Kocar, “‘Humanity,’” 219–20.
- 63 Irenaeus unambiguously states that this Restoration to the primordial state amounts to a reintegration of the spiritual part into God with the animate part shut outside of the Fullness (*Haer.* 1.7.1, 1.7.5), but the evidence of *Clem. Alex. Exc.* 63–65 is less clear on the matter. The scenario described by Irenaeus is assigned to *Exc.* 43–65 by McCue, “Conflicting Versions,” 415; Simonetti, “Eracleone,” 12–13; Pleše, “Evil,” 129–30; Kocar, “In Heaven,” 237–38; *idem*, “Ethics,” 207–221. Others, meanwhile, have argued that *Exc.* describes an initial integration of the animate to the spiritual part, followed by the latter’s assimilation the Fullness at a unified grade (Pagels, “Conflicting Versions,” 44–53, esp.

For if we confess the kingdom that is in Christ, they have departed from the complete multiplicity of form and inequality and change. For the end shall receive once again singular existence, just as the beginning was also singular; the place where there is no man nor woman, nor slave or free, nor is there circumcised and uncircumcised, [nor] is there angel nor is there human being, but all in all is Christ!<sup>64</sup>

As is widely recognized, this passage appears to envision a future eschaton where the animates and spirituals become one in the Fullness.<sup>65</sup> In the *Endzeit*, there will only be spirit and flesh, and spirit alone shall live.<sup>66</sup> *Tri. Trac.*'s eschatology privileges the bipartite anthropology—people who receive the seed, and people who do not—like that mentioned by Irenaeus.

The problem with this reading is obvious: if the bipartite division predominated in practice as well as eschatological theory, what, then, was the point of having the tripartite division at all? What are the animates for?

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52–53; Attridge and Pagels, “Notes,” 486–87)—similar to the present reading of *Tri. Trac.* Thomassen rightly notes that *Tri. Trac.*'s position on the matter may be independent of Irenaeus and Theodotus (op. cit. 449 n. 89; more strongly on this point, Simonetti, op. cit., 29–30).

64 *Tri. Trac.* NHC I 132.16–28, text BCNH, tr. mine. Cf. Gal 3:28; Col 3:11.

65 So Attridge and Pagels, “The *Tripartite Tractate*: Introduction,” 189: “here the author recalls a common formula concerning the reconciliation of opposites used in early Christian baptism (cf. Gal 3:28). This formula was interpreted by Western Valentinian sources in a specific symbolic way, wherein the elements of the opposed pairs refer to spiritual and psychic Christians respectively. If our author follows such a tradition, he intends to show that all distinctions between psychics and pneumatics will cease when Christ becomes ‘all in all.’” See also idem, “The *Tripartite Tractate*: Notes,” 486–87; Thomassen, “Commentaire,” 448–49; Simonetti, “Eracleone,” 21; Buell, *Why?*, 127–28; Reis, “Thinking,” 600.

66 Thomassen, “Saved by Nature?” 145. Kocar argues (“In Heaven,” 240, n. 54; “Ethics,” 221–22) that NHC I 135–36 describes rather multiple grades of salvation at the eschaton, but these passages seem to me to be too lacunose and opaque to serve as persuasive evidence either way. A more intriguing suggestion of his (Kocar, “In Heaven,” 240; “Ethics,” 222) is that the diversity of the aeonic realm indicates a diversity of post-Restoration salvific states. Sure enough, *Tri. Trac.* refers to the aeons having their own distinctive manners of praising the Father: “each one of those who render glory possesses its station and [its] height, [and] its abode and its repose—which is the glory that it brings forth” (NHC I 70.14–19; see also 65.39–66.5, 68.17–28; all cited by Kocar). However, this multiplicity in unity precedes the creation of the ‘right’ and ‘left’ and concomitant animate and psychic substances and characters, which follow from the Word’s ‘fall’—precisely what the Restoration corrects, in accordance with the dispensation (οικονομία). In other words, even if the pleromatic realm allows for diversity, this diversity is entirely on the spiritual (πνευματικός) plane, for there is nothing animate (much less material) in the Fullness—nor will there be, after the Restoration.



#### 4 4QInstruction and the “Vision of Hagu”

4QInstruction has helped me come to grasp this question more effectively, and perhaps even suggest an answer to it. 4QInstruction is not only the longest book of wisdom discovered amongst the Dead Sea Scrolls, but also one of the most interesting and difficult; its obscure, elliptical quality is compounded by the fact that it is not a product of the Dead Sea sect itself.<sup>67</sup> The author of the text advises its recipient (addressed as a מְבִין—a student, or one who has begun the road to understanding)<sup>68</sup> to study the רִז נְהִיָה—“the mystery that is to be.” Unattested in the Hebrew Bible and found only three times elsewhere at Qumran, this noun phrase is used over 20 times in 4QInstruction.<sup>69</sup> As Goff argues, the “mystery that is to be” seems to denote heavenly revelation—in keeping with the Hebrew term רִז—that concerns the whole of God’s earthly creation, i.e., the cosmos, everything in it, and everything that will happen in it, as predetermined by God (hence: “the mystery *to be*”).<sup>70</sup> It is possession of exactly this kind of revealed knowledge which characterizes the מְבִין as a member of the elect.<sup>71</sup>

67 Goff, *4QInstruction*, 27, recalls the text’s absence of key terms belonging to the Dead Sea sect (*Yahad*, Teacher of Righteousness, etc.), and observes that its discussion of marriage and domestic finances in no way echoes what we find in the *Damascus Document*. See also Frey, “Notion of ‘Flesh,’” 213.

68 Discussed by Goff, “Adam,” 2; idem, *4QInstruction*, 12–13.

69 Goff, “Adam,” 3; idem, *4QInstruction*, 14.

70 Goff, “Adam,” 3; idem, *4QInstruction*, 14–16; cf. Werman, who argues that this knowledge is not revealed but historical (“What is the *Book of Hagu*?” 131, 139), although these not need be mutually exclusive characteristics.

71 As Goff notes, 4QInstruction’s appeal to revealed knowledge as the source of wisdom is one of the features which distinguishes it from its fellow sapiential texts Proverbs and Ben Sira. Recalling as well the text’s depiction of divine judgment of sinners, Goff observes that “4QInstruction illustrates to an extent not evident before the emergence of the Dead Sea Scrolls that an early Jewish wisdom text could incorporate themes that accord with the apocalyptic tradition” (Goff, *4QInstruction*, 19; similarly idem, “Adam,” 3–4). Some have taken the esoteric knowledge reserved for the elect in Qumran texts as a harbinger of ‘Gnostic’ epistemology and soteriology, purportedly centered on the possession of esoteric, salvific γῶσις—cf. Colpe, “Gnosis I: Erkenntnislehre,” 483, as well as Ringgren, “Qumran and Gnosticism,” 379–82; more recently, Alexander, “Predestination,” 30–31. Given the nature of the present volume, it is perhaps worthwhile to comment here that this comparison can be misleading but instructive. First, the comparison obscures the fact that there is no evidence that the Qumran sectarians and the *Gnōstikoi* known to Irenaeus and Porphyry had any socio-historical relationship to one another. Second, it fails to ask about the content of esoteric, saving knowledge—to wit, while the רִז נְהִיָה denotes the God of Israel’s ordering of the cosmos and the ranks of the saved, observable in the movement of the heavenly spheres, the γῶσις ostensibly claimed by the Gnostics

There is a remarkable discussion of this revealed knowledge in 4Q417 1 I, lines 6–18:

6 ... And then you will know truth and iniquity, wisdom <sup>7</sup> [and foll]y. You ... [their] deed[s] in all their ways together with their punishment in all the everlasting ages and the punishment <sup>8</sup> of eternity. And then you will know the difference between [go]od and [evil according to their] deeds, [f]or the God of Knowledge is a foundation of truth. With the mystery that is to be <sup>9</sup> he spread out its foundation and indeed m[ade (it) with wis]dom and, regarding everything, [with cleve]rness he fashioned it ... <sup>15</sup> And the book of remembrance is written before him <sup>16</sup> for the ones who keep his word—that is, the vision of meditation of the book of remembrance. He bequeathed it to Adam together with a spiritual people (לְאֹנוֹשׁ עַם עֵי רוּחַ) be[cau]se <sup>17</sup> according to the likeness of the holy ones he fashioned him. But no more did he give what is meditated upon to the fleshly spirit (רוּחַ בִּשְׂרַר), for it did not distinguish between <sup>18</sup> [go]od and evil according to the judgment of its [sp]irit. *vacat* And you, understanding son, gaze *vacat* upon the mystery that is to be and know <sup>19</sup> [the path]s of all life and the manner of one's walking that is appointed over [his] deed[s] ...<sup>72</sup>

As is widely recognized, the “book of remembrance can be reasonably compared to the ‘tablets of heaven’ prominent in 1 *Enoch* and *Jubilees*,” as well as 1QH IX, 25–26, “in which God’s deterministic plan for creation is inscribed in creation.”<sup>73</sup> This predetermined plan is equated with the “vision of meditation” (חֲזוֹן הַהִגּוּת), a phrase which appears to refer to reflection on the “book of remembrance”: God’s plan, or the mystery that is to be.<sup>74</sup> As Shane Berg

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denoted one’s kinship with a divine beyond, a realm superior to the present world as well as its (sub-divine) creator (rightly acknowledged by Alexander, *op. cit.*). The רַז נְהִיָּה is no ‘*gnōsis* before the Gnostics’; rather, it may serve as a potent *comparandum* in the service of deconstructing the misleading terminological category of ‘Gnosis’ i.e., religious discourse focused on salvific knowledge eclipsing the category of ‘Gnosticism.’

72 Tr. Goff, *4QInstruction*, 139–40.

73 Goff, *4QInstruction*, 159; see further *ibid.*, 159–61; Lange, *Weisheit*, 69–79; *idem*, “Wisdom,” 343; Frey, “Notion of ‘Flesh,’” 218; Tigchelaar, “‘Spiritual People,’” 114; Werman, “What is the *Book of Hagu*?” 127–28; Attridge, “Divine Sovereignty,” 192. On the deterministic understanding of history presupposed by this motif, see also Popović, “Apocalyptic Determinism,” 261–62, with regard to e.g. 1 *En.* 81:1–2, 93:2; Dan 10:21; *Jub.* 6:35; 4Q180 (Ages of Creation A).

74 On חֲזוֹן see BDB 303a. For הִגּוּת see Lange, *Weisheit*, 84–85; *idem*, “Wisdom,” 343; Frey, “Notion of ‘Flesh,’” 218; Werman, “What is the *Book of Hagu*?” 138; Berg, “Ben Sira,” 155 n. 68; Goff, *4QInstruction*, 161–62; Wold, “Universality,” 215–16.

writes, “the object of such meditation is not quite clear, but what is clear is that those who possess the capability to meditate are those who are able to know good and evil.”<sup>75</sup> This vision of meditation is “bequeathed ... to Adam (אנוש) together with a spiritual people, because according to the likeness of the holy ones he fashioned him.” However, to the “fleshly spirit,” God did not give “what is meditated upon”—which I take to be synonymous with the ‘vision of meditation’—since the fleshly spirit “did not distinguish between good and evil according to the judgment of its spirit.” Jörg Frey has identified this divide between these elect individuals and the “fleshly spirit” as a Palestinian Jewish antecedent of the second century BCE for the characteristically Pauline demarcation between πνεῦμα and σάρξ (Gal 5:7; Rom 8:5–8).<sup>76</sup> In turn, this demarcation is fundamental to Paul’s concomitant tripartition of humanity into πνευματικοί, ψυχικοί, and σαρκικοί (1 Cor 2:14–15, in relation to Gen 1–3)—and its adaptation by the Valentinians.

## 5 Who Is the ‘Spirit of Flesh’ and Who Is אנוש?

This extraordinarily rich passage offers much to interpret and contend with. For our purposes here, I will focus on the problems of the identity of the “fleshly spirit” and that of Adam (אנוש). 4QInstruction draws an explicit contrast between the “spiritual” people and the fleshly spirit in 4Q417 1 I 18, where the מבין is told that he and other spiritual people have been made separate from the “fleshly spirit.”<sup>77</sup> The substance of this distinction between the people of spirit and the ‘fleshly spirit’ is the ability to “distinguish between good and evil.” As Goff avers, “since the ‘fleshly spirit’ does not have knowledge of good and evil (line 17), one can infer that the ‘spiritual people’ do.”<sup>78</sup> It can be deduced further that this knowledge is inscribed in the heavenly book of remembrance.<sup>79</sup> Line 18 tells us that they are not given “what is meditated upon (*hagui*).” Thus, those who belong to the ‘fleshly spirit’ are not like the angels. They are characterized by flesh, which connotes “their mortality and lack of access to supernatural revelation,” as implied by use of the expression

75 Berg, “Ben Sira,” 155 n. 68; similarly, Goff, “Adam,” 4.

76 Frey, “Notion of ‘Flesh,’” esp. 197–200 (emphasizing the lack of symmetry between Paul’s opposition of “spirit” and ‘flesh’ with Philo’s exegesis of the double creation of humanity in Gen 1–3), 224–26; followed by Goff, *4QInstruction*, 166.

