The Nag Hammadi Codices as Monastic Books

Edited by
HUGO LUNDHAUG and
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Mohr Siebeck

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The present volume is the result of many years of collaborative work. It builds on the premise of arguably the most important result of the research project New Contexts for Old Texts: Unorthodox Texts and Monastic Manuscript Culture in Fourth- and Fifth-Century Egypt (NEWCONT),[1] namely the conclusion that the Nag Hammadi Codices were most likely produced and used by monks. The editors would therefore especially like to thank the European Research Council (ERC), without whose generous funding of the NEWCONT project the path leading to this book would never even have been started. We are also grateful to the Faculty of Theology at the University of Oslo for hosting the NEWCONT project in the period 2012–2016, and for their continuing support of Coptological studies in Oslo also in the following period, leading ultimately to the development and establishment of the ERC-funded research project Storyworlds in Transition: Coptic Apocrypha in Changing Contexts in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Periods (APOCRYPHA).[2] Special thanks to Sigurd Hanserud for copy editing and proof-reading the manuscript, and to Lloyd Abercrombie for producing the volume's indices. We would also like to thank the Program Director of Biblical Studies, Early Christianity, and Jewish Studies at Mohr Siebeck, Elena Müller, the editors of the STAC series, Liv Ingeborg Lied, Christoph Markschies, Martin Walraff, and Christian Wildberg, and the production and marketing team at Mohr Siebeck, Markus Kirchner, Kendra Mäschke, and Ilse König for their efforts leading to the completion of this book. Numerous colleagues around the world, far too many to mention, have contributed to the scholarship expressed in this book through scholarly exchanges at conferences and seminars around the world, and especially at the workshops held in Oslo in the period 2012–2019, for which we are profoundly grateful. Above all, we would like to express our most sincere gratitude to the contributors to the present volume. We very much appreciate the efforts and patience of everyone involved.

Oslo, January 2023   Hugo Lundhaug and Christian H. Bull

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Abbreviations

ActIr	Acta Iranica
ACS	Ancient Commentaries on Scripture
ADAI.K	Abhandlungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo, Koptische Reihe
Aeg	*Aegyptus*
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AGLB	Aus der Geschichte der lateinischen Bibel
AJP	*American Journal of Philology*
AnBoll	*Analecta Bollandiana*
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*
ANTF	Arbeiten zur neutestamentlichen Textforschung
APF	*Archiv für Papyrusforschung*
Ap. Patr.	*Apophthegmata Patrum*
ARG	*Archiv für Religionsgeschichte*
ASAE	*Annales du service des antiquités de l'Egypte*
ASKÄ	Arbeiten zum spätantiken und koptischen Ägypten
ASP	American Studies in Papyrology
ATSLLC.S	Accademia Toscana di scienze e lettere La Colombaria, "Studi"
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BAB.L	*Bulletin de l'Académie royale de Belgique: Classe des lettres et des sciences morales et politiques*
BASP	*Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists*
BCNH	Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi
BCNH.C	Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi, section "Concordances"
BCNH.É	Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi, Section "Études"
BCNH.T	Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi, Section "Textes"
BEHE.R	Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes, Sciences Religieuses
BG	Berlin Gnostic Codex (P. Berol. 8502)
BKP	Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie
BIE	*Bulletin de l'Institut Égyptien*
BIFAO	*Bulletin de l'institut français d'archéologie orientale*
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*
BO	*Bibliotheca Orientalis*
BSac	*Bibliotheca sacra*
BSAC	*Bulletin de la Société d'archéologie copte*
BSIH	Brill's Studies in Intellectual History
BSR	*Bulletin for the Study of Religion*
ByzZ	*Byzantinische Zeitschrift*
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
C1, C2, etc.	P. Nag Hamm. Coptic 1, Coptic 2, etc.
ConBNT	Coniectanea biblica: New Testament Series

CBC   Cahiers de la Bibliothèque copte
CBM   Chester Beatty Monographs
CBQ   *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CCR   *Coptic Church Review*
CCSL   Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina
CFM   Corpus Fontium Manichaeorum
CH   *Corpus Hermeticum*
CH   *Church History*
CM   Cursor Mundi
CNRS   Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique
CRAI   *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres*
CRBS   *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies*
CRINT   Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
CS   Cistercian Studies
CSCO   Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
CSQ   *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*
CT   Codex Tchacos
CUFr   Collections des universités de France
ECF   The Early Church Fathers
ECS   Early Christian Studies
EPRO   Etudes préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain
ETL   *Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses*
ExpTim   *Expository Times*
FC   Fathers of the Church
FDS   Die Fragmente zur Dialektik der Stoiker
FH   *Fragmenta Hermetica*
FRLANT   Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
G^1, G^2, etc. *First Greek Life of Pachomius*, *Second Greek Life of Pachomius*, etc.
G1, G2, etc.   P. Nag Hamm. Greek 1, Greek 2, etc.
GCS   Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte
GCS.NF   Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte: Neue Folge
HistTh   *History and Theory*
Hors. Reg.   *Regulations of Horsiesios*
HTR   *Harvard Theological Review*
Hyp   Hypomnemata
HZ   *Historische Zeitschrift*
IBAES   Internet-Beiträge zur Ägyptologie und Sudanarchäologie
ICS   *Illinois Classical Studies*
JAC   *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*
JAOC   Judaïsme ancien et origines du christianisme
JAOS   *Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JARCE   *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*
JBL   *Journal of Biblical Literature*
JCS   *Journal of Coptic Studies*
JCSCS   *Journal for the Canadian Society of Coptic Studies*
JEA   *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*

JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
J. Ethics	*Journal of Ethics*
JHS	*Journal of Hellenic Studies*
JJP	*Journal of Juristic Papyrology*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JPT	*International Journal of the Platonic Tradition*
JRH	*Journal of Religious History*
JRS	*Journal of Roman Studies*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSRC	Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LEGC	Letteratura eziziana gnostica e cristiana
LSJ	Liddell, Scott, and Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon* (9th ed.)
LTP	*Laval théologique et philosophique*
MDAI	*Mitteilungen des Deutschen archäologischen Instituts*
MDAI.K	*Mitteilungen des Deutschen archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo*
MRE	Monographies Reine Elisabeth
MTSR	*Method & Theory in the Study of Religion*
Mus	*Le Muséon*
NAPSPMS	North American Patristic Society Patristic Monograph Series
NHC	Nag Hammadi Codex/Codices
NHMS	Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies
NHS	Nag Hammadi Studies
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NPNF[2]	*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* Series 2
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
NTTS	New Testament Tools and Studies
O. Mon. Epiph.	Ostraca from the Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes
OCP	*Orientalia christiana periodica*
OECS	Oxford Early Christian Studies
OECT	Oxford Early Christian Texts
OECGT	Oxford Early Christian Gospel Texts
OLA	Orientalia lovaniensia analecta
OLZ	*Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*
OPIAC	Institute for Antiquity and Christianity Occasional Papers
PAM	*Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean*
PapyBrux	Papyrologica Bruxellensia
PapyCol	Papyrologica Coloniensia
Paral.	*Paralipomena*
PAST	Percorsi, Strumenti e Temi di Archeologia
PatSor	Patristica Sorbonensia
PEES.GR	Publications of the Egypt Exploration Society, Graeco Roman Memoirs
PG	Patrologia graeca. Edited by J.-P. Migne
PGL	*Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Lampe)
PGM	*Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri*

PLB	Papyrologica Lugduno-Batava
Pr.	*Praecepta*
PTA	Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien
QSGKAM	Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Altertums und des Mittelalters
RB	*Revue biblique*
RdE	*Revue d'égyptologie*
RGRW	Religions of the Graeco-Roman World
RHPR	*Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses*
RHR	*Revue de l'histoire des religions*
RSPT	*Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*
RSR	*Recherches de Science Religieuse*
RTP	*Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie*
RVV	Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten
S^1, S^2, etc.	*First Sahidic Life of Pachomius*, *Second Sahidic Life of Pachomius*, etc.
SAA	Studia Antiqua Australiensia
SAC	Studies in Antiquity and Christianity
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SBLTT	Society of Biblical Literature Texts and Translations
SBo	Recension of the *Life of Pachomius* represented by the Bo, Av, S^4, S^5, S^6, S^7, etc. (compiled and translated by Armand Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1)
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SC	Sources chrétiennes
SecCent	*Second Century*
SGM	Sources gnostiques et manichéennes
SH	*Stobaei Hermetica*
SHR	Studies in the History of Religions (supplements to *Numen*)
SMSR	*Studi e materiali di storia delle religioni*
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SPAW.PH	Sitzungsberichte der Preussichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse
SPCK	Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge
SPhilo	*Studia philonica*
SPNPT	Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Tradition
STAC	Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum
StOR	Studies in Oriental Religions
StPatr	Studia Patristica
TC	*TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism*
TENT	Texts and Editions for New Testament Study
Theoph	Theophaneia
TJT	*Toronto Journal of Theology*
TLZ	*Theologische Literaturzeitung*
TS	*Theological Studies*

TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
TUGAL	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
TVOA	Testi del Vicino Oriente antico
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
VC	*Vigiliae Christianae*
VCSup	Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae
WGRV	Writings from the Greco-Roman World
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
YCS	*Yale Classical Studies*
ZAC	*Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum*
ZÄS	*Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*
ZDMG	*Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*
ZPE	*Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*

Monastic Readings of the Nag Hammadi Codices

Christian H. Bull and Hugo Lundhaug

The Nag Hammadi Codices remain some of the most enigmatic manuscripts from Late Antiquity. Despite thousands of scholarly publications on the texts contained in the remains of these thirteen papyrus codices, consensus regarding the times, places, and purposes of their authorship, or their intended original readers, remains elusive. Recently, however, progress has been made regarding the producers and users of these manuscripts, which were discovered in 1945 at the Jabal al-Tarif in Upper Egypt, a cliff littered with ancient tombs and caves, situated close to the sites of the ancient Pachomian monasteries of Sheneset and Pbow.[1]

Research into the question of who produced and used the Nag Hammadi Codices got a major boost through the European Research Council's funding of the University of Oslo-based research project *New Contexts for Old Texts: Unorthodox Texts and Monastic Manuscript Culture in Fourth- and Fifth-Century Egypt* (NEWCONT), a project that ran from 2012 to 2016.[2] The work of this project resulted in a number of publications demonstrating the likelihood of a monastic provenance for the Nag Hammadi Codices,[3] as well as a

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[1] Today, these are the sites of the modern villages of al-Qasr and Faw Qibli respectively.

[2] The research team consisted of Hugo Lundhaug (PI), Lance Jenott and Christian H. Bull (postdocs), and Kristine Toft Rosland (PhD student), together with close collaborators Paula Tutty and Lloyd Abercrombie (PhD students), all located at the University of Oslo, Faculty of Theology.

[3] See esp. Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (STAC 97; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015); idem, eds., *The Nag Hammadi Codices and Late Antique Egypt* (STAC 110; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018); idem, "Production, Distribution and Ownership of Books in the Monasteries of Upper Egypt: The Evidence of the Nag Hammadi Colophons," in *Monastic Education in Late Antiquity: The Transformation of Classical Paideia* (ed. Lillian Larsen and Samuel Rubenson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 306–25; Christian H. Bull, "Women, Angels, and Dangerous Knowledge: The Myth of the Watchers in the Apocryphon of John and Its Monastic Manuscript-Context," in *Women and Knowledge in Early Christianity* (ed. Ulla Tervahauta et al.; VCSup 144; Leiden: Brill, 2017), 75–107; idem, "An Origenistic Reading of Plato in Nag Hammadi Codex VI," in *Studia Patristica LXXV: Papers Presented at the Seventeenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2015. Volume 1: Studia Patristica; Platonism and the Fathers; Maximus the Confessor* (ed. Markus Vinzent; StPatr 75; Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 31–40; idem, "The Great Demon of the Air and the Punishment of Souls: The *Perfect Discourse* (NHC VI,*8*) and Hermetic and Monastic Demonologies," in *Nag Hammadi à 70 ans: Qu'avons nous appris? Colloque international, Québec, Université*

number of studies focusing on various aspects of methodology, most notably material philology and textual fluidity, as well as manuscript dating.[4]

Laval, 29–31 mai 2015 (ed. Eric Crégheur et al.; BCNH.É 10; Leuven: Peeters, 2019), 105–20; idem, "The Panopolis Connection: The Pachomian Federation as Context for the Nag Hammadi Codices," in *Coptic Literature in Context (4th–13th cent.): Cultural Landscape, Literary Production and Manuscript Archaeology* (ed. Paola Buzi; PaST Percorsi di Archeologia 5; Rome: Quasar, 2020), 133–47; Lance Jenott, "Recovering Adam's Lost Glory: Nag Hammadi Codex II in its Egyptian Monastic Environment," in *Jewish and Christian Cosmogony in Late Antiquity* (ed. Lance Jenott and Sarit Kattan Gribetz; TSAJ 155; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 222–43; idem, "The *Book of the Foreigner* from Codex Tchacos," *BASP* 57 (2020): 235–76; Hugo Lundhaug, "Origenism in Fifth-Century Upper Egypt: Shenoute of Atripe and the Nag Hammadi Codices," in *Studia Patristica LXIV: Papers Presented at the Sixteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2011: Vol. 12: Ascetica; Liturgica; Orientalia; Critica et Philologica* (ed. Markus Vinzent; StPatr 64; Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 217–28; idem, "Nag Hammadi Codex VII and Monastic Manuscript Culture," in *Coptic Society, Literature and Religion from Late Antiquity to Modern Times: Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Coptic Studies, Rome, September 17th–22nd, 2012, and Plenary Reports of the Ninth International Congress of Coptic Studies, Cairo, September 15th–19th, 2008* (2 Vols.; ed. Paola Buzi et al.; OLA 247; Leuven: Peeters, 2016), 1177–92; idem, "Monastic Exegesis and the Female Soul in the *Exegesis on the Soul*," in *Women and Knowledge in Early Christianity* (ed. Ulla Tervahauta et al.; VCSup 144; Leiden: Brill, 2017), 221–33; idem, "The *Dialogue of the Savior* (NHC III,*5*) as a Monastic Text," in *Studia Patristica XCIII: Papers Presented at the Seventeenth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford 2015: Volume 19: The First Two Centuries; Apocrypha and Gnostica* (ed. Markus Vinzent; StPatr 93; Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 335–46; idem, "The Dishna Papers and the Nag Hammadi Codices: The Remains of a Single Monastic Library?" in *The Nag Hammadi Codices and Late Antique Egypt* (ed. Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott; STAC 110; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 329–86; Paula Tutty, "The Monks of the Nag Hammadi Codices: Contextualizing a Fourth Century Monastic Community," (PhD dissertation; University of Oslo, 2019); eadem, "Is the Canon of the Scriptures Closed? Recent Interest in the Nag Hammadi Codices," in *T&T Clark Handbook of the Early Church* (ed. Ilaria L. E. Ramelli et al.; T&T Clark Companion; London: T&T Clark, 2021), 620–44.

   [4] See esp. Lance Jenott, "Reading Variants in *James* and the *Apocalypse of James*: A Perspective from New Philology," in *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology* (ed. Liv Ingeborg Lied and Hugo Lundhaug; TUGAL 175; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 55–84; Hugo Lundhaug, "An Illusion of Textual Stability: Textual Fluidity, New Philology, and the Nag Hammadi Codices," in *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology* (ed. Liv Ingeborg Lied and Hugo Lundhaug; TUGAL 175; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 20–54; idem, "Textual Fluidity and Post-Nicene Rewriting in the Nag Hammadi Codices," in *Nag Hammadi à 70 ans: Qu'avons nous appris? Colloque international, Québec, Université Laval, 29‒31 mai 2015* (ed. Eric Crégheur et al.; BCNH.É 10; Leuven: Peeters, 2019), 47–67; Hugo Lundhaug and Liv Ingeborg Lied, "Studying Snapshots: On Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology," in *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology* (ed. Liv Ingeborg Lied and Hugo Lundhaug; TUGAL 175; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017),

The studies in the present volume build specifically on one of the publications that emerged from the NEWCONT project, the monograph by Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices*, in which it is argued that the most likely producers and users of these manuscripts were fourth- and/or fifth-century monastics in Upper Egypt, and that the *most likely* candidates for such monastics would be those of the Pachomian monasteries in the vicinity of the manuscripts' discovery location.[5] It should be noted that the argument of the book concerns the *codices* as material objects, and not the authorship of the *texts* they contain.[6] The argument is based on the combined evidence of the cartonnage documents contained in the covers of the Nag Hammadi Codices,[7] the colophons found in some of the codices,[8] their discovery location and dating,[9] as well as contextual evidence for the reading of apocrypha by Egyptian monastics.[10] The book also challenges alternative theories of "Gnostics" or "urban intellectuals" as the codices' producers and users.[11] Having assessed the available evidence, the authors conclude:

While there were also other ascetics in the area, the Pachomian monks who lived close to the Jabal al-Tarif, at the monasteries of Sheneset and Pbow, are in our view the most likely people to have owned the Nag Hammadi Codices. Even if one doubts that the owners were specifically Pachomians, the evidence from the colophons, cartonnage, location of manufacture and discovery, and from the controversial history over apocryphal books and "Origenist" teachings in Egyptian monasteries, not to mention the Coptic (not Greek) language of the texts, point overwhelmingly to a cenobitic monastic community.[12]

1–19; Hugo Lundhaug, "Material Philology and the Nag Hammadi Codices," in *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* (ed. Dylan M. Burns and Matthew Goff; NHMS 103; Leiden: Brill, 2022), 107–43. On manuscript dating, see See Hugo Lundhaug, "The Date of MS 193 in the Schøyen Collection: New Radiocarbon Evidence," *BASP* 57 (2020): 219–34; idem, "Dating and Contextualising the Nag Hammadi Codices and Their Texts: A Multi-Methodological Approach Including New Radiocarbon Evidence," in *Texts in Context: Essays on Dating and Contextualising Christian Writings of the Second and Early Third Century* (ed. Joseph Verheyden, Jens Schröter, and Tobias Nicklas; BETL 319; Leuven: Peeters, 2021), 117–42.

[5] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*. See also idem, "Production, Distribution and Ownership."

[6] The question of the texts' original authorship is only briefly discussed towards the end of the volume, primarily in the context of the textual fluidity of the transmission of the texts (see below).

[7] See esp. Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 46–55; 104–45.

[8] See esp. Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 178–206.

[9] See esp. Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 9–21.

[10] See esp. Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 146–77, 234–62.

[11] See esp. Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 56–103.

[12] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 256.

Importantly, the conclusions of this study open further questions for discussion. If those who manufactured and read the Nag Hammadi Codices were monastics, maybe even Pachomian monastics, what interest did they have in the texts contained in them? This is what the contributions in the present volume seek to address.

The relevance of a reading of the texts of the Nag Hammadi Codices exactly as they are found there, and in the historical context of the codices themselves and of Coptic literature, was already emphasized by Stephen Emmel in a seminal essay given at the 50-year commemoration of the discovery of the codices at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature held in Philadelphia in 1995, where he stated that "The task is to read the texts exactly as we have them in the Nag Hammadi Codices in an effort to reconstruct the reading experience of whoever owned each of the Codices."[13] Lundhaug and Jenott make some preliminary suggestions along these lines in their monograph,[14] but more in-depth studies have also been published alongside and following that volume, not least in their 2018 edited volume *The Nag Hammadi Codices and Late Antique Egypt*.[15] While that volume approached the Nag Hammadi Codices and their texts from a broad fourth- to fifth-century perspective, the contributions to the present volume focus specifically on the *monastic* context of the transmission, and especially reception, of the texts they contain.[16] For if the codices were owned by monastics, the task at hand, following Emmel's suggestion, is to read them in light of fourth- and fifth-century monasticism, and ask why Egyptian monks, Pachomian or otherwise, would have read such books.

1. Short History of Scholarship

The first announcement of the astounding discovery of our papyrus codices only mentioned that the fellahin who discovered them came from the area near Nag Hammadi, the village with the closest railway station, but in 1949 Jean Doresse was able to affirm that the jar containing the codices had in fact been discovered at the foot of the Jabal al-Tarif, and henceforth he referred to it as the "Chenoboskion library," in recognition of the nearby ancient village called Chenoboskion in Greek and Sheneset in Coptic, which was the location of a

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[13] Stephen Emmel, "Religious Tradition, Textual Transmission, and the Nag Hammadi Codices," in *The Nag Hammadi Library After Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration* (ed. John D. Turner and Anne McGuire; NHMS 44; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 42.

[14] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 256–62.

[15] Lundhaug and Jenott, eds., *Nag Hammadi Codices*.

[16] While this was also the focus of some of the contributions of Lundhaug and Jenott, eds., *Nag Hammadi Codices*, the present volume is dedicated to this perspective in its entirety.

major Pachomian monastery.[17] Yet, Doresse and his collaborators did not en-
tertain the notion that the Pachomians may have been the owners of these man-
uscripts; the library must rather have belonged to a Gnostic sect still thriving
in the area in the fourth century, it was believed, and the sectarians must have
buried the books due to pressure from the nearby monasteries, and then gone
underground since the Pachomian literature does not mention any conflict with
Gnostics.[18] In his later monograph, Doresse changed his mind and stated that
the Pachomians did in fact struggle with the local Gnostics, since we know that
the abbot Theodore in 367 had received Athanasius' famous Easter letter of
this year – which included a list of canonical biblical writings and an attack on
apocrypha – and had it translated and read aloud in his monasteries in order to
combat heresy.[19]

For nearly thirty years after Doresse, it was taken for granted that a group
of Gnostics were the owners of the library, until John Barns in 1975 published
a preliminary report of his findings from an analysis of the cartonnage of the
leather bindings of the codices, which turned out to contain monastic papyrus
fragments.[20] This prompted Torgny Säve-Söderbergh in the same year to pro-
pose that the owners of the books were monks who had used the texts in order
to combat heresy.[21] Frederik Wisse, at the 1976 First International Congress of
Coptic Studies, went further and pointed out that the lack of ecclesiastical con-
trol over fourth-century monasticism made it possible that there were "Gnos-
tics" within the walls of monasteries, and that the Nag Hammadi Codices were

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[17] Jean Doresse and Togo Mina, "Nouveaux Textes Gnostiques Coptes Découverts en
Haute-Egypte la Bibliotheque de Chenoboskion," *VC* 3 (1949): 129–41.

[18] Doresse and Mina, "Nouveaux Textes Gnostiques," 138–39.

[19] Jean Doresse, *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics: An Introduction to the Gnos-
tic Coptic Manuscripts Discovered at Chenoboskion: With an English Translation and Crit-
ical Evaluation of the Gospel According to Thomas* (trans. Leonard Johnston; London: Hollis
& Carter, 1960), 135. On Athanasius' 39th *Festal Letter*, see, e.g., Louis-Théophile Lefort,
"Théodore de Tabennèsi et la lettre pascale de St-Athanase sur le canon de la bible," *Mus* 29
(1910): 205–16; David Brakke, "A New Fragment of Athanasius' Thirty-Ninth *Festal Letter*:
Heresy, Apocrypha, and the Canon," *HTR* 103 (2010): 47–66. On the translation of the letter,
see Christian H. Bull, "The Coptic Translation of Epiphanius of Salamis's *Ancoratus* and
the Origenist Controversy in Upper Egypt," *ZAC* 26 (2022): 230–63.

[20] John W. B. Barns, "Greek and Coptic Papyri from the Covers of the Nag Hammadi
Codices: A Preliminary Report," in *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts: In Honour of Pahor
Labib* (ed. Martin Krause; NHS 6; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 9–18.

[21] Torgny Säve-Söderbergh, "Holy Scriptures or Apologetic Documentations? The 'Sitz
im Leben' of the Nag Hammadi Library," in *Les textes de Nag Hammadi: Colloque du Cen-
tre d'Histoire des Religions (Strasbourg, 23–25 octobre 1974)* (ed. Jacques-E. Menard; NHS
7; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 3–14. See also idem, "The Pagan Elements in Early Christianity and
Gnosticism," in *Colloque international sur les textes de Nag Hammadi (Québec, 22–25 août
1978)* (ed. Bernard Barc; BCNH.É 1; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1981), 74.

produced by the nearby Pachomians.[22] However, after the death of Barns, John C. Shelton took over the project of publishing the cartonnage materials, and in his introduction to the 1981 publication he claimed that much of the cartonnage-material precluded the possibility of a monastic provenance.[23] For this reason, James M. Robinson, who initially embraced the idea of a Pachomian provenance in his introduction to the first edition of *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* of 1977, revised his views in the third edition of 1988, where he simply stated that the Pachomian connection remained "a tantalizing possibility."[24] Soon after, a prominent scholar of Pachomian monasticism, Armand Veilleux, published a two-part article in which he minimized the importance of the cartonnage and reasserted that in his opinion monasticism and Gnosticism are two separate "universal archetypes."[25] After this, the popularity of the hypothesis of a monastic provenance began to wane, even though scholars such as Jon F. Dechow, Clemens Scholten, and James E. Goehring continued to show that fourth-century monastic diversity was such that producers, owners,

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[22] Frederik Wisse, "Gnosticism and Early Monasticism in Egypt," in *Gnosis: Festschrift für Hans Jonas* (ed. Barbara Aland; Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 433–34. See also Henry Chadwick, "The Domestication of Gnosis," in *The School of Valentinus* (vol. 1 of *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut, March 28–31, 1978*; ed. Bentley Layton; SHR 41; Leiden: Brill, 1980), 14–16; Roelof van den Broek, "The Present State of Gnostic Studies," *VC* 37 (1983): 47.

[23] John C. Shelton, "Introduction," in *Nag Hammadi Codices: Greek and Coptic Papyri from the Cartonnage of the Covers* (ed. John W. B. Barns, Gerald M. Browne, and John C. Shelton; NHS 16; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 1–11.

[24] James M. Robinson, "Introduction," in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (1st ed. Leiden: Brill, 1977), 16–21, (3rd ed. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1988), 1–26 quote at 17. In the first edition, before Shelton's publication of the cartonnage, the Pachomian identity of the owners was accepted. See also Charles W. Hedrick, "Gnostic Proclivities in the Greek Life of Pachomius and the Sitz im Leben of the Nag Hammadi Library," *NovT* 22 (1980): 78–94; Bernward Büchler, *Die Armut der Armen: Über den ursprünglichen Sinn der mönchischen Armut* (München: Kösel, 1980), 141–44, claims that if the NHC derive from a Pachomian monastery they must have been read without the knowledge of Pachomius, possibly under his successor Theodore.

[25] Armand Veilleux, "Monachisme et Gnose. Première partie: Le cénobitisme Pachômien et la bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi," *LTP* 40 (1984): 275–94; idem, "Monachisme et gnose. Deuxième partie: contacts littéraires et doctrinaux entre monachisme et gnose," *LTP* 41 (1985): 3–24; cf. idem, "Monasticism and Gnosis in Egypt," in *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity* (ed. Birger A. Pearson and James E. Goehring; SAC; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 271–306. In fact, Veilleux leaves open the *possibility* that Pachomian monks produced and buried the manuscripts, but simply avers that this has not yet been proven. See also Antoine Guillaumont, "Gnose et monachisme," in *Gnosticisme et monde hellénistique: Actes du Colloque de Louvain-la-Neuve, 11-14 mars 1980* (ed. Julien Ries; Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut orientaliste, 1982), 301–10. Against this argument, see Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 264–65.

and readers of the Nag Hammadi texts could easily have found a home in the monasteries.[26] The majority of scholars were only too happy to revert to the hypothesis of Gnostic owners.

2. Alternative Hypotheses

2.1 Gnostics

The suggestion that the NHC were owned by Gnostic sectarians rests primarily on the testimony of Epiphanius of Salamis, that he encountered such Gnostics in Egypt, together with testimonies of Didymus the Blind and Serapion of Thmuis concerning Manichaeans.[27] Epiphanius unfortunately does not give us a very lucid picture of his run-in with "the Gnostics" (his sect #26). He states that it happened in his youth, hence likely in the late 320s or early 330s, and that women including "the Egyptian wife of the chief cook" were in charge of "flirty-fishing" prospective members.[28] Only after reading their books did the young Epiphanius understand that these women adhered to heretical myths, and he promptly procured the names of the heretics *hidden within the church,* ratting them out to the local bishops so that eighty people were expelled from the city. The mention of several bishops indicates that this was during a synod in Alexandria, where Epiphanius spent time in his youth. We are thus not speaking of a Gnostic sect in Upper Egypt, but – if Epiphanius can be taken at

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[26] See Jon F. Dechow, *Dogma and Mysticism in Early Christianity: Epiphanius of Cyprus and the Legacy of Origen* (NAPSPMS 13; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988); idem, "The Nag Hammadi Milieu: An Assessment in the Light of the Origenist Controversies (with Appendix 2015)," in *The Nag Hammadi Codices and Late Antique Egypt* (ed. Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott; STAC 110; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 11–51; Clemens Scholten, "Die Nag-Hammadi-Texte als Buchbesitz der Pachomianer," *JAC* 31 (1988): 144–72; James E. Goehring, *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert: Studies in Early Egyptian Monasticism* (SAC; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1999); idem, "The Provenance of the Nag Hammadi Codices Once More," in *Studia Patristica XXXV: Papers Presented at the Thirteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 1999: Ascetica, Gnostica, Liturgica, Orientalia* (ed. Maurice F. Wiles and Edward Y. Yarnold; StPatr 35; Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 234–53; see also Samuel Rubenson, *The Letters of St. Antony: Monasticism and the Making of a Saint* (SAC; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995); Lance Jenott and Elaine H. Pagels, "Antony's Letters and Nag Hammadi Codex I: Sources of Religious Conflict in Fourth-Century Egypt" *JECS* 18 (2010): 557–89.

[27] Henri-Charles Puech, and Jean Doresse, "Nouveaux écrits gnostiques découverts en Égypte," *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 92ᵉ année* 1 (1948): 91.

[28] See Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, "Flirty Fishing and Poisonous Serpents: Epiphanius of Salamis Inside His *Medical Chest Against Heresies*," in *History and Religion: Narrating a Religious Past* (ed. Bernd-Christian Otto, Susanne Rau, and Jörg Rüpke; RVV 68; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 93–108

face value – of a group around eighty people who *were part of the church of Alexandria*, and evidently went undetected as regular members of the Christian church until the youthful heresy-hunter rooted them out. In the wake of the influential deconstructions of the term "Gnosticism" by Michael A. Williams and Karen L. King,[29] the idea of Gnostic sectarians in fourth-century Egypt has fallen out of favor. If anything, the testimony of Epiphanius shows that Christians who were attracted to this kind of myth could happily find their place in the same church as Nicene Christians, perhaps constituting an extra-curricular study-group devoted to esoteric interpretation of Scripture.[30]

Another contemporary "Gnostic" mentioned by Epiphanius is Peter the Archontic, who supposedly belonged to many a Gnostic sect in his youth, yet became a presbyter in the Church, and was only found out and deposed by a bishop named Aetius, who must be Aetius of Lydda.[31] Defrocked, he went to Arabia, and Epiphanius implies he consorted with the Ebionites and Nazoreans there. In his old age he returned to Palestine before the end of the reign of Constantius (361), where he settled in a cave as a hermit, gathered other ascetics who called him "father," and "wore a sheep's fleece on the outside, and it was not realized that on the inside he was a ravening wolf."[32] It was only "from

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[29] Michael A. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); idem, "Was There a Gnostic Religion? Strategies for a Clearer Analysis," in *Was There a Gnostic Religion?* (ed. Antti Marjanen; Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 87; Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society, 2005), 55–79; Karen L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 2003).

[30] Cf. Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 64–68.

[31] Epiphanius, *Panarion* 40.1.3–7. See Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 68–69. Andrew S. Jacobs, *Epiphanius of Salamis: A Cultural Biography of Late Antiquity* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 78, no doubt correctly identifies Aetius as the bishop of Lydda, placing Peter's expulsion from the presbytery before the 340s. The bishop cannot be Aetius of Antioch, denounced by Epiphanius as the founder of the heresy of the Anomoeans in *Panarion* 56, where he also quotes Aetius' *Syntagmation* in full and refutes it point by point.

[32] Epiphanius, *Panarion* 40.1.3: ἔξωθεν μὲν γὰρ ἀληθῶς κώδιον προβάτου ἠμφίεστο, ἠγνοεῖτο δὲ ἔνδοθεν λύκος ὑπάρχων ἅρπαξ (Karl Holl, *Epiphanius* [3 vols.; GCS 25, 31, 37; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1915, 1922, 1933]; trans. Frank Williams, *The* Panarion *of Epiphanius of Salamis: Book I (Sects 1–46)* [2nd ed.; NHMS 63; Leiden: Brill, 2009], 283–84). The Armenian Eutactus is said (*Pan.* 40.1.2) to have received his heretical teachings from Peter at the end of the reign of Constantius in Palestine. Presumably Epiphanius exposed him shortly after this, when he was still head of the monastery near Eleutheropolis (see Epiphanius, *Ancoratus*, prooem.), not far from where Peter dwelled, close to Hebron. See Bentley Layton with David Brakke, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (2nd ed.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021), 243–46, who place the encounter between Epiphanius and Peter in 350. It is more economical to presume that Epiphanius found out about the proclivities of Peter because of his teaching of Eutactus, ca. 360–361. See Oliver Kösters, *Die Trinitätslehre des Epiphanius*

things he had whispered to certain persons"[33] that Epiphanius himself claimed to have exposed and anathematized him, so that he had to move to a cave, "abhorred by all and isolated from the brotherhood and from most who cared for their salvation."[34] Again, taking Epiphanius on his word, we see that Peter was *not* isolated in a Gnostic sect, but rather first served as a presbyter and later as a monastic (wearing the *melotes* sheepskin),[35] apparently respected by most Christians, until his heterodox theological views were twice uncovered, and he was twice deposed, first from his priesthood, then from his monastic status. One wonders what Peter would say in his own defense against the accusations of Epiphanius, who was not averse to painting his opponents with the heresiological tarbrush.[36] In any case, Peter was settled in Palestine, and for some time Arabia, and had no connection to Egypt as far as we can tell. The story of Epiphanius can thus not be used to shed light on supposed fourth century Upper Egyptian Gnostic sects.[37] Far from it, it indicates that people who were venerated as monks could harbor views incompatible with the orthodoxy of bishops (whether Nicene or Arian), and read suppressed literature, like Peter who as an "Archontic" supposedly used the *Ascension of Isaiah*, books of Allogenes, and a *Greater* and *Lesser Harmony*.[38]

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von Salamis: Kommentar zum „Ancoratus" (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 29–33, on Epiphanius in Palestine.

[33] Epiphanius, *Panarion* 40.1.6: ἀφ' ὧν εἰς ὦτά τινων ἐψιθύρισε ῥημάτων (Holl, *Epiphanius*).

[34] Epiphanius, *Panarion* 40.1.7: καὶ ἐκάθισεν ἐν τῷ σπηλαίῳ λοιπόν, βδελυχθεὶς ὑπὸ πάντων καὶ μονωθεὶς ἀπὸ τῆς ἀδελφότητος καὶ ἀπὸ πλείστων τῶν τῆς ζωῆς ἑαυτῶν ἐπιμελομένων (Holl, *Epiphanius*). Cf. Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 68–69. Jacobs, *Epiphanius*, 78–80, accuses Epiphanius of inconsistency, since Peter lives in a cave as a monk before and after the exposure of Epiphanius. But this misses the point: Epiphanius says Peter before his exposure lived in a cave as a seeming hermit, venerated by all, whereas afterwards he also lived in a cave, but now shunned by all, with no pretense of genuine monkhood.

[35] See Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, *Clothes and Monasticism in Ancient Christian Egypt: New Perspective on Religious Garments* (London: Routledge, 2021), 136–37, who suggests that Epiphanius does not use the traditional term *melotes* so as not to sully the venerable garb by association with Peter.

[36] See Aline Pourkier, *L'hérésiologie chez Épiphane de Salamine* (Christianisme antique 4; Paris: Beauchesne, 1992), 488. Pourkier also supposes (ibid., 39–41) that Epiphanius encountered more groups in his time in Palestine, but this is far from certain.

[37] Contra Alastair Logan, *The Gnostics: Identifying an Early Christian Cult* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2006), 26.

[38] See Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 69; Jenott, "*Book of the Foreigner*," 271–76.

2.2 Manichaeans

Didymus the Blind and Sarapion of Thmuis, who have also been invoked for the presence of Gnostics in fourth-century Egypt, do not write about Gnostics in the sense of adherents of the mythical system variously called Classical Gnosticism, or Sethian Gnosticism, to which several of the Nag Hammadi texts can be said to belong, but rather about Manichaeans.[39] No one has so far provided a sustained argument for the Manichaean provenance of the Nag Hammadi Codices, though Przemysław Piwowarczyk and Ewa Wipszycka have recently asserted that "the Manichaean connection seems equally – if not more – promising as the monastic one."[40] Nevertheless, despite the presence of Manichaeans in Kellis, Medinet Madi in the Fayyum, and Lycopolis at least in the late third century, there are no indications of any Manichaean presence on the Dishna plain surrounding Jabal al-Tarif, where the Nag Hammadi Codices were discovered, nor in Upper Egypt at all.[41] Naturally, we do not dispute that Manichaeans would likely have been very interested in our *texts*, and indeed they also read and produced texts in Coptic. We also grant that Manichaeism may have influenced the development of monasticism, as Guy G. Stroumsa has proposed,[42] and that early Pachomian coenobitism may have borrowed elements from Manichaeism, as James E. Goehring has suggested.[43] Moreover, there may be Manichaean influence on some of the texts in the Nag Hammadi Codices, as Timothy Pettipiece, René Falkenberg, and Dylan Burns have

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[39] Didymus the Blind, *Contra Manichaeos,* and several references in his commentaries, referring also to a meeting with a Manichaean; but again, this would be in Alexandria or its environs, not Upper Egypt. See Byard Bennett, "Didymus the Blind's Knowledge of Manichaeism," in *The Light and the Darkness: Studies in Manichaeism and its World* (ed. Paul Mirecki and Jason BeDuhn; NHMS 50; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 49–50; Serapion of Thmuis, *Contra Manichaeos*, provides no concrete information about Egyptian Manichaeism. See Oliver Herbel, *Sarapion of Thmuis:* Against the Manichaeans *and* Pastoral Letters (ECS 14; Strathfield: St Pauls, 2011)*.*

[40] Przemysław Piwowarczyk and Ewa Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin of the Nag Hammadi Codices?" *Adamantius* 23 (2017): 457. See also Alexandr Khosoryev, *Die Bibliothek von Nag Hammadi: Einige Probleme des Christentums in Ägypten während der ersten Jahrhunderte* (ASKÄ 7; Altenberge: Oros, 1995), 104–31.

[41] The reason why Lundhaug and Jenott do not discuss a possible Manichaean provenance for the Nag Hammadi Codices is not that they were unaware of the Kellis discoveries, as Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka claim, but rather that these discoveries throw little light on the question of the provenance of the Nag Hammadi manuscripts. See Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 235 n. 4.

[42] Guy G. Stroumsa, "Monachisme et Marranisme chez les Manichéens d'Egypte," *Numen* 29 (1982): 184–201.

[43] James E. Goehring, "Monastic Diversity and Ideological Boundaries in Fourth-Century Christian Egypt," *JECS* 5 (1997): 78.

shown.[44] Despite all this, the absence of Manichaeans in the area of discovery must be restated; furthermore – and importantly – there are no Manichaean texts included in the codices, no indications of Manichaeism in the colophons and scribal notes, nor are there any traces of Manichaeans in the cartonnage.[45]

2.3 An Individual Owner

Since Jean Doresse had claimed that the jar containing the Nag Hammadi Codices had been buried in a tomb at the foot of Jabal al-Tarif, Martin Krause suggested that the books had likely been buried as grave goods along with their wealthy owner, who was a Gnostic.[46] This suggestion did not gain much traction, until it was revivified by Nicola Denzey Lewis and Justine Ariel Blount, who proposed that the books may have served as Christian "Books of the Dead," thus being a survival of the ancient Egyptian religion.[47] Yet, the suggestion that the Nag Hammadi Codices were owned and used by a single individual has the major flaw that it does not take into consideration the combined evidence of the colophons and cartonnage documents that indicate that the codices were produced and used by a community. Moreover, the suggestion that they may have been buried as "Books of the Dead" has been convincingly rejected by Paula Tutty, who shows not only that the purported Christian custom of using books as grave goods has been overstated, but also that the Egyptian Book of the Dead had long since gone out of use by the fourth century and there was thus no longer such a religious custom for the Christians to take over.

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[44] Timothy T. Pettipiece, "Towards a Manichaean Reading of the Nag Hammadi Codices," *Journal of the Canadian Society for Coptic Studies* 3–4 (2012): 43–54; René Falkenberg, "What Has Nag Hammadi to Do with Medinet Madi? The Case of *Eugnostos* and Manichaeism," in *The Nag Hammadi Codices in the Context of Fourth- and Fifth-century Christianity in Egypt* (ed. Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott; STAC 110; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 261–86; Dylan M. Burns, "Gnosis Undomesticated: Archon-Seduction, Demon Sex, and Sodomites in the *Paraphrase of Shem* (NHC VII,1)," *Gnosis* 1–2 (2016): 140–44.

[45] See Bull, "Panopolis Connection," 135.

[46] Doresse, *Secret Books,* 134; Martin Krause, "Die Texte von Nag Hammadi," in *Gnosis: Festschrift für Hans Jonas* (ed. Barbara Aland; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 221, 241–43, states that the monastic cartonnage does not matter much since the codices could have been produced in monasteries and then sold to non-Christians ("Auch den in den Bucheinbänden verklebten Papyri aus den Klöstern Pachoms kommt keine entscheidende Aussagekraft zu, weil diese Codices zwar in den Klöstern hergestellt, aber an Nichtchristen zum Beschriften verkauft worden sein konnten," quote from p. 242).

[47] Nicola Denzey Lewis and Justine Ariel Blount, "Rethinking the Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices," *JBL* 133 (2014): 399–419; Nicola Denzey Lewis, "Death on the Nile: Egyptian Codices, Gnosticism, and Early Christian Books of the Dead," in *Practicing Gnosis: Ritual, Magic, Theurgy and Liturgy in Nag Hammadi, Manichaean and Other Ancient Literature: Essays in Honor of Birger A. Pearson* (ed. April D. DeConick et al.; NHMS 85; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 161–80; eadem, "Rethinking the Rethinking of the Nag Hammadi Codices," *BSR* 45 (2016): 39–45.

Furthermore, as Tutty shows, the cemetery mentioned by Doresse was not con-
firmed by archaeological excavations and likely never existed in the first
place.[48]

2.4 Urban Intellectuals

In 1995, Alexandr Khosroyev published a monograph proposing that the own-
ers of the Nag Hammadi Codices were urban intellectuals of an eclectically
esoteric bent.[49] This group was neither unambiguously Christian nor a sect *per
se,* rather the variety of literature in the Nag Hammadi Codices would reflect
their non-committal attitude. Khosroyev proffers Zosimus of Panopolis as an
example of the kind of person who might have owned the codices, as someone
with a working knowledge of Greek philosophy and an interest in Gnostic
scriptures and Hermetica.[50]

   First of all, Khosroyev neglects to mention in which city these intellectuals
lived. The "metropolis" of the Diospolite nome, nearby Diospolis Parva, shows
no archaeological signs of habitation around its Roman-era temple after the
reign of Gallienus, and must have been much reduced in the fourth century.[51]
It is thus unlikely that a group of educated elite urbanites dwelled here in the
fourth century. Panopolis is a better candidate, and we could perhaps envision
the children or grandchildren of Zosimus' circle as the owners, but one would
also have to explain why these Panopolitans saw fit to travel all the way to the
Jabal al-Tarif to bury their books right under the noses of the Pachomians.[52]

   There is no doubt that Zosimus and his circle, like the Manichaeans, would
have been interested in most of the texts of the Nag Hammadi Codices. Yet if
urban intellectuals owned the codices, why are the texts written in Coptic and
not Greek, the language of intellectual culture in Greco-Roman Egypt? Stephen
Emmel has attempted to answer this question by proposing that such a group
may have translated the texts into Coptic in order to make a new, Christianized

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[48] Paula Tutty, "Books *of* the Dead or Books *with* the Dead," in *The Nag Hammadi Co-
dices and Late Antique Egypt* (ed. Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott; STAC 110; Tübingen:
Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 287–326; see also Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 5–6; 17 n.
49; Bull, "Panopolis Connection," 134; Bull, "Women, Angels," 82 n. 29.

[49] Alexandr Khosroyev, *Die Bibliothek von Nag Hammadi: Einige Probleme des Chris-
tentums in Ägypten während der ersten Jahrhunderte* (ASKÄ 7; Altenberge: Oros, 1995).

[50] Khosroyev, *Bibliothek,* 99.

[51] William M. Flinders Petrie, *Diospolis Parva: The Cemeteries of Abadiyeh and Hu*
(London: The Egypt Exploration Fund, 1901), 56–57. The Coptic monastery and cemetery
mentioned by Petrie postdate the fourth century.

[52] See Bull, "Panopolis Connection," 135. It may also be noted that the Nag Hammadi
colophons do not resemble the way Zosimus addresses his correspondent, Theosebeia. On
the NHC colophons, see Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 178–206.

version of authentically Egyptian esoteric wisdom.[53] But there is no evidence for this taking place. A much less cumbersome explanation is simply that the texts were translated from Greek to Coptic so they could be read by, or to, people who did not understand Greek – or who did not understand Greek as well as they understood Coptic. Again, a monastic community, like the one depicted in the *Life of Pachomius*, with some bilingual members and many more who did not understand Greek, accounts well for the Coptic language of the codices.[54]

2.5 Non-Pachomian Monks

It has rightly been pointed out that the Pachomians were not the only monks in Upper Egypt, and that other monastics with a less clear record of staunch orthodoxy (however *post hoc*) may be viable candidates as owners and producers of the codices. We do not wish to reject this possibility and would like to reiterate that the Pachomians are simply offered as the *most likely* of potential monastic readers given the sources that are currently available. Veilleux states that there were other monastic groups in the area, "both orthodox and heterodox," as well as independent hermits attested in the Pachomian lives.[55] But, not counting the originally unaffiliated individual monasteries that chose to join the Pachomian monastic order,[56] there is no other monastic order established on the Dishna plain in the fourth century that we know of, and though unaffiliated monks may have been present, we have no direct evidence of them.[57] The other monks mentioned in the *vitae* may have come from anywhere in Egypt, and there seems to be no reason to suppose, as Veilleux does, that the disciples of Palamon remained near Sheneset unaffected by the Pachomian expansion.[58]

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[53] Stephen Emmel, "The Coptic Gnostic Texts as Witnesses to the Production and Transmission of Gnostic (and Other) Traditions," in *Das Thomasevangelium: Entstehung – Rezeption – Theologie* (ed. Jörg Frey, Enno E. Popkes, and Jens Schröter; BZNW 157; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 48. Cf. Christian H. Bull, "Hermes Between Pagans and Christians: The Nag Hammadi Hermetica in Context," in *The Nag Hammadi Codices and Late Antique Egypt* (ed. Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott; STAC 110; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 244–45.

[54] See Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 90–102.

[55] Veilleux, "Monachisme I," 282. See discussion of the evidence in Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 33–34.

[56] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 30–34.

[57] None of the monks and monasteries mentioned in the *vitae* cited by Veilleux, "Monachisme I," 280 n. 29, are situated near Sheneset or Pbow.

[58] The *Life of Pachomius*, SBo 18, states that when Palamon was on his deathbed they called for Pachomius, and when the latter returned south they stated "we have become orphans." See Armand Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia: The Lives, Rules, and Other Writings of Saint Pachomius and His Disciples* (3 vols.; CS 45–47; Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1980–1982), 40. It seems likely that the Apa Ebonh who joined his monastery in

Veilleux also claims that a Meletian provenance is quite as likely as any other hypothesis advanced.[59] But again, he can only mention Meletians living in the region near Antony, that is to say in Lower Egypt. Of course, there are also Melitian materials from the archives of Paieous, Paphnouthios and Nepheros, all likely related to the monastery of Hathor in the upper Lycopolite nome, but this is still far north of Jabal al-Tarif.[60] While Melitians or adherents of other monastic groups certainly cannot be ruled out as owners of the Nag Hammadi Codices, it must be remembered that, unlike the Pachomians, we have no evidence of their presence in the area close to where the codices were discovered.

The letter of Paphnutius to Pachomius in the cartonnage of Codex VII remains an important testimony. Even though it has been pointed out that both names were common, it seems somewhat far-fetched to propose that another monk named Paphnutius wrote to another monastic leader named Pachomius, whom he also addresses as a superior.[61] The simplest explanation still seems to be that this letter was written by the Pachomian Paphnutius to the founder of the order. This is in itself no smoking gun for the Pachomian provenance of the Nag Hammadi Codices, but when the cumulative evidence of the find-spot in the Pachomian heartland, the cartonnage, the codicology, and the colophons are taken into consideration, then the Pachomians remain the *most plausible* owners and producers of the physical objects known as the Nag Hammadi Codices.

3. Recent Criticism of the Monastic Hypothesis

Although the monastic hypothesis has inspired a new generation of scholars to read the Nag Hammadi treatises in light of fourth-century monasticism, its reassertion has not been equally well received by everyone. Two criticisms in particular must be briefly discussed: first the arguments of those who cast doubt on James Robinson's discovery story; and second, a polemic against Lundhaug and Jenott's arguments for a connection between the Nag Hammadi Codices and monasticism in Egypt.

Sheneset to the Pachomian federation (SBo 50; G[1] 54b) must have been a successor of Palamon, after the brothers there became "orphans," *pace* Veilleux, "Monachisme I," 280.

[59] Veilleux, "Monachisme I," 280 n. 30, 288.

[60] Goehring "Monastic Diversity," 64–72; Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 44–46, 235–38.

[61] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 136–39.

3.1 Criticism of Robinson's Discovery Story

In recent years there have been several attempts to undermine James Robinson's account of the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Codices[62] – and by extension the viability of the monastic hypothesis.[63] Yet, many of these arguments rest on questionable presuppositions and, in the end, do not present viable alternatives.[64]

Robinson's recent critics privilege the accounts given by Doresse,[65] as well as the opinion of Kasser and Krause,[66] despite the fact that Robinson, contrary to Doresse, Kasser, and Krause, had access to the sources closest to the discovery and also conducted by far the most thorough examination of it, including extensive interviews in the surrounding villages.[67] These interviews are important. As Dylan Burns points out:

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[62] James M. Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codices: A General Introduction to the Nature and Significance of the Coptic Gnostic Library from Nag Hammadi* (2nd rev. ed.; Claremont: Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, 1977), 2–3; idem, "The Discovery of the Nag Hammadi Codices," *BA* 42 (1979): 206–24; idem, "From the Cliff to Cairo: The Story of the Discoverers and the Middlemen of the Nag Hammadi Codices," in *Colloque International sur les textes de Nag Hammadi (Québec, 22–25 août 1978)* (ed. Bernard Barc; BCNH.É 1; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1981), 21–58; idem, *The Facsimile Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices: Introduction*. Leiden: Brill, 1984, 3–5; idem, "The Discovering and Marketing of Coptic Manuscripts: The Nag Hammadi Codices and the Bodmer Papyri," in *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity* (ed. Birger A. Pearson and James E. Goehring; SAC; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 2–25; idem, "Introduction," 22–26; idem, "The Discovery of the Nag Hammadi Codices," *JCS* 11 (2009): 1–21; idem, *The Nag Hammadi Story* (2 vols.; NHMS 86; Leiden: Brill, 2014), 20–40.

[63] Denzey Lewis and Blunt, "Rethinking the Origins"; Denzey Lewis, "Rethinking the Rethinking"; Mark Goodacre, "How Reliable is the Story of the Nag Hammadi Discovery?" *JSNT* 35 (2013): 303–22.

[64] See esp. Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 11–21; Dylan M. Burns, "Telling Nag Hammadi's Egyptian Stories," *BSR* 45 (2016): 5–11; Brent Nongbri, "Finding Early Christian Books at Nag Hammadi and Beyond." *BSR* 45 (2016): 11–19.

[65] Doresse, *Secret Books*, 116–36.

[66] Kasser and Krause's doubts regarding Robinson's reconstruction are famously stated in the first footnote of James M. Robinson, "Introduction," in *The Facsimile Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices: Introduction* (ed. James M. Robinson; Leiden: Brill, 1984), 1–102. It is stated here that they "do not consider as assured anything more than the core of the story (the general location and approximate date of the discovery), the rest not 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 protagonists could not at the time understand" (ibid., 1 n. 1).

[67] Jean Doresse spent only two days at Nag Hammadi in 1950 and conducted the rest of his investigations in Cairo during extended stays from 1947 to 1953 (Robinson, "Introduction," 1). As Robinson points out, "Jean Doresse did not identify and hence did not interview any of the principals involved prior to the material reaching the two main Cairo antiquities dealers Phokion J. Tano and Albert Eid, and hence his publication of the story a generation

If there is a cornerstone upon which the veracity of Robinson's account as a whole stands or falls, it is occupied chiefly ... by Raghib Andarawus at al-Qasr – an individual unmentioned by Doresse, Kasser, Krause, Goodacre, and Denzey Lewis and Blount, but who Robinson interviewed repeatedly from 1975–1978, and who told his own story of his involvement with the codices at a panel entitled "A Report on the Discovery of the Nag Hammadi Codices" on 10 December 1976 at the meeting of the International Committee for the Nag Hammadi Codices in Cairo.[68]

At this meeting he appeared together with another important informant of Robinson, by the name of Bibawi.[69] Not only did Andarawus and Bibawi corroborate Mohammad Ali al-Samman's claim to be the discoverer of the Nag Hammadi Codices and the veracity of the blood-feud in which he was involved, but their presence at this meeting also invalidates a significant aspect of Kasser and Krause's criticism, quoted by Robinson's recent critics,[70] that Robinson's informants were not available for questioning by others.[71] Moreover, as Burns succinctly puts it:

if anyone has silenced the subaltern in relating the Nag Hammadi discovery, it is Kasser and Krause, who, present at the meeting of the International Committee for the Nag Hammadi Codices in Cairo in 1976 when two Egyptians recounted their experiences regarding the codices, went and dismissed these Copts' testimony entirely, as they denounced Robinson's rendering of it.[72]

At the end of the day, while one may question the veracity of some of the details of the accounts of the discovery given by Muhammad Ali al-Samman and others, we see little reason to doubt that he and his companions found the Nag Hammadi Codices in a sealed jar by the Jabal al-Tarif – either buried somewhere in the talus or in one of the caves.[73] Moreover, it is worth pointing out once more that both Doresse and Robinson pinpoint the same limited area by the Jabal al-Tarif as their preferred site of discovery, and that even Kasser and Krause considered "as assured" "the general location" of the discovery.[74]

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ago did not go beyond 'the general location and approximate date of the discovery'" (Robinson, "Introduction," 1 n. 1). Robinson himself conducted interviews with the discoverers and middlemen during multiple visits to the Nag Hammadi area in 1966, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1978, and 1980 (see ibid.).

[68] Burns, "Telling Nag Hammadi's Egyptian Stories," 6–7.

[69] Burns, "Telling Nag Hammadi's Egyptian Stories," 7.

[70] See Denzey Lewis and Blunt, "Rethinking the Origins," 400; Goodacre, "How Reliable," 308–10.

[71] See Burns, "Telling Nag Hammadi's Egyptian Stories," 6–8.

[72] Burns, "Telling Nag Hammadi's Egyptian Stories," 9. Cf. also Nongbri, "Finding Early Christian Books," 17–18.

[73] See the map in Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 15. It should be noted that the latter possibility is rejected by Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Story*, 2:1148.

[74] See Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Story*, 1:11; Robinson, "Introduction," 1 n. 1. As Robinson puts it, although the excavations conducted in the mid-70s did not produce any evidence

Moreover, Mark Goodacre as well as Nicola Denzey Lewis and Justine Ariel Blount doubt Robinson's account of the blood-feud between families from the adjacent villages of al-Qasr and Hamrah Dum. Ignoring the real significance of the blood-feud in Robinson's account, they claim his description to be the result of an orientalizing western perspective. However, the existence of blood-feuds and general lawlessness in this area of Egypt is far from something Robinson made up. Not only are blood-feuds well-known and common in the Egyptian countryside, but the particular blood-feud referred to by Robinson and his informant, Mohammad Ali al-Samman, is well-documented.[75] In this regard there is also considerable continuity between the situation in this part of Egypt shortly after the Second World War up until recent times.[76] A relatively recent newspaper report, dated August 31, 2014, describes the situation in Hamrah Dum as follows:

> Villagers are walking around carrying guns and rifles for self-defence; no women are seen in the streets, the small police office chain-locked, and the village's medical center deserted with only some decaying posters of medical instructions hanging on its old walls. That is how things look like in Hamra Doum, or known as "the Village of Blood and Fire."[77]

The report also mentions "the revenge issues in the village," and the fact that no less than the governor of Qena had been called upon "to launch a reconciliation initiative between three main fighting families in Hamra Doum."[78] Moreover, the function of the blood-feud in Robinson's account is not simply to add spice to the story of the discovery, but it serves as the most important

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verifying the site of the discovery, "the many local reports agree on the identity of the discoverer and of the site of the find at the Jabal al-Tarif, specifically the same southern part of the foot of the cliff that had been pointed out to Doresse in 1950" (Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Story*, 2:1118). These facts are glossed over by Robinson's recent critics, Goodacre and Denzey Lewis and Blount.

[75] Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Story*, 20–27, 42–43.

[76] One may compare the accounts given by Robinson, as well as Doresse's previously unpublished account of his visit to the site of the discovery (published in Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Story*, 1:78–92), with recent accounts such as, e.g., Yassin Gaber, "Tea and Guns with the Sa'idi of Egypt," *Roadsandkingdoms.com* (http://roadsandkingdoms.com/2014/tea-and-guns-with-the-saidi-of-egypt/). See also Nicholas Hopkins and Reem Saad, "The Region of Upper Egypt: Identity and Change," in *Upper Egypt: Identity and Change* (ed. Nicholas Hopkins and Reem Saad (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2004), esp. 13–15.

[77] "Feature: Upper Egypt's village of 'blood and fire' appeals for services, security," http://www.china.org.cn/world/Off_the_Wire/2014-08/31/content_33387179.htm. See also the report on the situation in Egypt, dated December 12, 2001, compiled by The Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland entitled "Information on Blood Feuds, Including Information on any Police Protection Available," (http://www.refworld.org/publisher,RDCI,,, 4f1025b62,0.html).

[78] Ibid.

means by which the discovery is dated, and also provides the reason why Muhammad Ali had not dared to return to the site of discovery before Robinson managed to convince him to do so many years later.

Furthermore, Denzey Lewis and Blount also regard Robinson's description of Mohammad Ali's alleged fear of jinn to be fanciful, and claim that rural Egyptians "do not fear *jinni* in bottles," attributing this part of Robinson's account as well to "orientalizing elements" that they label "relics of a bygone era in Egyptian archaeology."[79] However, rather than discrediting Robinson, this statement only betrays their own unfamiliarity with rural Egyptian folk beliefs.[80] Indeed, while accusing Robinson of Orientalism, these modern critics themselves dismiss the accounts of the local Egyptians while also seeming unaware of the realities on the ground in Upper Egypt. And one must also not forget that belief in spirits or other supernatural entities is pervasive among the majority of the world's population, even in first-world countries.

3.2 Criticism of The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices

Secondly, we need to address in more detail a polemical review of Lundhaug and Jenott's *Monastic Origins* by Polish papyrologists Przemysław Piwowarczyk and Ewa Wipszycka, since it in several ways misrepresents the thesis and arguments of the book.[81] We have already discussed part of their criticism above, but a few additional points deserve brief discussion.

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[79] Denzey Lewis and Blount, "Rethinking the Origins," 418.

[80] See, e.g., El-Sayed El-Aswad, *Religion and Folk Cosmology: Scenarios of the Visible and Invisible in Rural Egypt* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 39–41, 71.