77 Frey, “Notion of ‘Flesh,’” 215–16; Goff, “Adam,” 4; idem, *4QInstruction*, 165.

78 So Frey, “Notion of ‘Flesh,’” 218–19.

79 Goff, *4QInstruction*, 164.

in the *Hodayot* (e.g., 1QH v, 19–20).<sup>80</sup> Indeed, 4Q416 1, 10–13—probably a fragment of the opening of 4QInstruction—states that “all the sons of his truth will be favorably accepted b[efore him ...] its end. And all those who polluted themselves in it (wickedness) will be terrified and cry out, for heaven will be afraid; [earth] wi[ll shake from its place;] [s]eas and depths are terrified. Every fleshly spirit will be laid bare but the sons of heav[en ... on the day] of its judgment. And all iniquity will come to an end forever ...”<sup>81</sup> The group characterized by flesh is polluted, wicked, and will be destroyed at the final judgment; they are opposed to the “sons of truth.”<sup>82</sup>

As Jörg Frey notes, 4QInstruction’s designation of the “fleshly spirit” as an outside group differs from texts composed within the *Yahad*, such as the *Hodayot*, where sinful flesh is in fact shared by members of the in-group, problematic though that may be.<sup>83</sup> Eibert Tigchelaar, meanwhile, has turned this argument on its head: arguing that the phrase “according to the judgment of its [sp]irit”—glossing the manner in which the fleshly spirit fails to distinguish between good and evil—may also be translated as “according to the manner of its spirit”; he suggests that the “fleshly spirit” of 4QInstruction is like that of the *Hodayot* after all, designating all humanity, including the author and audience of the text, in its opposition to God.<sup>84</sup> The passage, he avers, is not a precursor to the dichotomy of πνεῦμα and σάρξ, but of πνεῦμα and ψυχή, and, in turn, πνευματικοί versus ψυχικοί.<sup>85</sup> The point need not be settled here (although I am inclined to agree with Frey), because the eschatological thrust of 4Q416 1, 10–13 remains twofold, not threefold, regardless of one how defines its members: even if the ‘fleshly spirit’ denotes a ψυχικός rather than a σαρκικός, it is characterized by its pollution and “will be laid bare ... [on the day] of its judgment.” There can be no doubt that for 4QInstruction, on the last day in the future, the ‘fleshly spirit’ will denote an out-group.

Yet the case may be somewhat different with regards to the primordial scenario described in the pericope. Much rests on the identity of the recipient of the “vision of *hagu*”: אָדָם, translated by Goff above as “Adam.” While it has

80 Goff, “Adam” 14; idem, *4QInstruction*, 165; see also Frey, “Notion of ‘Flesh,’” 202–6 (on ‘flesh’ in the *Hodayot*).

81 Tr. Goff, *4QInstruction*, 44. On placing 4Q416 1 at the beginning of the work, see Strugnell and Harrington, DJD 34, 83; Frey, “Notion of ‘Flesh,’” 216 n. 88; Goff, *4QInstruction*, 8, 45–46.

82 So Lange, *Weisheit*, 86–87, followed by Frey, “Notion of ‘Flesh,’” 216–17; Goff, *4QInstruction*, 49–54.

83 Frey, “Notion of ‘Flesh,’” 221.

84 Tigchelaar, “Spiritual People,” 110. On the various permutations of the phrase’s meaning, see further Strugnell and Harrington, DJD 34, 166.

85 Tigchelaar, “Spiritual People,” 110–11, 116–17.

been argued by Armin Lange that the patriarch Enosh is meant,<sup>86</sup> he “is never proclaimed as a recipient of revelation in the Second Temple period.”<sup>87</sup> Goff follows John Collins’s suggestion that Enosh refers to Adam, who, on this reading, received a revelation of God’s plan in the Garden of Eden. The identification of the ‘vision of meditation’ as knowledge of good and evil speaks for this interpretation. So does the reference to the “holy ones”—that is, angels.<sup>88</sup> In the likeness of the “holy ones,” these angels, the “spiritual people” (עַם רוּחַ) were created. The “likeness” (תְּבוּנִית) is a clear allusion to Gen 1:27, the ‘first’ creation of Adam. Adam and the elect are like the ‘angels.’ Another fragment, 4Q418 81 4–5, adds that the מְבִין is in “the lot of the angels.”<sup>89</sup> As Collins has argued, all this points again to traditions regarding the double creation of humanity in exegesis of Gen 1–3—particularly Philo and Paul.<sup>90</sup> The difference, as Goff recognizes, is that 4QInstruction does not actually posit two different Adams that correspond to two different human types; rather, there is one Adam. (This is also true of *Tri. Trac.*) So how do the ‘spiritual people’ and the ‘fleshly spirit’ map onto the single primordial human being? Goff notes that line 17 says in passing that *hagu* was given to the fleshly spirit, “but no more,” perhaps a reference to the expulsion from Paradise.<sup>91</sup> 4QInstruction prefers, Goff thinks, to focus on Adam as a positive figure. The evidence for this is another fragment, 4Q423 1, which likens the מְבִין to Adam and his authority over the Garden.<sup>92</sup> This is a plausible reading, but the fragment in question is very fragmentary—considerably more than 4Q417—and its context is hypothetical at best.

Benjamin Wold offers a different interpretation of this evidence. He begins by following Jéan-Sebastien Rey and others in translating אָנוּשׁ not as “Adam,”

86 E.g., Lange, *Weisheit*, 87–90; Frey, “Notion of ‘Flesh,’” 218; discussed in Strugnell and Harrington, DJD 34, 164; Collins, “In the Likeness,” 611–12.

87 Goff, “Adam,” 14; idem, *4QInstruction*, 163; cf. also Strugnell and Harrington, DJD 34, 164. This may be so, strictly speaking, but Enosh is a recipient of revelation in the *Cologne Mani Codex* and Mandaean sources—for the *Apocalypse of Enosh*, see CMC 52.8–55.9; on Enosh as recipient of revelation, see further Reeves, *Heralds*, 37–38, 142–46, 154.

88 Collins, “In the Likeness,” 615–17, followed by Goff, “Adam,” 14–15; idem, *4QInstruction*, 163; discussed in Strugnell and Harrington, DJD 34, 164.

89 Goff, *4QInstruction*, 168. Here again, the Nag Hammadi evidence presents itself: “we resembled the great, eternal angels,” say Adam and Eve in the *Apocalypse of Adam* (NHC V 64.12–16, my tr.).

90 Goff, *4QInstruction*, 166, following Collins, “In the Likeness,” 617, regarding *De officio mundi* 1–35; *Legum Allegoriae* 1, 31–32; 1 Cor 3:1. Similarly, Berg, “Ben Sira,” 155–56.

91 Goff, “Adam,” 16–17; idem, *4QInstruction*, 166.

92 On this fragment, see Goff, “Adam,” 5–7; idem, *4QInstruction*, 290–95; cf. Wold, “Universality,” 220–24.

but simply “humanity,”<sup>93</sup> which is fair enough given that the import of the figure of Adam is his capacity of primordial archetype of humanity. However, as Goff points out, Wold’s reading goes against the most intuitive reading of the text: why would the author have written that the vision was “bequeathed to the people, and to the spiritual people”?<sup>94</sup> This is no problem for Wold, who argues that line 17 does not say “together with the spiritual people” at all. Rather, he follows Cana Werman, in taking the first  $\text{נע}$  as the attributive of Enosh, and the second  $\text{נע}$  as the preposition “with.” Instead of “Adam, together with the spiritual people,” one then can read “humanity, a people with spirit”—a statement that all humans were created with spirit.<sup>95</sup> However, some of them—particularly the Israelites—went astray, and it is these to whom the labels “fleshly spirit” and “inclination of the flesh” refer, and who receive *hagu* “no more.”<sup>96</sup> The upshot of Wold’s reading is obvious: 4QInstruction is then no determinist text, but offers a volitionist perspective, wherein all human beings are responsible for whether they live according to ‘spirit’ or ‘flesh,’ since all humans were originally made as creatures of spirit.<sup>97</sup>

Space does not permit me to engage each step of Wold’s argument, but in short, such a reading of 4QInstruction appears anachronistic, given the absence of something resembling a faculty of ‘free will’ concerned with ‘freedom to do otherwise’ in ancient Greek thought prior to at least the second century CE.<sup>98</sup> However, Wold correctly diagnoses the problem the passage is trying to deal with, which is why some people act one way and others act another way. Perhaps 4QInstruction envisions Adam/primordial humanity as in possession of *both* the fleshly spirit and *hagu*, as suggested by Tigchelaar—even if in the end-times, the two forms of people characterized by their inclination

93 Wold, “Universality,” 217–18; idem, “Flesh’ and ‘Spirit,” 266; similarly, Werman, “What is the *Book of Hagu*?” 137; Tigchelaar, “Spiritual People,” 111–12.

94 *4QInstruction*, 163.

95 Wold, “Universality,” 219–20; idem, “Flesh’ and ‘Spirit,” 265–71, following Werman, “What is the *Book of Hagu*?” 137.

96 Wold, “Universality,” 219; idem, “Flesh’ and ‘Spirit,” 277.

97 “Humanity is spiritual and even in the case that the unrighteous form an opposing group, one that is described as no longer being given *Hagu*, they are still described as the fleshly *spirit*” (Wold, “Universality,” 220, italics his). The ‘Garden of Eden’ passage in 4Q423 is central to his development of this thesis: “all of humanity started out in the garden and each person chose to cultivate wisdom or not. The failure to do so results in this privilege being taken away, which is the description found in the vision of *Hagu*” (Wold, “Universality,” 224). Wold offers a more expansive exploration of this reading in his recent monograph *4QInstruction*.

98 See e.g. Bobzien, “Inadvertent Conception,” esp. 142–46, 173–74; for a somewhat different account, see Frede, *Free Will*, 44–48, 77, 85; see also Popović, “Apocalyptic Determinism,” 257; Kocar, “In Heaven,” 242; idem, “Ethics,” 223.



decided who has access to revelation, and who not. And yet, as many scholars have observed, this properly ‘determinist’ theology seems to have coexisted at Qumran with a variety of texts and everyday practices which presuppose some degree of human volition.<sup>102</sup> Moreover, as Jonathan Klawans has argued, virtually all apocalyptic literature presupposes some degree of divine determination, given the predominant periodization of history.<sup>103</sup> In other words: determinism at Nag Hammadi and Qumran, but so what?

Determinism and compatibilism were controversial positions to take in an ancient context, but they were not unusual, particularly in the world of ancient Jewry. This leads me to wonder if we should rein in the impulse of scholarship today to regard heresiological charges of ‘Gnostic determinism’ to have been mere slander or at least woefully misinformed. This impulse has served as a healthy correction of a naïve acceptance of the heresiologists’ testimony and their agendas. However, perhaps this naïveté goes even deeper, by privileging Irenaeus and his ilk as representative of ‘mainstream’ Christian thought.<sup>104</sup> Put bluntly, maybe it was not the compatibilism of the Valentinian author of *Tri. Trac.* that was strange in its day; maybe it was the impulse towards volitionism in Justin and Irenaeus. A look at determinism at Qumran helps us see that compatibilism was standard stuff for Jewish intellectuals of the Second Temple period, and that the departure from it by ‘proto-orthodox’ Christian writers was extreme, even if their position has become more familiar to us.

Second, the tripartite anthropologies of the Valentinians are frustratingly vague about the social realities behind them—what an animate does and how freely s/he does it, and how they actually are to get saved. The problem is compounded by the variety of views in the sources. However, despite this variety, I think all of these sources are dealing with the same problem: what to do with people who are neither ‘in’ nor ‘out,’ regardless of whether the ‘animates’ refer to non-Valentinian fellow Christians, or to potential ‘Pagan’ converts.<sup>105</sup> Granted, in the endgame, it will come down to the spirituals and the materials,

102 Surveyed in Popović, “Apocalyptic Determinism,” 257, 264–66; cf. Attridge, “Divine Sovereignty,” 191–98.

103 Klawans, *Josephus*, 62; see also Popović, “Apocalyptic Determinism,” 258–61; along similar lines, Löhr, “Gnostic Determinism,” 387.

104 Similarly Kocar, “In Heaven,” 277.

105 The former assumption appears to govern most secondary scholarship on the matter in *Tri. Trac.*, since an inter-Christian context is clearly meant in the parallel evidence of Ir. *Haer.* and Clem. Alex. *Exc.* The latter possibility has been suggested for *Tri. Trac.* by Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, esp. 168–73, followed by Dunning, “Tripartite Anthropologies,” 183 n. 14. Kocar surmises rather that the work has very general types in mind (“‘Humanity,’” 214–15). Dunderberg’s argument is complex, and space does not permit full engagement with it here; in any case, the claims made in this article concerning the usage of terminology



a bipartite anthropology and soteriology—but we are not at the end yet. ‘Animate’ is the word for people who are questionable—or, from a missionary perspective, who are targets.<sup>106</sup>

Some of the ambiguity we face when we turn to the Valentinian ‘animates’ and their post-mortem fate is clarified—if not solved—by a look at the Vision of Hagu, which *only* envisions “people of flesh” and “people of spirit.” 4QInstruction is not a product of the Qumran sectarians, but “the separation from the rest of humankind and the addressee’s affinity with the angels, along with his access to supernatural revelation in the form of the *raz nihyeh*, suggest that the composition was written to a specific community that considered its members to have elect status. The group had some sort of sectarian mentality ...”<sup>107</sup> There was no halfway in being a member of this group, for there is no need for a category of ‘animates’ in a deeply sectarian context. The more sectarian a group is, the less interest it has in a category of ‘in-betweens’ that accommodates spiritual failings, however construed.<sup>108</sup> This confirms what scholars have been cautiously saying about the Valentinians for some time: our evidence describes people who were embedded in churches of the Jesus movement, and participated fully in a wider Christian culture beyond Valentinian circles. Valentinians were no sect; they were, in Rodney Stark’s terms, a ‘Church.’<sup>109</sup> The category of ‘animate’ presupposes considerable fluidity in practice, because the social situation of the Valentinian churches demanded such fluidity, where some animates revealed themselves to be spirituals, others revealed themselves to be materials, and perhaps still others revealed themselves to be somewhere in-between—but still part of the terrestrial Church.<sup>110</sup> Yet at the end of the world—what *Tri. Trac.* calls the ‘Restoration’—there will

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of ‘spiritual’ and ‘animate’ in *Tri. Trac.* stand or fall regardless of whom one believes the ‘animates’ to be.