[81] The review article by Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin of the Nag Hammadi Codices?" is indeed remarkable for its hostile tone as well as for its many misrepresentations. For instance, Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka claim that Lundhaug and Jenott, in their discussion of the names Eugnostos and Gongessos in the colophon of NHC III, "do not give any source-rooted (sic!) example of a change of the name or of adoption of a spiritual name; they cannot do it, because such a practice did not exist in Egyptian monasticism" ("A Monastic Origin," 454). Yet, Lundhaug and Jenott do cite such examples in their discussion of this topic on the very page to which the reviewers refer (*Monastic Origins*, 193). Again, when Lundhaug and Jenott argue that there is no evidence of "Gnostics" in Egypt in the fourth century, Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka claim that they ignore the evidence of Epiphanius ("A Monastic Origin," 441), whereas in fact they discuss Epiphanius' testimony at length, arguing *inter alia*: "There is little reason to doubt that Epiphanius encountered Christians in Egypt whom he regarded as heretics. But what is important for our current discussion is that the reliable part of Epiphanius' eye-witness testimony actually calls into question [the] idea that such people belonged to a 'Gnostic cult movement'" (Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 64–69, quotation from p. 67). Elsewhere, Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka discuss the negative views of Athanasius regarding the reading of apocrypha, and evidence of censorship in antiquity, but neglect to mention that all of this is in fact discussed at length in Lundhaug and Jenott's book (Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin," 441; Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, e.g., 146–52 [in a section entitled "Censors and

Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka maintain that Lundhaug and Jenott should have discussed the identity of the authors and readers of what the reviewers refer to as the "Gnostic" texts *before the rise of monasticism*.[82] This, however, is not the purpose of Lundhaug and Jenott's book, which focuses on the identity of those who produced and read the Nag Hammadi Codices – the material artifacts which can safely be dated after the advent of monasticism. It must again be emphasized that the main argument of Lundhaug and Jenott's book is that the Nag Hammadi Codices were produced and used by Egyptian monastics. The book does *not* argue that all the works contained in these codices were *authored* in the same context. These works had highly different transmission histories and in a number of cases no doubt ultimately derive from a time, place, and context of authorship far removed from the monasteries of Upper Egypt. Conversely, some of the works had *shorter* histories of transmission, and we should not rule out by default that *some* of the texts may have been authored close to the time, place, and context of the Nag Hammadi Codices themselves. Moreover, considering the fluid nature of the transmission of this type of literature in late antique manuscript culture, we should not be surprised to find evidence of adaptation to the contexts through which these works may have passed in transmission. Even works authored long before the fourth century may show traces of the fourth-century context(s) in which they were copied and read.[83] Arguments for the existence and importance of specific adaptations of this sort must of course be made on a case-by-case basis.[84] In their

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Symphathizers"]; 164, 166, 169, 175, 182, 205, 239, 249). Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka also question Lundhaug and Jenott's emphasis on the presence of works of Origen in monasteries ("A Monastic Origin," 445), though it is made abundantly clear throughout the book that this is important since the reading of apocryphal books is associated in many sources with Origen or "Origenists" (Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 35–38, 175–76; 238–56). This is only a small sample of the many misrepresentations of the review, and a final example will have to suffice. Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka attempt to dismiss the evidence of the colophon in Codex VII, arguing that the term "fatherhood" does not *necessarily* mean "abbot" ("A Monastic Origin," 453). But Lundhaug and Jenott already admitted as much, and merely argue, on the basis of much cited evidence, that the term most probably refers to a monastic superior *in the context of this particular colophon* (Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 180–82).

[82] Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin," 441. They also state with confidence that these texts already circulated in Egypt not only in Greek, but also in Coptic, prior to the advent of monasticism, but there is in fact no concrete evidence of any of these texts existing in Coptic prior to the fourth century.

[83] Cf. Lundhaug and Lied, "Studying Snapshots"; Lundhaug, "An Illusion of Textual Stability"; idem, "Textual Fluidity."

[84] See, e.g., Bull, "Women, Angels"; idem, "An Origenistic Reading"; idem, "Great Demon"; Jenott, "Reading Variants"; Lundhaug, "An Illusion of Textual Stability"; idem, "Dialogue of the Savior"; idem, "Monastic Exegesis"; idem, "Textual Fluidity"; René Falkenberg, "The Making of a Secret Book of John: Nag Hammadi Codex III in Light of New Philology," in *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture,*

book, Lundhaug and Jenott do not argue against the circulation of any of the Nag Hammadi texts outside a monastic context, and doing so would indeed have been ludicrous. They simply argue that *these particular codices* derive from such a context and that the texts they contain may have been altered, to greater or lesser degree, to fit that context.[85]

Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka assert that Lundhaug and Jenott "entirely ignore the fact that even though monks did read apocrypha, they were not their only readers."[86] But obviously they do no such thing. The argument of the book is simply that the most likely readers of the apocrypha *as they appear in the Nag Hammadi Codices* were upper Egyptian monks, most likely belonging to the Pachomian monastic federation. Lundhaug and Jenott do not argue that it was monastics who authored the *Gospel of Thomas*, for instance, or who produced and used the Oxyrhynchus fragments attesting to the circulation of this work in Greek, as Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka imply.[87] What their book does argue is that the Nag Hammadi Codex in which an entire version of the *Gospel of Thomas* has been preserved in Coptic was produced and read by monastics, and that these monastics *may* even have rewritten or edited certain parts in order to make it more suitable for their context of use.[88]

Another point on which Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka take issue with Lundhaug and Jenott is in their evaluation of the nature and significance of the cartonnage evidence. Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka repeat the "wastepaper dealer" explanation for how the monastic letters ended up in the cartonnage of

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Textual Fluidity, and New Philology (ed. Liv Ingeborg Lied and Hugo Lundhaug; TUGAL 175; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 85–125.

[85] Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin," 449, state that "the idea that the *Gospel of Philip* could have been created in the course of Origenist disputes (p. 246) seems to be too radical (it could have been just rewritten or supplemented)." However, when one takes a look at page 246 in *Monastic Origins*, one finds that what is argued there is simply that "the *Gospel of Philip* seems to reflect the theological debates of the Origenist controversy in Egypt, and may even be responding to anti-Origenist polemics in its own unique interpretations." What is argued here, using the word "reflect," is in fact nothing more than what Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka themselves suggest, namely that the text seems at least to have been rewritten. Lundhaug and Jenott do not argue for the "Origenist origin of [the] text," as Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka try to present it (ibid.), but rather that the text in several ways echoes the debates about Origenism and Origen's theology that were current at the time when the Nag Hammadi Codices were produced, which may very well have been the result of rewriting.

[86] Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin," 450.

[87] Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin," 451.

[88] We would of course agree with Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin," 451, that texts like "the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Gospel of Mary* seem to have enjoyed comparable popularity," but take issue with their suggestion that Lundhaug and Jenott assume that "all readers of such texts collectively joined the monastic movement" (ibid.). This is of course not what is argued.

the Nag Hammadi Codices, a theory originally proposed by Wipszycka herself,[89] without mentioning the fact that it has been pointed out not only by Lundhaug and Jenott, but also by Roger Bagnall that there is no evidence for such a trade.[90] This hypothesis, which Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka simply repeat,[91] can therefore not be used to dismiss the evidence of the monastic letters from the cartonnage in any discussion of the provenance of the codices.

Moreover, the reviewers claim that Lundhaug and Jenott "had to prove that all the papyri from the codex covers came into existence as a result of the functioning of Pachomian monastic administration."[92] Yet again, this is not what is argued. Instead, the book proposes that the majority of the documents found in the cartonnage of the covers *could have* come into existence as a result of internal monastic administration.[93] Lundhaug and Jenott argue this in response to Shelton, who claimed that Pachomian monks could not have produced such documents since they were so isolated from the material affairs of the world.[94] The monastic hypothesis accounts for the fact that wastepaper used by monks

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[89] Ewa Wipszycka, "The Nag Hammadi Library and the Monks: A Papyrologist's Point of View," *JJP* 30 (2000): 179–91.

[90] Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin," 434–35; Roger S. Bagnall, *Early Christian Books in Egypt* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 58; Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 139–42. Erja Salmenkivi, "Reuse and Recycling of Papyrus," in *Recycling and Reuse in the Roman Economy* (ed. Chloë N. Duckworth and Andrew Wilson; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 274–79, notes the lack of evidence for wastepaper dealers, but wrongly implies that Lundhaug and Jenott base the monastic provenance hypothesis solely on cartonnage material.

[91] Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin," 439.

[92] Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin," 435.

[93] For instance, Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka misrepresent Lundhaug and Jenott's argument regarding the cartonnage document G1. Lundhaug and Jenott do not try to prove that this is a monastic product, but simply argue that it is not necessarily non-monastic. This is an important distinction. Similarly, with G3, where Lundhaug and Jenott argue that this might also have originated in a monastic context, rather than necessarily a "private" one, they are not trying to prove that it could only have been produced in a monastic context. Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka quote Malcolm Choat's comment in a recent article on monastic letters from Late Antique Egypt to the effect that he found it "not entirely convincing" that *all* the cartonnage documents could derive from a monastic context (Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin," 436; Malcolm Choat, "Monastic Letters on Papyrus from Late Antique Egypt," in *Writing and Communication in Early Egyptian Monasticism* [ed. Malcolm Choat and Mariachiara Giorda; Leiden: Brill, 2017], 34 n. 88), but they seem to misunderstand him when they later quote him approvingly saying that "it is at least clear that the variety of monasticism displayed in the codices can be easily reconciled with Pachomian monasticism if one reads attentively past the ideals in the literary record of the *koinonia*" (Choat, "Monastic Letters on Papyrus," 36. Cf. Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin," 438). This is exactly what Lundhaug and Jenott argue.

[94] See Shelton, "Introduction."

to make books could have originated both inside and outside the monastery. As Lundhaug and Jenott put it:

> why seek 'a single source' for the mixture of papyri in the first place? There is no reason to posit that whoever made the covers would have acquired all the papyri from one place or through one person. Far from challenging the monastic hypothesis, the diverse assemblage of documents found in the cartonnage actually makes a good deal of sense as the by-product of a cenobitic organization, which, as we have seen, generated its own documents from within (accounts, personal correspondence, literary texts), received letters, and must have acquired other documents from outside, for instance when new members joined, sometimes bringing property with them and donating it to the monastery.[95]

What Lundhaug and Jenott do argue is that internal recycling in a monastic community is the most economic explanation – and thus the *most likely* one – for how a majority of the cartonnage papyri ended up in the covers of the Nag Hammadi Codices.

Arguably the most curious part of Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka's criticism is their dismissal of the evidence of the letter to Pachome from Papnoute (known as cartonnage fragment C6) found in the cover of Codex VII.[96] The fact that the name Pachome has to be reconstructed *in the address line on the verso of the fragment*,[97] does not detract from what is actually clearly visible on the recto. The picture of the recto of that fragment, printed in the *Monastic Origins*, leaves no room for doubt that the letter is addressed to Pachome by a person named Papnoute.[98] The only question that remains is whether this person is the same Pachome as the one we know as the founder of the Pachomian *koinonia*. Lundhaug and Jenott acknowledge the fact that it is impossible to be sure, but add that considering the time and place, it would be quite curious if they were not, since the letter comes from the exact time and region as the famous abbot and that Papnoute addresses him with such a reverent title as "my beloved father."[99]

Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka argue that the evidence of the cartonnage letters are more consistent with "monks living in loose communities (*laura*)," but the evidence they refer to is of a significantly later date,[100] and does not inval-

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[95] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 140.

[96] Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin," 437–38.

[97] Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin," 437–38, here simply repeat Shelton's criticism of Barns' reconstruction of the text on the *verso*. Like Shelton, Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka thus completely miss the far more important point that the name "Pachome" is clear, without any reconstruction, on the *recto*.

[98] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 135. The book also includes a transcription of the Coptic text, together with Lundhaug and Jenott's translation (ibid., 136).

[99] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 136–38; see also the discussion above.

[100] Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin," 438–39, and especially the evidence cited in n. 25.

idate Lundhaug and Jenott's arguments that they most likely derive from a cenobitic context,[101] a view recently corroborated by a thorough examination of the cartonnage evidence by Paula Tutty.[102]

In their book, Lundhaug and Jenott present evidence showing that fourth- and fifth-century monastics would in several respects have constituted ideal readers for many of the texts contained in the Nag Hammadi Codices. One such argument is that the monks possessed the kind of profound knowledge of the Bible necessary to grasp the complex biblical allusions found in these texts. In relation to this, Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka claim that Lundhaug and Jenott "forget that not only monks read the Bible."[103] This is of course a misreading of the argument, which is that the complexity of the use of Scripture in these texts would presuppose as its ideal readers people who were especially knowledgeable of Scripture, and that we find evidence of such people in the monastic sources. Lundhaug and Jenott do not argue that *only* monastics could have understood these texts. When Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka claim that Lundhaug and Jenott "do not explain what the monks, immersed in the biblical language and imagery, would look for in such texts," [104] they disregard the book's final two chapters,[105] where it is argued, *inter alia*, that "We should not dismiss the possibility that the monks who read these texts, Pachomian or otherwise, were

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[101] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 139–42. See also Dechow, "The Nag Hammadi Milieu."

[102] Tutty, "The Monks of the Nag Hammadi Codices." It may also be noted that when Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin," 443, argue that the use of fragments from the book of Genesis for the cartonnage of Nag Hammadi Codex VII points towards a secular rather than monastic context, they ignore the evidence, cited by Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 126–27, of such reuse in the covers of other Coptic codices produced in Egyptian monasteries. Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka here write as though the presence of the book of Genesis in the cartonnage of Codex VII is used by Lundhaug and Jenott as positive evidence of a monastic connection, whereas Lundhaug and Jenott adduce the fragment to show that the recycling of biblical manuscripts as cartonnage is not a valid argument *against* a monastic place of production. When Lundhaug and Jenott subsequently point out the similarities between the Genesis fragments and certain codices from the Dishna Papers, they do so not to argue that this in itself makes the Nag Hammadi Codices monastic, as Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka suggest, but simply to point out that both manuscript discoveries, of which it can be argued on separate grounds that they are monastic, *may* in fact derive from the same community. For a more detailed argument along these lines, see Lundhaug, "Dishna Papers." Moreover, when Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka ("A Monastic Origin," 436–37) claim that the comparisons Lundhaug and Jenott bring to the table between the Bala'izah papyri and the Nag Hammadi cartonnage documents are not valid, their quotation of the work of Joanna Wegner does not in fact support their dismissal of the validity of such a comparison – quite the contrary.

[103] Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin," 441.

[104] Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin," 441.

[105] See Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, esp. 256–68.

capable of reading selectively, finding edification in one passage while disagreeing with another."[106] When Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka charge that "the universality" of such selective reading practices is "yet to be proven and not to be taken for granted,"[107] this is a straw man argument, for selective reading does not need to have been a universal practice for it to have been practiced by certain monastic individuals or groups at any one time.[108] What is important is that monastiscs may have read the Nag Hammadi Codices selectively, and for a number of reasons and purposes. Why and how they may have done so is the focus of the present volume.

4. Outline of the Present Volume

The following articles all engage with and further explore the avenues of research opened up by considering monks as producers, owners, and readers of the Nag Hammadi Codices. We still believe that the monastic hypothesis makes best sense of all the evidence at our disposal. The remaining hesitancy of the critics of the hypothesis has no doubt much to do with squaring how supposedly orthodox monks could have read such texts as are found in the Nag Hammadi Codices, besides those which demonstrably were read by monastics, such as the *Teachings of Silvanus* (NHC VII,4) and the *Sentences of Sextus*

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[106] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 267. This argument was indeed already made by Rubenson, *Letters of St. Antony*, 123: "The fact that there is much in the texts that could have been regarded as edifying by intellectual monks is not disproved by the presence in the texts of speculation and mythology alien to the Pachomian tradition. We should not today deny a fourth century monastic reader the capacity of selective reading and intelligent interpretation."

[107] Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin," 443.

[108] At the end of the day, it seems as if Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka are far more certain of what would or would not be possible for Christian monks in the fourth century than the sources allow for. Against the vision of Pachomian uniformity and "orthodoxy" upheld by Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka there is no lack of evidence. See, e.g., Goehring, *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert*. Compare furthermore the treatment of Shenoute's *I Am Amazed* in Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin," 447–49 to esp., *Monastic Origins*, 35–38, 71–73, 170–77, 234–46; Hugo Lundhaug, "Shenoute's Heresiological Polemics and Its Context(s)," in *Invention, Rewriting, Usurpation: Discursive Fights Over Religious Traditions in Antiquity* (ed. Jörg Ulrich, Anders-Christian Jacobsen, and David Brakke; ECCA 11; Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2012), 239–61; idem, "Shenoute's Eucharistic Theology in Context," in *The Eucharist – Its Origins and Contexts: Sacred Meal, Communal Meal, Table Fellowship in Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity* (3 Vols.; ed. David Hellholm and Dieter Sänger; WUNT 376; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 2:1233–51; idem, "Mystery and Authority in the Writings of Shenoute," in *Mystery and Secrecy in the Nag Hammadi Collection and Other Ancient Literature: Ideas and Practices* (ed. Christian H. Bull et al.; NHMS 76; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 259–85.

(NHC XII,1). Yet it is by now quite clear that early Egyptian monasticism, including the Pachomian federation, was far more diverse than is often portrayed in the later hagiographic literature, not to mention modern scholarship, and so the current volume contains contributions showing how monks in fourth- or fifth-century Egypt could profitably have read the texts of the Nag Hammadi Codices, despite the fact that such ecclesiastical or monastic authorities as Athanasius, Epiphanius, Theophilus or Shenoute vociferously opposed such engagement with dangerous texts. The contributions of this volume seek to show that monks *could* and some likely *did* read the Nag Hammadi treatises, and also to imagine how the texts would have made sense to them.

In the first essay, Lance Jenott compares the *Letter of Peter to Philip* in Nag Hammadi Codex VIII and Codex Tchacos, focusing on variant readings. The process of copying the text and translating it from Greek to Coptic have predictably yielded several variants in the two versions, and Jenott shows how some of these were probably caused by theological differences between copyists and/or translators, but also how accidental mistranslations may lead to different readings that still make sense in a fourth-century monastic milieu.

Six contributions dealing specifically with texts from Nag Hammadi Codex II follow. Ingvild Sælid Gilhus introduces this section by showing how this codex, as a whole, could have been read by monks, including Pachomians, as an aid in ascetic practice. Gilhus shows how the codex may have been read by more intellectual monks who strove to understand the roots of the passions they were combatting, before the cultural memory of Egyptian monasticism was settled as an anti-intellectual mass-phenomenon in the fifth century. Next, René Falkenberg deals with the notion of "single ones" (ογα ογωτ / мोⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ) in the *Gospel of Thomas*, suggesting that the term μοναχός, used there to designate a person, was inserted by the last readers and copyists of the text in the fourth or fifth century, to refer to themselves as monks. This underlines the fluidity of the textual transmission of the *Gospel of Thomas*, and how it was "updated" to better fit the contemporary readers of the only Coptic manuscript of the text we have. Also dealing with the *Gospel of Thomas*, André Gagné emphasizes how monks may have read the text as a spiritual exercise. Gagné proposes that the text, by insisting on the need to find its secret meaning, is in effect inviting the reader to engage in speculative hermeneutics by linking one saying to another and "participate in the meaning of the text." Gagné identifies the *Gospel of Thomas* as a "scripture as veil," similar to the esoteric exegesis demanded by Clement of Alexandria. Hugo Lundhaug shows how Codex II's other Thomas-text, the *Book of Thomas*, is congenial to a Pachomian monastic reading, both in its paratextual features, its focus on asceticism, the struggle with demons, and the notion of true knowledge that grants perfection. Several parallels with monastic, in particular Pachomian, texts are adduced to show that monks would be ideal readers of the text as it appears in our manuscript. Next, Kristine Toft Rosland reads the *Apocryphon of John*'s use of Scripture not as

a "hermeneutic of revolt," but rather as "hermeneutical problem solving," picking out problematic passages in Scripture in order to make sense of them. Rosland reads the phrase "not as Moses said" to be a cue for the reader to interpret the Torah passages allegorically rather than literally. Like Gilhus, Kimberley A. Fowler sees Nag Hammadi Codex II as an ascetic book, but she focuses in particular on the fourth and fifth treatises of the codex, the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World*. She reads them as holding out the eschatological promise for the successful ascetic, which would resonate well with the Pachomian view of the afterlife.

Moving from Codex II to Codex I, Paul Linjamaa looks at the scribal markings in the text of the *Tripartite Tractate* and argues that the passages highlighted by these markings would be congenial to a monastic readership. From Codex VI, Tilde Bak Halvgaard argues that the fourth-century readers of the distinctly puzzling text entitled *The Thunder: Perfect Mind*, may have been interested in the epistemological dimensions of the revelatrix as *epinoia*, reading the text in light of discussions about this term by Origen, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Eunomius. Since some of these writers, and especially Origen, had a profound impact on Egyptian monasticism, this may well explain the presence of *Thunder* in the Nag Hammadi Codices. In the next essay, Dylan Burns compares the Nag Hammadi Codices to the Graeco-Egyptian and Coptic magical papyri, many of which are in close temporal and geographical proximity to the Nag Hammadi Codices, focusing in particular on the use of *voces magicae*. Burns reminds us that the Nag Hammadi Codices are also part of an esoteric *koine* shared with the magical papyri, and that monks too engaged in practices commonly labelled as "magic."

The final two contributions are both about the curious inclusion in Codex VI of a Coptic translation of an excerpt from Plato's *Republic*, containing the famous image of the soul as a tripartite being, a human, a lion, and a multi-headed beast, indicating respectively the rational, spirited, and appetitive parts of the soul. Christian Askeland delves into the translation technique (or lack thereof) of the person who translated the excerpt into Coptic. By analyzing the translational choices, Askeland concludes that the translator shows no sign of being a "Gnostic," as has been proposed, and that the translator's lack of understanding of Plato's Attic Greek, as well as the philosophical context of the excerpt, is consistent with "an eclectic fourth-century monastic library." Much in tune with Askeland's conclusion, Christian H. Bull investigates the Plato-excerpt on the background of the decline of Greek philosophy in fourth-century Egypt, evident from the dwindling Greek, and almost non-existent Coptic, manuscript attestation. Apart from the Plato fragment in Codex VI, only one other such text is known in Coptic, a collection of sayings of the philosophers. Meanwhile, as Origenism still enjoyed popularity in the monasteries, Bull argues that some of the interpolations found in the Plato fragment in Codex VI

are best understood on the hypothesis that the translator was one of those monks labelled "Origenist" by their detractors.

The readings of the Nag Hammadi texts presented in these contributions differ from traditional approaches by interpreting the texts from a monastic, rather than "gnostic" perspective, and by focusing primarily on transmission and reception, rather than on authorship. It is hoped that the present volume will provide an impetus for further work connecting the contents of the Nag Hammadi Codices to their fourth- and/or fifth-century users. The following contributions certainly provide excellent starting points for further study, representing different points of departure, trying out monastic readings of a selection of Nag Hammadi texts. At the same time, there are a good number of Nag Hammadi texts not treated here that can also be approached from this perspective, most of which have hitherto not been the focus of such enquiries.[109] We thus sincerely hope that the present volume will inspire many more studies along similar lines.

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[109] Recent studies interpreting Nag Hammadi texts from a monastic perspective include (in addition to the studies by members of the NEWCONT project cited in footnote 3 above), Kimberley A. Fowler, "From the Apocryphon of John to Thomas the Contender: Nag Hammadi Codex II in its Fourth-Century Context," (PhD diss. University of Manchester, 2013); eadem, "The Ascent of the Soul and the Pachomians: Interpreting the Exegesis on the Soul (NHC II,6) within a Fourth-Century Monastic Context," *Gnosis* 2 (2017): 63–93; eadem, "Reading *Gospel of Thomas* 100 in the Fourth Century: From Roman Imperialism to Pachomian Concern over Wealth," *VC* 72 (2018): 421–46; Sarit Kattan Gribetz, "Women as Readers of the Nag Hammadi Codices," *JECS* 22 (2018): 463–94; Eduard Iricinschi, "The Scribes and Readers of Nag Hammadi Codex II: Book Production and Monastic *Paideia* in Fourth-Century Egypt" (PhD Diss. Princeton University, 2009); Melissa Harl Sellew, "Reading Jesus in the Desert: The *Gospel of Thomas* Meets the *Apophthegmata Patrum*," in *The Nag Hammadi Codices and Late Antique Egypt* (ed. Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott; STAC 110; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 81–106; Blossom Stefaniw, "Hegemony and Homecoming in the Ascetic Imagination: Sextus, Silvanus, and Monastic Instruction in Egypt," in *The Nag Hammadi Codices and Late Antique Egypt* (ed. Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott; STAC 110; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 107–38. In addition, one should also take into account the earlier studies by Louis Painchaud and Timothy Janz, "The 'Kingless Generation' and the Polemical Rewriting of Certain Nag Hammadi Texts," in *The Nag Hammadi Library After Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration* (ed. John D. Turner and Anne McGuire; NHMS 44; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 439–60; Louis Painchaud and Jennifer Wees, "Connaître la différence entre les hommes mauvais et les bons: Le charisme de clairvoyance d'Adam et Ève à Pachôme et Théodore," in *For the Children, Perfect Instruction: Studies in Honor of Hans-Martin Schenke on the Occasion of the Berliner Arbeitskreis für koptisch-gnostische Schriften's Thirtieth Year* (ed. Hans-Gebhard Bethge et al.; NHMS 54; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 139–55.

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Peter's Letter to Philip:
Textual Fluidity in a New Testament Apocryphon[*]

Lance Jenott

In the introduction to the *Nag Hammadi Library in English* (1977), James Robinson observed that the texts in this ancient treasure trove of religious and philosophical literature show clear signs of having been altered in transmission as they were copied from generation to generation, first in Greek and then in Coptic, eventually arriving in the form in which we have them preserved. He points to the Coptic translation of the short excerpt from Plato's *Republic* in Nag Hammadi Codex VI as a particularly revealing example of how its ancient translator "clearly did not understand the text, though it obviously seemed edifying and worth translating."[1] Of course by "understand" Robinson means that the translator did not comprehend the passage in the way Plato originally intended it. Yet the fact that the excerpt "seemed edifying" nevertheless assumes that the translator, and later readers, did understand it in their own ways, regardless of the fact that their translation departs from Plato's original.[2]

Textual fluidity in the Nag Hammadi texts is most visible when more than one copy of a tractate survives, as, for example, is the case with the *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II,1; III,1; IV,1; BG 8502,2), *Eugnostos* (NHC III,3; V,1; and its rewriting in the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* [III,4; BG8502,3]), and the so-called *Gospel of Truth* (NHC I,2; XII,2), among others.[3] Even a superficial comparison of the different versions shows divergences in vocabulary, word order,

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[1] James M. Robinson, "Introduction," in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 2.

[2] Christian H. Bull, "An Origenistic Reading of Plato's Republic in Nag Hammadi Codex VI," in *Studia Patristica LXXV: Papers Presented at the Seventeenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2015. Volume 1: Studia Patristica; Platonism and the Fathers; Maximus the Confessor* (ed. Markus Vinzent; StPatr 75; Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 31–40.

[3] For studies of textual fluidity in these texts, see Hugo Lundhaug, "An Illusion of Textual Stability: Textual Fluidity, New Philology, and the Nag Hammadi Codices," in *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New*

sometimes even entire paragraphs and sections (such as the hymn about Providence and the lengthy section on the creation of Adam's body parts included only in the longer recension of the *Apocryphon of John*). Differences among manuscripts of the same literary work result from all the usual suspects: inadvertent mistakes introduced by scribes in the copying process; a translator's misunderstanding of an exemplar; a conscious decision over how to translate an ambiguous passage; and, perhaps most interesting, deliberate changes made by copyists for theological reasons – all well-known occurrences in the transmission of biblical manuscripts.[4] As Robinson points out, the fluidity evident in these cases "leads one to wonder about the bulk of the texts that exist only in a single version."[5] Unfortunately we remain in the dark when it comes to most of the texts in the Nag Hammadi collection, which are preserved only in one copy. Yet the infrequent discovery of manuscripts such as Codex Tchacos (hereafter CT) – most famous for its singular copy of the *Gospel of Judas* – provides the rare opportunity to study fluidity in two Nag Hammadi texts, namely the *(First) Apocalypse of James* (NHC V,3; CT,2) and the *Letter of Peter to Philip* (NHC VIII,2; CT,1). By comparing the extant versions, we can see how ancient readers of these books literally wrote their own theological views into the texts as they translated and copied them. I have addressed some points of textual fluidity in the *(First) Apocalypse of James* elsewhere,[6] and in this essay I focus on the *Letter of Peter to Philip*.

1. Publication History of Peter's Letter to Philip

Our two copies of the *Letter of Peter to Philip* have quite different publication histories. The copy in Nag Hammadi Codex VIII (hereafter VIII) was discovered in 1945 near the modern town of Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt, but was

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Philology (ed. Liv Ingeborg Lied and Hugo Lundhaug; TUGAL 175; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 20–54; René Falkenberg, "The Making of a Secret Book of John: Nag Hammadi Codex III in Light of New Philology," in Lied and Lundhaug, *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions*, 85–125; Katrine Brix, "Two Witnesses, One Valentinian Gospel? The Gospel of Truth in Nag Hammadi Codices I and XII," in Lied and Lundhaug, *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions*, 126–45.

[4] Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); David C. Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[5] Robinson, "Introduction," 2.

[6] Lance Jenott, "Reading Variants in *James* and the *Apocalypse of James*: A Perspective from New Philology," in Lied and Lundhaug, *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions*, 55–84.

not published for over thirty years due to scholarly rivalries.[7] In the case of CT, we do not know exactly where, when, or how it was discovered, though hearsay tells us it was found in Middle Egypt sometime in the 1970s.[8] Whatever the circumstances of this codex's discovery may be, it was first offered to scholars for purchase by an antiquities dealer in a Geneva hotel room on 15 May 1983.[9] But no deal was made, and the codex remained inaccessible to scholars until 2001, when its new owner, Frieda Nussberger Tchacos, made it available to the scholarly community for conservation and study.