106 Similarly Brakke, *Gnostics*, 116.

107 Goff, “Angels,” 4. On sectarianism at Qumran with respect to the question of determinism, see Alexander, “Predestination,” 48; on sectarianism at Qumran more generally, see Regev, *Sectarianism*, esp. 33–93.

108 Regarding the various typologies concerning “churches,” “sects,” and “cults,” see Bromley, “Sect / Sectarianism / Cult.”

109 See e.g. Williams, *Rethinking “Gnosticism”*, 111; Brakke, *Gnostics*, 119; cf. also idem, “Scriptural Practices,” esp. 274.

110 Noting that the *Shepherd of Hermas*, Clement of Alexandria, and even Irenaeus himself also explored notions of higher and lower salvific rewards among the saved, Kocar suggests that for all parties involved—including Valentinian authors—“the phenomenon of higher and lower levels of salvation was a useful technology that could help maintain expectations for ethical conduct, but could also help account for moral shortcomings” (“In Heaven,” 230). This hope of progress within and beyond these “moral shortcomings”—i.e., “fluidity in practice”—is not described in 4QInstruction.

no longer be any soul, only spirit and flesh. At this moment of the Restoration of the entire pre-existent Church to its original, celestial state, the Valentinian Church is, in sociological terms, no longer a church at all. It is a sect.

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# The Visionary's View: Otherworldly Motifs and Their Use/Reuse in Texts of Qumran and Nag Hammadi

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This essay analyzes traditional tropes that are prominent in the narration of visions which relate to a seer's peering into otherworldly space. It will engage the early Jewish literary contexts in which otherworldly motifs are present. Portrayals of the otherworld often occur in revelatory texts connected to apocalypses and/or the Aramaic language. The article will next discuss major motifs that pertain to the otherworld which are found in these texts. It then explores how particular texts from Qumran and Nag Hammadi utilize comparable *topoi*. From central sites like Jerusalem and the temple of a utopian future to cosmological motifs associated with extraordinary access to heavenly secrets, these tropes are found in a range of Jewish and Christian literature. Earlier traditions also refer to locales connected to postmortem judgment; such eschatological themes, however, do not appear in the same manner in sectarian texts from among the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices. Instead, the otherworldly imagery that derives from common traditions is reconfigured in distinctive ways in each textual corpus.

## 1 Visions and Revelations

A first matter to take up is the literary context of otherworldly *topoi*. Traditional *topoi* related to mythic geography<sup>1</sup> appear in the narration of visions, visions that concern a seer's peering into otherworldly space, a realm or reality that

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1 I define "mythic geography" in the following manner: "Mythic geography might be defined as particular sites, topography, regions or realms that have a legendary quality to them and are in some manner ordinarily inaccessible to humankind. The expression itself may be artificial or anachronistic with regard to an ancient audience who might not have understood such sites to be "mythical" in either the ancient or contemporary sense of the word; in fact, such sites might be said to reflect or inform the world view and mental map of an ancient audience. Still there were certain locales represented as extraordinary, remote, and unreachable in the Greco-Roman world to all but a few, sites which play a role especially in the journeys



is not otherwise accessible.<sup>2</sup> Access to otherworlds occurs via vision (הזה) and revelation (גלה).<sup>3</sup> These emic categories lend themselves to both visionary reports of the second temple period and the transmission of esoteric information.<sup>4</sup> By way of further context, interpreting angels serve as tour guides for the visionary and also conveniently explain to the reader/hearer the significance of the *topoi* emphasized. The visionary experience and pseudepigraphal persona confer authority on the extraordinary content that is revealed,

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- of heroes and seers to the ends of the earth or to heavenly realms or in descriptions of the afterlife." See my "Geography, Mythic," 673.
- 2 Raphael helpfully advocates for further clarification of terms such as "transcendence" and "otherworld." See her "Metacritical Thoughts on Transcendence and the Definition of Apocalypse." By otherworldly and transcendent space, place and phenomena, I mean space, place and phenomena that are not readily available or self-evident by ordinary sense perception. Lefebvre's classification of space conceived (*The Production of Space*) and E. Soja's "Secondspace" (space imagined as well as re-presented; see, for example, *Thirdspace*, esp. 10, 66–67) are useful also for assessing the depiction of space in these texts. As spatiality studies make clear, space, imagined or real, is a social construct and is mediated and understood always by means of culture. See, for example, Flanagan, "Ancient Perceptions of Space/Perceptions of Ancient Space," 26–39; Berquist, "Critical Spatiality and the Construction of the Ancient World," 14–29; George, "Space and History"; Coblenz Bauth, "Spatiality and Apocalyptic Literature," 5–9.
  - 3 Parlance of visions and revelations as modes of divine communication are found in association with prophetic figures from Balaam (Num 24:16), for example, and Amos (see 3:7); note the LXX's rendering in these instances of הזה and גלה as ὄρασις and ἀποκαλύπτω, respectively. As perceived forms of communication, the lexemes and concepts of הזה and גלה have had longevity, even as they were transformed within different cultural and temporal contexts. While not addressing specifically the matter of genre, I suggest that Morton Smith's assessment of ἀποκαλύπτω and ἀποκαλύψις in early Jewish contexts overstates the case that these do not have much to do with divine revelation (Smith, "On the History of ΑΠΟΚΑΛΥΠΤΩ and ΑΠΟΚΑΛΥΨΙΣ," 10, 18). Smith was not able to benefit from important, subsequent work on the Dead Sea Scrolls, which might have led to the nuancing of his study. In fact, the extensive work undertaken on the Scrolls to date, suggest a reevaluation of these lexemes in order and should be brought to bear on our study of a number of texts. See also DiTommaso, "זהה"; Machiela, "גלה." See further also Perrin, *The Dynamics of Dream-Vision Revelation in the Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls*, who examines especially the role of dreams in association with visions and revelation.
  - 4 With regard to esoteric traditions, DiTommaso noted in his formal response to this paper that information revealed in these kinds of texts is often of a general nature and not so specific. DiTommaso's comment recalls the observation of Shani Tzoref earlier in the conference that heavenly revelation can concern material that is already available and earthly. See Shemesh and Werman, "Hidden Things and their Revelation," 409–27, for an intriguing examination of the reception of Deut 29:28 among ancient communities drawing on the language of revelation and esotericism.

and the pseudepigraphal persona<sup>5</sup> selected also provides a meaningful narrative frame for the rhetorical or hortatory purpose of the work.

Focus on genre directed scholarly attention to narratives which forefronted revelations from otherworldly sources to human recipients (especially by means of visionary reports). These narratives, which also were identified in antiquity as revelatory (i.e., Rev 1:1) and exhibited certain shared features used to similar effect, came to be designated “apocalypses.”<sup>6</sup> Important genological (genre-oriented) studies<sup>7</sup> in the last decade have brought to the fore the limitations of or challenges associated with the generic study of ancient texts,<sup>8</sup> and the genre “apocalypse” in particular has been deemed, from different critical vantages, a contemporary construct created for scholarly analysis.<sup>9</sup> Still, the insights of John J. Collins—that apocalyptic literature<sup>10</sup> (a more neutral

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- 5 In his response to this paper, DiTommaso inquired about the identity of the visionaries. In some cases, the identity of the visionary is not clear from the text (as in the case of the *New Jerusalem Text*). In other instances, one can find compelling enough reasons as to why different figures are invoked in pseudepigraphical, visionary texts, and how the personas (and their contexts) relate to the vision's content (for example, Ezra and Baruch's associations with the time of the exile and restoration make them potent figures for addressing the loss of the second temple and future aspirations in 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch). At the same time, visionaries of illustrious backgrounds help to authorize the content of the vision. It may also be the case that the literature draws on a repertoire of authorizing tropes, that mean to signal the numinous or divine origin of the visionary experience or text.
- 6 See the definition of Collins, “Introduction,” 9, which is nuanced in later publications; for example, Collins, “What is Apocalyptic Literature?” 2–6. See also Collins's response in *Apocalyptic Thinking in Early Judaism: Engaging with John Collins' The Apocalyptic Imagination*. Attentiveness to genre and literary form occurred at a time some might characterize as the twilight of form criticism. See Goff, “The Apocalypse and the Sage,” 15–17.
- 7 See especially Newsom, “Spying out the Land.” See also Linton, “Reading the Apocalypse as Apocalypse,” and Barr, “Beyond Genre.”
- 8 Newsom, “Spying Out the Land,” 21, 26. See also Tigchelaar, *Prophets of Old and the Day of the End*, 1–12. There is awareness as well that the texts we study creatively employ genre, can be indebted to and transform earlier genres and can communicate multiple influences as well as styles. See Newsom, “Spying out the Land,” 26, 28–29 and Linton, “Reading the Apocalypse as Apocalypse,” who call attention to the genological work of J. Derrida, M.-L. Ryan, V. Shklovsky, A. Fowler, and M. Bakhtin.
- 9 Goff, “The Apocalypse and the Sage,” 9. Reflecting on Collins' work on both the genre apocalypse and apocalyptic literature in general, Goff contrasts the scholarly construct “apocalypse” with the diachronic studies of apocalypticism.
- 10 On terminology, taxonomy and definitions, see DiTommaso, “Apocalypses and Apocalypticism in Antiquity (Part I),” 238–42. He (*ibid.*, 241) notes: “The label ‘apocalyptic literature’ remains a common and useful if general term, although it should be restricted to instances where precise definitions are unneeded or inappropriate. It potentially encompasses apocalypses proper, texts operating as apocalypses, but which are not formal examples of the genre, and, characteristically, a nebula of associated compositions

designation, perhaps, than “apocalypse”?) reveals spatially and temporally transcendent *realia*<sup>11</sup>—and of Christopher Rowland (concerning the importance of revelation itself)<sup>12</sup> are valuable to our thinking about visionary texts that concern “otherworlds.”

Bracketing the critique of genre, there is another issue involving a discussion of apocalypse and the Dead Sea Scrolls. While the community<sup>13</sup> at Qumran has been widely understood as apocalyptic in orientation, the extent to which “apocalypses” (per the initial *Semeia* articulation) were present among the Dead Sea Scrolls has been debated.<sup>14</sup> An important insight has been, however, that would-be candidates for the genre ‘apocalypse’ among the texts contained in the Scrolls are typically written in Aramaic;<sup>15</sup> or put alternatively, the Aramaic texts tend toward apocalyptic.<sup>16</sup> Further, attention to the semantic range of חזיה and גלה in the Aramaic texts among the Scrolls yields an awareness that these texts are acutely attentive to the disclosure of divine mysteries, esoterica,

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whose definitions remain in dispute but which for certain purposes may be included in a broader category.” On the scholarship of apocalypticism, see, for example, Hellholm, ed., *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East*; Yarbrow Collins, ed., *Early Christian Apocalypticism*; Collins and Charlesworth, eds., *Mysteries and Revelations*; Collins, McGinn, and Stein, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*; Collins, ed., *Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*. Numerous studies and presentations at the eleventh Enoch Seminar / Munich Congress on Apocalypticism in Antiquity (May 23–27, 2021; published proceedings from this meeting anticipated) have made clear the complexities associated with heuristic terms like “apocalyptic” and “apocalypticism.” In the first decades of the twenty-first century, an “apocalyptic” worldview is commonly associated with “supernatural revelation, the heavenly world, angels and demons, and eschatological judgment” (Collins, “What is Apocalyptic Literature?,” 7).

11 See “Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre,” 9.

12 Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, 14.

13 While the Scrolls typically have been associated with a particular movement (i.e. sectaries or Essenes), it is important to consider the collective in a nuanced manner, keeping in mind the origin of the group, the presence of the group outside of Qumran, the history of occupation of Qumran as suggested by the archaeology of the site, and the dynamic nature of the community or communities over time.

14 For example, Stegemann, “Die Bedeutung der Qumranfunde für die Erforschung der Apokalyptik”; Dimant, “Themes and Genres in the Aramaic Texts from Qumran,” 16–18. Collins, willing to use the language of apocalypse but cognizant of its limitations, suggests nonetheless several candidates that might be deemed apocalypses, works that would be especially associated with otherworldly journeys or visionary reports; see his “Apocalypticism and Literary Genre in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 406–21.

15 Collins, “Apocalypticism and Literary Genre in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 421.

16 Much has been published on this topic. See, for example, García Martínez, “Aramaica Qumranica Apocalypica”; and DiTommaso, “Apocalypticism and the Aramaic Texts from Qumran.”

special insight and transcendent realms.<sup>17</sup> Many of the Aramaic texts are considered non-sectarian and there is good reason—considering their preservation apart from the Scrolls—to think that they originated outside of Qumran.<sup>18</sup>

Visions, interpreting angels, and visionary journeys appear also in texts outside of the Aramaic works preserved among the Dead Sea Scrolls. These are available in post-exilic Hebrew texts (respectively, Ezekiel 1–3; 10; Zechariah; Ezekiel 40–48) sometimes posited as influences upon the *Book of the Watchers* and other early Jewish texts.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps what especially distinguishes the Aramaic texts, like *Watchers*, from earlier Hebrew predecessors is the extent to which these motifs, many set in the hoary past, dominate compositions.