Despite the deplorable condition in which CT was delivered to its first editor, Rodolphe Kasser, who described it as a jumble of papyrus fragments "pitifully packed at the bottom of a cardboard box," its pages were patiently reconstructed.[10] When the *editio princeps* appeared in 2007, it included an almost complete copy of the *(First) Apocalypse of James*,[11] and later that year Johanna

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[7] For the most detailed account of the find and its aftermath, see James M. Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Story* (2 vols.; NHMS 86; Leiden: Brill, 2014) and my review, with summary, in *JTS* 67 (2016): 298–302. Photographs of *Ep. Pet. Phil.* were first published in *The Nag Hammadi Codices Facsimile Edition, Codex VIII* (Leiden: Brill, 1976). The first edition and translation into a modern language followed a year later by Jacques-É. Ménard, ed., *La lettre de Pierre à Philippe* (BCNH.T 1; Québec: Les presses de l'Université Laval, 1977); German and English translations followed shortly thereafter: Hans-Gebhard Bethge, "Der sogenannte Brief des Petrus an Philippus. Die zweite Schrift aus Nag-Hammadi-Codex VIII eingeleitet und übersetzt vom Berliner Arbeitskreis für koptisch-gnostische Schriften," *TLZ* 103 (1978): 161–70; Marvin W. Meyer and Frederik Wisse, "The Letter of Peter to Philip," in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, 431–37. Major studies of the text in NHC VIII include Marvin W. Meyer, *The Letter of Peter to Philip: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (SBLDS 53; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981) and Hans-Gebhard Bethge, *Der Brief des Petrus an Philippus. Ein neutestamentliches Apokryphon aus dem Fund von Nag Hammadi (NHC VIII,2)* (TUGAL 141; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997).

[8] The story of CT's find and marketing was researched by investigative journalist Herbert Krosney, *The Lost Gospel: The Quest for the Gospel of Judas Iscariot* (Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 2006), 9–24, although in my opinion it should be taken with a grain of salt since the information is third-hand and comes from unverifiable informants. For critical reflections on the story, see Lance Jenott, *The Gospel of Judas: Text, Translation, and Interpretation of the 'Betrayer's Gospel'* (STAC 64; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 103–4.

[9] The first scholars to see the codex were Stephen Emmel, Ludwig Koenen, and David Noel Freedman. Emmel's written recollection of the event is published by James Robinson, *The Secrets of Judas: The Story of the Misunderstood Disciples and his Lost Gospel* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 95–100; cf. Herbert Krosney, *The Lost Gospel*, 106–16, and *Nag Hammadi Codices Facsimile Edition: Introduction*, 21.

[10] Rodolphe Kasser, "The Story of Codex Tchacos and the Gospel of Judas," in *The Gospel of Judas from Codex Tchacos* (ed. Rodolphe Kasser, Marvin Meyer, and Gregor Wurst; Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 2006), 48.

[11] Rodolphe Kasser and Gregor Wurst, eds., *The Gospel of Judas together with the Letter of Peter to Philip, James, and a Book of Allogenes from Codex Tchacos* (Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 2007), 115–61.

Brankaer and Hans-Gebhard Bethge published a handy synopsis of *James* set next to the text of NHC V,3.[12] That was unfortunately not the case with CT's copy of the *Letter of Peter to Philip*, which was only partially published in 2007. Sometime prior to its acquisition by the editors, more than half the text (the lower halves of pages 1–8) had been separated from the codex and went missing. Because of this unfortunate circumstance, only 49% of the text was available for publication in 2007 (approximately 114 of its 229 lines).[13]

The situation of CT's *Letter of Peter to Philip* drastically improved in 2010, however, when Kasser's co-editor, Gregor Wurst, posted photographs of the missing parts of the manuscript to his website at the University of Augsburg.[14] The previously missing fragments had turned up in the estate of Mr. Bruce Ferrini, an antiquities dealer from Ohio, with whom Nussberger-Tchacos had shared the codex in 2000 before making it available to scholars.[15] When Ferrini returned the codex to Nussberger-Tchacos in 2001, he evidently kept some large fragments for his own collection, including the missing sections of the *Letter of Peter to Philip* (CT 1–8) as well as parts of the *Gospel of Judas* (CT,3), the *Book of Allogenes* (CT,4), and the Coptic translation of *Corpus Hermeticum XIII* (CT,5). Ferrini declared bankruptcy in 2005, and his estate was seized by an Ohio bank to pay his debts. When Nussberger-Tchacos learned that some of her property was still in Ferrini's estate, and could be auctioned off, she filed with the Ohio court to have her property identified and returned to her. In 2008 Ferrini admitted under oath that he had kept the fragments and subsequently yielded them to the court. The court promptly had the fragments photographed and the photos sent to Wurst in Augsburg, who confirmed that they were part of Codex Tchacos and should therefore be reunited with the rest of the codex in the Bodmer Library, Switzerland.

Yet the newly available fragments never made it to Switzerland. According to investigative journalist Herbert Krosney, who saw the fragments in a Cleveland bank vault in 2010, the United States Immigration and Customs agency seized the parcel after Nussberger-Tchacos's attorney in Ohio registered them for shipment. They were then repatriated to Egypt under the direction of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, and their current whereabouts remain unknown. What we possess of these fragments, then, are the photographs taken

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[12] Johanna Brankaer and Hans-Gebhard Bethge, eds., *Codex Tchacos: Texte und Analysen* (TUGAL 161; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), 83–162.

[13] In fact, of the 114 lines available in 2007, 27 lines came from a photograph provided by Charles Hedrick, as noted in the *editio princeps*, pp. 96–97 (CT 3.14–27 and 4.15–27).

[14] https://www.kthf.uni-augsburg.de/prof_doz/hist_theol/wurst/forschung_downloads/neue_fragmente_V/index.html.

[15] According to some reports, Nussberger-Tchacos initially sold the codex to Ferrini, but took the codex back when the latter could not pay for it. See Barry Meier and John Noble Wilford, "How the Gospel of Judas Emerged," *The New York Times*, April 13, 2006.

by the Ohio court in 2008 and shared with the public by Gregor Wurst in 2010.[16]

The good news is that nearly the entire copy of the *Letter of Peter to Philip* in CT can now be reasonably reconstructed on the basis of these photographs.[17] To the best of my knowledge, no complete Coptic edition of the text of CT has yet been published, but my own transcripts of CT,1, NHC VIII,2, and a synoptic edition and translation of the two versions are forthcoming. In the meantime, a synoptic German translation has been published by Hans-Gebhard Bethge and Johanna Brankaer, based on an unpublished transcript prepared by Gregor Wurst.[18]

Hans-Gebhard Bethge has already conducted a detailed and thoughtful comparison of the two copies of the *Letter of Peter to Philip*, with special attention to differences in vocabulary and style, their possible Greek Vorlagen, and idiosyncrasies in the presentation of key characters and themes.[19] In what follows, I do not attempt a comprehensive comparison of all variant readings between the two copies, but comment upon what strikes me as some of the most interesting variants in terms of theological meaning. Following the tenets of New Philology, I focus not on what the original reading might have been, but rather contextualize the variants amid theological views and controversies in the ancient Church, asking what difference it makes when the copies diverge and what theological views those divergences support. Asking questions about the text's reception history and reader experience, I discuss how the Egyptian Christians who read the two copies may have understood their respective texts within their society, culture, and interpretation of Christianity.

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[16] Herbert Krosney, Marvin Meyer, and Gregor Wurst, "Preliminary Report on New Fragments of Codex Tchacos," *EC* 1 (2010): 282–94. A brief report concerning the legal proceedings and auction also appeared in the *Columbus Dispatch*, March 17, 2008, "Auction selling off collector's artifacts."

[17] Only a handful of stubborn lacunae remain: CT 1.14, 2.13–14, 5, 9, 7.10–12, 8.11–12, and 9.10.

[18] Hans-Gebhard Bethge and Johanna Brankaer, "Der Brief des Petrus an Philippus (NHC VIII,2/CT,1)," in *Antike christliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung. I. Band: Evangelien und Verwandtes* (ed. Christoph Markschies and Jens Schröter; 2 vols.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 2:1195–1207. The translators note (1196 n. 1) that they worked from an unpublished transcription of material from CT,1 provided by Gregor Wurst.

[19] Hans-Gebhard Bethge, "'Der Brief des Petrus an Philippus' als Bestandteil von NHC VIII und Codex Tchacos," in *Judasevangelium und Codex Tchacos: Studien zur religionsgeschichtlichen Verortung einer gnostischen Schriftensammlung* (ed. Enno Edzard Popkes and Gregor Wurst; WUNT 297; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 173–88. Bethge pays specially attention to themes in CT,1 that relate to other tractates in Codex Tchacos, e.g., Christ's passion and the topic of martyrdom.

2. The Letter's Narrative Setting

As previous researchers have pointed out, the genre of the *Letter of Peter to Philip* is less an epistle than a post-resurrection dialogue between Jesus and his disciples.[20] Its introductory lines present an epistle that the apostle Peter sent to Philip and "the brothers" with him, in which Peter speaks of their separation from each other and hints at some kind of disagreement between them. Peter encourages Philip to reconcile with the other apostles so that they can carry out their apostolic mission:

Peter, the apostle of Jesus Christ, to Philip our beloved brother and fellow apostle and the brothers with you. Greetings. I want you to know, our brother, that we received commandments from our Lord and savior of the whole world that we should come together and teach and preach in the salvation that has been established for us by our Lord Jesus Christ. You, however, have been separated from us, and you have not wanted us to come together and think about how we might organize ourselves so as to preach the good news. If, then, it pleases you, our brother, you should come according to the commandments of our God Jesus. (NHC VIII 132.12–133.8)[21]

The imagined setting in the history of the early church is probably the narrative in the canonical Acts of the Apostles 8:26–40, in which Philip leaves the apostles in Jerusalem to undertake a special evangelical mission in response to a vision of an angel. After travelling south to Gaza, and converting a pious Ethiopian eunuch, Philip is "snatched away" by the Spirit of the Lord and miraculously transported north to the city of Azotus near the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. From there, he makes his way to Caesarea, preaching the gospel in all the towns along the way. According to Acts, he settled in Caesarea permanently, where he had four daughters and later hosted the apostle Paul on his way to Jerusalem (21:8).[22]

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[20] For a recent consideration of the epistolary genre, see J. Gregory Given, "Four Texts from Nag Hammadi amid the Textual and Generic Fluidity of the 'Letter' in the Literature of Late Antique Egypt," in Lied and Lundhaug, *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions*, 201–20. Given finds that the epistolary genre was a popular way that Egyptian monks, among others, inculcated the sense of belonging to an elite group and communicated esoteric knowledge, "perhaps because of the special association [epistles] seem to have with the spoken word" (217).

[21] All translations and Coptic transcripts of *Ep. Pet. Phil.* are my own.

[22] The canonical Acts actually distinguishes between two Philips: Philip the apostle, who is one of the twelve (Acts 1:13, Luke 6:14), and Philip the deacon and evangelist (6:5, 21:8). It appears to be Philip the deacon and evangelist who left Jerusalem and settled in Caesarea, since Acts 8:1 says that all the apostles (i.e., the twelve) stayed there during a persecution while others scattered. But later Christian texts conflate the two Philips. Thus in *Ep. Pet. Phil.*, the Philip to whom Peter writes is probably imagined as one of the twelve apostles and also the evangelist who had separated from them. On the conflation of Philip in Christian literature, see Wilhelm Schneemelcher and A. de Santos Otero, "Later Acts of the Apostles,"

Elaborating upon this biblical narrative, the *Letter of Peter to Philip* imagines that Philip has been separated from the other apostles for some time and leads his own group (the other brothers with him). The sectarian mindset of whoever first composed this "letter" may be hinted at in Peter's charge that Philip had not wanted to join the apostles in order to help plan their apostolic mission. Peter and the apostles would therefore represent the author's party, presenting themselves as the ones who seek reunification and Christian mission, whereas Philip and those with him represent a dissenting party, set apart and resistant to the mission. The author, writing in the name of Peter, exhorts the dissenters to return to the fold.

Themes of suffering, spiritual warfare, and exhortation to imitate Christ's passion have led commentators to see the text's original composition as taking place in a time of persecution, in an effort to help believers make sense of their own suffering at the hands of hostile neighbors and government authorities.[23] Yet after the cessation of persecutions brought by Constantine's edict of Milan in 313, such martyr literature continued to be composed, read, and copied, while their teachings took on new meanings and were put to new purposes in the theological controversies of later centuries. But what is most interesting is that those who continued to read and copy these texts took license to change them at will. This fact points to a peculiar relationship between the authority of the copyists and the authority of the texts. On the one hand, readers who copied the texts evidently felt that they had the authority to revise and reshape them in order to make them conform to their own theological views; but on the other hand, the very fact that they made such revisions suggests that the message of the text was regarded as important enough that it should be made to conform. Such texts, though not included in the emerging canon of Scripture, were clearly thought worthy of attention – perhaps "useful for instruction," to borrow Athanasius's category – even if they needed to be revised just so. In what follows, I analyze a number of variant readings between the two copies of the *Letter of Peter to Philip* that reveal differing theological views on the part of their ancient readers and copyists.

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in *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 2: *Writings Relating to the Apostles; Apocalypses and Related Subjects* (ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965), 577.

[23] E.g., Karen L. King, "Martyrdom and its Discontents in Codex Tchacos," in *The Codex Judas Papers: Proceedings from of the International Congress on the Tchacos Codex held at Rice University, Houston, Texas, March 13–16, 2008* (ed. April D. DeConick; NHMS 71; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 23–42.

3. Providential Will and the Defect of the Aeons

According to the text's narrative, after Philip receives Peter's letter, he is moved with joy to reconcile with his fellow apostles. As they gather on the Mount of Olives to pray, Jesus appears to them in a bright light, and they begin to ask him questions. The first thing they want to know is why the world has become such a disturbed place and how it can be healed; in this text's idiom, what is "the defect of the aeons and their completion?" Jesus then begins to explain:

NHC VIII 135.8–136.5

ⲉⲧⲃⲉ [ⲡⲓϣⲱ]ⲧ̀ ⲙⲉⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲛⲉⲱⲛ ⲡⲁⲓ [ⲡⲉ] ⲡⲓϣⲱⲧ̀ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲧⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲧ[ⲥ]ⲱⲧⲙ̄ <ⲧ>ⲉ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲧⲙ̄ⲛⲧⲁⲧϣⲟϫⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲧⲙⲁⲁⲩ ⲉⲧⲁⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛϩ̄ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉϫⲙ̄ ⲡⲟⲩⲁϩⲥⲁϩⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲧⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲛⲟϭ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲡⲓⲱⲧ̀ ⲁⲥⲟⲩⲱϣ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲛⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ϩⲉⲛⲉⲱⲛ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲉⲧⲁⲥϣⲁϫⲉ ⲁϥⲟⲩⲱⲛϩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ϭⲓ ⲡⲁⲩ[ⲑ]ⲁⲇⲏⲥ· ⲉⲧⲁⲥϣⲱϫⲧ̇ ⲇⲉ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲙⲉⲣⲟⲥ ⲁϥⲁⲙⲁϩⲧⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ ⲛ̄ϭⲓ ⲡⲓⲁⲩⲑⲁⲇⲏⲥ· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁϥϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩϣⲱⲧ̀ ⲡⲁⲓ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲓϣⲱⲧ̀ [ⲛ̄]ⲧⲉ ⲛⲓⲉⲱⲛ·

ⲉⲧⲁⲡⲓⲁⲩⲑⲁⲇⲏⲥ ϭⲉ ⲉⲧⲁϥϫⲓ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲙⲉⲣⲟⲥ ⲁϥⲭⲟϥ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁϥⲕⲱ ⲛ̄ϩⲉⲛϭⲟⲙ ⲉϩⲣⲁⲓ ⲉϫⲱϥ ⲙⲛ̄ ϩⲉⲛⲉⲝⲟⲩⲥⲓⲁ· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁϥⲟⲗϥ̄ ⲉϩⲟⲩⲛ ⲉⲛⲓⲱⲛ ⲉⲧ̄ⲙⲟ[ⲟ]ⲩⲧ̀· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲩⲣⲁϣⲉ ⲛ̄ϭⲓ ⲛⲓϭⲟⲙ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲡⲕⲟⲥⲙⲟⲥ ϫⲉ ⲁⲩⲭⲡⲟⲟⲩ· ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲩ 136,1 ⲇⲉ ⲛ̄ⲥⲉⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲁⲛ ⲙ̄ⲡⲓ[ⲱⲧ ⲉⲧⲣ̄]ϣⲣ̄ⲡ̄ ⲛ̄ϣⲟⲟⲡ· ⲉⲡⲓⲇⲏ ϩⲉ[ⲛ]ϣⲙ̄ⲙⲟ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ ⲛⲉ· ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲡⲁⲓ ⲡ[ⲉ]ⲧⲉⲁ[ⲩ]ϯϭⲟⲙ ⲛⲁϥ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲩϣⲙ̄ϣⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ ⲉⲁⲩⲥⲙⲟⲩ ⲉⲣⲟϥ·

CT 3.17–4.12

ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲡϭⲱϫⲃ̄ ⲙⲉⲛ ⲛ̄ⲛⲁⲓⲱⲛ· ⲡⲉⲓ ⲡⲉ ⲡϭⲱϫⲃ̄ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲧⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲧⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄ ⲡⲉ· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲧⲙⲉⲟⲩ ⲛⲁⲧⲣⲉϥϫⲓⲥⲟϫⲛⲉ ⲁⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛϩ̄ ⲁ̄ϫⲛ̄ ⲧⲕⲉⲗⲉⲩⲥⲓⲥ ⲙ̄ⲡⲛⲟϭ· ⲡⲁⲓ [ⲁ]ϥⲟⲩⲱϣⲉ ϫⲛ̄ ⲛ̄ϣⲟⲣⲡ ⲉⲧⲟⲩ̄ⲛⲟⲥ ϩⲛ̄ⲁⲓⲱⲛ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲥ ⲉⲁⲥ[ϣⲁϫⲉ]· ⲁϥⲟⲩⲱⲛϩ̄ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ϭⲓ [ⲡⲭⲁ]ⲥⲓϩⲏⲧ· ⲁϥⲥⲉⲡ ⲇⲉ ⲛ̄ϭⲓ ⲟⲩⲙⲉⲗⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧⲥ̄ ⲁϥⲁⲙⲁϩⲧⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ ⲛ̄ϭⲓ ⲡⲭⲁⲥⲓϩⲏⲧ· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲩϭⲱϫⲃ̄ ϣⲱⲡⲉ· ⲡⲉⲉⲓ ϭⲉ ⲡⲉ 4,1 ⲡϭⲱϫⲃ̄ ⲛ̄ⲛⲁⲓⲱⲛ·

ⲡⲭⲁⲥⲓϩⲏⲧ 2 ⲅⲁⲣ ⲁϥϫⲓ ⲙ̄ⲡⲙⲉⲗⲟⲥ ⲁϥⲭⲟ ⲙ̄[ⲙ]ⲟ[ϥ] 3 ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁϥⲧⲁϩⲟ ⲉⲣⲉⲧ[ⲟⲩ ⲛ̄ϩⲉⲛϭⲟⲙ] 4 ⲙⲛ̄ ϩ̄ⲛⲉⲝⲟⲩⲥⲓⲁ ⲁ[ⲩⲱ ⲁϥⲟⲗϥ̄] 5 ⲉϩⲟⲩⲛ ⲉⲛⲁⲓⲱⲛ ⲉ[ⲧⲙⲟⲟⲩⲧ] 6 ⲁ̄[ⲩ]ⲱ ⲁⲩⲣⲁϣⲉ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ ⲛ̄[ϭⲓ ⲛⲉϭⲟⲙ] 7 ⲙ̄ⲡⲕⲟⲥⲙⲟⲥ ϫⲉ ⲁⲩϣⲱ[ⲡⲉ] [ⲛ̄ⲧⲟ]8ⲩ ⲇⲉ ⲛ̄ⲥⲉⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛⲉ ⲁⲛ ⲙ̄[ⲡ̄ⲱⲧ] 9ⲉ[ⲧ]ϣⲟⲟⲡ ϫⲛ̄ ⲛ̄ϣⲟ[ⲣⲡ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϫⲉ] 10ϩⲛ̄ϣⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲓ ⲉⲣⲟϥ ⲛⲉ ⲁ[ⲗⲗⲁ ⲡⲁⲓ] 11ⲡⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϯ ⲛⲉⲩ ϭⲟⲙ ⲁⲩ[ϣⲙϣⲉ] 12ⲛⲁϥ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲩⲥⲙⲟⲩ ⲉⲣⲁ[ϥ] ⲁⲩⲱ

Now then, concerning [the defect] of the aeons, this [is] the defect, namely[24] the disobedience and thoughtlessness *of the*

Now then, concerning the defect of the aeons, this is the defect, namely the disobedience and the *thoughtless* Mother.

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[24] The syntactic obscurity in ⲉⲧⲉ ϯⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲧ[ⲥ]ⲱⲧⲙ̄ ⲇⲉ (VIII 135.10–11) can now be clarified on the basis of the parallel text in CT 3.18–19. Following Ménard's *editio princeps*, editors read ⲇⲉ as a Greco-Coptic postpositive particle and then emended ⲉⲧⲉ on line 10 to a Coptic temporal clause (ⲉⲧ<ⲁ>): thus ⲡⲁⲓ [ⲡⲉ] ⲡⲓϣⲱⲧ̀ ⲉⲧ<ⲁ>ϯⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲧ[ⲥ]ⲱⲧⲙ̄ ⲇⲉ ⲙⲛ̄ ϯⲙ̄ⲛⲧⲁⲧϣⲟϫⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲧⲙⲁⲁⲩ ⲉⲧⲁⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛϩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ, "This is the defect: <When> the disobedience and the thoughtlessness of the Mother appeared ..." However, the text is perfectly intelligible as it stands, if one understands ⲇⲉ as ⲧⲉ (by the phenomenon of consonantal interchange; see below). ⲇⲉ (ⲧⲉ) is thus the copula in an explanatory relative clause with ⲉⲧⲉ ('namely ...'). The parallel in CT 3.18–19 has the same construction (except with the masculine form ⲡⲉ retaining the gender of the antecedent ⲡϭⲱϫⲃ̄). Thus, "This is

Mother, when she appeared without the command of the *Father's greatness. She* wanted (ⲁⲥⲟⲩⲱϣ) to set up aeons, and when she spoke, the Arrogant One appeared. When she left behind a *portion* (ⲙⲉⲣⲟⲥ), the Arrogant One seized it. And it (or he – the Arrogant One) became a defect. This is the defect of the aeons.	She appeared without the command of the *Great One. He* wanted (ⲡⲁⲓ̈ [ⲁ]ϥⲟⲩⲱϣⲉ) *from the beginning* to set up aeons. And when she [spoke], [the] Arrogant One appeared. Now a *limb* (ⲙⲉⲗⲟⲥ) was left behind by her, and the Arrogant One seized it. And a defect came about. So then, this is the defect of the aeons.
Then when the Arrogant One took a *portion*, he sowed it, set over it powers and authorities, and harvested mortal aeons. And all the powers of the world rejoiced because they had come into being. But they do not know the [Father who is] from the beginning, since they are strangers to him. Rather, it is this (arrogant) one whom they empowered, and they worshipped and praised him.	For the Arrogant one took the *limb* and sowed it, established [powers] and authorities, and [harvested mortal] aeons. And all [the powers] of the world rejoiced because they had come into being. But they do not know [the Father] who is from the beginning, [since] they are strangers to him. [Rather], it is [this (arrogant) one] who empowered them, and they [worshipped] him and praised [him and]

Jesus's answer is perhaps less than satisfactory for modern readers struggling with their own material and existential problems. Nevertheless, his explanation is that all corruption in our world can be traced back to the reckless actions of a heavenly Mother, who acted on her own volition without the permission of the heavenly Father. Her disobedience became embodied in an arrogant creature who, in turn, gave rise to further embodiments of pain and suffering in his "powers and authorities," i.e., the demonic rulers over our world.[25]

Readers familiar with ancient Christian mythology of this ilk will of course recognize that the story is a rather cursory version of more detailed myths, such as those preserved in the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Hypostasis of the Archons*. Underneath their mythological face lies the idea – common to most monotheists – that sin and human suffering result from disobedience to God.

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the defect, namely the disobedience and thoughtlessness of the Mother, when she appeared …" On consonantal interchange between ⲁ and ⲧ, see Francis Thomas Gignac, *A Grammar of Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods* (2 vols.; Milan: Istituto Editoriale Cisalpino – La Goliardica, 1976–1981), 1:80–83; Walter Ewing Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), 49a, 389a.

[25] Thereby also giving explanation to the biblical teaching attributed to Paul, that "our struggle is not against enemies of flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the *authorities*, against the cosmic *powers* of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph 6:12 NRSV). Just as "Paul" in Ephesians encourages his readers to "put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (6:11), *Ep. Pet. Phil.* encourages its readers to "Clothe yourselves with the power of my Father and make known your prayer. He, the Father, will help you just as he helped you when he sent me" (NHC 137.26–30).

Yet at the same time these stories attempt to transfer some of that human culpability to invisible demonic forces who oppress humanity. In that sense, these ancient Christian explanations for evil have a much more positive view of human nature than do some of the alternatives, such as Augustine of Hippo's view that the human will itself was evil from the beginning, thus leading humanity to selfishly stray from God's will.[26]

In any event, the interesting divergence in this passage concerns the figure to whom providential will (ογωϣ) for the creation of the aeons is assigned. The copy in CT attributes the desire to establish aeons to the Great One – i.e., the heavenly Father – and adds "from the beginning," whereas VIII attributes it to the disobedient Mother:

NHC VIII   ⲁⲥⲟⲩⲱϣ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲛⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ϩⲉⲛⲉⲱⲛ
                  She wanted to set up aeons ...

CT   ⲡⲁⲓ̈ [ⲁ]ϥⲟⲩⲱϣⲉ ϫⲛ̄ ⲛ̄ϣⲟⲣⲡ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲛⲟⲥ ϩⲛ̄ⲁⲓⲱⲛ
                  This one, he wanted from the beginning to set up aeons ...

The copy in CT resonates with a pattern that Michael Williams has identified in other dualistic Christian creation stories, which take care to emphasize that the ultimate will for creation belongs to the heavenly Father, the source of goodness and perfection, even when the creation itself is carried out by lower, sometimes hostile agents. As Williams observes,

though these myths of origin are deservedly famous for portraying incompetence, ignorance, impotence, or even malicious intent on the part of the world creator(s), at the same time such texts very frequently emphasize that the cosmogonic process as a whole was in accordance with the "will" of the highest divinity.[27]

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[26] "The will itself, or man himself, insofar as his will was evil, was, as it were, the corrupt tree which brought forth the evil fruit of those evil deeds." (Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, XIV.11 [trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 604]).

[27] Michael A. Williams, "A Life Full of Meaning and Purpose: Demiurgical Myths and Social Implications," in *Beyond the Gnostic Gospels: Studies Building on the Work of Elaine Pagels* (ed. Eduard Iricinshi et al.; STAC 82; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 28. Williams points to three particularly potent examples of such myths, among others, in the Nag Hammadi texts: *Gos. Phil.* 55.14–19: "The rulers thought that it was by their own power and will that they were doing what they did; but the holy spirit was secretly doing everything through them as it wished"; *Hyp. Arch.* 96.11–14: "Envy engendered death; and death engendered his offspring and gave each of them charge of its heaven; and all the heavens of chaos became full of their multitudes. But it was by the will of the Father of the universe that they all came into being, after the pattern of all the things above, so that the totality of chaos might be perfected"; *Trim. Prot.* 47.19–27: "I (the Logos) dwell within all the sovereignties and powers, and within the angels, and in every movement that exists in all matter. I hid myself within them until I revealed myself to my [brethren]. And none of them (the powers) knew me, [although] it is I who work in them. Rather, [they thought] that the universe was

The idea that creation, despite its faults, should be willed by the highest providence was important for the ancient theologians who wrote these creation stories. By doing so, they could maintain that there was an unbroken chain between God's will and creation, while simultaneously safeguarding his essential goodness by attributing pain and suffering in creation to the faults of lower providences. Although CT's version of the *Letter of Peter to Philip* does not explicitly state that the Great One worked through the Mother to create, it does attribute to him the initial will for creation. The inclusion of the small phrase "from the beginning" (ϫⲛ ⲛ̄ϣⲟⲣⲡ) in CT's version, not found in the parallel text of VIII, emphasizes all the more that the Father's will to create the aeons was primordial, as if creation had always been part of God's plan.

Thus we find in such instances that Christian readers revised their non-canonical books, just as they did their sacred Scriptures, according to their own theological views. As Bart Ehrman puts it with regard to the rewriting of canonical books, some revisions "change the text's meaning, or to put a different slant on it, 'improve' its theology. ... Scribes altered their sacred texts to make them 'say' what they were already known to 'mean.' ... in virtually every case, the variant readings demonstrate how the passages *were* understood by scribes who 'read' their interpretations not only out of the text but actually into it, as they modified the words in accordance with what they were taken to mean."[28]

My guess is that the two different readings in the *Letter of Peter to Philip* – "she willed" vs. "he willed" – resulted from a natural ambiguity in the Greek Vorlage, where the subject of the verb was unclear (e.g., ἠθέλησε δὲ αἰώνας ἀναστῆναι). In such a case, each Coptic translator would have had to decide if the antecedent was the Mother or the Father. If so, then it is significant that the Coptic translator of CT's text evidently had in mind that the primary will to create the aeons should be attributed to the heavenly Father, and should not be regarded as an aberration from the divine will. In other words, the translator seems to have assumed that the heavenly Father willed creation all along; and perhaps he added to his text the masculine pronoun "this one" (ⲡⲁⲓ) and the phrase "from the beginning" (ϫⲛ ⲛ̄ϣⲟⲣⲡ) in order to make explicit what in his mind he already knew to be "true."

Another notable variant in this section is the difference between ⲙⲉⲣⲟⲥ (ὁ μέρος) "portion" in VIII and ⲙⲉⲗⲟⲥ (τὸ μέλος) "limb," "body part," or "member" in CT. As Bethge points out, "portion" (ⲙⲉⲣⲟⲥ) better fits the story's agricultural metaphor of the Arrogant One sowing seed and "harvesting" aeons than does CT's "limb" (ⲙⲉⲗⲟⲥ).[29] While ⲙⲉⲗⲟⲥ is therefore the *lectio difficilior*,

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created [by them]." Translations follow Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Library in English* (modified).

[28] Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 275–76. See similarly David C. Parker, "Textual Criticism and Theology," *ExpTim* 118 (2007): 583-89.

[29] Bethge, "Der Brief des Petrus an Philippus," 178–79.

this is an instance where it is probably not to be regarded as the more original reading, since the change from ⲙⲉⲣⲟⲥ to ⲙⲉⲗⲟⲥ is entirely understandable by interchange of liquid consonants /r/ and /l/. This interchange is well documented in papyri from the Fayum,[30] and CT,1 exhibits other spellings influenced by northern dialects.[31] Bethge observes that the transformation from ⲙⲉⲣⲟⲥ to ⲙⲉⲗⲟⲥ could easily result from an aural misunderstanding, in which a reader pronounced /l/ for /r/, and if so, then this instance may provide a clue that these texts were sometimes copied by dictation involving a team of at least one person reading aloud and one or more persons copying.[32]

Yet another intriguing question is how readers and hearers of CT would have understood ⲙⲉⲗⲟⲥ in their version of the story. On the one hand, they could have merely understood it to mean "portion" (i.e., the equivalent of ⲙⲉⲣⲟⲥ), since according to Gignac, "in the speech of many writers in the Roman and Byzantine periods, there was only one liquid phoneme /l/."[33] In this case, the word ⲙⲉⲗⲟⲥ likely held the semantic range of both "portion" and "limb." Nevertheless, I translate it as "limb" above in order to draw attention to the variant, its ambiguity, and the questions it raises about the range of meanings it might have had for those who read CT's version of the *Letter of Peter to Philip*. I will return to this question below when I discuss another variant reading that involves the text's attitude toward mortal bodies.

4. Mortal Bodies and the Incarnation of the Savior

After Jesus tells his disciples about the origins of the Arrogant One and his demonic powers, he continues with an explanation of how the mortal bodies of humanity were created by the powers after the pattern of a heavenly model that appeared to them (again, a condensed version of the kind of myth told in the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Hypostasis of the Archons*). And here too we find small, but theologically significant variations in the way the two versions tell the story:

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[30] Gignac, *Grammar of Greek Papyri*, 1:102.

[31] E.g., final vowel /i/ for /e/ characterstic of Bohairic and Fayumic (ⲥⲉⲭⲓ 4.27, 6.21; ⲙⲉⲟⲩ̈ⲓ 4.26; ⲣⲱⲙⲓ 5.16; ϣⲱⲡⲓ 6.24); final consonant /b/ for /f/ (ⲭⲱⲛⲃ̄ 8.20). Cf. Kasser, "Étude dialectale," in Kasser and Wurst, *Critical Edition*, 60–64.

[32] Such phonological variants have also been explained as the mistake of a single scribe copying from an exemplar, especially in a culture where reading out loud to oneself was normal. See James E. Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 83–90, and the extensive bibliography he cites on the question. Nevertheless, dictation remains a plausible explanation for such phenomena, as Theodore C. Skeat's classic study suggests: Skeat, "The Use of Dictation in Ancient Book-Production," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 42 (1956): 179–208.

[33] Gignac, *Grammar of Greek Papyri*, 1:102.

NHC VIII 136.5–20	CT 5.13–25

ⁿⲧⲟϥ ⲇⲉ ⲡⲓⲁⲩ⁶ⲑⲁⲇⲏⲥ ⲁϥϫⲓⲥⲉ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧ` ⲉϩⲣⲁⲓ̈ ⲉϫⲙ̄ ⁷ⲡⲓⲥⲙⲟⲩ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲛⲓϭⲟⲙ· ⲁϥ[ϣ]ϣ[ⲡⲉ] ⲛ̄⁸ⲟⲩⲣⲉϥⲕⲱϩ· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁϥⲟ[ⲩ]ϣϣ ⲉ]ⲧⲁ⁹ⲙⲓⲟ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩϩⲓⲕⲱⲛ ⲉⲡⲙ[ⲁ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩϩⲓⲕⲱⲛ] ¹⁰ⲙⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲙⲟⲣⲫⲏ ⲉⲡⲙⲁ ⲛⲟⲩⲙ[ⲟⲣ]¹¹ⲫⲏ· ⲁϥⲧⲱϣ ⲇⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲓϭⲟⲙ ϩⲣⲁⲓ̈ ϩ[ⲛ̄] ¹²ⲧⲉϥⲉⲝⲟⲩⲥⲓⲁ ϫⲉ ⲉⲩⲉⲡⲗⲁⲥⲥⲁ ⲛ̄ϩⲉ[ⲛ]¹³ⲥⲱⲙⲁ ⲉⲩⲙⲟⲟⲩⲧ` ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲩϣⲱ¹⁴ⲡⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲙⲛ̄ⲧ`ⲁⲧ`ⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ¹⁵ϩⲛ̄ ϯⲓⲇⲉⲁ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲁⲥϣⲱⲡⲉ :

¹³ⲛ̄ⲧⲟϥ ⲡϫⲁⲥⲓϩⲏⲧ [ⲁϥϫⲓⲥ]ⲉ̣ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧ̄` ¹⁴[ϩⲙ̄] ⲡⲉⲥⲙⲟⲩ [ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ϭⲟⲙ] ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲩ¹⁵ϣⲱ[ⲡ]ⲉ ⲛ̄ⲣⲉϥⲕⲱⲧ̄ϩ ⲁⲩⲟ[ⲩ]¹⁶ϣⲉ ⲛⲟⲩϩⲓⲕⲱⲛ ⲁⲛϯ ⲟⲩϩⲓⲕⲱⲛ ¹⁷ⲟⲩⲙⲟⲣⲫⲏ ⲁⲛϯ ⲟⲩⲙⲟⲣⲫⲏ ⲁϥ¹⁸ⲣ̄ⲕⲉⲗⲉⲩⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ϭⲟⲙ ϩⲛ̄ ⲧⲉϥⲉⲝⲟⲩ¹⁹ⲥⲓⲁ ⲉⲣ̄ⲡⲗⲁⲥⲥⲉ ⲛ̄ϩⲛ̄ⲥⲱⲙⲁ ⲛ̄ⲣⲉϥ²⁰ⲙⲟⲩ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲥϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲛ̄ϭⲓ ⲟⲩⲁ[ⲛⲟ]²¹ⲙⲓⲁ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲙ̄ ⲡⲓⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϣⲱⲡ[ⲉ]

¹⁶ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲡⲓⲡⲗⲏⲣⲱⲙⲁ ⲇⲉ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲁ[ⲩⲱ] ¹⁷ⲁⲩⲧⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲟⲩⲧ` ⲉϩⲣⲁⲓ̈ ϩⲙ̄ ⲡⲥⲱⲙⲁ [ⲉ]¹⁸ⲧⲃⲉ ⲡⲓⲥⲡⲉⲣⲙⲁ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲁϥϩⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ¹⁹ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲓ̈ⲉⲓ̈ ⲉϩⲣⲁⲓ̈ ⲉⲡⲉⲩⲡⲗⲁⲥⲙⲁ ⲉ[ⲧ]²⁰ⲙⲟⲟⲩⲧ`

²²ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲡϫⲱⲕ ⲇⲉ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ϫ[ⲉ] ²³ⲁⲩⲧⲛⲟⲟⲩⲧ` ⲉⲥⲱⲙⲁ [ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲛⲉ]²⁴ⲥⲡⲉⲣⲙⲁ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲥⲱⲣⲙ ⲉⲁⲩⲉⲓ [ⲉ]ⲟⲩ²⁵ⲡⲗⲁⲥⲙⲁ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲩ

The Arrogant One became vain due to the powers' praise, and he [turned into] a rival. He (the Arrogant One) [wanted to] make an image in the place of [an image] and a form in the place of a form. By his authority he commanded the powers to fashion mortal bodies, and *they* came about *in a way dissimilar* (ⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲧⲉⲓⲛⲉ) to the model that had come about.

The Arrogant One [became] vain due to the [powers'] praise, and he [turned into] a rival. They (the powers) wanted an image in the place of an image, a form in the place of a form. By his authority he commanded the powers to fashion mortal bodies, and [*lawlessness*] (ⲁ[ⲛⲟ]ⲙⲓⲁ) came about from the model that had come about.

Now concerning the completion: It is I. [And] I was sent *into the* body for the seed that fell away. *And I came down into their mortal mould.*

Now concerning the completion: It is I. For I was sent to *a* body [for the] seeds that were lost *when they came into a mortal mould.*

There are two significant variants in this passage: 1) VIII's ⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲧⲉⲓⲛⲉ, "dissimilarity," vs. CT's ⲁ[ⲛⲟ]ⲙⲓⲁ, "lawlessness"; and 2) how each version describes the incarnation and body of Jesus.

In the first place, how to reconstruct the lacuna ⲁ[. .]ⲙⲓⲁ at CT 5.20–21 is a matter of some conjecture. Bethge restores the word as ⲁ[ⲧⲓ]ⲙⲓⲁ, "dishonor," and notes ⲁ[ⲛⲟ]ⲙⲓⲁ as an alternative.[34] Yet a good argument can be made for restoring the word as ⲁ[ⲛⲟ]ⲙⲓⲁ when one takes into account an underlying connection with the parallel in VIII, ⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲧⲉⲓⲛⲉ, "dissimilarity." In personal conversation, the late John Turner ingeniously pointed out that ⲁⲛⲟⲙⲓⲁ

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[34] Bethge, "Der Brief des Petrus an Philippus," 178 n. 39.

(ἀνομία) probably resulted from a reduced form of ⲁⲛⲟⲙⲟⲓⲁ (ἀνόμοια), "dis-similar,"[35] by the phenomenon of iotacism, in which vowels and dipthongs become pronounced as *iota*.[36] When *oi* was reduced to *i* in pronunciation, ⲁⲛⲟⲙⲟⲓⲁ, dissimilarity, transformed into ⲁⲛⲟⲙⲓⲁ, lawlessness. Turner's keen observation not only reconstructs the lacuna but also provides a rational explanation for the genesis of the variant. Once the text was translated into Coptic, however, readers would probably not have seen and heard ⲁⲛⲟⲙⲓⲁ as anything but the Greco-Coptic word for lawlessness. How, then, might CT's audience have understood this version of the creation myth, which says that lawlessness surfaced when the the mortal bodies of humanity were produced?

In the Bible, the concept of ἀνομία is generally synonymous with sin.[37] Assuming that the readers of CT belonged to a Christian community steeped in biblical vocabulary and concepts, their interpretive strategy for explaining the ambiguity of "lawlessness" in their version of the creation story would have been to associate, perhaps even identify, the mortal bodies created by the demonic powers with sin itself. A close association of the body, mortality, and sin would be perfectly intelligible following Paul's diatribe on exorcistic baptism in his letter to the Romans. According to Paul, all of humanity bears a "body of sin" inherited from its common ancestor Adam; yet through baptism, understood as a ritual death with Christ, the believer can be liberated, at least metaphorically, from the body of sin (Rom 5:12, 6:6). An association between the body, sin, and lawlessness would be suggested all the more by Paul's exhortation that follows:

Just as you once presented your members (ⲛⲉⲧⲛⲙⲉⲗⲟⲥ, τὰ μέλη) as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness for lawlessness (ⲧⲁⲛⲟⲙⲓⲁ ⲉϩⲟⲩⲛ ⲉⲧⲁⲛⲟⲙⲓⲁ, τῇ ἀνομίᾳ εἰς τὴν ἀνομίαν), so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification." (Rom 6:19)

If readers of CT knew Paul's anthropology of the body's lawlessness in his letter to the Romans, then it would have made sense to read in their copy of the *Letter of Peter to Philip* that "lawlessness (ⲁⲛⲟⲙⲓⲁ) was produced" when the demonic powers created humanity's mortal bodies. With this biblical passage in mind, CT's readers might even have understood the variant reading ⲙⲉⲗⲟⲥ, which the Arrogant One seized from his mother and used for his own creations, as the archetype of their bodily "members," perhaps even identified with the model that is said to have appeared to the powers.

The fact that mortal bodies came to be associated with the sin of lawlessness in CT also helps explain the other significant variant in this passage, namely how CT describes the body into which the Savior descended. Whereas in VIII

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[35] A neuter plural adjective agreeing with τὰ σώματα in the Greek Vorlage.

[36] Cf. Royse, *Scribal Habits*, 79–81.

[37] Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967), 4:1085–87. See, e.g., ⲁⲛⲟⲙⲓⲁ in the sense of sin and wickedness in both the Greek and Coptic versions of Matt 7:23, 13:41, 23:38, 24:12.

Jesus says that "I descended into their mortal mould" (ⲁⲓⲉⲓ ⲉϩⲣⲁⲓ ⲉⲡⲉⲩⲡⲗⲁⲥⲙⲁ ⲉ[ⲧ]ⲙⲟⲟⲩⲧ), thus taking on a mortal body like the rest of humanity, the parallel in CT says Jesus was sent only "to a body" (ⲉⲥⲱⲙⲁ) for those who were lost "when *they* went into a mortal mould" (ⲉⲁⲩⲉⲓ [ⲉ]ⲟⲩⲡⲗⲁⲥⲙⲁ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲩ).[38] According to CT's account, Jesus was indeed incarnated into a body, but it does not specify what kind of body he inhabited and it avoids describing his body as "a mortal mould."

Following Paul's ambiguous assertion that God sent his son "in a *likeness* of sinful flesh" (ἐν ὁμοιώματι σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας, Rom 8:3; cf. Heb 4:5, Christ was χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας), ancient exegetes time and again had to explain that Jesus had a body like everyone else, except for the fact that it possessed no sin. How? Because it was the only body conceived without the polluting contagion of sexual desire. Thus Origen explains in his *Commentary on Romans* (as translated by Rufinus):

> The fact that he (Paul) said "in a likeness of the flesh of sin" shows that we indeed have the flesh of sin, but the Son of God had a likeness of the flesh of sin, not the flesh of sin (itself). Thus all of us, who have been conceived by the semen of a man joining with a woman, must use that saying of David, "since in iniquities I was conceived and in sins my mother conceived me." But he who came to a flawless body – not from the contagion of a man, but from the Holy Spirit alone coming upon the Virgin and the power of the Most High overshadowing her – he certainly had the nature of our body, but he did not at all have the pollution of sin, which is transmitted from the stirring of desire to those who are conceived. Therefore it is said that the Son of God came "in a likeness of the flesh of sin." (Origen, *Comm. Rom.* 6.12.4)[39]

In the fourth and fifth centuries, when Codex Tchacos was copied and read, the Alexandrian patriarchs continued to express views similar to Origen's. While affirming that Christ was incarnated into a body like ours, they also denied that it was polluted by sin. In his influential treatise *On the Incarnation*, Athanasius writes that the heavenly Logos "took our body, and not simply that, but from a

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[38] The word *plasma* here recalls the creation of the man from dirt in Gen 2:7 LXX.

[39] *Quod dixit 'in similitudine carnis peccati' ostendit nos quidem habere carnem peccati, filium vero Dei similitudinem habuisse carnis peccati, non carnem peccati. Omnes enim nos homines qui ex semine viri cum muliere convenientis concepti sumus, illa necessario utimur voce qua dicit David, 'quoniam in iniquitatibus conceptus sum et in peccatis concepit me mater mea." Verum qui ex nulla viri contagione sed solo Spiritu Sancto super Virginem veniente et virtute altissimi obumbrante venit ad corpus immaculatum, naturam quidem corporis nostri habuit, pollutionem tamen peccati quae ex concupiscentiae motu conceptis traditur, omnino non habuit. Idcirco ergo 'in similitudine carnis peccati' venisse dicitur Filius Dei*. Translation mine, following text in Caroline P. Hammond Bammel, *Der Römerbriefkommentar des Origenes. Kritische Ausgabe der Übersetzung Rufins. Buch 4–6* (AGLB 16; Freiburg: Herder, 1997), 525. See similarly Tertullian, *Carn. Chr.* 16; Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (trans. Theodore S. de Bruyn; WGRW 41; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 145–46; and other patristic exegeses of Rom 8:3 in Gerald Bray, ed., *Romans*, ACS 6; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005).

pure and unspotted virgin ignorant of a man, a body pure and truly unalloyed by intercourse with men. ... He fashioned for himself in the virgin a body as a temple."[40] A century later, archbishop Cyril would echo similar sentiments in his commentary on Romans: the Savior's body "was a likeness of flesh of sin, that is, it resembled our bodies, but in fact was not the type that was sick from fleshly impurity. For that divine sanctuary was holy from the womb."[41]

Once the copy of the *Letter* preserved in CT came to associate ordinary mortal bodies of people with the sin of lawlessness (ⲁⲛⲟⲙⲓⲁ), it might have made sense to ancient readers to revise the text so as to distance Jesus' body from that sin. Thus the reading in CT says that Jesus came only into "a body" on behalf of others when *they* came into a mortal mould. This incarnational theory does not deny that Jesus had a body or that he died, as if in some docetic fashion; in fact, later in the narrative the apostle Peter affirms several times that Jesus did die. The variant only avoids associating the body into which Jesus descended with the sin that characterizes other human bodies.

In contrast, the text in VIII says that Jesus did in fact descend into "their mortal mould." But this statement would raise no theological objections, since in this version of the *Letter* the mortal human body is not associated with the sin of lawlessness. Preserving what is undoubtedly the more original reading, VIII says only that mortal bodies were produced in a way dissimilar (ⲙⲛⲧⲁⲧⲉⲓⲛⲉ = ἀνόμοια) to the heavenly model, and Jesus descended into one of them.[42] The variant in CT thus reveals a concern on the part of a copyist to conform to the orthodox idea that Jesus' body, albeit mortal, had no sin.

5. Divest Yourself of "this Flesh" or "this Corruption"?

In the previous passage, Jesus explained that he himself is the "completion" or "patch" (ⲡⲗⲏⲣⲱⲙⲁ) for the world's defect, by his coming into the world, taking

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[40] Athanasius, *Inc.*, 8 (ed. and trans. Robert W. Thomson, *Athanasius: Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione* [Oxford Classical Texts; Oxford: Clarendon, 1971], 152–53).

[41] ὁμοίωμα δὲ μᾶλλον σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας· τουτέστι προσεοικὸς μὲν τοῖς ἡμετέροις σώμασιν, οὐ μὴν ἔτι καὶ νοσεῖν εἰδὸς σαρκικὴν ἀκαθαρσίαν· ἅγιος γὰρ ἐκ μήτρας ὁ θεῖος ἐκεῖνος νεώς. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on Romans* (ed. P. E. Pusey, *Sancti patris nostri Cyrilli archiepiscopi Alexandrini in D. Joannis evangelium*, vol. 3 [Oxford: Clarendon, 1872], 212–13) (trans. mine).

[42] As Antti Marjanen observes with regard to the text in VIII, "the passage stresses that the Savior had to live under the same severe limitations which mark all the human life on the earth." Marjanen, "The Crucifixion in the Letter of Peter to Philip," in *Fair Play: Diversity and Conflicts in Early Christianity: Essays in Honour of Heikki Räisänen*, (ed. Ismo Dunderberg, Christopher Tuckett, and Kari Syreeni; NovTSup 103; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 493.

on a human body, and dying on behalf of humanity.[43] Earlier in the dialogue, his disciples asked him why they were being detained – i.e., held captive by demons who fight against them – and Jesus explains that it is because their mortal bodies are the handiwork of the demons. Their mortal bodies are demonic instruments of detention. Jesus then exhorts the disciples to remove the obstacle in order to fulfill their human potential:

NHC VIII 137.4–9	CT 5.11–16
ⲉϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛⲁⲕⲁⲕ⁷ⲧⲏⲛⲉ ⲕⲁϩⲏⲩ ⲙ̄ⲡⲁⲓ̈ ⲉⲧ`ⲧⲁⲕⲏⲟⲩⲧ`· ⲧⲟ⁸ⲧⲉ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛⲁϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲛ̄ϩⲉⲛⲫⲱⲥⲧⲏⲣ· ⁹ϩⲛ̄ ⲧⲙⲏⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ϩⲉⲛⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲉⲩⲙⲟⲟⲩⲧ`	¹³ϩⲟⲧ[ⲁⲛ ⲉⲧⲉ]ⲧⲛ̄ϣⲁⲛⲕⲱ ⲙⲙⲱⲧ[ⲛ̄] ¹⁴ⲕⲁϩ-[ⲏⲟⲩ ⲛ̄]ⲧⲉⲓⲥⲁⲣⲁ̄ϩ ⲧⲟⲧⲉ [ⲉ¹⁵ⲧⲉⲧ]ⲛⲉ[ϣⲱⲡ]ⲉ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩ[ⲟⲉⲓ]ⲛ ¹⁶ⲛ̄ϩ[ⲉ]ⲛⲣⲱⲙⲓ ⲉϣⲁⲩⲙⲟⲩ :
If you divest yourselves of this *corruption*, then you will become lights among mortals.	When you divest yourselves of this *flesh*, then [you will become lights] for mortals.

VIII's reading "divest yourselves of this corruption" (ⲡⲁⲓ̈ ⲉⲧⲧⲁⲕⲏⲟⲩⲧ) versus CT's "this flesh" (ⲧⲉⲓⲥⲁⲣⲁ̄ϩ) is wholly understandable in light of disagreements over the nature of the resurrected body, which became a divisive topic in the Origenist controversies of the late fourth century and beyond.[44] Although the passage in the *Letter of Peter to Philip* does not address resurrection explicitly, exhortation to divest oneself of corruption or flesh would have immediately tied the passage to quarrels among Christian intellectuals over whether the risen body will be made of flesh or spirit. Origen and his followers were criticized for their "mortally dangerous exegesis"[45] that the resurrected body would be made of spirit, not flesh, following Paul's teaching that the body "is sown (as) an ensouled body – σῶμα ψυχικόν; it is raised a spiritual body – σῶμα πνευτματκόν" (1 Cor 15:44) and that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor 15:50).

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[43] NHC VIII 136.16 ⲡⲓⲡⲗⲏⲣⲱⲙⲁ ⲇⲉ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ. Although the word ⲡⲗⲏⲣⲱⲙⲁ (τὸ πλήρωμα) in Nag Hammadi texts is often translated ambiguously as "the fullness," or is sometimes left untranslated, thereby lending the texts an esoteric quality, it is worth noting that the term can have rather practical meanings, such as a patch sewed onto old clothes, literally "that which fills up" a tear in the cloth. Thus in Mark 2:24, Jesus preaches that "No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch (τὸ πλήρωμα) pulls away from it, the new from the old, and the tear is made worse." The idea that Jesus is a "patch" for the defects of the world works nicely in *Ep. Pet. Phil.* as well, since he came into the world to fix its defect.

[44] Elizabeth Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 87–94, with reference to Epiphanius, *Anc.* 90–91 and *Pan.* 64.67; for the persistence of the controversy, see David Brakke, "The Egyptian Afterlife of Origenism: Conflicts over Embodiment in Coptic Sermons," *OCP* 66 (2000): 277–93, esp. 280–86.

[45] Epiphanius, *Pan.* 64.3.9 (trans. Frank Williams, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis: Books II and III (Sects 47–80, De Fide)* [NHMS 36; Leiden: Brill, 1994], 134).

The alternative position, which was advocated by anti-Origenists such as Epiphanius, archbishop Theophilus, and abbot Shenoute, was that "this flesh" will indeed rise, yet it will be devoid of corruption. Advocates of this view cited the same chapter of First Corinthians as their opponents, but emphasized instead Paul's teaching that "this corruption (τὸ φθαρτὸν τοῦτο, ⲡⲁⲓ ⲉϣⲁϥⲧⲁⲕⲟ) must put on incorruption" (15:53).[46] According to Epiphanius, the entire body of Christ was raised, flesh and all. Yet his flesh was pure and rarified into a "spiritual body" of flesh so fine in substance that it could walk through closed doors (John 20:19). The transformation of Christ's risen body thus provides the precedent for our own future transformation: "So that he might show that your corruption itself (αὐτὸ τὸ φθαρτὸν ὑμῶν) is truly clothed in incorruption ... he entered through closed doors, to show that the dense was refined, that the mortal was immortal, and that the corruptible (τὸ φθαρτὸν) was incorruptible."[47] In Epiphanius's later book, the *Panarion*, he goes on to speak of the "corruptible deeds" (φθαρτὰ ἔργα) that we do in our present bodies; but when we are raised, he says, "there will be no more marriages, no more lusts, no more struggles for those who profess continence." Our risen bodies will be like Elijah's taken up in the fiery chariot, a "spiritual flesh" (σαρκί πνευματικῇ) devoid of its sexual impulses and need for food, drink, and clothing.[48]

The divergence between the two versions of the *Letter* shows a sensitivity on the part of copyists regarding what part of the self people must divest in order to become "lights among mortals."[49] According to the copy in CT, it was "this flesh" that humanity needs to remove, as Origen and his followers maintained. The reading in VIII, however, lends itself more clearly to the position advocated by Epiphanius and other critics of Origen: one needs to divest oneself not of the flesh itself, but of its corruption.[50]

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[46] Epiphanius, *Pan.* 64.68.3; *Ancoratus,* 90–91 (ed. Karl Holl, *Epiphanius: Ancoratus und Panarion*, vol. 1 [Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1915], 112).

[47] Epiphanius, *Anc.* 91.2 (ed. Holl, *Epiphanius: Ancoratus und Panarion*, vol. 1, 112; trans. mine); see similarly *Pan*. 64.64.3–8, 77.29.2–3.

[48] Epiphanius, *Pan*. 64.63.14–64.64.2 (ed. Holl, *Epiphanius: Ancoratus und Panarion*, vol. 2 [Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1922], 502–4; trans. Williams, *Panarion*, 190).

[49] The metaphor of becoming luminaries (ⲅⲉⲛⲫⲱⲥⲧⲏⲣ VIII / ⲛ̄ⲟⲩ[ⲟⲉⲓ]ⲛ̄ CT) among mortals is probably rooted in such Pauline exhortation as Phil 2:15, "be blameless and innocent, children of God, faultless amid a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world (οἷς φαίνεσθε ὡς φωστῆρες ἐν κόσμῳ)." See also Eph 5:18; Matt 5:14–16.

[50] This analysis could be further complicated by the fact that the meaning of the phrase "this flesh" itself was disputed, as Hugo Lundhaug has shown in his work on *Gos. Phil*. Does it refer to the flesh of the material body? Or to the spiritual flesh, as imagined by Epiphanius? Or even to the more imaginative and symbolic meaning of the body of Christ? See Lundhaug, "Begotten, Not Made, to Arise in This Flesh: The Post-Nicene Soteriology of the *Gospel of*

6. Is it Necessary to Suffer or to Die?

After the revelation on the Mount of Olives, the apostles make their way back to Jerusalem encouraged and reassured by Jesus' teachings. Yet someone now raises a further concern, quite reasonably, about the great suffering they will have to endure on their mission to preach the gospel.

NHC VIII 138.7–27 | CT 6.17–7.9

тоте [8]ⲁⲛⲁⲡⲟⲥⲧⲟⲗⲟⲥ ⲁⲩϣⲡ̄ϩⲙⲟⲧ̀ ⲛ̄ⲧⲙ̄[9]ⲡϫⲟⲉⲓⲥ ϩⲣⲁⲓ̈ ϩⲛ̄ ⲥⲙⲟⲩ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲁⲩⲱ [10]ⲁⲩⲕⲟⲧⲟⲩ ⲉϩⲣⲁⲓ̈ ⲉⲑⲓⲗⲏ̄ⲙ ⲉ[ⲩ]ⲛ̄[11]ⲛⲏⲩ ⲇⲉ ⲉϩⲣⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲩϣⲁϫⲉ ⲙ̄ⲛⲛ[ⲉⲩ][12]ⲉⲣⲏⲩ ϩⲓ ⲧⲉϩⲓⲏ· ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲡⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲛ [ⲉ][13]ⲧⲉ ⲁϥϣⲱⲡⲉ· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁϥϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲛ̄[14]ϭⲓ ⲟⲩϣⲁϫⲉ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲡϫⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲉⲩϫ[ⲱ] [15]ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ ϫⲉ ⲉϣϫⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟϥ ⲡⲉⲛϫⲟ[ⲉⲓⲥ] [16]ⲁϥϫⲓⲙ̄ⲕⲁϩ ϩⲓⲉ ⲁⲟⲩⲏⲣ ϭⲉ ⲁⲛⲟⲛ

[17]ⲁϥⲟⲩⲱϣⲃ̄ ⲛ̄ϭⲓ ⲡⲉⲧⲣⲟⲥ ⲉϥϫⲱ [18]ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ ϫⲉ ⲁϥϫⲓⲙ̄ⲕⲁϩ ⲉⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧ̄[ⲛ̄] [19]ⲁⲩⲱ ϩⲁⲡⲥ̄ ⲉⲣⲟⲛ ϩⲱⲱⲛ ⲉⲧⲣⲉ[ⲛ][20]ϫⲓⲙ̄ⲕⲁϩ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲧⲉⲛⲙⲛ̄ⲧ̀ⲕⲟⲩ[ⲓ̈]

[21]ⲧⲟⲧⲉ ⲁⲩⲥⲙⲏ ϣⲱⲡⲉ ϣⲁⲣⲟⲟⲩ [22]ⲉⲥϫⲱ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ ϫⲉ ⲁⲓ̈ϫⲟⲥ ⲛⲏⲧⲛ̄ [23]ⲛ̄ϩⲁϩ ⲛ̄ⲥⲟⲡ̄ ϫⲉ ϩⲁⲡⲥ̄ ⲉⲣⲱⲧⲛ̄ [24]ⲉⲧⲣⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ϫⲓⲙ̄ⲕⲁϩ· ϩⲁ[25]ⲡⲥ̄ ⲉⲧⲣⲉⲩⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲩⲧⲛ̄ ⲉϩⲉⲛⲥⲩ[26]ⲛⲁⲅⲱⲅⲏ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ ϩⲉⲛϩⲏⲅⲉⲙⲱⲛ [27]ϩⲱⲥⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ϫⲓⲙ̄ⲕⲁϩ·

ⲧ[ⲟ]ⲧⲉ [18]ⲛⲁⲡⲟⲥⲧⲟⲗⲟⲥ ⲁⲩϣⲡ̄ϩⲙⲟⲧ [19]ⲛ̄ⲧⲛ̄ ⲡⲭⲥ̄ ϩⲛ ⲥⲙⲟⲩ ⲛⲓⲙ [ⲁ]ⲩⲱ [20] ⲁⲩⲛⲟϩⲟⲩ ⲉⲑⲓⲗⲏ̄ⲙ ⲉ[ⲩⲛⲏⲩ] [21]ⲇⲉ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲛⲉⲩⲉⲣⲏⲩ ⲉⲩⲥⲉϫⲓ ⲙⲛ̄ [22]ⲛⲉⲩⲉⲣⲏⲩ ϩⲓ ⲧⲉϩⲓⲏ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲡⲟⲩ[23]ⲟⲓ̈ⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ [ⲟⲩϣⲁϫⲉ] [24] ⲁϥϣⲱⲡⲓ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲡⲭⲥ̄ [ⲉⲩϫⲱ ⲙ̄][25]ⲙⲟⲥ ϫⲉ ⲉϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲛⲧⲟϥ ⲡⲉⲛⲭ[ⲥ̄] [26]ⲁϥⲙⲟⲩ ϩⲓⲉ ⲡⲟⲥⲱ ⲙⲁⲗⲗⲟⲛ [27]ⲁⲛⲟⲛ ϩⲱⲱⲛ·

ⲁϥⲟⲩⲱϣⲃ̄ ⲇ[ⲉ] [7,1]ⲛ̄ϭⲓ ⲡⲉⲧⲣⲟⲥ ⲡⲉϫⲁϥ ϫⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϥ[2]ⲙⲟⲩ ⲉⲧⲃⲏⲧⲛ̄ ⲥϣⲉ ⲉⲣⲟⲛ ϩⲱⲱ(ⲛ) [3]ⲉⲙⲟⲩ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲣⲱⲙⲉ :

ⲧⲟ[4][ⲧⲉ ⲟⲩⲥ]ⲙⲏ ⲁⲥϣⲱⲡⲉ ϣⲁⲣⲟⲟⲩ [5][ⲉⲥϫ]ⲱ ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲥ ϫⲉ ⲁⲉⲓϫⲟⲟⲥ ⲛⲏⲧⲛ̄ [6][ϩⲛ̄]ϩⲁϩ ⲛ̄ⲥⲟⲡ ϫⲉ ⲥϣⲉ ⲉⲣⲱⲧⲛ̄ [7][ⲉⲙⲟⲩ ⲁ]ⲩⲱ ⲛ̄ⲥⲉϫⲓⲧⲏⲩⲧⲛ ⲉ̣[8][ϩⲟⲩⲛ ⲉ]ⲛ̄ⲥⲩⲛⲁⲅⲱⲅⲏ ⲁⲩⲱ ϣ[ⲁ] [9][ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲅⲉ]ⲙⲱⲛ

Then the apostles gave thanks to the Lord with every blessing and returned to Jerusalem. As they were going up, they were speaking with each other on the road about the light that appeared, and a comment was made about the Lord, that "If he, our [Lord], *suffered*, then how much more (shall) we?"