Complicating matters, regardless of how one would identify the Aramaic texts, the *Book of the Watchers*—if considered a prominent example from among this “corpus”—explicitly takes up the matter of eschatology and judgment. Acknowledging the numerous literary microstructures within *Watchers*,<sup>20</sup> the booklet’s attention to divine judgment and places associated with it appear throughout, but are especially concentrated in chapters 17–36. In fact, eschatological judgment is the only subject interpreting angels bring up in conversation with Enoch. If we are uncertain about designating the *Book of the Watchers* a type of “book of the dead” or *nekylia*, we cannot deny the prominence the text accords to journeys to places associated with the afterlife and future punishment and reward.<sup>21</sup> As if to make the point that such concerns were significant to the *Book of the Watchers*, numerous early Jewish and Christian texts, which bear resemblances to the former, also explore the nature of the afterlife, paradise and places of punishment.<sup>22</sup>

17 DiTommaso, “חֹזֶה” and Machiela, “גִּלְיָה,” 611. Perrin’s study (*Dynamics of Dream-Vision Revelation in the Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls*) also highlights the association between Aramaic texts and revelation.

18 The Enochic booklets, Daniel 2:4–7:28, a pseudepigraphon associated with Levi, and the *Book of Giants* are examples. On the literary creativity of scribes and their distinctive contributions to these Aramaic texts, see Reed, *Demons, Angels, and Writing in Ancient Judaism*, 87–131.

19 Regarding the influence of Ezekiel, see Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 56–58; and *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, 73–102; also Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, 78–85. Regarding the influence of Zechariah, Wacker, *Weltordnung und Gericht*, 292–94 and Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 292.

20 So Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 28–36.

21 See, for example, Bauckham, “Early Jewish Visions of Hell”; and idem, “Visiting the Places of the Dead in the Extra-Canonical Apocalypses.”

22 See the studies of Himmelfarb and Bauckham. Texts include, for example, the Hebrew *Apocalypse of Elijah* (*Sefer Eliyahu*), the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*, and numerous others.

Ascent traditions, too, continued to be popular in certain Jewish and Christian texts featuring tours of hell and paradise, relocated to the heavens,<sup>23</sup> as well as in *Hekhalot* and *Merkavah* literature. We need not try to prove that the *Book of the Watchers* inspired these later writings, and unlike Himmelfarb and Halperin, I am not arguing that Ezekiel or other texts considered now as “biblical” served as *the* point of inspiration for *Watchers* or comparable texts. The point I wish to make here is simply that visionary accounts involving journeys and ascents have a long afterlife in terms of narrative settings that continue to be popular among Jews and Christians. Perhaps Aramaic texts like the *Book of the Watchers* were significant as vehicles for otherworldly *topoi* and visionary accounts. At the same time, aspects of the tradition can be found in Hebrew texts, and have a very rich existence in much later texts.

## 2 What Seers Saw

The *topoi* we take up concern three areas: 1) key geographical sites; 2) cosmological tropes; and 3) sites uniquely associated with judgment.

Visionary reports can include visits to sites that are “this worldly” in orientation and familiar to tradition, though they are removed temporally in some manner. Ezekiel 40–48 and the *New Jerusalem Text* (influenced likely by the former) include tours of a future, ideal temple and environs, and the *Book of the Watchers* has its protagonist learn about the future temple (*1 En.* 24–25) and then visit Jerusalem (*1 En.* 26–27).<sup>24</sup> Ezekiel 40–48, the *New Jerusalem Text* and the *Book of the Watchers* showcase space in the context of a tour led by an angelic guide. The temple of Ezekiel 40–48 with life giving water flowing from the temple in chapter 47 is of a utopian nature.<sup>25</sup> The *Book of the Watchers* evokes both temple and Jerusalem (*1 En.* 25–27), and with the transplanting of a fragrant tree whose fruit extends life, envisages a paradisiacal home for the righteous in the shadow of the temple in some future time. Jerusalem is

23 While early second temple period texts exhibit a tri-partite cosmology of a netherworld, landmass and heaven, apocalyptic texts from the first century CE and following tend to adopt a view of the cosmos featuring multi-layered heavens in which “paradise” or “Hades” was relocated to the heavens. See Wright, *The Early History of Heaven*, 30–37, 53–58, 117–23, 139–84. See also Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism*, esp. 21–54.

24 I follow here DiTommaso’s (“New Jerusalem,” 798) distinction between the idealized (restored) Jerusalem (e.g. Tobit 13) and an ideal (utopian) Jerusalem.

25 The seer also underscores that the temple and its environs belong to the realm of vision through frequent use of  $\text{ܩܝܢܘܢܐ}$ .

described as the sacred center of the world (*1 En.* 26:1).<sup>26</sup> The *New Jerusalem Text* features a seer led throughout Jerusalem and the temple with special emphasis on space related to priestly ritual.<sup>27</sup>

While each must be read on its own terms, general questions to be put to these texts concern whether and to what extent they intend to present a sacred site restored along particular lines, depict an eschatological temple and city, or communicate the significance of space through use of symbolic language.<sup>28</sup> The highly stylized, monumental architecture in Ezekiel 40–48 and the *New Jerusalem Text* suggest to some that these are utopian depictions of a new age<sup>29</sup> (that is, of a temple and Jerusalem divorced from earlier manifestations);<sup>30</sup> imagery of flowing water that issues from the temple and brings life to all and the arboreal references signify vitality (*1 En.* 26:1–2; contrast 18:12).<sup>31</sup> In addition to space, scholars have also called attention to the close relationship between space and time in literary works. The relationship is expressed through Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of *chronotope* ("time-space"). Ezekiel 40–48, the *Book of the Watchers*, and the *New Jerusalem Text* convey a view of space that is not immediately available, presumably looking to a utopian future.<sup>32</sup>

Visionary texts feature mountains or bodies of water often described in allusive terms but also sometimes explicitly identified (for example, the Red Sea in *1 En.* 32:2). Some geo-political sites serve as the setting for putative visionary experiences or appear in narratives which are otherwise sparse in geographical

26 The language employed evokes Eden, but it is clear in the *Book of the Watchers* that there are several sites which employ the motif of fragrant trees and feature lush surroundings (*1 En.* 24:4 [note the tree here is relocated in a future time by the temple; 25:5]; 26:1–3; 27:1; 28:1–3; 29:2; 30:1–32:1) and none of these are equated in the text with Eden (depicted as the "Paradise of Righteousness [or Truth]" associated with the protoplasts; *1 En.* 32:2–6), which this Enochic booklet locates far to the east.

27 See DiTommaso, *The Dead Sea New Jerusalem Text*, esp. 112–33 on the New Jerusalem in early Judaism and Christianity and scholarly assessments of the motif.

28 With regard to the *New Jerusalem Text*, the reference to traditional enemies of Israel in 4Q554 frag. 2 suggests to some that the temple is anticipated in the eschaton after a battle of some sort.

29 So Tigchelaar, "The Character of the City and the Temple of the Aramaic *New Jerusalem*," 131 (cf. also *Jub.* 1.27–29 and 11QT<sup>a</sup> XXIX, 8–10).

30 Do re-presentations of the temple mean to challenge also the nature of the contemporaneous temple? See Beyerle, "The Imagined World of Apocalypses," 383–85. In the case of the *Book of the Watchers*, the Jerusalem of *1 Enoch* 24–27 has a positive evaluation (see Coblentz Bautch, "Situating the Afterlife," 261). It is worth noting that the temple and Jerusalem depicted in these works belong to the realm of visions.

31 But note, the use of tree, branches and sapling imagery in *1 En.* 26:1 could refer to a family, with perhaps messianic overtones.

32 In *Book of the Watchers*, this is indicated by the judgment at the Valley of Hinnom (*1 En.* 27).

information. The latter include Mount Hermon (*1 En.* 6:6; 13:7), Abel-Main (*1 En.* 13:9; *ALD* 4:1),<sup>33</sup> Dan (*1 En.* 13:7), and Sinai (*1 En.* 1:4; *Jub.* 4:26). The sites are saturated with meaning, both in terms of traditions associated with Israel (as in the instance of Sinai, linked to the giving of the Torah, theophany and received revelation)<sup>34</sup> and in terms of the authors' own contexts, whose relationships with such sites are now lost to us.<sup>35</sup> In these instances, the interplay between past and future significance of sites and the extraordinary occurrences at these sites again—hinting at potentiality?—present narrativized constructs of space in which the latter is essentialized.

In addition to journeys along the 'horizontal' axis to extraordinary this-worldly spaces, on the 'vertical' axis, there are traditions of heavenly ascents. Though a prophet like Micaiah ben Imlah sees God enthroned and surrounded by heavenly hosts (*1 Kgs* 22:19; cf. *Isa* 6), ascents are presented typically as visionary experiences in the context of dreams and visions that present the visionary journeying in some manner to God's remote (heavenly) throne room (see *1 En.* 13–16; *ALD* 4). In these visions, the symmetry or symbiotic connection between the earthly temple in Jerusalem and the heavenly temple often is made. Seers also view other extraordinary features of the cosmos unreachable to mortals. The mouth of the abyss (e.g., *1 En.* 17:8), the storehouse of the winds (e.g., 18:1; 60:11), the cornerstone or foundation of the earth (18:1–2), and the firmament of heaven (18:5) or the ends of the earth (18:5) are among the phenomena understood by these revelatory texts as unavailable to humankind.<sup>36</sup>

Other aspects of the "natural world" (for example, the depths of the abyss, the weight of the wind, the drops of rain [*2 Bar.* 59:5–6], and the "secrets" of lightning, wind, dew, etc. and how these function [*1 En.* 41:3–8]) are revealed to the elect or to seers<sup>37</sup> but presented in some wisdom literature as within the purview of God alone (see *Job* 28 and 38).<sup>38</sup> In the latter, the tropes serve

33 See Drawnel, *An Aramaic Wisdom Text From Qumran*, 75–76, 225–27.

34 The Valley of Hinnom (in Hebrew, *Ge Hinnom* and transliterated as *Gehenna*) provides another instance of this: deemed repugnant because it was the locus for immolation (*Jer* 19:2–5; 32:35), the place came to be associated with eschatological judgment (*Mark* 9:43, 45, 47; *2 Bar.* 59:11; *Sib. Or.* 1.103; 2.292).

35 Consider, for example, the speculation of Venter, "Spatiality in Enoch's Journeys," 228, who wonders whether the *Book of the Watchers* indicates a conflict between priests based in Dan and others in Jerusalem.

36 As is articulated by the seer after his first otherworldly voyage in the *Book of the Watchers* (*1 En.* 19:3).

37 Famously observed by Michael Stone, in "Lists of Revealed Things in the Apocalyptic Literature."

38 It is worth noting that the phenomena detailed in these lists typically include sites or phenomena linked with eschatology. See *2 Bar.* 59:2–4 and *1 En.* 41:1–2.

to distinguish in a literary context mortals from divinity; in the former, these help to establish the pedigree of the seer.<sup>39</sup> These *topoi*, in sum, are shared with elect figures and are presented in literature as outside the scope of humankind, again underscoring revelatory contexts.

The early Jewish texts that feature these *topoi* and their Christian successors typically tie extraordinary sites to eschatology, judgment and the afterlife. The pseudo-scientific information made available to Enoch in *1 Enoch* 17 and 36 bookends and is eclipsed by the journeys to sites associated with divine judgment. These sites can include realms of the dead (*1 Enoch* 22's western mountain), reference to otherworldly prisons for celestial rebels (chs. 18–19; 21), the paradise or garden of Adam and Eve (*1 En.* 32; *Jub.* 4:23),<sup>40</sup> Hades or Tartarus (*1 En.* 20:1; *Sib. Or.* 4:186; 2 Pet 2:4) or afterlife paradise, heavenly or otherwise (*1 En.* 20:7; 2 Bar. 4; 51; 59; 2 *En.* 8). The point is driven home by the fact that each dialogue (question and answer sessions involving the *angelus interpres*) in the *Book of the Watchers* concerns 1) places which detain malevolent or wayward creatures (rebellious watchers, wandering stars, the impious and apostates) until judgment or 2) places associated with eschatological judgment or blessings in some manner (*1 En.* 18:14–16; 19:1–2; 21:4–10; 22:1–14; 24:5–25:6; 27:1–4; 32:5–6).<sup>41</sup> While many of the visionary Aramaic texts at Qumran do not include the extensive visits to places associated with afterlife or judgment as one finds in the *Book of the Watchers*, many of these texts are noted for their apocalyptic worldview.<sup>42</sup> The association between these visionary texts and eschatology is further underscored by the numerous later apocalypses with visits to paradise or hell which contain similar tropes (see above).

These traditional *topoi* and otherworldly sites are always revealed, removed in some manner, spatially or temporally, from the inhabited world. Motifs related to these otherworld *realia* that appear in visionary texts derive from a wide body of Near Eastern and Mediterranean lore, including traditions of ancient Israel. It is not clear to what extent these motifs were uniquely communicated to authors of early Jewish visionary works via sacred texts which would come to be thought of as authoritative. There has been much attention

39 Coblentz Bautch, *A Study of the Geography of 1 Enoch 17–19*, 223–27.

40 Earliest depictions of paradise present the mythical space as terrestrial but as located at the ends of the earth or as removed from the inhabited world. On the topic, see Coblentz Bautch, *A Study of the Geography of 1 Enoch 17–19*, and recently Goff, “Where’s Enoch?” who explores the traditions of Enoch stationed in paradise in *Jubilees*, the birth of Noah story (now situated in *1 Enoch* 106–7), and the *Book of Giants*.

41 With the dialogues noted above having to do with the second half of the *Book of the Watchers*, all angelic interaction with Enoch has to do in some way with the theme of judgment, including the first half of the booklet with its focus on the watchers.

42 See note 16 above.



paid to scribal products, intertextuality, and how authoritative texts generated subsequent literature. I would also like to allow for a fluid, creative environment in which themes, motifs and tropes circulated freely and were used to demonstrate esteem through extending particular traditions. We have only a very limited number of texts that are extant. We clearly do not have even a fraction of all the literary output of early Jews and Christians. Minimal witnesses should argue against the hasty positing of relationships among extant texts; instead, we should remain open to creative processes that contributed to the generation and transmission of such traditions.<sup>43</sup>

### 3 Otherworldly Motifs among the Sectarian Dead Sea Scrolls and Nag Hammadi Texts

We turn next to how otherworldly motifs appear in texts that are distinctive to the Dead Sea Scrolls and Nag Hammadi. While there is much that distinguishes the Dead Sea Scrolls from Nag Hammadi, the texts we associate with both tend to regard highly wisdom or gnosis revealed to particular sanctioned figures. Moreover, both corpora esteem revelation and a sense of esotericism. While many of the otherworldly tropes appear in their respective contexts in order to authorize visionaries,<sup>44</sup> frequently—and unlike earlier visionary texts to some extent—otherworldly motifs in the so-called sectarian Qumran and Nag Hammadi texts are especially interiorized and made a part of the visionary's internal landscape. To articulate succinctly, per the insight of Angela Kim Harkins, otherworldly motifs of (Lefebvre's) 'Secondspace' (space conceived) appear in these new contexts as 'Thirdspace' (the space of lived experience).<sup>45</sup> We consider a few instances of this phenomenon.

The *Thanksgiving Hymns* or *Hodayot* are often cited among the Scrolls associated with the sectaries. The *Hodayot* have been found in Caves 1 and 4, in several manuscripts.<sup>46</sup> The *Hodayot* are complex compositions on many levels and have benefited from contemporary scholarship which underscores this

43 For a fresh examination of the sites of revelation and 'launching' into heavenly journeys in Coptic apocrypha, see now Lundhaug, "Sitting on the Mount of Olives."

44 As noted also by Frankfurter, "The Legacy of Jewish Apocalypses in Early Christianity," 151–52.

45 *Reading with an "I" to the Heavens*, 5, 114–52; see also Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 39–45. Relevant also is Henry Corbin's articulation of the "imaginal world." See his *Temple and Contemplation*, 263–390.

46 See Schuller, "1QHodayot<sup>a</sup>." Schuller notes numerous ways the *Thanksgiving Hymns* exhibit vocabulary or features like other composition considered sectarian among the Scrolls.

point. For example, Carol Newsom examined the *Hodayot* in terms of how they functioned in identity formation among the sectarians of Qumran.<sup>47</sup> Through analysis of discourse in the *Hodayot*, Newsom observes both identity construction and world-making. The self-construction of the sectary was largely inculcated through instruction and praxis.<sup>48</sup> In terms of their world-making, the authors of the *Hodayot* drew upon many key otherworldly motifs. These include the language of ascent to heaven (1QH XI, 20–21; 1QH XV, 25–28), paradise and the Garden of Eden (1QH XVI, 5–XVII, 36), and places of punishment and imprisonment (for example, the abyss, Sheol, or the pit; 1QH X, 14–15, 23; 1QH XI, 10, 13, 14–19, 27–29, 30–33; XVII, 4–5).

Harkins examined these otherworldly *topoi* and, drawing on spatial theory and performance studies, explained how these *topoi* related to the use of the *Hodayot* at Qumran. Harkins proposes that the performative reading and emotional re-enactment of first-person hymns were mechanisms for experiencing events described in the *Hodayot*. Indeed, the one performing, enacting or reading the *Hodayot* is taken on an interior journey, one in which earlier tropes<sup>49</sup> relate less to external geography, markers of authority, or future judgment. In fact, when contrasting apocalypses with texts considered distinctive to Qumran, John Collins concluded that the scrolls authored by sectaries displayed a sense of realized eschatology: that is, the community was already enjoying the fruits of their ideal, “angelic” existence in fellowship with the angels (consider, for example, 1QH XXVI, 4–5; also XXIII, 30).<sup>50</sup>

While the classic articulation of the genre apocalypse is not well attested among the sectarian compositions at Qumran, scholars initially identified many contenders for this revelatory genre among the Nag Hammadi texts.<sup>51</sup> Inasmuch as otherworldly *topoi* are communicated within visionary contexts, one would expect that Nag Hammadi works identified as apocalypses would be potential contexts for these. These works, which may be considered eschatological from different vantages, also take a more interiorized approach to these *topoi*.<sup>52</sup>

47 Newsom, *The Self as Symbolic Space*, 191–346.

48 *The Self as Symbolic Space*, 77–286.

49 See Harkins, *Reading with an “I” to the Heavens*, 124–52.

50 Collins, “Apocalypticism and Literary Genre in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 426–28. It is perhaps interesting to consider the observation of Nickelsburg and others that the sectarian texts do not have much to say about afterlife—traditional fodder for later Jewish and Christian texts, which, like the *Book of the Watchers*, explore eschatological places of punishments and reward.

51 See, for example, Fallon, “The Gnostic Apocalypses.”

52 For a reassessment of the language of apocalyptic and apocalypses in light of particular Gnostic movements, see Attridge, “Valentinian and Sethian Apocalyptic Traditions.”

Discerning a deep-rooted connection between Nag Hammadi apocalypses and early Judaism, Guy Stroumsa,<sup>53</sup> Birger Pearson,<sup>54</sup> and David Frankfurter<sup>55</sup> have sought to demonstrate several notable instances of indebtedness. When it comes to the texts traditionally designated apocalypses, formal features associated with early Jewish visionary texts appear, but are utilized to very different ends. We consider briefly one example: the otherworldly journey of *Zostrianos*.

*Zostrianos* (NHC VIII,1) relates the first-person account of a journey undertaken by a seer; the pseudonymous narrative engages a highly philosophical vocabulary and revolves around the seer's quest for knowledge of the self and the universe.<sup>56</sup> The tractate commences with *Zostrianos*' anguish as he ponders

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- Attridge challenges the "global" definitions usually proffered for apocalypticism and Gnosticism and attends especially to particular Gnostic movements or communities (Valentinians and Sethians) more readily identifiable by texts. He notes how Valentinian texts tend to ignore characteristics of early Jewish apocalyptic texts and have a form of eschatology more attentive to the philosophically inclined. In contrast, Sethian texts have more features that recall early Jewish revelatory literature.
- 53 Stroumsa, *Another Seed*. There has also been attention to possible connections between Gnosticism and later Jewish mysticism, especially thanks to the work of G. Scholem and P. Alexander. See also Herrmann, "Jüdische Gnosis?"
- 54 See, for example, his "The Problem of 'Jewish Gnostic' Literature," 15–36. Demonstrating how the *Apocalypse of Weeks* may have influenced the *Life of Adam and Eve* (ibid., 30), Pearson notes: "What we have available now, as the result of chance discoveries, is undoubtedly only the 'tip of the iceberg.' In the material at our disposal we can see how specifically Jewish literature (esp. the Bible), Jewish exegetical and theological traditions, and Jewish literary genres have been utilized to express a drastic reorientation of values and perceived religious truth" (ibid., 34).
- 55 "The Legacy of Jewish Apocalypses in Early Christianity," esp. 150. Frankfurter (ibid., 142–49) explores the social context and historical circumstances in Egypt that may have fueled Jewish apocalypticism and have led Christians to explore ideas of revelation, gnosis, and authority. In the background as well, he notes, are indigenous Egyptian traditions of oracles, revelations, and even use of narrative frames to retroject revelatory episode into the past (ibid., 146–49). In terms of texts associated with Gnosticism, Frankfurter (ibid., 151) would place a text like *Zostrianos* along with other Nag Hammadi texts that concern "cognitive awareness of cosmological secrets" (e.g., the *Apocryphon of John*).
- 56 *Zostrianos* is considered typically representative of Sethian Gnosticism. Earlier scholars challenged the extent to which *Zostrianos* is eschatological or reflects a Jewish or Christian background (e.g., Turner, "Gnosticism and Platonism," 429). More recently, Burns (*Apocalypse of the Alien God*) demonstrates the work's eschatological framework (96–102; see also idem, "Cosmic Eschatology and Christian Platonism," 169–89) and argues that Sethianism here, even in Platonized form, is related to traditions of Judaism and Christianity (*Apocalypse of the Alien God*, 140). Even so, his cautious approach to this literature seems especially wise (*Apocalypse of the Alien God*, 140): *Zostrianos* is "not easily classifiable as belonging to one movement or the other. It is thus a strong witness to the artificial nature of terms used to describe ancient religious discourse and the great indebtedness of one branch of Gnostic thought to Jewish lore." Burns notes that Sethian

how a malevolent cosmos was derived from “an invisible, undivided, and self-begotten spirit” (*Zost. NHC VIII* 2.27–28).<sup>57</sup> With the appearance of the “angel of the knowledge of eternal light” (3.28–29), Zostrianos is elevated to the heavenly world of the Autogenes aeon. Zostrianos is accompanied by divine guides (Ephesech, Authrounios, Youel, and Salamex) who respond to his questions concerning the nature of humankind and the “All.” In addition to gaining “gnosis” at each level of the “ascent,” Zostrianos is baptized (4.12–129.22). Zostrianos “descends” through the various levels (129.22–28) until he is again returned to the “air” (ἀήρ) and “the perceptible world” (πῶς οὐρανός) where he inscribes three wooden tablets for those coming after him (130.1–6). Zostrianos returns to preach his newfound truth which is summarized in a homily at the conclusion of the work (130.16–132.6).

This broad sketch demonstrates how *Zostrianos* resembles other texts identified as apocalypses inasmuch as the seer makes a journey led by otherworldly guides and travels through realms not easily reached. Yet the work does not utilize spatial setting in the same manner as the early Jewish visionary texts we have discussed. *Zostrianos* lacks mention of any specific locale and is, in fact, a hostile witness to the material, sensible world integral to constructing a terrestrial *mise en scene*.<sup>58</sup> The seer is concerned only with the spatial inasmuch as he rejects the sensible world of which he himself is a part and disparages cosmos (κόσμος), creation (κτίσις), the somatic darkness (πῶς οὐρανός), and his own body (κῶς οὐρανός), the perceptible world (πῶς οὐρανός), and his own body

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traditions are not oscillating between Jewish, Christian, Greek, or Roman influences, but rather are broadly indebted to a rich context (p. 145); he also observes that the absence of speech associated with Jesus does not necessarily make Sethian texts “not Christian.” As has been demonstrated with “Old Testament Pseudepigrapha” which were not only preserved but authored by Christians (see Davila, *The Provenance of the Pseudepigrapha*), Burns is correct.

57 Translations of *Zostrianos* are from Sieber, “Translation.”

58 In terms of the different approach to space and *topoi* in otherworldly journeys, Glenn W. Most argues that Gnostic texts “tend in general to downplay the role of human (or humanized) agents and the specificity of their intentions, actions, and spatiotemporal circumstances in conferring coherence to their narratives” (“Do Gnostics Tell Stories Differently from Other People?,” 230). Most concludes that the lack of context invites readers to move temporarily from their world into that of the text, with the aim of the readers moving beyond their world (ibid., 244). One exception occurs in the introduction to *Zost.*: in distress, Zostrianos seeks to give himself over to the wild beasts of the wilderness. It is in this desert (ἐρημός) where the seer encounters the “angel of knowledge” and experiences the revelatory journey (*Zost. NHC VIII* 3.26–28). In this respect, the use of desert as a *topos* for both a context where one can encounter the Divine (e.g., Elijah) or as a bewildering landscape (e.g., Jesus in the temptation scene) accords with the typical narrative pattern.

(πλάσμα).<sup>59</sup> Even the language of ascent can be misleading; “some of the Nag Hammadi apocalypses use the template of heavenly ascent to describe a non-spatial movement into the ‘Platonic’ heaven—that is, into intellect,” Dylan Burns observes.<sup>60</sup> That is, the seer makes an ontological, contemplative ascent.

In this regard, *Zostrianos*' negative evaluation of physical reality reflects one of the key points often made about the Gnostic understanding of the material world. As noted by Christoph Marksches in his typological study of Gnosticism, the material world and creation are problematic, a perspective that is reflected in numerous Nag Hammadi works.<sup>61</sup> The fictive environment presented in *Zostrianos* is paradigmatic: the drama to which the reader is introduced is an interiorized journey as it leads one to gnosis so that one may escape the inferior, material realm. Even so, the process is not entirely solitary: as PHEME PERKINS points out, the seer ultimately depends on divine revelation and could not ascend without the aid of divine assistance.<sup>62</sup> Other than the imaginative context of the otherworldly journey and revelation, many of the standard tropes are absent from *Zostrianos*.

#### 4 Concluding Observations

In the introduction to their edited volume *Revelation, Literature, and Community in Late Antiquity*, Philippa Townsend and Moulie Vidas make the case that

59 Cf. *Zost.* NHC VIII 1.10–25, 3.22–23, 4.24.

60 Personal correspondence, July 19, 2018. Burns also notes: “*Zostrianos*' ascent into heaven begins with a literal ascent into heaven, past the moon, but once he gets past the aeonic antitypes and arrives at the ‘Autogenes,’ he has completely escaped space and time. In some of these texts, ‘up’ and ‘down’ are still used as narrative components, but did the author really understand the ‘Autogenes’ to be ‘up’? Did the Christian scribe who transmitted the text, whose actual knowledge of Platonist philosophy may have been marginal, understand it that way?” The matter, according to Burns, has yet to be examined; cf. also his paper “There is No Soul in a Sect,” in this volume. At the same time Burns notes that the superimposition of the non-spatial heavens over the spatial is not a universal at Nag Hammadi, since not all the Nag Hammadi apocalypses are “Gnostic-Platonic” (cf. for instance the *Apocalypse of Paul*, with ten heavens, all vertically stacked).