Then the apostles gave thanks to the Lord with every blessing and returned to Jerusalem. [As they were going along] with each other, they were speaking with each other on the road about the light that appeared, and [a comment] was made about the Lord, that "If he, our Lord, *died*, then how much more (shall) we?"

Peter responded, saying, "He *suffered* on [our] behalf. And it is necessary that we too *suffer* because of *our smallness*."

But Peter responded and said, "It is on our behalf that he *died*. It is necessary that we too *die* because of *humanity*."

Then a voice came to them, saying, "I have told you many times that you must *suffer*.

Then a voice came to them, saying, "I have told you [many] times that you must [*die*] and you must be brought

You must be brought to synagogues and governors *so that you suffer.*	[into] synagogues and [before the governors].

The two variant readings I would like to draw attention to here are: 1) the consistent variation between "suffer" (ϫⲓⲙ̄ⲕⲁϩ) in VIII and "die" (ⲙⲟⲩ) in CT (also found at VIII 139.22–23 ‖ CT 8.3–4); and 2) the reason each version gives for why the apostles must suffer or die: in VIII "because of our smallness" (ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲧⲉⲛⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲕⲟⲩ[ï]), and in CT "because of humanity" (ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲣⲱⲙⲉ).

As Bethge observes, the variation between "suffer" and "die" has a precedent in another Petrine epistle, namely the canonical First Peter,[51] where in 2:21 and 3:18 some manuscripts read Christ suffered (ἔπαθεν) while others read he died (ἀπέθανεν).[52] According to Paul Achtemeier, the original reading in First Peter is probably ἔπαθεν, since it supports the letter's historical context in which "Peter" encourages readers to endure their present sufferings just as Christ suffered for them.[53] Achtemeier conjectures that the text might have been redacted to ἀπέθανεν by later scribes under the influence of traditional confessions, such as the language of 1 Cor 15:3 ("For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ *died* [ἀπέθανεν] for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures ...").[54]

The reading "die" in CT's version could perhaps be the result of similar assimilation to confessional language. Or perhaps it reveals efforts to bring the language of this non-canonical Petrine letter into conformity with those versions of canonical First Peter that read ἀπέθανεν.[55] In any event, what interests me here is not so much the genesis of the variant, or recovering the more original reading, but rather exploring the possible implications of the two variants as they were read and understood by different Christians in late antique Egypt.

CT's reading, that the apostles must *die* "because of humanity," could be interpreted as emphasizing their role as martyrs for the Faith and intercessors for later generations of Christians. The term ⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲣⲱⲙⲉ can mean both "humanness," i.e., the state of being human, but also frequently means "humanity" in the sense of the human race or mankind, as I suggest it does here in

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[51] Bethge, "Der Brief des Petrus an Philippus," 183–84.

[52] On the witnesses and discussion, see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2nd ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), *loc. cit.*

[53] Paul J. Achtemeier, *A Commentary on First Peter* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 189, 198–99, 239, 247.

[54] See also Rom 5:8 ("while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"); 2 Cor 5:14 ("one has died for all, therefore all have died"); 1 Thess 5:10 ("Jesus Christ, who died for us …").

[55] In a similar vein, Birger Pearson suggests efforts were taken to shape the *Apocalypse of Peter* (NHC VII,3) along the lines of canonical Second Peter. See Pearson, *The Emergence of the Christian Religion: Essays on Early Christianity* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1997), 88–98.

CT (note the absence of the possessive prefix "our" in CT's version in contrast to VIII's "*our* smallness").[56] According to CT's version, that the apostles must die "because of humanity" or even "on behalf of humanity" could be understood to mean that their deaths will benefit the human race, just as the cults of the martyrs claimed. As Peter Brown observes:

Many Egyptian Christians seem to have assumed that the martyrs, as "unconquered" heroes who had overcome the demons of the lower air by their heroic deaths, could now be prevailed upon, by the prayers of believers, to torture the demons yet further (in a long Egyptian tradition, by which higher gods bullied and threatened their subordinates) ...[57]

By emphasizing the need for the apostles to die, and not merely suffer as in VIII, CT's version casts the apostles as the original martyrs, like Jesus, whose deaths will nevertheless serve the human race by transforming them into victorious soldiers in spiritual warfare. As Bethge observes, this version of the letter makes a fitting introduction to CT, which has a notable preoccupation with themes of death, martyrdom, and victory over the forces of evil (e.g., the martyrdom of the apostles in CT,1; of Jesus and his brother James in CT,2; and of Jesus in CT,3).[58] The three crosses that the CT's scribe drew on page 9 at the end of the letter – including an ankh, the traditional Egyptian symbol for life, placed in the center – visually reinforce the theme of Christ and the apostles' death, victory over evil, and new life in the spirit (fig. 1). By the fourth

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[56] For the meaning "humanness," see, e.g., *Treat. Res.* 44.25: the Son of God was also Son of Man, possessing "both humanity and divinity" (ⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ). The sense of ⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲣⲱⲙⲉ as "mankind, human race" is also well documented: e.g., *Tri. Trac.* 118.14 says that "mankind (ⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲣⲱⲙⲉ) came into being in three essential types, the spiritual, the psychic, and the material, conforming to the triple disposition of the Logos"; *Treat. Seth* 53.16 says that the heavenly rulers reveal the place of the angels, which mankind (ⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲣⲱⲙⲉ) was seeking; the so-called *Val. Exp.* 38.29 says that when Cain killed Abel, he initiated "the struggle between the apostasy of the angels and mankind (ⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲣⲱⲙⲉ)." The term is also used repeatedly in *Pistis Sophia* to refer to the human race: e.g., "the invisible ones ... existed before mankind (ⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲣⲱⲙⲉ), they, the gods, and the rulers" (Askew Codex 88b); see similarly 183a, 196b, 244b, 275b, 10b, *et passim*. The term is also used to refer to the human race elsewhere in Codex Tchacos: the *Gospel of Judas*'s introduction says that when Jesus appeared on earth, he performed signs and wonders "for the salvation of humanity (ⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲣⲱⲙⲉ)" (CT 33.9).

[57] Peter L. Brown, *Authority and the Sacred: Aspects of the Christianisation of the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 74. For a detailed treatment of the Egyptian martyr cults, see Theofried Baumeister, *Martyr Invictus: Der Martyrer als Sinnbild der Erlösung in der Legende und im Kult der frühen koptischen Kirche: Zur Kontinuität des ägyptischen Denkens* (Forschungen zur Volkskunde 46; Münster: Regensberg, 1972).

[58] Bethge, "Der Brief des Petrus an Philippus," 184–85; King, "Martyrdom and its Discontents in Codex Tchacos"; Jenott, *The Gospel of Judas*, 7–11, 30–32, 123–28.

century, the sign of the cross was not only the earliest iconographic representation of Christ's passion, but had come to be understood as an apotropaic sign to ward off evil spirits.[59]

Fig. 1: Lower half of Codex Tchacos page 9, with title of the *Letter of Peter to Philip* and crosses.

Although we know virtually nothing about who produced and read CT in fourth century Egypt, one is tempted to think of Melitian Christians, the self-proclaimed "Church of the Martyrs,"[60] when considering the range of possible owners and readers of the codex. Of course Melitians were not the only Christians that venerated martyrs, so the question of who owned CT in antiquity must remain open. In CT,4, the story of Allogenes overcoming the temptations

[59] Larry Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 136–39. On the cross as apotropaic sign, see Athanasius, *C. gent.* 1; *Inc.* 29, 47; *Vit. Ant.* 13, 35, 53, 78, 80; cf. Geoffrey W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), s.v. σφράγιζω (B) and σταυρός (E3).

[60] Epiphanius, *Pan.* 68.3,7.

of Satan in the wilderness, and then receiving revelation about demonic powers and the soul's ascent to heaven, also resonates with the hagiographic tales of Egyptian anchorites.[61]

In contrast to CT's emphasis on the apostles' death, VIII's version says only that the apostles must *suffer* (ϫⲓⲘ̄ⲕⲁϩ), and not because of humanity, but rather "because of our smallness" (ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲧⲉⲛⲘ̄Ⲛ̄Ⲧ`ⲕⲟⲩ[ⲓ̈]). The term ⲘⲚ̄Ⲧⲕⲟⲩⲓ̈ often refers to a youthful age, but can also mean "of little importance" or "insignificance" like its Greek equivalent μικρός.[62] The idea that the apostles must suffer because of their smallness, their frailty as human beings, is borne out in Peter's speech when he contrasts their suffering with that of Jesus, who, he says, "is a stranger to this suffering" because of his heavenly nature.[63]

We know more about the likely owners and readers of the Nag Hammadi Codices in late antique Egypt: they seem to have been Christian monks living in Upper Egypt.[64] For the monks who read NHC VIII, the example of the apostles' suffering because of their human frailty could have provided a model for their own ascetic practices. In Egyptian monasticism, the experience of suffering came to be seen as an important way of imitating Christ and the martyrs that followed his lead. The monk imitates their suffering, not through violent death at the hands of persecutors, but through routine *ascesis*. Thus in the *Life of Antony*, after the cessation of imperial persecutions, the hero withdraws to his cell "and was there daily being martyred by his conscience, and doing battle in the contests of the faith. He subjected himself to an even greater and more strenuous asceticism."[65] In another story, the anchorite Apa Aaron reflects on Christ's sufferings for motivation when he finds himself struggling to perform his *ascesis*:

Whenever I remember the afflictions my good savior endured on our behalf until he redeemed our race from the devil's captivity – he gave his body and blood for us – well then I

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[61] Lance Jenott, "The Book of the Foreigner from Codex Tchacos." *BASP* 57 (2020): 235–276.

[62] Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 94a.

[63] NHC VIII 139.21–23. Cf. Bethge, "Der Brief des Petrus an Philippus," 186. Peter says that in contrast to Christ, "we must suffer because of the transgression of the mother," referring to Jesus' earlier explanation of the "defect of the aeons" (135.8–136.15). Since humanity came to be embodied in the mortal forms created by the Arrogant One and his rulers, ultimately as a result of the mother's transgression, they are naturally subject to suffering in this world. Although Christ did indeed suffer, die, was buried, and rose from the dead (139.14–21), he can nevertheless be considered a stranger to this suffering because of his heavenly origin, descending into mortal form only in order to correct the defect of the aeons (136.16–137.4). As Bethge argues, the text in no way denies Christ's suffering and should not be interpreted as a form of docetism.

[64] Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (STAC 97; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015).

[65] Athanasius, *Life of Antony*, 47 (trans. Robert C. Gregg, *Athanasius: The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus* [London: SPCK, 1980], 66).

say, "If God endured suffering for us, then it is necessary that we too endure every kind of affliction (ⲉϣϫⲉ ⲁⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲁⲛⲉⲭⲉ ⲉϥϩⲓⲥⲉ ϩⲁⲣⲟⲛ, ⲁⲛⲟⲛ ϩⲱⲱⲛ ϣϣⲉ ⲉⲣⲟⲛ ⲉⲧⲣⲛϥⲓ ϩⲁϩⲓⲥⲉ ⲛⲓⲙ) until he shows us mercy on the day of our visitation" (*Histories of the Monks of Upper Egypt*, 40b).[66]
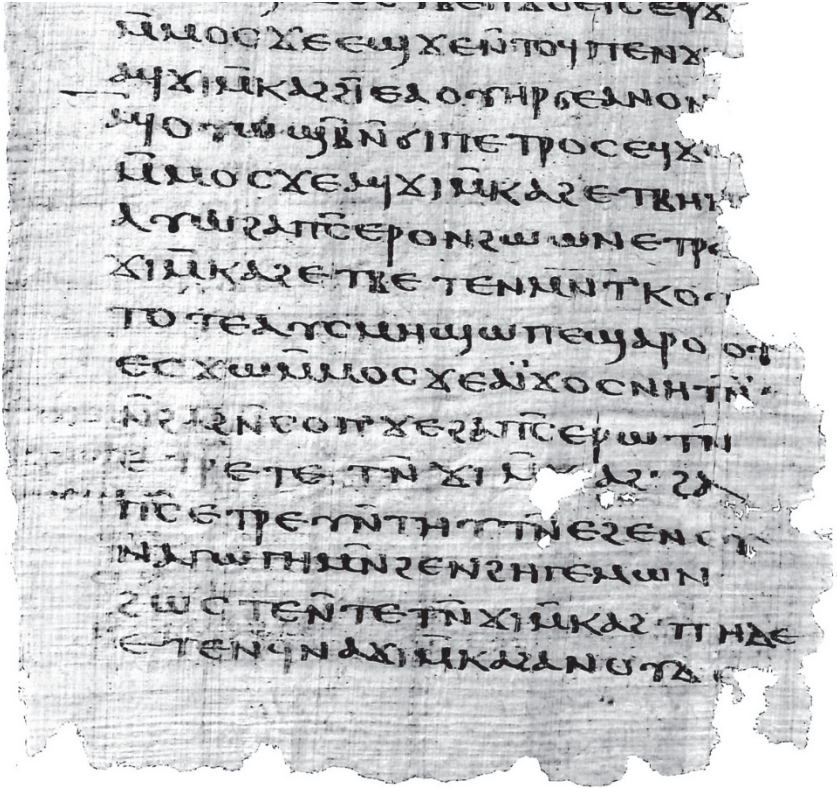

Fig. 2: Lower half of NHC VIII 138, with paragraphus marking Peter's speech on Christ's suffering.

Monks who read NHC VIII would have found similar encouragement in Peter's speech there about the necessity of suffering like Christ: "He suffered on our behalf, and it is necessary that we too suffer because of our smallness" (ⲁϥϫⲓⲛⲕⲁϩ ⲉⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧ[ⲛ̅], ϩⲁⲡⲥ̄ ⲉⲣⲟⲛ ϩⲱⲱⲛ ⲉⲧⲣⲉ[ⲛ]ϫⲓⲛⲕⲁϩ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲧⲉⲛⲙ̅ⲛ̅ⲧ̀ⲕⲟⲩ[ⲓ̈]). This very passage appears to have been especially important for readers of the

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[66] Ernest A. Wallis Budge, ed., *Miscellaneous Texts in the Dialect of Upper Egypt* (London: British Museum, 1915), 474–75 (trans. mine). For a more recent edition and translation of the text, unfortunately not available to me at the time of writing this essay, see Jitse H. F. Dijkstra and Jacques van der Vliet, *The Coptic Life of Aaron: Critical Edition, Translation and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

codex since someone, either the scribe or a later reader, drew a paragraphus mark right at the beginning of Peter's speech about Christ's suffering (fig. 2).[67]

7. Conclusion

In this essay I have discussed several significant variant readings between the two extant copies of the *Letter of Peter to Philip* and explored their theological implications. I have focused not only on the genesis of the variants, suggesting likely explanations for how and why they came into being, but also on questions of their significance to ancient readers: what difference does it make theologically if the text reads one way or the other? And how might ancient readers have made sense of the version they were reading?

The two copies of the *Letter of Peter to Philip* exhibit all the kinds of textual variants that one expects to find in books that were copied by hand and translated from one language to another. In at least one instance we have seen how two translators rendered what must have been an ambiguous Greek passage into Coptic according to their own theological assumptions, one attributing the primary impetus for creation to the heavenly Father, another to the heavenly Mother. The act of translation thus becomes an act of interpretation. As David Parker puts it, such revisions "bring out what these users believed to be the true meaning of the text."[68]

In other cases, copyists seem to have inadvertently introduced significantly different theological ideas into their texts through the smallest of phonological misunderstandings: e.g., the confusion of ⲙⲉⲣⲟⲥ (ὁ μέρος) "portion" and ⲙⲉⲗⲟⲥ (τὸ μέλος) "limb" by consonantal interchange (/l/ for /r/); and the reduction of ⲁⲛⲟⲙⲟⲓⲁ (ἀνόμοια) "dissimilar" to ⲁⲛⲟⲙⲓⲁ (ἀνομία) "lawlessness" by iotacism. Such variants, though likely accidental, would have opened up an entirely new array of exegetical possibilities for readers and called for interpretive strategies based on different biblical passages.

Other variants likely arose not from accidental, but deliberate revisions of passages involving hot-button questions that divided Christians in antiquity:

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[67] A dicolon and blank space at 139.21 may serve to demarcate the passage as a subsection of the text, even though Peter's speech continues until 140.7. The other two paragraphus marks in the text are at 136.16 (combined with a dicolon and blank space on the previous line) marking the beginning of Jesus' speech on the completion of the aeons, and at 140.16, marking Jesus' final benediction on the apostles.

[68] David C. Parker, "Textual Criticism and Theology," *ExpTim* 118 (2007): 585. Parker's study is of course focused on copyists who rewrote passages of Scripture in order to clarify their meaning, and were not necessarily involved in translating from one language to another. But his observation applies just as well to translators who introduced exegetical clarifications into their translations according to what they honestly believed the text said in the original language.

Into what kind of body did Christ descend? Does one need to divest oneself of the flesh itself or merely of the flesh's corruption? Is it enough to suffer, or does one need actually to die to follow in Jesus's footsteps?

Finally, the case of intentional revisions raises the question of what kind of status non-canonical pseudepigrapha such as the *Letter of Peter to Philip* had in the eyes of their reader-redactors. As I suggested above, redactors evidently regarded such texts as pliable and open to revision. Yet that should not lead us to the conclusion that they thought the texts lacked authority, or at least usefulness, since we know that redactors made the same kind of revisions even to canonical Scripture. Instead, their revisions suggest that they regarded such texts as important and useful enough that they should be made to conform, to reflect more clearly and accurately the theology of their readers. We need not think that redactors "improved" their books for disingenuous reasons. As in the case of rewritten canonical Scripture, no evidence suggests that revisions were made "out of sheer malice or utter disregard for the constraints of the text ... Quite to the contrary, it appears that these scribes knew exactly what the text said, or at least they thought they knew ... and that the changes they made functioned to make these certain meanings all the more certain."[69]

The comparison with rewritten canonical Scripture should, however, not be taken as an indicator that readers of books such as the *Letter of Peter to Philip* regarded them as possessing the same authority as canonical books or as candidates for the canon. By the fourth century, the contours of the biblical canon were widely agreed upon, with only a few outliers still under dispute (e.g, 2–3 John, James, Jude, 2 Peter, and Revelation).[70] Athanasius's famous Thirty-Ninth Festal Letter of 367, which lists the exact twenty-seven books of the New Testament that he regarded as "divinely inspired," would likely have found wide-spread acceptance across Egypt and other regions of Christendom, even among Christians who did not see themselves as members of Athanasius's church (e.g., Melitians, Arians, and diverse self-governed teachers and monks spread across the Egyptian landscape). As Hugo Lundhaug and I have previously suggested, Athanasius's challenge may not have been so much to convince Christians that they ought to regard his list of twenty-seven New Testament books as divinely inspired, but rather to *limit* the books in his second category, those "useful for instruction," to only a select few, the teachings of which he deemed safe within the boundaries of his orthodoxy.[71] Books such as

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[69] Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 280.

[70] Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*, 3.3, 3.25.

[71] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 146–52. Note that Athanasius and Eusebius disagree on the status of *The Shepherd of Hermas* and the *Teaching of the Apostles*. Athanasius includes them in his approved list of books "useful for instruction," while Eusebius lists them among the "spurious books." Eusebius, however, acknowledges that some have found

the *Letter of Peter to Philip*, which Athanasius relegated to his third category, "apocryphal" books of the heretics, were likely regarded by other Christians living in Egypt as both edifying and useful for instruction. This does not, of course, mean that readers would have believed in everything written in these books. Instead, they probably found some parts more edifying and "useful" than others; Athanasius himself suggests as much when he warns people that they should not read them "even if a useful word be found in them (ⲕⲁⲛ ⲉⲩϣⲁⲛϩⲉ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲉⲩϣⲁϫⲉ ⲛⲭⲣⲩⲥⲓⲙⲟⲛ ⲛϩⲏⲧⲟⲩ)."[72] The words of the pseudonymous Coptic author Euodius, who purports to be the bishop of Rome "second after Peter," likely reflect the rationale of those Christians who continued to read and teach with such apocrypha: "the Lord Jesus will not find fault with us if we add a few embellishments to the holy gospels, but he will commend us all the more and bless those who will bear fruit through them."[73]

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the *Shepherd* "indispensable, especially for those in need of elementary instruction" (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*, 3.3, trans. Geoffrey A. Williamson, *Eusebius: History of the Church* [London: Penguin, 1989], 66).

[72] Athanasius, *Thirty-Ninth Festal Letter* (ed. L.-Th. Lefort, *S. Athanase: Lettres festales et pastorales en copte*, CSCO 150, Scriptores Coptici 19 [Leuven: Durbecq, 1955], 20–21). On selective reading, see Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 88–89, 253, 267.

[73] Euodius of Rome, *Homily on the Passion and the Resurrection*, 42 (trans. Paul Chapman in *Homiletica from the Pierpont Morgan Library: Seven Coptic Homilies Attributed to Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, and Euodius of Rome*, ed. Leo Depuydt, CSCO 525, Scriptores Coptici 44 [Leuven: Peeters, 1991], 96).

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Ascetic Readings in Codex II from Nag Hammadi[*]

Ingvild Sælid Gilhus

In their book, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices*, Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott invite us to explore how the Nag Hammadi texts might have been read in monastic milieus, and especially in a Pachomian environment.[1] They ask why "would the Pachomians, or any other Egyptian monks, have read such books as the Nag Hammadi Codices?,"[2] and go on to offer "a few suggestive points." These points include ascetic emphasis,[3] interpretations of Adam and Eve which match the monks' aspiration to become like Adam,[4] combat with demons,[5] an interest in heavenly ascents,[6] and references to *monachos*.[7]

In the present article I will continue this line of thought, but focus on only one of the codices and ask: Why was Codex II attractive for ascetics, and why would the Pachomians, or any other Egyptian monks, have read this codex?[8] Codex II includes the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Gospel of Philip*, the *Nature of the Archons*, *On the Origin of the World* (without title in the codex), *Exegesis on the Soul*, and the *Book of Thomas*.[9]

The article takes its point of departure in a broad theme – supernatural worlds and the creation of cultural memories, which might help describe the situation when the Nag Hammadi Codices, including Codex II, were buried. From here the article moves to two themes, which are prominent in the codex and most likely had a special appeal to monastic readers: The allures of origin

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[1] Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (STAC 97; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015).

[2] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 256.

[3] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 256.

[4] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 258.

[5] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 259.

[6] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 269.

[7] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 261.

[8] Cf. Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 256.

[9] The Coptic texts and translations of NHC II are from Bentley Layton, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7: Together with XIII,2*, Brit. Lib. Or. 4926(1), and P. Oxy. 1, 654, 655* (2 vols.; NHS 20–21; Leiden: Brill, 1989).

myths, and the problems of evil, sexual desire and women. Stress is further laid on the didactic approach of these texts.

1. Supernatural Worlds and the Creation of Cultural Memories

"Out of the mist of the beginnings of our era there looms a pageant of mythical figures whose vast, superhuman contours might people the walls and ceilings of another Sistine Chapel."[10] These words introduce the paperback edition of Hans Jonas' *The Gnostic Religion: The message of the alien God and the beginnings of Christianity*, where he describes rather poetically what such an alternative Sistine Chapel would have looked like filled with "the blessed Aeons," "God's erring Wisdom, the Sophia," "a blind and arrogant Creator believing himself the Most High," "the Soul, trapped and lost in the labyrinth of the world," and "a Saviour from the Light" – all of them partaking in a precosmic drama.

Jonas saw Gnosticism as an alternative to the dominant supernatural world of Christianity. He is right that tractates like those found at Nag Hammadi include a rich world of mythological beings and that they stage a cosmological drama, whose tale in the main was suppressed. This, however, leads to more general questions: What sort of super-natural imaginary worlds existed in late antiquity in Egypt? What was their appeal? For the sake of clarity, let us divide such supernatural worlds roughly into ideal-types. The division is, of course, artificial and the boundaries between these worlds are porous in lived religion. It is made to suggest a background for what happened when Codex II went from being read to being buried:

1. An Egyptian supernatural world (for instance Thoth/Hermes, Osiris, Isis, intermediary beings).

2. A Greco-Roman supernatural world (for instance Jupiter, Venus, Hercules, Eros, intermediary beings).

3. The supernatural world of the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint (for instance Yahweh, Adam and Eve, Moses, Elijah, intermediary beings).

These supernatural imaginary worlds have ancient roots. While their superior beings differ, they also include a plethora of intermediary beings with or without names, which were partly shared.[11] Connected to these imaginary worlds were ancient texts, which in one way or another were regarded as canonical or were part of canonization processes, for instance temple libraries, Homer's

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[10] Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity* (2nd rev. ed.; Boston, MA: Beacon, 1963), xiii.

[11] Cf. Rangar Cline, *Ancient Angels: Conceptualizing Angeloi in the Roman Empire* (RGRW 172; Leiden: Brill, 2011).

oeuvre, and the Septuagint. Canonical texts invite commentaries, or, equally correct, because these texts are included in rituals and commented upon, they are kept in the cultural memory and regarded as canonical. Commentaries might further give rise to secondary imaginary worlds and, as pointed out by Guy Stroumsa, to secondary canonization processes, which are developed in relation to canonical texts.[12] One example is how the Hebrew bible and the Septuagint are viewed through the lenses of the New Testament texts. The New Testament can be seen as a commentary on the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint and accordingly as part of a secondary supernatural world. In this article, the focus is on two secondary or, in relation to the New Testament texts, even tertiary supernatural worlds, a Jewish/Christian Apocryphal and a Christian monastic supernatural world. The first has a focus on mythical figures and cosmological scenarios, while the second has its focus on the origin of monasticism and on ideal humans, the monastic founding fathers, sometimes with superhuman traits. Both worlds include intermediary superhuman beings – angels and demons, and both comment on canonical biblical texts.

1. A Jewish/Christian Apocryphal supernatural world (for instance Ialdabaoth, Sophia, Seth, Melchizedek, Jesus, giants, angels, demons).

2. A Christian monastic supernatural world (for instance Antony, Pachomius, Shenoute, Horsiesius, Theodore, angels, demons).

According to Aaron Hughes, who has discussed the genre of commentary from a theoretical perspective, "by commenting on a set of sacred texts or events, a community manipulates its past in such a way that it contextualizes the present."[13] Hughes assumes, in line with J. Z. Smith, "a canon to be a basic cultural process"[14] and its interpretation to be a method of understanding the present.[15] Canonical texts are commented upon so that they speak directly to the present, because, while the canon is more or less fixed, there is a continuous need to overcome its limitations and bring the present in line with the past, which the canon describes. Comments upon canonical texts create different pasts, each of which suits different communities and their stage of development. The experiences and expectations of a community influence its interpretations of the canon and how to understand the canon "is about transporting the perceived

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[12] Guy G. Stroumsa, *Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism* (SHR 70; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 79–91.

[13] Aaron Hughes, "Presenting the Past: The Genre of Commentary in Theoretical Perspective," *MTSR* 15 (2003): 149; cf. Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, "Contextualizing the Present, Manipulating the Past: Codex II from Nag Hammadi and the Challenge of Circumventing Canonicity," in *Canon and Canonicity: The Formation and Use of Scripture* (ed. Einar Thomassen; Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2010), 91–108.

[14] Hughes, "Presenting the Past," 149.

[15] Hughes, "Presenting the Past," 154ff.

past into the present."[16] "Commentaries, thus, provide the primary mechanism by which a community orders and classifies the unfamiliar, the strange, and the hitherto unexperienced."[17] Both Jewish/Christian apocryphal texts, like some of the tractates in Codex II, and the monastic texts such as *vitae*, letters and rules connected to Pachomius, Horsiesius, Theodore, and Shenoute circle around canonical texts and can be seen as commentaries to them. However, these two types of texts, the apocryphal and the monastic, create different memories of the past and somewhat different supernatural worlds – one relating mainly to mythical beings and one to deceased persons with superhuman characteristics. These texts could have catered to different communities in fourth and fifth century Egypt, including monastic communities, but might they not also have catered to communities in different stages of development?

Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott have rightfully stressed that apocryphal books continued to be read in the monasteries. In the case of the Nag Hammadi codices, however, such books were actually buried and thus hidden away, which implies that these codices were read in one period but not in the next. However, we know that similar texts continued to be read. Why the Nag Hammadi texts were buried has been much discussed. Another and perhaps equally interesting question is what replaced them. What did the monks read instead of the buried codices? Obviously they read biblical texts, but did they read something in addition? We know that a Pachomian literature gradually developed with rules, biographies, letters and catecheses. It is tempting to see the demise of the Nag Hammadi codices in relation to the growth of the Pachomian literature and as two parallel processes. Jan Assmann's concepts of "communicative memory" and "cultural memory" can fruitfully be applied to describe this development.[18] These concepts and their theoretical underpinning contribute to a hypothesis of why the codices were read in one period and not in the next. The keywords are institutional development and changes in the Pachomian movement.

In Assmann's description, cultural memory "is exteriorized, objectified, and stored away in symbolic forms that, unlike the sound of words or the sight of gestures, are stable and situation-transcendent."[19] Cultural memory reaches back to the remote past and even the beginning of time and does not distinguish between myth and history ("*in illo tempore*"). It is mediated in "texts, icons, dances, rituals, and performances of various kind; 'classical' or otherwise formalized language(s)."[20] According to Assmann, the "participation structure of

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[16] Hughes, "Presenting the Past," 163.

[17] Hughes, "Presenting the Past," 164.

[18] Jan Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* (ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning; Media and Cultural Memory 8; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 109–18.

[19] Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," 110–11.

[20] Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," 117.

cultural memory has an inherent tendency to elitism; it is never strictly egalitarian."[21] Cultural memory has an institutional character and is cultivated by specialists.

Different from cultural memory, communicative memory lives in everyday interaction and does not normally reach further back than eighty years. It is autobiographical, informal, embodied and diffuse. Communicative memory is sometimes transformed into cultural memory by being made into texts, a type of development, which took place in the Pachomian movement.

It is, of course, impossible to know the day-to day communication in the Pachomian monasteries and how the memory of the fathers was kept alive among ascetics in the fourth century. What we do know, however, is that a few generations after Pachomius, the need arose to write his biography:

> We write these things although we have not seen him in the flesh, as we have said before. But we have seen those who were with him and of the same age. They knew these things accurately and they have recounted them to us in detail. Should anybody say, "Why did they not write his life" our answer is that we did not hear them speak often about writing, although they had been with him and were of the same age and he was their father. But perhaps it was not yet time. And when we saw that it was necessary to do so, that we might not forget altogether what we had heard about the perfect monk who is our father after all the saints, we wrote down a few out of many things.[22]

According to this quote, the living, communicative memory was no longer enough. Too much time has passed. The biographer says that the text is written for the sake of the memory (*mneme*), so that Pachomius should be remembered. The biographer also mentions Athanasius' the *Life of the Blessed Antony* as a model when, "we have been writing as children eagerly desiring to recall the memory of the fathers who brought us up."[23] Through Pachomius and the memory of him the monks reconnected to the narratives about the origin of the monastery and to the biblical world. When James E. Goehring describes ascetic heroes in Egypt, his point of departure is Shenoute, but his description fits also very well how the biographical tradition treated Pachomius and his successors: "When their ascetic skills and charisma surely set them apart from the average monk during their lives, their post-mortem elevation conformed them more and more to the figures of the biblical past and the angelic future than to those of the world of the living."[24]

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[21] Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," 116.

[22] G[1] 98, trans. Armand Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia: The Lives, Rules, and Other Writings of Saint Pachomius and His Disciples* (3 vols.; CS 45–47; Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1980–1982), 1:364–65.

[23] G[1] 99, trans. Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia*, 1:366.

[24] James E. Goehring, "Remembering for Eternity: The Ascetic Landscape as Cultural Discourse in Early Christian Egypt," in *Ascetic Culture: Essays in Honor of Philip Roussaeu* (ed. Blake Leyerle and Robin Darling Young; Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 213.

The battle against apocryphal literature, like the Nag Hammadi texts, can be seen as taking place parallel to the process of the fixation of the Pachomian communicative memory in writing and thus as a parallel process to the transformation of the communicative memory of the Pachomian heroes into what can be characterized in line with Assmann's terminology as a new cultural memory. This might suggest that one type of cultural memory, which described the cosmic origin of an elite, was gradually exchanged for another, which spoke more directly to the institutional developments in the monasteries.[25] Monasticism and ascetic life went from embracing the select few to develop into a broader movement in Egypt. The stories of origin and the long cultural memory, which had been so important in the first decenniums and perhaps the first hundred years of the Pachomian movement, were then partly replaced by a literature which spoke about events closer in time. The communicative memory was made into writing and this new literature related more directly to the day-to-day routines in the monasteries and to the administration of the monastic life, to the organisation of monasteries and the monastic federation, and to the interplay between the monasteries and their surroundings. Before this happened, however, the tractates of Codex II were read. If the readers were monks and ascetics, what did they look for in the tractates?

2. The Allures of Origins

The tractates in Codex II can aptly be characterized with a term from P. F. Bradshaw as "living literature."[26] By being in a continuous process of change, the tractates had during the years been adapted to their different users' needs and interests, until they were finally enclosed in Codex II. Except for the *Gospel of Thomas*, which probably stems from the second century, and parts of the *Apocryphon of John*, which has roots in the second century, the other tractates had most likely their roots no earlier than the third century. In the last phase before they were buried they catered to the cultural memory of monastic and ascetic groups in the Nag Hammadi area, and most likely to monks and ascetics who were included in the Pachomian federation. What did monks and ascetics in the fourth century search for and what did they find in Codex II, which was relevant to their social and religious situation? What power was exercised by means of these texts? How did the myths and ideas in this codex help people pursue an ascetic life?

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[25] Cf. Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, "Munker, minner og tekster i Egypt i senantikken," *Dīn* 1 (2016): 10–26.

[26] Paul F. Bradshaw, "Liturgy and 'Living Literature'," in *Liturgy in Dialogue: Essays in Memory of Ronald Jasper* (ed. Paul F. Bradshaw and Bryan Spinks; London: SPCK, 1993), 138–53.

Is it reasonable to think that monks and ascetics in the fourth century were edified by ideas and myths about the remote past and the beginning of time, which they found in texts like the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Nature of the Archons*, and *On the Origin of the World*? These tractates combine cosmology with an apocalyptic outlook. But human origins and the myth of Adam and Eve are important elements in the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Gospel of Philip*, and the *Exegesis on the Soul* as well, which shows that the focus on the beginning was common to the tractates in the codex.

To establish a cultural memory is to establish an origin and a cosmology which make sense to a group, especially in relation to the status and place of that group in the wider society. The cultural memory of most of the tractates in Codex II reaches further back than a traditional interpretation of the beginning, which is described in Genesis 1:1 when "God created the heavens and the earth." The long cosmological memory of these tractates is influenced by Plato's thoughts about a world of ideas and forms, which exists on a higher level than the perceptible material world. It is tailored to support a wish to get back to the origin and in this way to escape death, but also to nourish a feeling among the readers that they are among the elect.

By means of their interpretations of Genesis, the tractates in Codex II reflect a wish to return to the beginning in order to correct the present. This also means that Adam and his fate became extremely important, and that the return to Adam's prelapsarian state was an explicit goal, a point, which is convincingly argued by Lance Jenott.[27] The wish to return to the beginning might very well be a general trait in ascetic movements, as pointed out by Gavin Flood.[28] According to Flood, asceticism mainly belongs to textual religions where the body and the self are inscribed in a cosmological narrative. Religious readings and other repeated actions serve "to replace personal memory with the memory of tradition."[29] Denial of reproduction and of sexuality is the reversal of the natural instincts of the body.[30] Cosmic time is related to individual time – the reversal of the natural instincts of the body is an attempt at reversing cosmic time and "to perform the memory of tradition and to perform the ambiguity of the self."[31] It further means that asceticism implies "the subjective appropriation of tradition in the enactment of cultural memory."[32] When the ascetic self looks

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[27] Cf. Lance Jenott, "Recovering Adam's Lost Glory: Nag Hammadi Codex II in its Egyptian Monastic Environment," in *Jewish and Christian Cosmogony in Late Antiquity* (ed. Lance Jenott and Sarit Kattan Gribetz; TSAJ 155; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 222–43.

[28] Gavin Flood, *The Ascetic Self: Subjectivity, Memory and Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); cf. also Jörn Rüsen, "Historical Narration: Foundation, Types, Reason," *HistTh* 26 (1987): 88.

[29] Flood, *The Ascetic Self*, 194.

[30] Flood, *The Ascetic Self*, 5.

[31] Flood, *The Ascetic Self*, 4.

[32] Flood, *The Ascetic Self*, 7.

back through tradition to an origin, this origin or source becomes at the same time a future goal.[33] Flood captures very well the importance of origins in ascetic practices. In the texts of Codex II, the origin of the world and of humans is a recurring topic, which make these texts highly relevant to ascetic readers who want to understand and reverse the fallen state of humans.

Generally speaking, several things might attract people to an ascetic and monastic life. Mundane needs were provided for, for instance, better living conditions, a safer life, or being part of a community, but also the possibility of escaping one's social circumstances such as the biological family. Other, more explicitly religious attractions offered were to live a religious life, to inhabit an imaginary biblical world, and to escape human mortality. These attractions are interrelated; becoming a monastic means both to replace one's biological family with a non-biological family of "fathers," "brothers," "mothers" and "sisters," and to inhabit a supernatural world of mythical figures, where the highest entity is described as father in line with the norms of a patriarchal society and accordingly in terms of a metaphor based on kin.

An ultimate attraction was to escape death. Salvation is a type of supra-biological life, which implies the continuation of life after death. It may also include a special quality of life on earth. Deathlessness and eternal life are offered in several of the tractates in Codex II: According to the *Nature of the Archons* "all who have become acquainted with this way exist deathless in the midst of dying mankind" (96.25–27). Both the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Gospel of Philip* promise a type of supra-biological life/resurrection for those who grasp their message while still alive on earth.

Ascetics saw themselves as an elite in relation to ordinary people, and some ascetics were regarded as an elite by others. Much of the monastic literature is about making monastic heroes – monks who stood out among their peers – as seen, for instance, in the different *vitae*, the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, letters and rules. At first glance this seems to be opposed to the ideals of monastic life. According to a common presupposition, life in a monastery was meant to create equality.[34] In William Harmless' words: "At the heart of Pachomius's legislation was the desire to create, down to the most nitty-gritty details of everyday life, a community of equals."[35] Social inequalities were, for instance, overcome in a process of equalization and adaptation, which went in two directions. The monks should both participate in manual labour, and they should be educated

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[33] Flood, *The Ascetic Self*, 13. Asceticism internalizes the cosmology by claiming that the levels of cosmos are inner states of the mind and by mapping the cosmological hierarchy into the body by means of ritual processes (Flood, *The Ascetic Self*, 11). This means that the lower parts of the cosmos are related to lower parts of the body and higher parts of cosmos to higher parts of the body.

[34] Cf. *The Testament of Horsiesios*, 23.

[35] William Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 132.

– according to the Pachomian rules everyone had to learn to read (*Praecepta* 139-140). This was the ideal. To what degree this educational goal was achieved in real life is another matter and hard to know.

At the same time as the Pachomian rules strongly promote an ideology of equality, they also signal that some of the monks have higher status than others. The date of the monk's entrance in the monastery determined his place in a hierarchy, and the leaders had higher status than ordinary monks.[36] But the individual efforts of the monks also mattered. Some monks were regarded as saintlier than others, and some were more strictly ascetic. Some monks were probably also more learned than others. Even if the norms were that everyone who joined a Pachomian monastery had to learn to read, it is obvious that reading abilities and love of reading must have been unequally distributed among the monks. It is equally obvious that this must have been a source of some kind of hierarchy and that one type of monastic elitism included books and learning.

An argument for claiming that there was a hierarchy of readers in the monasteries is that according to tradition, Pachomius wrote in a secret language.[37] This indicates that in the early days of the Pachomian movement, literacy was taken to a higher level and an elite type of reading and writing was developed in the monasteries. So while it is difficult to think that everyone in a monastery read the tractates in Codex II, it is easy to imagine that those who were learned and philosophically inclined among the monks read them.

The tractates have in common that they are hard to understand and extremely rich in potential meaning, with unlimited possibilities for intertextual readings and for *eisegesis* – having meanings read into them. The acquisition of knowledge involves seeing through worldly things and by doing this to approach the level of the spiritual elite described in the texts. The title of the last treatise and the colophon of the codex read: "The Book of Thomas: It is the Athlete who writes to the Perfect. Remember me also, my brothers, in your prayers. Peace to the saints and the spiritual ones" (145.20–23). In line with this address to the perfect, the saints, and the spiritual, the tractates in the codex cater to a wish to be among those who are elected and exalted. Alan Bowman and Greg Woolf differentiate between power over texts and power exercised by means of their use.[38] In the case of Codex II, one of its functions might have been to support the readers' experience of being a spiritual elite and to empower them by nourishing this experience. This type of identity-formation was probably seen as less attractive when a stricter monastic order was created and

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[36] G¹ 28; SBo 26.

[37] The Letters of Pachomius, trans. Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia*, 3: 51-53, 67-69, 72-78; *Historia Lausiaca* 32.5; cf. Joel Kalvesmaki, "Pachomius and the Mystery of the Letters." in *Ascetic Cultures: Essays in Honor of Philip Rousseau* (ed. Blake Leyerle and Robin Darling Young; Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 11–28.

[38] Alan K. Bowman and Greg Woolf, eds., *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 6.

enforced and the Church became more powerful and restrictive. In the end, someone exercised their power over the texts by having them disposed of.

3. The Problems of Evil, Sexual Desire, and Women

The wish to get back to the origin and to the ideal state before the fall is in the tractates of Codex II accompanied by a wish to know how things went wrong and how evil impulses influence life in this world. The biblical-demiurgical tractates in Codex II are based on interpretations of Genesis, which take the form of mythical narratives.[39] These mythical narratives give a plausible explanation of how and why evil came into being.[40] By spelling out how evil operates in this world, the tractates might have helped their readers in fourth-century Egypt live an ascetic life and given them strength to forsake what their ascetic training programmed them to forsake – not least sexual temptations.

The three biblical-demiurgical tractates offer an answer to the problem of why evil exists and how it can be overcome by presenting the evil and stupid world-creator Ialdabaoth as its main source.[41] They also offer an overview of the flourishing world of demons in Egypt in late antiquity.[42] This world of demons is spelled out in the *Apocryphon of John*, while *On the Origin of the World* refers to other tractates where the reader can find a survey of demons and their names. By connecting the demons to the evil world-creator Ialdabaoth, these creatures are given a specific source. This means that the problem of theodicy is solved in a dualistic manner at the same time as evil gets a subordinate place in the theological system.

Ialdabaoth is, as has frequently been pointed out, a travesty of Yahweh. Yahweh was, to begin with, an Iron Age or even Late Bronze Age god, who developed through time and went from living in the temple in Jerusalem, to being

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[39] Michael Williams has aptly labelled this group of texts "the biblical-demiurgical tradition" because they depict the god of Genesis as a subordinate world-creator (Michael A. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category.* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996]).

[40] Evagrius of Pontus presents psychological descriptions and systematizations of the negative impulses in the ascetic life. His approach represents an alternative to the mythical descriptions of evil, which are characteristic for the biblical-demiurgical tractates.

[41] It is usual when one is "de-gnostifying" these texts to point out that the evil and stupid demiurge/caricature of Yahweh is not found in the majority of the texts, which is correct (Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 85). In Codex II, however, the demiurge is present in three of the seven tractates, which includes ca. 74 of 145 pages, so this creature is dominant in this codex.

[42] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 259; Jenott, "Recovering Adam's Lost Glory."

everywhere and becoming transcendent.[43] Yet he remained intimately connected with the old stories of Genesis and was not disengaged from them. The three biblical-demiurgical tractates in Codex II take issue with this god. Worth noting is also that the world-creator in these texts has some similarities with another superhuman being who developed in these centuries, namely Satan.[44] Structurally these entities have much in common, and they also have shared characteristics and mythologems.[45]

In the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Nature of the Archons*, and *On the Origin of the World*, Ialdabaoth caters especially to sexual desire and procreation, which the ideal monk is never allowed to satisfy. Ialdabaoth defiles the material Eve in the *Apocryphon of John*, begets two sons with her (24.15–19) and plants sexual desire in her; he rapes the material Eve in the *Nature of the Archons* and tries to rape Norea (89.27–31, 92.18–21); while the authorities "cast their seed upon her (Eve)" in *On the Origin of the World* (117.3–4). In *On the Origin of the World* Ialdabaoth is repeatedly called "arch-begetter."[46] In addition to this highly sexed creature, there are in two of the tractates also specialized entities who are in charge of sexuality and procreation – "the Opposing Spirit" in the *Apocryphon of John*, and Eros, in *On the Origin of the World* (109.8–109.25).

Why did these entities appeal to monks? The emotionally charged mythology in Codex II helped support monastic celibacy by showing that sex and procreation are bad, since they represent a prime mechanism keeping the demiurgic world going. By introducing an evil and highly sexed world-creator, the biblical-demiurgical tractates also solved in a radical way the problem of reading biblical texts ascetically.[47]

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[43] It is difficult to reconstruct the prehistory of Yahweh. His roots seem to be in Canaanite religion from the Late bronze age and clan religion (cf. Patrick D. Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel*. [London: Westminster John Knox, 2000], 227; Mark S. Smith, *God in Translation: Deities in Cross-Cultural Discourse in the Biblical World*. [Berlin: Mohr Siebeck, 2008], 96-98).

[44] Henry Ansgar Kelly has in his *Satan: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) pointed out how what he calls "the Original Biography of Satan" was changed by the church fathers who introduced what he calls "a New Biography of Satan." Origen of Alexandria applies the Lucifer passage of Isaiah to Satan and thus the sins of pride and rebellion towards God (Kelly, *Satan*, 191–214).

[45] Cf. "princes of this world" in John 16:11 and 1 Cor 2: 6-8.

[46] The term is used for the chief archon 15 times, spread throughout the tractate (cf. Louis Painchaud, *L'ecrit sans titre: Traité sur l'origine du monde (NH II,5 et XIII,2 et Brit. Lib. Or. 4926[1])* [BCNH.T 21; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1995], 86).

[47] When Elizabeth Clark speaks about three different ways asceticism is read into biblical texts, they are represented by John Chrysostom who minimizes the distance between ancient Hebrew and contemporary ascetic ideals; Jerome who contrasts the carnality of the Hebrew past with the asceticism of the Christian present; and Origen, who reads Scripture allegorically and trans-historically (Elizabeth A. Clark, *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999], 153-74).

The colophon of the codex addresses "the brothers." The term may be read as gender-inclusive and accordingly may include women. However, it is a strong possibility that it presupposes, as pointed out, a male audience (see below). This implies that the spiritual males in the texts were the identification objects of the readers, while women were "others" both in relation to the male characters within the texts as well as to the male readers of the text. According to Lisbeth Mikaelsson, "religious teachings legitimize gender hierarchies in society and influence personal gender identity."[48] She also points out that "the constitution of masculinity is perhaps the key question in religious gender studies."[49] The seven tractates in Codex II may have different roots, but they share an interest in constructing ascetic masculinity and a matching interest in constructing female characters who play supporting roles in relation to the ascetic males. In their stories about Adam and Eve, the old connection between sexuality and a gender hierarchy in Genesis is reset in a new ascetic context. In *On the Origin of the World*, for instance, in connection with the birth of Eros, it is said that earth, woman, marriage, birth, and dissolution follow each other (109: 22-25). This means that they are part of a vicious circle of reproduction and death. It represents a male perspective on the life cycle – for while woman is part of this cycle, man is not necessarily part of it.

The strong presence of female mythological beings in Codex II and other Nag Hammadi codices indicates that women are good to think with. The wide range of articles and books on the subject of the feminine also show that the female characters in the tractates have triggered the imagination and curiosity of scholars.[50] That the presence of female mythological characters do not necessarily mean that these texts are especially friendly towards women, is a fact that has frequently been pointed out. If one throws a glance at other religions,

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The biblical-demiurgical tractates in Codex II represents a fourth and more radical way because they have made Yahweh into an evil god who has created sexuality and procreation for evil purposes (cf. Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, "Historiography as Anti-History: Reading Nag Hammadi Codex II," *ARG* 20:1 [2018]: 77–90).

[48] Lisbeth Mikaelsson, "Gendering the History of Religions," in *New Approaches to the Study of Religion* (2 vols.; ed. Peter Antes, Armin Geertz, and Randi R. Warne; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004), 1:295.

[49] Mikaelsson, "Gendering the History of Religions," 300.

[50] An early example is Karen L. King, ed., *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism* (SAC; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), which was built on a conference with the same name. The function and formulation of "the feminine" has been repeatedly commented upon. Recent examples of nuanced approaches are Benjamin H. Dunning's work in relation to *Orig. World* ("What Sort of Thing Is This Luminous Woman? Thinking Sexual Difference in *On the Origin of the World*," *JECS* 17 [2009]: 55–84) and Christian H. Bull on the use of the Myth of the Watchers in the *Ap. John* ("Women, Angels, and Dangerous Knowledge: The Myth of the Watchers in the *Apocryphon of John* and Its Monastic Manuscript-Context," in *Women and Knowledge in Early Christianity* [ed. Ulla Tervahauta et al.; VCSup 144; Leiden: Brill, 2017], 75–107).

such as Greek religion, Mesopotamian religion and Hinduism, a strong presence of one or more female goddesses is rather the norm than a deviance, without these religions being particularly woman-friendly. One example of a strong female character in Codex II is Norea. Karen King has seen her as a saved saviour,[51] which implies a mixture of the human and the superhuman, while Birger Pearson describes Norea as "an agent of salvation."[52] Such interpretations are plausible. This figure might further have been read as a model for the soul, as also suggested by King.[53] Seen from the point of view of male ascetics, Norea has probably more in common with a supernatural being like Seth or the female soul than she has with a female ascetic. A fruitful question is probably not how we should interpret her and the other female figures in the tractates, but rather: How did "the brothers," "the perfect," and "the spiritual ones" addressed in the colophon imagine these figures? It is likely that the ascetics interpreted the mythological females, such as Pronoia, the spiritual Eve, and Norea, in relation to their male ascetic world. Spiritual mothers and female souls (*Exeg. Soul* and *Gos. Phil.*), as well as mythological whores (Sophia) and fallen women (the material Eve) are useful and predictable characters in this male ascetic universe, where monks aspired to lead celibate lives and where spiritual motherliness and non-material female counterparts were presented as far more attractive than real women.

Sarit Kattan Gribetz has recently suggested "considering gender and the possibility that women were among the codices' readers."[54] She argues that this was likely and supports it with examples of women who owned and read books as well as with specific suggestions for how female readers would have approached the motifs and characters of Codex II. This is a promising new approach. For while the implicit readers of the tractates are male, it does not necessarily mean than women did not read these books. If there was a sort of elite reading in the monasteries (see above), were women included in this elite, and if that was the case, what characterized elite female readers? What reading strategies did they apply? To what degree did, for instance, female readers take to heart the promise of Jesus in the *Gospel of Thomas*, where he says to Mary, "I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven" (51.21–26)? If the ideal to be made

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[51] Karen L. King, "Ridicule and Rape, Rule and Rebellion: The Hypostasis of the Archons," in *Gnosticism & the Early Christian World: in Honor of James M. Robinson* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1990), 23.

[52] Birger A. Pearson, "Revisiting Norea," in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism* (ed. Karen L. King; SAC; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 275.

[53] King, "Ridicule and Rape," 23.

[54] Sarit Kattan Gribetz, "Women as Readers of the Nag Hammadi Codices," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 26: 3 (2018): 466.

male was pursued by women, how would it affect their reading? Did they iden-
tify with the male characters, or did they, like Gribetz has suggested, identify
with Norea and the spiritual Eve? These are challenging and difficult questions
to answer.

4. A Didactic Approach

The Pachomian Rules and the biographical literature show that Bible-studies,
including teaching, listening to lectures, and self-studies, were extremely im-
portant in the monasteries. In the main, the tractates in Codex II fit very well
in a didactic context, but it is important to note that in this literature the stress
is on advanced studies. The last point is reflected in the *Apocryphon of John*,
the *Gospel of Thomas*, and the *Book of Thomas w*here the sayings of Jesus are
characterized as secret knowledge or secret sayings. In the *Apocryphon of
John*, John's questions lead to the vision of the Saviour, the *Nature of the Ar-
chons* starts with a learned question, while *On the Origin of the World* begins
with the question of what existed before Chaos and characterises the answer as
an *apodixis,* which means that the text supports the answer by referring to com-
mon knowledge at the same time as the use of this term signals learnedness.[55]
The sixth text is an "Exegesis" on the Soul. These features indicate that the
texts had an inbuilt intention to be a learned literature for the select few.

The tractates furthermore tend to stage a didactic situation involving teach-
ers and pupils. The *Apocryphon of John*, the *Nature of the Archons* and the
Book of Thomas present dialogues with questions from "pupils" and answers
from "superhuman teachers." They are examples of revelation discourses with
a strong claim to teacher authority.[56] The pupils – John and Norea – are ex-
pected to learn something and afterwards to teach what they have learnt to oth-
ers. In this way they function as models for the readers of the texts.

The readers are also drawn into a more intimate interplay with the tractates.
When in the *Apocryphon of John*, John returns to his fellow disciples to tell
them what the Saviour has taught him, the readers have already got the mes-
sage. This means that the intended or internal readers, who are the disciples,
receive the message after the fourth-century readers of the tractate have already

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[55] Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, "Chaotic Mothers and Creepy Shadows: Metaphors of Procrea-
tion and Vision in On the Origin of the World (NHC II,5)," in *From the Fjords to the Nile:
Essays in honour of Richard Holton Pierce on his 80ᵗʰ birthday* (ed. Pål Steiner, Alexandros
Tsakos and Eivind Heldaas Seland; Oxford: Archaeopress, 2018), 64.

[56] Dylan M. Burns, "Apocalypses amongst Gnostics and Manichaeans," in *The Oxford
Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature* (ed. John J. Collins; Oxford: Oxford University Press,
2014), 358–72.

received it. That the readers are invited to identify with John and with his "fellow disciples" at the same time as they in a way replace them, is also a textual strategy that makes the tractate work more directly on its readers.[57] Similar things happen in the last text of the codex, the *Book of Thomas*, which switches between second person singular, implying Thomas, as well as the reader, and second person plural, speaking directly to the readers. In this case the line between the internal reader and the actual readers are blurred. This is a strategy that makes the text work more directly on the reader.

The importance of knowledge and teaching in Codex II is also made clear when the eating from the Tree of Knowledge is re-evaluated in a positive direction in the three biblical-demiurgical texts. But in spite of the authoritative teaching of the Saviour/Jesus, the texts do not always agree with each other, even on significant points. One example is the role of the serpent.[58] The serpent is connected to sex in the *Apocryphon of John*, it is a giver of knowledge in *On the Origin of the World*, while in the *Nature of the Archons*, the serpent is both a carnal animal and a mouthpiece for the spiritual Eve. The *Apocryphon of John* speaks explicitly against a positive interpretation of the serpent (21.9–15). Perhaps on this more advanced level, the hermeneutical process was more important than the exegetical details? When the tractates of Codex II are read together they invite exegetical activity and commentaries, and reflect Gavin Flood's point that performing tradition and the cultural memory implies that the mythical past is actualized in the present.[59]

It is also tempting to ponder what sort of exegesis an ascetic reading of them might lead to. Here Blossom Stefaniw's approach is helpful. She has analysed the exegetical technique of Origen of Alexandria, Didymus the Blind, and Evagrius Ponticus and labelled their exegesis, "noetic exegesis."[60] It is dependent on an assumed difference between the intelligible and the sensible world.[61] A noetic exegesis is "concerned with perceiving the noetic content of an authoritative text by means of noetic comprehension of the higher significance of the text and with a view to rehabilitating and cultivating the interpreter's

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[57] Cf. Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, "'The Mountain, a Desert Place': Spatial Categories and Mythical Landscapes in the *Secret Book of John*," in *Wilderness in Mythology and Religion: Approaching Religious Spatialities, Cosmologies, and Ideas of Wild Nature* (ed. Laura Feldt; Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2012), 109.

[58] Michael Williams presents a useful table of the Hermeneutical Valuation of Elements from the Genesis Narrative and one of the Reversal or Nonreversal in Valuation of Elements from the Genesis Narrative (Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, 61–62).

[59] See above.

[60] Blossom Stefaniw, *Mind, Text, and Commentary: Noetic Exegesis in Origen of Alexandria, Didymus the Blind, and Evagrius Ponticus* (ECCA 6; Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2010).

[61] According to Stefaniw, some texts have a special revelatory status and require an extraordinary type of interpretation (Stefaniw, *Mind, Text, and Commentary*, 62, 85).

nous."[62] Both her general point that exegesis is a social act,[63] and her specific stress on noetic comprehension as personal development are relevant for how we should understand reading processes in relation to Codex II and in relation to its tractates being read by monks. Origen, Didymus, and Evagrius have in common that the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 condemned their works. They were seen as heretical and Origenist. It is not the place here to discuss the contents of Codex II in relation to Origenes' views,[64] but rather to point out that the type of reading, which a noetic exegesis presupposes, also encourages a personal and individual understanding of texts. While monks and ascetics in the earlier phase of the monastic movement might have been encouraged to read the tractates in Codex II because it nourished their personal development, this type of individual reading seems to have been more restricted in the later development of the Pachomian monasteries when monastic conformity was established and enforced.

5. Conclusion

The tractates in Codex II are interpretations of biblical texts. They were read by monastics because they explained the origin and existence of evil, sexuality and procreation, and nourished the hope of eternal life. Together the texts of Codex II constructed a conception of gender in consonance with the ascetic life of males. The reading of them created a feeling of belonging to the elect and to an elite and cultivated the cultural memory of the first generations of monastics. The tractates produced a didactic situation with stress on teaching, interpretation and an advanced stage of knowledge very much in line with a life focused on salvation and a higher level of being.

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[62] Stefaniw, *Mind, Text, and Commentary*, 12–13.

[63] Stefaniw, *Mind, Text, and Commentary*, 331.