61 Marksches, *Gnosis*, 16–17. See also Kurt Rudolph: “The whole world system, the cosmos, is thus for the Gnostic system of constraint, which he [sic] therefore can describe as ‘darkness,’ ‘death,’ ‘deception,’ ‘wickedness’” (*Gnosis*, 69). Also: “The verdict with regard to the earthly and visible world includes on the anthropological level a negative judgment upon the whole of bodily and psychic existence. This earthly material existence, like the world itself, is a product of the Demiurge and correspondingly is a sphere hostile to God, dominated by evil powers which are evident and active in the passions and desires (ibid., 91).

62 *The Gnostic Dialogue*, 91.

far from being on the decline, the idea of revelation remained as vital as ever in late antiquity.<sup>63</sup> Among many compelling observations is their remark that revelation served as a mechanism for late ancients for making sense of the world in which they lived, and also that revelation had special status in terms of its ability to legitimize. Not only can the experience or expression of revelation legitimate particular content, but it can also legitimate those with access to it, contributing to communal identity and differentiating insider from outsider in terms of who has access to the revelation.

Otherworldly journeys belong to the realm of revelation. This is especially the case for the role otherworldly *topoi* play in the sectarian compositions from Qumran and in Nag Hammadi texts. Otherworldly *topoi* appear as part of the “elevated” scenery in compositions that speak to or are intended for particular communities. As we have seen as well, visits to extraordinary sites appear in both the Qumran and Nag Hammadi corpora (using that expression *very* loosely) in texts that concern interiorized experiences.<sup>64</sup> The purposes of such interior journeys, though, differ, from penitence and praise (so the *Hodayot*) to philosophical contemplations (so *Zostrianos*).

To return to the start of our study, otherworldly *topoi* appear in visions and revelations of divine mysteries in early Jewish literature. Ezekiel and Zechariah may provide early instances in Hebrew of visionary travels and interpreting angels that contributed to later traditions. At the same time, works like the *Book of the Watchers* and the *New Jerusalem Text* recall the appearance of these motifs in Aramaic texts from the Scrolls (which are commonly understood as non-sectarian). Are Ezekiel, Zechariah, the *Book of the Watchers* and other apocalyptic Aramaic texts the inspiration for the otherworldly *topoi* found among the sectarian compositions and Nag Hammadi? The shared *topoi* related to visionary traditions in texts we associate uniquely with the Dead Sea Scrolls and Nag Hammadi were influenced, to my thinking, by a wide body of ancient Jewish traditions, not limited to texts one would later equate with the Hebrew scriptures or the Aramaic texts preserved at Qumran. Moreover, otherworldly *topoi* in visionary contexts continue to flourish and are prevalent in later pseudepigraphal works; these later “tours of hell” and “ascent” traditions, even with very different, developed cosmologies, resemble to a greater degree

63 Townsend and Vidas, “Introduction,” 1–2.

64 Here Attridge’s comments (“Valentinian and Sethian Apocalyptic Traditions,” 204) regarding Sethian apocalypses’ use of earlier Jewish tradition are illustrative: “Jewish apocalypses provided a model of such visionary account ... not particularly suitable for Sethians with philosophical pretensions. They instead detached the literary form of heavenly ascent from its Jewish moorings and made it serve a more ‘ecumenical’ agenda.”

(in function and form) earlier Jewish visionary texts than the sectarian texts among the Scrolls or the Nag Hammadi texts we have examined.<sup>65</sup>

### Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dylan Burns and Mathew Goff, organizers of the conference on The Dead Sea Scrolls and Nag Hammadi Codices, for their hospitality and for hosting such an excellent gathering of scholars. I am grateful to Lorenzo DiTommaso for his response to the paper and helpful comments, and for feedback from conference participants, with special appreciation to Hugo Lundhaug, Tuomas Rasimus, René Falkenberg, and Dylan Burns for their counsel on Nag Hammadi texts.

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65 See the numerous texts surveyed by Himmelfarb in *Tours of Hell and Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*; see also Spurling, "Hebrew Visions of Hell and Paradise." No matter our reticence around genre, the tradition of visits to otherworldly places continued to be of interest for some time.

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# Expressions of Pseudepigraphy in the Qumran Aramaic Fragments and First Impressions of the Nag Hammadi Codices

*Andrew B. Perrin*

## 1 Speaking of Pseudepigraphy ...

The past is never strictly past tense. On the one side of the spectrum looking back, source criticism and redaction criticism have taught us that, not unlike an archaeological site, ancient literature has layers. On the other end looking ahead, reception history and studies in scribal culture have reminded us that those layers are not sedimentary accretions that turn up on their own with the tides of time. Communities, scribes, authors—and yes, real, live people—cultivated, circulated, and performed traditions. They did so in view of ever-changing cultural, political, and religious contexts, which, in turn, enabled the continued development of traditions. The production of texts, then, was neither a one-shot deal nor isolated from larger networks of traditions. While the canons of Judaism and Christianity have enshrined selective snapshots of ancient traditions, discoveries such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and Nag Hammadi Codices have revealed a diversity and development of both the literatures and socio-religious makeup of groups and movements behind them.

The literature left behind in both collections attests to what were until very recently forgotten, or at least marginalized, forms of Judaism and Christianity. Both groups/movements clearly had a lot to say and had many fresh ideas. Yet, most often, they anchored their thought and literatures in traditions and lore inherited from the past. The topic of pseudepigraphy, then, provides an interesting space for a comparative study or, at least, a conversation starter.

Despite continued misuse in some areas, our understanding of the term “pseudepigraphy” has come a long way from descriptions of writings as “falsely attributed,” which implies both a value statement on the literature produced and caricatures scribes as perpetrators against, rather than participants in, developing traditions.<sup>1</sup> While there is some precedent for a pejorative use of

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<sup>1</sup> On the bounds of authorship and authority as it relates to the creation of texts and cultivation of traditions, see especially Najman, *Seconding Sinai*.

the term for spurious or falsely titled works among some Graeco-Roman or early Christian authors,<sup>2</sup> that selective usage does not adequately account for the formation of texts by way of this mechanism. Similarly, we can no longer retain the category of “pseudepigrapha” as if these were a group of writings, i.e., *the* Pseudepigrapha, existing in some codified collection. As Annette Yoshiko Reed demonstrated, such a corpora is at best an eighteenth-century innovation and its (re)configuration is informed by several factors related to the colonialism of theological and scholarly constructs on the publication and study of ancient texts.<sup>3</sup>

While these terms, and other cognates, have acquired some baggage, they can remain useful with sufficient qualification and focused use. In the technical sense, pseudepigraphy is a compositional mechanism, not a category. It is one that has shaped traditions before, within, and beyond the Bible. At its root, *pseudepigraphy* is the strategic authorial ascription or attribution of some or all of a work to an individual revered, remembered, or recreated from the past. Such *pseudepigraphic* material is often, though not necessarily, couched in the first-person voice of that figure, effectively collapsing the gap between long ago and a reader/hearer/performer's present. This technique both extends a tradition and draws upon the authority attached to certain figures.<sup>4</sup> As Lange remarked, this ascription is often achieved by various mechanisms, for example, “by way of title, content, or tradition.”<sup>5</sup> Writers may engage in this type of compositional activity for a variety of reasons, which may result in as many

2 Stuckenbruck, for example, noted the report of Serapion, bishop of Antioch, dismissing the *Gospel of Peter* as “pseudepigrapha” (“Pseudepigraphy and First Person Discourse,” 295–326, regarding Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 6.12.2).

3 Reed, “The Modern Invention of ‘Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,’” 403–36. In the end, Reed noted that, “like all categories, ‘the Old Testament pseudepigrapha’ has both a specific history and a shifting semantic field” (434). As VanderKam commented, in common usage the term “pseudepigrapha” has often become a “catch-all” for anything outside the Bible, Philo, Josephus, and the Dead Sea Scrolls (*An Introduction to Early Judaism*, 58). This problem is perpetuated by its continued imprecise use, for example, in the recent volume Bauckham, Davila, and Panayotov, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*. As one reviewer critiqued, “The title is, of course, unavoidably problematic (each word requires some qualification)” (Collins, review of *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*).

4 In this sense, I find Bernstein's earlier proposal of “authoritative pseudepigraphy” to be the most helpful in his initial exploration of the levels, roles, and functions of pseudepigraphy as a compositional strategy in the Dead Sea Scrolls (Bernstein, “Pseudepigraphy in the Qumran Scrolls,” 1–26). For recent studies focusing on the voicing techniques of the Aramaic texts in particular, and their relation to composition techniques in Qumran Hebrew materials, see Fröhlich, “From Pseudepigraphic to Sectarian,” 395–406; and Stuckenbruck, “Pseudepigraphy and First Person Discourse.”

5 Lange, “In the Second Degree,” 40.

genres, but the outcomes may be described as *pseudepigrapha* in the technical sense.<sup>6</sup> We could also note that the terms to describe this process and the literary works resulting from it—pseudepigraphy, pseudepigraphic, pseudepigrapha, etc.—are not native to the writings that are the subject of this study. They are tools we use to assess and understand some of the ways in which scribes of antiquity both cultivated and contributed to traditions in the production of texts and development of traditions. Of course, my description here goes only as far as the function of pseudepigraphy for the scribal formation of texts. This is to say nothing of the question of how this voicing technique relates to religious experience.<sup>7</sup>

So what can we say of the uses of this compositional technique in the writings discovered near Qumran and at Nag Hammadi? For myself, I can say both “a lot” and “likely not enough.” As a comparative study of corpora, there is always the risk of over explaining the topic on my home turf (Dead Sea Scrolls studies) while not-knowing-what-I-do-not-know on the other side of the fence (Nag Hammadi studies).<sup>8</sup> Yet the task of those in this volume is exploration and conversation between fields. In this way, my essay is both an introduction to the presentation, construction, and function of pseudepigraphy in the Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls as well as offers some of my first impressions of pseudepigraphy in the Nag Hammadi collection as an outsider. I will do the latter by way of a brief study on the *Secret Book (Apocryphon) of John*.

## 2 Overview of the Aramaic Texts Discovered in the Judaean Desert

Since the discovery details and narratives of the Qumran texts and Nag Hammadi scriptures are topics considered by others in the volume, I will cut right to the chase and offer some words on the origins, nature, and scope of the Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>9</sup> The library of Qumran is multilingual, with the majority of texts penned and transmitted in Hebrew, a handful in Greek, and

6 On the general motivations for pseudepigraphic composition, see Stuckenbruck, “Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha,” 143–62.

7 See Coblenz Bautch, “Concealment,” 1–9.

8 For surveys on the Qumran side of the equation, see Flint, “Noncanonical Writings,” 80–126; and Dimant, “Old Testament Pseudepigrapha at Qumran,” 447–67. While there is a widespread recognition of the pseudonymous quality of the Nag Hammadi texts, to date the topic has not been the subject of its own full investigation. For an overview of many key texts with comment on some of their pseudepigraphic features, see Fallon, “The Gnostic Apocalypses,” 123–58.

9 This summary is based, in part, on my previous introduction to the Qumran Aramaic texts. For the finer points of statistics and bibliography in the history of research, see Perrin, *The Dynamics of Dream-Vision Revelation*, 23–38. See also the essay in this volume by Frey.

a cross-section in Aramaic. Depending on how you sift the epic jigsaw puzzle of Qumran and coordinate statistics, the Aramaic texts constitute between 10–13% of the overall collection. These represent copies of approximately thirty different literary works.

This collection or corpus—the appropriate term here is debated, though I tend toward the latter—includes early Aramaic copies of previously known texts (e.g., Tobit, Daniel 2–7, or sections of booklets known from Ethiopic *1 Enoch*), writings suspected from later known works (e.g., *Book of Giants* or *Aramaic Levi Document*), a majority of compositions that were lost until their modern recovery seventy years ago (e.g., *Genesis Apocryphon* or *Prayer of Nabonidus*), and a very few translational works (e.g., the so-called *Targum of Job* or the Leviticus fragments).

The compositional dates of individual texts are not always easy to determine, but the general range seems to be from the third to first centuries BCE. The palaeographical dates of the manuscripts themselves also reflect a burst of transmission activity and reception throughout the mid to late Second Temple period, with some fragments, such as those of “biblical” Daniel, coming from but a generation after the work’s original composition. Copies of other works extend into the first century CE, indicating the continuing interest in, and transmission of, some of these writings centuries after their initial production.

The origins of these writings is also an open question. In general, scholars agree that these materials were received at Qumran but are not ‘sectarian’ in the traditional sense of the word. For this reason, the Aramaic texts may offer fresh insight into the thought, practice, and identity of Judaism in the Second Temple period.

Finally, the reception, or apparent lack thereof in most Western traditions, of the Qumran Aramaic texts is also a topic in need of further study. By various channels a few works with Aramaic roots, such as Tobit, *1 Enoch*, or Daniel, found a place in scriptural collections of Judaism and Christianity. At least one text, the *Aramaic Levi Document*, turns up in Egypt in the Cairo Genizah. These four aforementioned texts, in one way or another, turn up in Greek translations. A *Book of Giants* tradition travelled east via Manichaeism, while Enochic traditions blossomed in Ethiopia. Most, however, remained tucked away in the caves of the Judaean Desert wilderness, until around the same time as the Nag Hammadi Codices came to light.

With this introduction to the Qumran Aramaic texts in place, I now overview the forms and functions of pseudepigraphy across this corpus in two stages. First, I will establish the roster of first-person voices heard in the texts. Second, I will overview some of the predominant scribal strategies used for establishing pseudepigraphic perspectives.



### 3 Whose Voices Are We Hearing? Pseudepigraphic Profiles in the Qumran Aramaic Texts

The cast of characters we encounter in the Qumran Aramaic materials is diverse. Some figures are familiar from antecedent Israelite traditions, others emerging in Jewish literature of the Second Temple period, and a few are drafted in and redrawn from lore of surrounding ancient cultures. Yet for all of the ways the scribes who imagined the new literary worlds of the Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls, it is clear that they did so predominantly using the first-person voices of leading characters of their narratives.<sup>10</sup> In this way, a number of the Aramaic texts discovered at Qumran qualify as pseudepigrapha in the technical sense: they are not merely associated with a figure from the remote or recent past but ascribed to them and couched as tales told in their own words.

Since the narratives of the Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls are generally set in either the antediluvian and patriarchal past or on the other side of Israelite national history proper in exilic and diaspora contexts, it is perhaps not surprising that the majority of first-person voices heard speak from these contexts.<sup>11</sup> Several of our Aramaic works proceed in the name and voices of figures with either established resumes or known from genealogical references in the book of Genesis.<sup>12</sup> For example, the *Genesis Apocryphon* is, in a way, a pseudepigraphic anthology with stretches of materials attributed to Lamech, Noah, and Abram. By the final columns of the scroll as we know it, of course, the Abrahamic material shifts to the third-person (1Q20 XXI, 23–XXII, 34). This blending of first and third-person voicings seems to be somewhat common in ancient Aramaic texts, such as in Daniel 2–7, Tobit, and *Ahiqar*.

The example of Enoch in *Genesis Apocryphon* also reveals how, in some cases, pseudepigraphic attribution to a character extended to a network of texts developed in the orbit of a specific foundational figure. It is well-known that Enoch ascends to rock star status in and beyond the Second Temple

10 There are, however, many writings in the Qumran Aramaic texts that are couched as third-person accounts, such as *Jews in the Persian Court* (4Q550), the wrongly titled *Pseudo-Daniel* materials, which are not ascribed to Daniel but feature him in a new narrative setting (4Q243–245), and aspects of the Enochic tradition. On this trend in the Aramaic texts, see Stuckenbruck, “Pseudepigraphy and First Person Discourse,” 301–2.

11 On the narrative settings of the Qumran Aramaic texts, see Dimant, “Themes and Genres,” 15–45; Tigchelaar, “Aramaic Texts from Qumran,” 155–71; and García Martínez, “Les rapports avec l’Écriture,” 19–40.

12 This is not to say that Hebrew pseudepigrapha ascribed to figures from Genesis are absent; the so-called *Testament of Naphtali* (4Q215) is a case in point. However, it is clear that the number of surviving Aramaic pseudepigrapha from this period outweighs those penned in Hebrew.

period. The Qumran Aramaic texts are one of the earliest places we see this tradition grow. While the shape and scope of Enochic tradition in the Aramaic texts is debated, in many places the scribes cultivating this tradition did so by using the voice of Enoch (e.g., sections of Aramaic booklets of *1 Enoch*) or featuring this character in new contexts (e.g., *Genesis Apocryphon*, *Book of Giants*, or *Pseudo-Daniel*).

The roster of pseudepigraphic voices among the Qumran Aramaic texts also includes a surprising concentration of priestly figures. At least three compositions are framed as first-person reflections or instructions from Levi (*Aramaic Levi Document* [1Q21, 4Q213, 4Q213a, 4Q213b, 4Q214, 4Q214a, 4Q214b]), Qahat (*Testament of Qahat* [4Q542]), and Amram (*Visions of Amram* [4Q543–547]). This cluster of traditions related to the early generations of a priestly line is built in the name and voice of its foundational members, most of which are otherwise voiceless in antecedent traditions.

The figures introduced thus far demonstrate both the reception and development of Genesis traditions in ancient Judaism. Name-dropping Noah, Enoch, Levi, or the like, is an explicit form of pseudepigraphy. Other Aramaic compositions, however, feature first-person accounts of characters created in the Second Temple period who relate tales of the more recent past in the exilic age. Tobit and Daniel are our main examples here. Yet even in these cases, idioms and expressions of Genesis were formative to both aspects of the narrative and the creation of characters. In this way, even “new” characters and pseudepigraphic voices, at times, had the hint of something old.<sup>13</sup>

The scribal culture of the Aramaic scrolls is indeed well-read, cultured, and conversant in aspects of lore of their broader ancient Near Eastern and Hellenistic contexts. Gilgamesh is cast literally as a blood-thirsty bastard in *Book of Giants* (4Q530 2 11 6–12 1; 4Q531 22 12) and the sage Aḥiqar is adopted as a nephew of Tobit (Tob 1:21–22; 2:10; 11:18; 14:10).<sup>14</sup> In terms of pseudepigraphy, however, the Aramaic *Prayer of Nabonidus* (4Q242) stands out for its deployment of the first-person voice of a figure outside of Israel's internal cultural heritage. This time, the neo-Babylonian king's voice is deployed by a Second Temple period Jewish scribe in a clever propaganda piece taking jabs at the empire.

13 On the re-presentation of idioms and language of Genesis in Tobit, see Novick, “Biblicized Narrative,” 755–64. On the formation of Daniel in view of Joseph traditions, see Segal, *Dreams, Riddles, and Visions*, 48–51.

14 For the interaction with Babylonian traditions in the *Book of Giants*, see Goff, “Gilgamesh the Giant,” 221–53; and Fröhlich, “Mesopotamian Elements and the Watchers Traditions,” 11–24. For Tobit's interaction with Aḥiqar, see Kottsieper, “Look Son, What Nadab Did to Ahikaros,” 145–67.

It is a bold move to speak for a king, arguably, bolder still to speak for an otherworldly being. The scribe of the *Words of Michael* (4Q529, 4Q571, and perhaps 6Q23), however, seems to have taken up this otherworldly mouthpiece. While the pseudepigraphic first-person voice of the text is not always clear, its title and part of its fragmentary content suggest the content comes from an angelic guide speaking of a visionary journey undertaken likely with Enoch. This pseudepigraphic perspective, then, is an elevated expression, or even insider take on, the classic *angelus interpres* motif.

While this rundown of pseudepigraphic personae in the Qumran Aramaic texts is not complete, it illustrates the general parameters of the first-person voices heard across the corpus. Now that we have a sense of *who* is speaking we can now turn to ask *how* the scribes of these materials couched their pseudepigraphic narratives using various compositional mechanisms.

#### 4 How Are These Voices Created? Scribal Mechanisms for Constructing Pseudepigraphic Perspectives in the Qumran Aramaic Texts

The study of pseudepigraphy is not merely tallying a list of names with claimed first-person voices—it is about exploring the ways in which the scribes behind these narratives constructed frameworks for these voices to speak. This approach, then, opens up a larger set of questions related to expressions of authority, portrayals of scribal craft, and claims to continued revelation. These are all large topics in their own right. For now, some samples from across the Qumran Aramaic corpus may help illustrate their relatedness to scribal strategies for pseudepigraphic presentations.

Titles, superscriptions, or third-person narrative introductions are some of the widest spread and relatively consistent formal approaches to pseudepigraphy in the Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>15</sup> These concise headers not only set the scene but also prepare the reader/hearer for the first-person voices that predominate in narratives. Texts are routinely presented as the veritable “words” of the figure in question, are represented as a “copy” of a more ancient document, or are connected with a “writing” penned by the protagonist themselves

15 This section is a summary of some of the outcomes of my previous study, Perrin, “Capturing the Voices of Pseudepigraphic Personae,” 98–123. See also Steiner, “The Heading of the Book of the Words of Noah,” 66–71; Drawnel, “The Initial Narrative of the *Visions of Amram*,” 517–54; and Popović, “Pseudepigraphy and a Scribal Sense of the Past,” 308–18.

within the narrative. The following examples illustrate these phenomena with a variety of figures:<sup>16</sup>

*Genesis Apocryphon* (1Q20 v, 29)

[A copy:] The Book of the Words of Noah [...]

*Words of Michael* (4Q529 11)

The words of the book that Michael said to the angels [...]

*Prayer of Nabonidus* (4Q242 1-3 1-2)

The words of the pra[y]er of Nabonidus, king of [Ba]bylon, [the great] kin[g, when he was smitten] with a severe inflammation at the command of G[o]d, in Teima.

As Stuckenbruck noted, Enoch's visionary journeys and access to tablets are foundational for validating the first-person voice heard across Enochic traditions.<sup>17</sup> These two items are also integrated with other pseudepigraphic presentations in the Qumran Aramaic corpus. Some superscripted content includes an additional component for claiming authority by representing the pseudepigraphic composition, or section thereof, as relating to a dream-vision experience. This is the case, for example, in the introduction to the *Visions of Amram*, which opens: "A copy of the book 'The Words of the Vision of Amram son of [Kohath, son of Levi]'" (4Q543 1a-c 1; cf. 4Q545 1a 1 1-4; 4Q546 1 1-2). Many other pseudonymous figures in the Aramaic texts (e.g., Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Levi, etc.) were also subject to dream-visions.<sup>18</sup>

In the above cases, the attribution is pseudepigraphic insofar as the figure mentioned is presumably already known to the reader/hearer. Intriguingly, titular superscriptions in a very similar form to some of those listed above are also used for the literary effect of a vivid first-person narrative of new characters. This would certainly be the case with the book of Tobit (1:1) and, I would argue, some episodes of the early Aramaic Daniel tradition (e.g., 7:1), which bridges into Hebrew pseudepigrapha by way of a title in the second half of the work.

16 Translations of Dead Sea Scrolls texts are drawn from the "Qumran Non-Biblical English" module in Accordance Bible Software, which are based on Wise, Abegg, and Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*.

17 Stuckenbruck, "Pseudepigraphy and First Person Discourse," 304.

18 See Perrin, *The Dynamics of Dream-Vision Revelation*.

Another technique for layering pseudepigraphy found in a number of Aramaic texts is the mention of the first-person figure accessing, receiving, transmitting, or even expounding on booklore associated with yet another authoritative figure. The Aramaic Enoch tradition abounds with instances of Enoch writing or reading, eventually earning him the reputation of “[Eno]ch, the noted scribe (or, scribe of interpretation)” in *Book of Giants* (4Q530 2 II + 6–12, 14). In *Genesis Apocryphon*, we also find a scene of Abraham cracking the covers of “the book of the words of Enoch” (1Q20 XIX, 25–26). Booklore and ancestral instructions were also essential for the transmission of knowledge in the pseudepigraphic priestly texts. Qahat instructs his son Amram in inscribed lore handed down from Levi (4Q542 1 II 9–13). In these examples, it is not uncommon to find an inscribed pseudepigraphic authority within an already pseudepigraphic narrative.

As with the summary of characters above, I have painted the mechanisms of pseudepigraphic presentations in the Aramaic texts in broad strokes. The two components of this introduction, however, show it is not only the resultant “I” of pseudepigraphic narratives that deserves our attention; it is the variety of ways in which this content was framed and coordinated with other claims to how, where, and when the material originated that made a broad and impactful pseudepigraphic impression.

With the *who* and *how* of pseudepigraphic composition now set in place for the Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls, I now explore the nature of pseudepigraphic attribution on the other side of our interdisciplinary fence, the Nag Hammadi Codices.

## 5 Inscribing and Ascribing Traditions in the Nag Hammadi Materials: Case Study on the ‘Secret Book (Apocryphon) of John’

The Nag Hammadi texts are dynamic and diverse in the ways they engage scriptural traditions, extend them, and integrate a variety of gnostic teachings with literary forms, genres, and discourse styles. The study of pseudepigraphy in these codices could proceed in many directions. However, to make a first step in this comparative exercise, I will undertake but a single brief case study on a writing that adopted a pseudepigraphic perspective: the *Secret Book of John*, as preserved in Nag Hammadi Codex II.<sup>19</sup> This preliminary comparative

19 All translations of the NH texts here are from Meyer, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*. For a synoptic critical edition of the manuscripts of the *Secret Book*, see Waldstein and Wisse, eds. and trs., *The Apocryphon of John*. See also the essay in this volume by Goff.

exercise will allow for some first impressions of how the study of pseudepigraphy in the Qumran Aramaic texts and Nag Hammadi materials might shed light on the uses of this technique across cultures and corpora of antiquity.

The *Secret Book of John* is attested in four different codices. Textually, these map onto two recensions of different lengths (NHC II; IV [longer]; NHC III; BG 8502 [shorter]), each revealing degrees of textual variations between the traditions.<sup>20</sup> As Turner noted, the work, or one like it, seems to have grabbed the attention of Irenaeus already in the second century (*Against Heresies* 1.29), which may help in a general date of the early stages of the tradition.<sup>21</sup> The work is presented as a mysterious revelation from the post-resurrection Jesus to John, the brother of James, on topics including: the origins of the Savior, his orientation to other beings, the order of the archons, the material/spiritual qualities of humanity, and a variety of other theological and ritualistic topics. Treatments of these items in the *Secret Book of John* represents a blend of both Ophite and Sethian literary traditions.<sup>22</sup>

The writer of the *Secret Book of John* deployed several strategies to establish a pseudepigraphic presentation. At the outset, we find a formal title: “The teaching of the Savior, and [the revelation] of the mysteries [and the things] hidden in silence, things he taught his disciple John” (NHC II 1.1–4).<sup>23</sup> Shortly after this header, the “I” voice directs the discourse. Fallon noted that, as a rule, all seers in the gnostic materials are pseudonymous.<sup>24</sup> To be sure, however, John’s voice is heard only in framing dialogue or in sporadic questions intervening larger stretches of content delivered from the revealer. The largest block of content attributed to John is at the outset of the narrative to introduce the circumstances of his revelatory encounter (NHC II 1.5–2.25). Following this,

20 On the challenges of understanding the textual history and establishing a critical text, see Wisse, “After the Synopsis,” 138–53; see also King, “Approaching the Variants”; more recently, Falkenberg, “Making.”

21 Irenaeus’s interaction with such a tradition was identified as early as 1896, when Carl Schmidt published his first summary of the contents of BG 8502, also known at the time as the ‘Achmim Codex’ (Schmidt, “Ein vorirenäisches gnostisches Originalwerk”); cf. also the remarks of Helmbold, noting *Ap. John’s* apparent reminiscence of Rev 1:13–18 (“A Note on the Authorship,” 77–79).

22 Burns, “Ancient Esoteric Traditions,” 17–33, esp. 25, with reference to Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*. There is much more to this vivid and diverse work than I have summed up here, but I hope that an overview will suffice for the present purposes. See now the study of King, *The Secret Revelation of John*.

23 Compare also the superscription framing Rev 1:1.

24 Fallon, “Gnostic Apocalypses,” 125.

his first-person interjections are waypoints in longer sections of revelatory disclosures.<sup>25</sup>

At two points, the revelation mentions booklore. After a lengthy list of angelic beings and their corresponding role in creating the physical and emotional components of humanity, the Savior says, “Now, there are others over the remaining passions, and I have not told you about them. If you want to know about them, the information is recorded in the *Book of Zoroaster*.”<sup>26</sup> As Meyer noted, the identification of this work is not clear.<sup>27</sup> Regardless, the appearance of a writing attributed to another (seemingly) authoritative figure in the context of divine revelation adds another layer to the authoritative claim of the *Secret Book of John*.<sup>28</sup>

The second is a critical reference to Mosaic booklore in the context a description on the origins of Eve: “It did not happen, however, the way Moses said: ‘Adam’s rib.’”<sup>29</sup> In this instance, it seems, the otherworldly authority in tandem with the apostolic voice are used not to extend a scriptural tradition associated with a founding figure, but in fact, to provide a new, esoteric explanation of origins.

The work concludes with the ascension of the revealer, who states, “I have told you everything for you to record and communicate secretly to your spiritual friends.”<sup>30</sup> In this way, the work closes with a reference to the pseudonymous seer John commanded to inscribe the content of the revelation. As King noted, however, while speech acts dominate most of the narrative itself, the eventual writtenness of the work was likely to secure the claimed spoken revelation and extend its reach.<sup>31</sup>

This synopsis has described some of the predominant pseudepigraphic mechanisms of the *Secret Book of John*. But *why* John? If we take the traditions associated with John that eventually surface in the New Testament as even a partial gauge for the development of Johannine tradition, there are few reasons

25 For the first-person interjections of John in the revelatory framework, see NHC II 1.17–19, 13.17–18, 22.21–22, 25.16–18, 26.7–11, 26.21–25, 26.32–35, 27.11–14, 27.21–24, 27.31–32.

26 NHC II 19.6–11, tr. Turner and Meyer in Meyer, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, 124.

27 Meyer, in idem, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, 124, n. 89.

28 Cf. further the many references to lost or fictional pseudepigraphic books in *On the Origin of the World* NHC II 102.7–11, 107.2–3, 110.29–30, 122.9–16. For Gnostic texts’ claims to record in some fashion the revelations originally written down and deposited in remote antiquity, see Burns, “Gnostic,” 453.

29 NHC II 23.3–4, tr. Turner and Meyer in Meyer, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, 126. King has teased out the references to inscribed material in the Coptic texts (see her “Approaching the Variants”).

30 NHC II 31.28–30, tr. Turner and Meyer, in Meyer, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, 132.

31 King, “Approaching the Variants,” 109–10.

that make John a convenient and strategic choice for developing a pseudepigraphic tradition.

First, the memory of John carries the weight of apostolic authority. In a sense, his pseudonym anchors the work in the pivotal past, even the historical origins, of the early Jesus movement as a founding figure. As Aune noted, while much of biblical literature is technically anonymous, “in the early church [from the mid-second century on] there was a pronounced tendency to link early religious writings to apostles or those closely associated with them because of their authority as founders as well as because of their traditional link to the historical Jesus.”<sup>32</sup> Here, of course, Aune is speaking of the theological motivation for putting important names to an inherited collection of nameless scriptures (i.e., ascription of texts in reception history), which is the case for most writings received in the New Testament. At the compositional level, however, I would suggest that the writer of the *Secret Book of John* deployed the pseudonymous, first-person voice of (a) John for similar reasons: this perspective enabled both the apostolic voice to continue to speak and offered an open ear to the heavens for continuing claims of revelation.<sup>33</sup>

Second, no matter how we untangle the questions of authorship and association of the New Testament Johannine traditions, the growing traditional understanding of John as being the writer of a gospel, epistles, and an apocalypse indicate from an early time the memory of this figure was with pen in hand. While the colophon of Rev 22:18–19 demands a closed book on that aspect of the tradition, since that John was a seer, there was always the potential he could have seen more. The gospel of John, of course, ends on just that note, claiming that even a globe full of books could not contain all the acts and words of Jesus (John 20:30; 21:25). Here too, the tradition ends with an invitation for more. As King concluded, the *Secret Book of John* “is filling the gaps in Christ’s revelation in the Gospel of John, offering a full narrative of the Divine Realm, the creation of the world and humanity, the condition of humanity in the world, and salvation. The ascription of the work to John overtly places the *Secret Revelation of John* in the tradition of Johannine Christianity and it has

32 Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, xlvi. Note also that, at this early time, the distinction between several Johns of the early Jesus movement was likely limited. In this way, I suggest the pseudepigraphic presentation of the *Secret Book of John* is leaning upon a broad basis of a Johannine authority and persona. Cf. also King, “*Apocryphon of John*,” 146–50.

33 King commented on the rhetorical force of the two-tiered attribution: “it is the word of the divine revealer and the prophetic seer that guarantees the truth of the work as revelation” (“Approaching the Variants,” 116). Van Unnik suggested that the style of presentation of the work indicates that “its author wanted his book to be considered as a *prophetic revelation*” (“A Prophetic Formula,” 94, italics original).



the effect of asking readers to interpret the Gospel of John within the framework of Christ's revelation."<sup>34</sup> In this way, the tradition is generative and occasioned by exegetical extension.

Third, John is also a unique candidate for his profile for privileged encounters with the post-resurrection Jesus. We might infer that his selection as a pseudepigraphic seer was informed by the *Secret Book's* author's association of him with both apocalyptic revelation (Rev 1:1–3) as well as the expectation, or at least, open question, that the *parousia* might occur within the evangelist's lifetime (John 21:22).<sup>35</sup> In this way, it is possible that the growth of this Johannine tradition was enabled by the continued development of the memory of a character that benefited from both past experience of revelation and the hint of another expected experience in the near future.

## 6 Closing Thoughts on the Parallel Study of Pseudepigraphy in the Qumran Aramaic Texts and Nag Hammadi Materials

The foregoing study was less an initiative in identifying "connections" or "influence" than a conversation starter for further comparative study. For my colleagues whose daily data is found in the Nag Hammadi materials, I hope this first encounter with the largely pseudepigraphic narratives in the Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls opens up a new conversation partner regarding forms and functions of pseudepigraphy in the mid-Second Temple period. For Qumran studies, my initial walk through but one Nag Hammadi text, the *Secret Book of John*, may point the way forward for further comparative research. Since conclusions on such a preliminary exploration would be necessarily forced, I'd rather close with three "to be continued" remarks for subsequent research.

(1) *Moving Qumran and Christian origins beyond "normative" expressions.* While there has been much research, particularly in the early days of Dead Sea Scrolls studies, focused on the comparative study of the Qumran texts and community with that of the early Jesus movement, this area of study is reemerging with fresh questions and methods in view of the now fully published collection.<sup>36</sup> It is also fair to say, I think, that research of this sort has been challenged to account for both the diversity of the religious identity and

34 King, *Secret Revelation of John*, 238; similarly, eadem, "Apocryphon of John," 148.

35 In agreement with King, "Apocryphon of John," 148–49.

36 In a recent reflection on the topic, Brooke noted that the pendulum in New Testament studies has "swung away from attention to the Jewish context" of Christian origins "towards more detailed consideration of Greco-Roman materials" ("New Perspectives," 267).

expressions in ancient Judaism *and* emerging Christianity. For the former, until recently, Qumran has been largely studied as a “sect” rather than a group as part of a broader movement. For the latter, emerging Christianity has been mostly equated with the New Testament, with apparent outliers relegated to the sidelines of study.

As scholars of the scrolls, we regularly emphasize that the Hebrew Bible did not yet exist at the turn of the era. Yet, neither did the New Testament. Therefore, our comparative or contextual studies about the identity, thought, and expressions of ancient Judaism in light of the scrolls and emerging Christianity must adopt, at least initially, an equally wide swath of data from the diversity of literary texts and social groups that made up the landscape of, for lack of a better term, early Christianity. While there is always a need to be sensitive to dates of texts and the historical settings of movements behind them, it is time we fold the Nag Hammadi literatures into our research not merely as a foil against some sort of “normative” religion or obligatory nod to an alleged second-tier collection of writings from the fringes. Since the Qumran Aramaic texts are from the broader world of Judaism in the Second Temple period and share many common themes or interests with the Nag Hammadi Codices, not least pseudepigraphic attribution, they are perhaps one of the best points of departure for this type of work.

(2) *The strategies that built and carried scriptural traditions.* One of the more promising insights from Qumran studies that cuts across the collection is the recognition that many of the interpretive and scribal strategies observed for transmitting and receiving texts are the very same approaches that were formative to underlying or antecedent authoritative traditions. In this way, ancient Jewish scribes at Qumran (and beyond) were not only heir to ancestral traditions, but also to a craft of engaging and extending those traditions through a variety of processes (e.g., rewriting, pseudepigraphic attribution, scribal intervention, etc.). This ensured that traditions were marked by a vitality and ability to speak to communities and culture.

While my reading of the *Secret Book of John* only scratched the surface, I would suggest this is also true of the form and function of pseudepigraphy in this writing. Regardless of the authorial origins of Johannine traditions that surface in the New Testament, it is now clear that the materials garnered under the name of John were done so by association and attribution. Whether or not the writer or group behind the *Secret Book of John* were aware of this is beside the point. What matters is that they contributed to a broader Johannine tradition by continuing a heritage of compositional activity that was essential to the formation and reception of that larger tradition. In this light, I suggest, we have a space for continued comparative study not only

of the deployment of pseudepigraphy in the Qumran Aramaic texts and Nag Hammadi materials but also for how expressions of pseudepigraphy redeploy compositional strategies inherent to the authoritative, antecedent traditions of both collections. One recent initial foray into such comparative study of the deployment of pseudepigraphy in the Qumran texts and Nag Hammadi materials, for instance, has focused on the absence of pseudepigraphy in the sectarian materials from Qumran, which may be explained by the presence of a local, living authority (perhaps the Teacher of Righteousness) or the memory and heritage of such a figure, and high group definition. The coincidence of the absence of pseudepigraphy with high group definition and local authority in the sectarian Qumran texts reminds us that the pseudepigraphic Nag Hammadi materials probably derive from environments with an absence of local, living authorities, and which have concomitant, lower group definition.<sup>37</sup>

(3) *Pseudepigraphy and the emergence and evolution of apocalypses.* As with any comparative enterprise, there is the question of continuity, adaptation, or evolution in view of similarly observed features. The heritage of so-called gnostic apocalypses has been debated and traced to either ancient Jewish wisdom or apocalyptic traditions—this seems to be the roundup of usual suspects for most quests for the origins of the apocalypse—of course, with a recognition of the larger Hellenistic context that shaped early expressions of such literature.<sup>38</sup> While the form and formation of ancient Jewish apocalyptic literature and thought in the Second Temple period remains a live conversation, at least two main outcomes of recent contributions have implications here. First, there is an increasing recognition that our understanding of the “genre” must be somewhat organic. Second, part of this need for flexibility is due to the emergence and study of new texts.<sup>39</sup> I would argue that for ancient Judaism, the Qumran Aramaic texts are at the center of this intersection. In this way, if the writers of the Nag Hammadi materials are downstream from an apocalyptic tradition from centuries past, then we need to keep our research in this area current by accounting for how new texts, questions, and outcomes have changed the course and content of that stream.

37 Burns, “Is the *Apocalypse of Paul*,” especially 105–11. The argument is made with reference to the *Apocalypse of Paul* (NHC v,2), via the discussion of Brakke, “Scriptural Practices.”

38 See the review and bibliography of Fallon, “Gnostic Apocalypses,” 123–24; further, Frankfurter, “Legacy”; Attridge, “Valentinian and Sethian.”

39 See the collection of essays in Wassén and White Crawford, *Apocalyptic Thinking in Early Judaism*.

## Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Dylan Burns and Matthew Goff for leading in interdisciplinary dialogue by organizing such a stimulating conference in Berlin. Research for this essay was made possible through the support of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, which funded a research fellowship at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München with Prof. Loren Stuckenbruck. This project was developed further thanks to support from the Canada Research Chair in Religious Identities of Ancient Judaism at Trinity Western University. Thanks to Monika Andrassyova for her editorial assistance in preparing the final draft of this study.

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