[64] About Origenism and Nag Hammadi Codices, see Hugo Lundhaug, "Origenism in Fifth-Century Upper Egypt: Shenoute of Atripe and the Nag Hammadi Codices," in *Studia Patristica LXIV: Papers Presented at the Sixteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2011: Vol. 12: Ascetica; Liturgica; Orientalia; Critica et Philologica* (ed. Markus Vinzent; StPatr 64; Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 217–28; and Hugo Lundhaug, "Shenoute of Atripe and Nag Hammadi Codex II," in *Zugänge zur Gnosis: Akten zur Tagung der Patristischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft vom 02.-05.01.2011 in Berlin-Spandau* (ed. Christoph Markschies and Johannes van Oort; Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 201–26.

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The "Single Ones" in the *Gospel of Thomas*:
A Monastic Perspective[*]

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Jesus said,
"I will select you, one from a thousand and two from ten thousand,
and they will stand since they are single ones." (NHC II 38.1–3)[1]

The above logion 23 from the *Gospel of Thomas* (abbr. *Thomas*) can be divided
into two parts. In the first, Jesus says that the listeners will be among the elect
("I will select you"), where two fractions ("one from a thousand and two from
ten thousand") exemplify the rarity of that election. In the second part, these
people are said to maintain a distinct physical posture ("they will stand") based
on their election and oneness ("since they are single ones").[2] In *Thomas*, ⲟⲩⲁ

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[1] Text: Bentley Layton, "The Gospel According to Thomas," in *Gospel According to
Thomas, Gospel According to Philip, Hypostasis of the Archons, and Indexes* (ed. Bentley
Layton; vol. I of *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2-7 Together with XIII,2*, Brit. Lib. Or. 4926(1),
and P. Oxy. 1, 654, 655,* ed. Bentley Layton; NHS 20; Leiden: Brill, 1989), 82. All transla-
tions are my own, unless stated otherwise.

[2] In line with the grammatical person in the Future ("*they* will") and Present ("*they* are"),
ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ is here taken as generic: Each one of those standing is a single one but as a group
they are single ones; this plural sense is also noticed by Simon Gathercole, *The Gospel of
Thomas: Introduction and Commentary* (TENT 11; Leiden: Brill, 2014), 314. Such an inter-
pretation does not invalidate the standard translations, i.e., in English: "and they shall stand
as a single one" (Thomas O. Lambdin, "The Gospel of Thomas (II,2)" in *The Nag Hammadi
Library in English: Fourth Revised Edition* [ed. James. M. Robinson; Leiden: Brill, 1996],
129); in German: "Und sie werden dastehen *als ein einziger*" (Jens Schröter and Hans-
Gebhard Bethge, "Das Evangelium nach Thomas (NHC II,2),"in *Nag Hammadi Deutsch 1.
Band: NHC I,1–V,1. Eingeleitet und übersetzt von Mitgliedern des Berliner Arbeitskreises
für Koptisch-Gnostische Schriften* [ed. Hans-Martin Schenke, Hans-Gebhard Bethge, and
Ursula Ulrike Kaiser; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2001], 169); and, in French: "et ils se tiendront *en
étant un seul être*" (Jean-Marie Sevrin, "Évangile selon Thomas (NH II,2)," in *Écrits gnos-
tiques: La bibliothèque de Nag Hammadi* [ed. Jean-Pierre Mahé and Paul-Hubert Poirier;
Bibliothèque de la Pléiade 538; Paris: Gallimard, 2007], 314). Notice that only Jean-Marie

ⲟⲩⲱⲧ ("single ones") clearly parallels ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ (Gr. μοναχός).[3] The two expressions are synonyms or, at least, close variants on the Thomasine theme of oneness.[4]

Here, our primary focus will be on the Coptic version of *Thomas* where ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ and ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ occur three times each.[5] As for ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ, Gilles Quispel

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Sevrin explicates the circumstantial Present in ⲉⲩⲟ ("en étant … être"), as in the present translation ("since they are").

[3] If we compare logion 23, "and they will stand since they are single ones (ⲁⲩⲱ ⲥⲉⲛⲁⲱ̄ⲅⲉ ⲉⲣⲁⲧⲟⲩ ⲉⲩⲟ ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ)," with logion 16, "and they will stand since they are single ones (ⲁⲩⲱ ⲥⲉⲛⲁⲱ̄ⲅⲉ ⲉⲣⲁⲧⲟⲩ ⲉⲩⲟ ⲛ̄ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ)" (NHC II 36.4–5; text: Layton, "Gospel," 60), the two expressions are identical in use and content. The only difference is that logion 23 lacks the ⲛ̄- of equivalence (i.e. ⲉⲩⲟ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ) as attested in logion 16 (ⲉⲩⲟ ⲛ̄ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ) and as well in logion 11 (ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲟ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲁ; NHC II 34.22–23; text: Layton, "Gospel," 58); however, with or without the ⲛ̄-, the meaning is the same.

[4] As Funk has argued, "mit seiner Seligpreisung der μοναχοί (Log. 49) und seiner mehrmaligen Prädizierung von ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ, d. h. einem ganzen semantischen Geflecht von Aussagen über 'Einsame' und 'Einzige,' dessen zentrale Bedeutung für die Theologie dieser Schrift allgemein anerkannt ist" (Wolf-Peter Funk, "'Einer aus Tausend, Zwei aus Zehntausend': Zitate aus dem Thomasevangelium in den koptischen Manichaica," in *For the Children, Perfect Instruction: Studies in Honor of Hans-Martin Schenke on the Occasion of the Berliner Arbeitskreis für koptisch-gnostische Schriften's Thirtieth Year* [ed. Hans-Gebhard Bethge et al.; NHMS 54; Leiden: Brill, 2002], 88). And also Régine Charron: "le rédacteur copte de notre version de *Thomas* a plutôt voulu exprimer, au sujet de la condition du 'solitaire,' une doctrine très bien attestée dans le corpus *nag-hammadien.* Et pour cela, il avait à sa disposition un terme technique autochtone, celui de 'ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ,' auquel ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ sert de variante, une variante qui demeure quelque peu énigmatique" (Régine Charron, "À propos des ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ et de la solitude divine dans les textes de Nag Hammadi," in *Coptica – Gnostica – Manichaica: Mélanges offerts à Wolf-Peter Funk* [ed. Louis Painchaud and Paul-Hubert Poirier; BCNH-É 7; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2006], 133). I agree with Charron that a Coptic redactor has been at work here, but not that the use of ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ is *énigmatique*, quite the contrary, as I will argue below.

[5] ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ is found in logia 4 (NHC II 33.10), 22 (37.30–31), and 23 (38.3), whereas ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ is found in logia 16 (36.4–5), 49 (41.28), and 75 (46.12). In the Nag Hammadi codices, wording related to ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ is elsewhere attested 34 times (cf. Folker Siegert, *Nag-Hammadi-Register: Wörterbuch zur Erfassung der Begriffe in den koptisch-gnostischen Schriften von Nag-Hammadi mit einem deutschen Index* [WUNT 26; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1982], 127), mainly in the philosophical context of the *Tractatus Tripartitus* (NHC I). Besides the three occurrences of ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ in *Gos. Thom.*, the Nag Hammadi codices attest it four more times: twice in the spelling ⲙⲟⲛⲟⲭⲟⲥ, in *Dial. Sav.* (NHC III 120.26; 121.18; cf. n. 60 below), and twice in the cartonnage of NHC VII (cf. Malcolm Choat, "The Development and Usage of Terms for "Monk" in Late Antique Egypt," *JAC* 45 [2002], 9; Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices* [STAC 97; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015], 261): in two documentary texts, we find μοναχός (dat. pl. μοναχοῖς) in a Greek monastic letter (G72.2) and ⲙⲟⲛⲟⲭⲟⲥ in a Coptic letter (C8a.2 *verso*); cf. John W. B. Barns, Gerald M. Browne, and John C. Shelton, eds., *Nag Hammadi Codices: Greek and Coptic Papyri from the Cartonnage of the Covers* (NHS 6; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 69, 143.

famously said, "The *Gospel of Thomas* is the first writing in the history of the universe to use the noun, 'monachos'."[6] His conclusion rests on the premise that the Coptic text of *Thomas* is identical to the original Greek composition. As for its textual transmission, however, the Coptic version (4th–5th century) differs from the Greek fragments (3rd century), which are our oldest witnesses to the text of *Thomas* (probably originally composed in the 1st–2nd century).[7] Therefore, we hardly can expect the extant Coptic version to be a one-to-one translation of the original Greek *Vorlage*, as Gilles Quispel does. The Nag Hammadi codices themselves show that texts are not stable in their written diffusion, which becomes clear when comparing texts found in double or multiple versions.[8] They display textual variance and ongoing editorial activity,

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[6] Gilles Quispel, "The *Gospel of Thomas* Revisited," in *Colloque international sur les textes de Nag Hammadi: Québec, 22–25 août 1978* (ed. Bernard Barc; BCNH.É 1; Québec : Peeters, 1981), 237.

[7] The dating of the original composition of *Gos. Thom.* has been suggested to be as early as "prior to 50 CE" and as late as "about A.D. 200"; see Gathercole's list on the dating suggested by 31 scholars (*Gospel of Thomas*, 125–27). On paleographical grounds (following the *editio princeps* of the Greek text of *Gos. Thom.* by Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt), the first Greek witness, P. Oxy. 1, is dated "shortly after A.D. 200"; the second, P. Oxy. 654, "in the middle of the third century"; and the third, P. Oxy. 655, "between A.D. 200 and 250" (cf. Harold W. Attridge, "The Greek Fragments," in *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7 together with XIII,2*, Brit. Lib. Or. 4926(1), and P. Oxy. 1, 654, 655 with contributions from many scholars. Volume One: Gospel According to Thomas, Gospel According to Philip, Hypostasis of the Archons, and Indexes* [ed. Bentley Layton; NHS 20; Leiden: Brill, 1989], 97–98). For the Coptic version, a specific date (7 Oct 348) is found in the cartonnage of NHC VII, in a discharged "deed of surety" (cf. Barns, Browne, and Shelton, *Nag Hammadi Codices*, 5, 57–58), marking the *post quem* dating for the production of the cover of NHC VII. This is also the most concrete indication of the production date of the other codices, including NHC II with *Gos. Thom.*, thus pointing to a time range from the middle of the 4th century until the beginning of the 5th century, which furthermore can be confirmed by radiocarbon testing; cf. Hugo Lundhaug, "Dating and Contextualising the Nag Hammadi Codices and Their Texts: A Multi-Methodological Approach Including Radiocarbon Evidence," in *Texts in Context: Essays on Dating and Contextualising Christian Writings of the Second and Early Third Century* (ed. Joseph Verheyden, Jens Schröter, and Tobias Nicklas; BETL 319; Leuven: Peeters, 2021), 117–42.

[8] Cf. Hugo Lundhaug, "An Illusion of Textual Stability: Textual Fluidity, New Philology, and the Nag Hammadi Codices," in *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology* (ed. Liv Ingeborg Lied and Hugo Lundhaug; TUGAL 175; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 20–54. The most obvious example of textual fluidity in the Nag Hammadi codices is *Ap. John*, which exists in both a short recension (NHC III and the Berlin Codex) and a long recension (NHC II and IV). Today, scholars are beginning to focus more on the textual variance than on text-critical studies trying to establish the original composition of the Nag Hammadi-texts that appear in double or multiple versions; cf. Katrine Brix, "Two Witnesses, One Valentinian Gospel? *Gos. Truth* in Nag Hammadi Codices I and XII," in *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology* (ed. Liv Ingeborg Lied and

possibly until the time of their inclusion in the codices. Consequently, the present take on *Thomas* is that it too underwent rewriting until its latest stage of transmission, which becomes especially clear in its use of μοναχός, since the first Christian centuries do not attest the noun designating a person.[9] Only from the first decades of the 4th century onwards, the noun begins to appear as such.[10]

Here we aim at a historically sound interpretation of ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ and ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ in *Thomas*, taking fully into account the time and context of the occurrence of μοναχός ("monk") as well as the time and context of the production of NHC II

Hugo Lundhaug; TUGAL 175; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 126–45, on *Gos. Truth* in NHC I and XII; Lance Jenott, "Reading Variants in *James* and the *Apocalyps of James*: A Perspective from New Philology," in *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology* (ed. Liv Ingeborg Lied and Hugo Lundhaug; TUGAL 175; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 55–84, on *1 Apoc. Jas.* in NHC V and *Jas.* in Codex Tchacos; the essay by Lance Jenott on *Ep. Pet. Phil.* in the present volume; René Falkenberg, "The Making of a Secret Book of John: Nag Hammadi Codex III in Light of New Philology," in *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology* (ed. Liv Ingeborg Lied and Hugo Lundhaug; TUGAL 175; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 97–100, on the short recension of *Ap. John* in NHC III and the Berlin Codex. Such studies not only concern the variance among the Coptic texts, but also between Plato's *Republic* in Greek and its Coptic version in NHC VI; cf. Christian H. Bull, "An Origenistic Reading of Plato in Nag Hammadi Codex VI," in *Studia Patristica LXXV: Papers Presented at the Seventeenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2015: Vol. 1: Platonism and the Fathers, Maximus Confessor* (ed. Markus Vinzent; StPatr 75; Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 31–40, and the essays by Christian H. Bull and Christian Askeland in the present volume.

[9] Though μοναχός as an adjective is well attested earlier, e.g., in the Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible by Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion (2nd–3rd century AD; but not attested in the Septuagint itself); cf. Albertus Frederik Johannes Klijn, "The 'Single One' in the Gospel of Thomas," *JBL* 81 (1962), 272 n. 3; Ivan Miroshnikov, *The Gospel of Thomas and Plato: A Study of the Impact of Platonism on the "Fifth Gospel"* (NHMS 93; Leiden: Brill, 2018), 121–22. It has been suggested that μοναχός also is used as an adjective in *Gos. Thom.*; cf. Gathercole, *Gospel of Thomas*, 282. I admit that it could be the case in logia 16 (ⲉⲩⲟ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ; text: Layton, "Gospel," 60) and 49 (ϩⲉⲛⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲟⲥ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲉⲧⲥⲟⲧⲡ; text: Layton, "Gospel," 72), but hardly in logion 75 (ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ ⲛⲉⲧⲛⲁⲃⲱⲕ; text: Layton, "Gospel," 80) where the noun is twice determined in the plural (ⲙ̄-/ⲛⲉⲧ-). For heuristic reasons, we stick with understanding μοναχός as a noun in the present contribution.

[10] First attestation of the noun μοναχός is AD 324; cf. Edwin A. Judge, "The Earliest Use of Monachos for 'Monk' (P. Coll. Youtie 77) and the Origins of Monasticism," *JAC* 20 (1977), 72. Also AD 323 has been suggested; cf. Klaas A. Worp, "Marginalia on Published Documents," *ZPE* 78 (1989), 135; Choat, "Development and Usage," 7 n. 9. Or perhaps even as early as AD 311–312; cf. Dmitrij F. Bumazhnov, "Some Further Observations Concerning the Early History of the Term ΜΟΝΑΧΟΣ (Monk)," in *Studia Patristica XLV: Papers Presented at the Fifteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2007: Ascetica, Liturgica, Orientalia, Critica et Philologica, First Two Centuries* (ed. Jane Baun et al.; StPatr 45, Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 24. Μοναχός has hitherto been attested in 19 documentary texts from the 4th century; cf. Choat, "Development and Usage," 9–10.

into which *Thomas* was copied, namely 4th–5th century Egyptian monasticism, following the insights won by Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott.[11] Such a take on *Thomas* is quite novel and scarcely attempted before; in fact, some scholars may even find it controversial.[12] Still, I want to highlight the possibility that it

[11] They suggest that monks, possibly from the Pachomian federation, manufactured the Nag Hammadi codices and read the texts as edifying literature; cf. Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 234–62. Moreover, we can be sure that monastic literature was used elsewhere in the Nag Hammadi Codices; e.g., in the composition of *Teach. Silv.* (NHC VII), which reuses a passage from the *Teachings of Antony*; cf. Wolf-Peter Funk, "Ein doppelt überliefertes Stück spätägyptischer Weisheit," *ZÄS* 103 (1976): 8–21; Rubenson, "Textual Fluidity in Early Monasticism: Sayings, Sermons and Stories," in *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology* (ed. Liv Ingeborg Lied and Hugo Lundhaug; TUGAL 175; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 191. Two other texts have even been suggested to be monastic in origin; cf. Hugo Lundhaug, "Monastic Exegesis and the Female Soul in the *Exegesis on the Soul*," in *Women and Knowledge in Early Christianity* (ed. Ulla Tervahauta, Ivan Miroshnikov, Outi Lehtipuu, and Ismo Dunderberg; VCSup 144; Leiden: Brill, 2017), 221–33 (*Exeg. Soul* in NHC II); idem, "*The Dialogue of the Savior (NHC III,5) as a Monastic Text,*" in *Studia Patristica XCIII: Papers Presented at the Seventeenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2015: Vol. 19: The First Two Centuries, Apocrypha and Gnostica* (ed. Markus Vinzent; StPatr 93; Leuven: Peeters 2017), 335–46 (*Dial. Sav.* in NHC III). Scholars have also undertaken the task of situating individual Nag Hammadi codices in a monastic context; cf. Lance Jenott and Elaine Pagels, "Antony's Letters and Nag Hammadi Codex I: Sources of Religious Conflict in Fourth-Century Egypt," *JECS* 18 (2010), 557–89 (i.e. NHC I); Lance Jenott, "Recovering Adam's Lost Glory: Nag Hammadi Codex II in its Egyptian Monastic Environment," in *Jewish and Christian Cosmogony in Late Antiquity* (ed. Lance Jenott and Sarit Kattan Gribetz; TSAJ 155; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 222–36 (i.e. NHC II); Falkenberg, "Secret Book," 85–125 (i.e. NHC III); and the contributions in the present volume.

[12] As for other monastic readings of *Gos. Thom.*, cf. the essay by André Gagné in the present volume; Kimberley A. Fowler, "Reading *Gospel of Thomas* 100 in the Fourth Century: From Roman Imperialism to Pachomian Concern over Wealth," *VC* 72 (2018): 421–46; also Melissa H. Sellew, "Reading Jesus in the Desert: The *Gospel of Thomas* Meets the *Apophthegmata Patrum*," in *The Nag Hammadi Codices and Late Antique Egypt* (ed. Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott; STAC 110; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 81–106, who recognises ογα ογωτ to be synonymous with мonaχoc, but "without the technical meaning of 'monk' or 'monastic'" (ibid., 83 n. 5). In general, scholars do not recognise monastic influence in *Gos. Thom.* regarding its use of μοναχός: "A few centuries later, it became such [a technical term], used as a clerical title, *a monk*. It is not justified to explain the meaning of a word as used in the second century [in *Gos. Thom.*] by its usage in the fourth century" (Klijn, "Single One," 272 n. 3); "Though the exact meaning of μοναχός in these [Nag Hammadi] texts is still a matter of discussion, it certainly does not designate 'monks' in the later sense of the word" (Bumazhnov, "Further Observations," 21); "it is possible that for the readers of the Nag Hammadi version of the Gospel of Thomas, and indeed already for its Coptic translator, the expression ⲛⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ/ⲏ̄ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ in the text designated monks"; however, "[s]ince there are reasons to believe that the sayings about the μοναχοί were present in the 'original' Gospel of Thomas, the original meaning of the word μοναχός cannot be

was the latest readers of *Thomas*, who added ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ and ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ to the text in reference to their own monastic environment.[13]

In *Thomas*, the most plausible evidence of such monastic influence is found in the abovementioned logion 23. Before reaching a reception-historical analysis of that logion's two parts, we first need to show that the Coptic version of *Thomas* is a fluid text, which will be done in logia 4 and 30 when comparing the Greek witnesses to the Coptic version. We will then turn to other logia that attest ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ and ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ in *Thomas*. They occur in contexts of a social, scriptural, and soteriological nature, and especially the final sentences of logia 16 and 23 indicate a technical use that aligns with contemporary monastic

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'monk'" (Miroshnikov, *Gospel of Thomas and Plato*, 118 and 128). As the title of Miroshnikov's book suggests, his thesis is that *Gos. Thom.* originally was influenced by Platonism, also as regards its use of μοναχός (cf. ibid., 105–16). As for detecting Platonism in the text, I admit that he makes a strong case; but in regard to the μοναχός nomenclature, I am not sure that his study rules out the possibility of *later* Platonic influence on *Gos. Thom.* in the 4th–5th century monastic setting. Samuel Rubenson has convincingly demonstrated that the Platonic legacy of Origen (3rd century) is a widespread phenomenon in early monastic literature; cf. Samuel Rubenson, "Origen in the Egyptian Monastic Tradition of the Fourth Century," in *Origeniana Septima: Origenes in den Auseinandersetzungen des 4. Jahrhunderts* (ed. Wolfgang A. Bienert and Uwe Kühneweg; BETL 137; Leuven: Leuven University Press/Peeters, 1999), 319–37; idem, "Monasticism and the Philosophical Heritage," in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity* (ed. Scott F. Johnson; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 487–512.

[13] Here following Judge, "But, whatever the literary origin of the Coptic work, we must recognise the possibility that the Greek loan-word was adopted by the Coptic author ... because at the time he was writing he knew that *monachos* was the name of a recognised social type in Egypt. In that case the meaning of the word in the Gospel of Thomas could be that of 'monk,' provided that the dating of the Coptic composition fell later than the time at which that sense became current in Egypt" (Judge, "Use of Monachos," 87). Scholars have already noticed the monastic setting of μοναχός in the NHC VII cartonnage (see G72.2; C8a.2 *verso*); cf. Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 46–54; Paula J. Tutty, "The Monks of the Nag Hammadi Codices: Contextualising a Fourth Century Monastic Community" (PhD Diss.; University of Oslo, 2019), 21–25; though the first to notice this connection was John W. B. Barns, "Greek and Coptic Papyri from the Covers of the Nag Hammadi Codices: A Preliminary Report," in *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honour of Pahor Labib* (ed. Martin Krause; NHS 6; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 9–18, who was posthumously critiqued by his fellow editors, Gerald M. Browne and John C. Shelton, in the *editio princeps* of the NHC cartonnage (Barns, Browne, and Shelton, *Nag Hammadi Codices*, 1–2, 5–11). An important argument for locating the Nag Hammadi codices in a monastic setting concerns the origin of this cartonnage, which those who produced the codex covers considered wastepaper. Arguments have been put forth for the internal reuse of wastepaper in a monastery (cf. Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 104–45) or of wastepaper from a professional dealer of such since, according to Ewa Wipszycka, "we know quite well that waste paper trade existed in antiquity" (cf. Ewa Wipszycka, "The Nag Hammadi Library and the Monks: A Papyrologist's Point of View," *JJP* 30 [2000], 188). There is, however, no evidence to support the latter hypothesis.

ideas. Finally, we will analyse the textual dissemination of the two parts of logion 23, especially in Manichaean sources, where the first part attests a longer transmission history than the second part, which may in fact be a monastic invention.

1. Fluidity of the *Gospel of Thomas*: Logia 4 and 30

In order to shed light on the complex textual transmission of *Thomas*, two logia extant in both Greek and Coptic will serve as examples. The Greek text is preserved in fragments of manuscripts from the 3rd century, thus produced before monasticism arose in the first half of the 4th century. Since the extant Coptic text is at least a century later than the Greek, we may use the monastic context as plausible *comparandum*. So, let us compare the Greek and the Coptic text of logia 4 and 30, and see if their differences can be explained by a 4th–5th century monastic context.

[λέγει Ἰη(σοῦ)ς]· οὐκ ἀποκνήσει ἄνθ[ρωπος παλαιὸς ἡμε]ρῶν ἐπερωτῆσε πα[ιδίον ἑπτὰ ἡμε]ρῶν περὶ τοῦ τόπου τῆ[ς ζωῆς· καὶ ζή]σετε, ὅτι πολλοὶ ἔσονται π[ρῶτοι ἔσχατοι καὶ] οἱ ἔσχατοι πρῶτοι, καὶ [± 10–15]σιν.

ⲡⲉϫⲉ ⲓ̅ⲥ̅ ϥ̅ⲛⲁϫⲛⲁⲩ ⲁⲛ ⲛ̅ϭⲓ ⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲛ̅ϩⲗ̅ⲗⲟ ϩⲛ̅ ⲛⲉϥϩⲟⲟⲩ ⲉϫⲛⲉ ⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲉⲓ ⲛ̅ϣⲏⲣⲉ ϣⲏⲙ ⲉϥϩⲛ̅ ⲥⲁϣϥ̅ ⲛ̅ϩⲟⲟⲩ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲡⲧⲟⲡⲟⲥ ⲙ̅ⲡⲱⲛϩ ⲁⲩⲱ ϥ̅ⲛⲁⲱⲛϩ ϫⲉ ⲟⲩⲛ̅ ϩⲁϩ ⲛ̅ϣⲟⲣⲡ̀ ⲛⲁⲣ̅ ϩⲁⲉ – ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛ̅ⲥⲉϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ

[Jesus says], "A m[an old of da]ys should not hesitate to ask a little ch[ild of seven da]ys about the place of [life. And] you will [live], for many who are f[irst] will be [last, and the last first, and [---]." (Logion 4; P. Oxy. 654.21–27)[14]

Jesus said, "The man old in his days should not hesitate to ask a little child of seven days about the place of life, and he will live. For many who are first will be last, – and they will be single ones." (Logion 4; NHC II 33.5–10)[15]

At first glance, the Greek and Coptic texts of logion 4 seem quite alike, even if differences exist.[16] The idea that a senior person knows less than a junior per-

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[14] Greek text: Attridge, "Fragments," 115. I do not follow Attridge's punctuation (i.e. his "ζωῆς, καὶ ζή]σ<αι>·" is changed to "ζωῆς̣ καὶ ζή]σ<αι>̣,") or two of his restoration suggestions (cf. n. 17 below).

[15] Coptic text: Layton, "Gospel," 54.

[16] The following variants are found: ἄνθ[ρωπος παλαιὸς ἡμε]ρῶν is determined in ⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲛ̅ϩⲗ̅ⲗⲟ and provided with a prepositional clause with a possessive pronoun (ϩⲛ̅ ⲛⲉϥϩⲟⲟⲩ) instead of the Genitive ([ἡμε]ρῶν); the πα[ιδίον] is enlarged to ⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲉⲓ ⲛ̅ϣⲏⲣⲉ ϣⲏⲙ; [ἑπτὰ ἡμε]ρῶν is exchanged, again, with a prepositional clause (ϩⲛ̅ ⲥⲁϣϥ̅ ⲛ̅ϩⲟⲟⲩ) but without the possessive pronoun; and [καὶ] οἱ ἔσχατοι πρῶτοι is lacking in the Coptic version. I have not corrected the Greek text here – even if ἐπερωτῆσε ("to ask") often is corrected to ἐπερωτῆσ<αι> to mirror the infinitive of ⲉϫⲛⲉ (cf., e.g., Attridge, "Fragments," 115) – as the plausible occurrence of monophthongization does not call for an emendation. This is also

taining to divine insight may come from the saying in other early gospel tradi-
tion, "You hid these things from wise and intelligent ones and revealed them
to infants" (Matt 11:25).[17] Now, if we instead focus on specific nomenclature
and the gospel quotation at the end of the Greek logion ("many who are f[irst]
will be [last, and] the last first" = Mark 10:31 par. Matt 19:30), another saying
from gospel tradition comes to mind. Like logion 4, Mark 10:13–31 (par. Matt
19:13–30) runs counter to usual social norms by highlighting status reversal
within the early Jesus movement. Both logion 4 and the Markan passage oper-
ate with a person of high status ("old" [logion 4]/"wealthy" [Mark 10:22–25])
and low status (παιδίον [logion 4]/παιδίον or παιδία [Mark 10:13–16]). The
latter is presented with a better ability than the former to be familiar with the
τόπος τῆς ζωῆς (logion 4) or the place of the kingdom (Mark 10:14–15, 23–25)
and eternal life (10:17, 30). Finally, both sum up and spell out that those who
are expected, on the usual social scale, to be "first (= old/wealthy men) will be
last, and the last (= παιδίον/παιδία)" will be "first" to enter the place of life
eternal (logion 4/Mark 10:31). Therefore, the first half of the Greek logion
comes to function as an *exemplum*, a parable, which encourages readers to
prime themselves in a manner alike to the old person, basically invalidating the
traditional system of old *versus* young age.[18] Accordingly, the second half of
the Greek logion is ethically coloured in the sense that behaviour based on the
exemplum leads readers to life eternal, "[And] (*doing like the old man*) you will
[live]." Thereafter, readers are again reminded of the needed status reversal by
a quotation from the New Testament, "for many who are f[irst] (*like the old
man*) will be [last, and] the last (*like the little child*) first."

   In the Coptic version, the theme of status reversal is still at centre stage. The
focus is primarily on the old man, though, emphasized by the use of 3rd sg. ("*he*
will live"). Even if the Coptic saying does not address readers directly, as in
the Greek 2nd pl. ("*you* will [live]"), the ethical *exemplum* is still intact. "The
man old in his days" must be quick in asking "a little child of seven days" about

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the case with [ζή]σετε (2nd pl.), which often is corrected to [ζή]σετ<αι> in accordance with
ϥⲛⲁⲱⲛϩ (3rd sg.) (cf., e.g., Attridge, "Fragments," 115), but [ζή]σετε actually makes good
sense as it stands. That the last sentence is lacunous is unfortunate since it may have attested
wording related to μοναχός, as is the case in the Coptic parallel; cf. the analysis of logion 30
below.

   [17] All my New Testament translations are based on the Greek text from Nestle-Aland
(NA28).

   [18] Old age was revered in antiquity, childhood was not. The old man in the Greek witness
of *Gos. Thom.* nevertheless needs to consult the little child on the important "place of life,"
which mirrors the New Testament saying that such a place belongs to that child, and if the
old man "does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child (παιδίον)," he "will never
enter it" (Mark 10:15). The reversal of social status in logion 4 is here as strong as it gets.
Of course, the old man cannot expect an answer from a newborn child, but he simply needs
to realize that usual status systems are of no value for admission into the kingdom and the
immortal life.

divine truth, "and he will live." The abbreviated New Testament quotation in Coptic seems to concern the old man only, "For many (*old men*) who are first will be last"; that is, they come in last if they fail to consult the little child. The final sentence, "and they will be single ones," seemingly relates to old persons but may also refer to both the old and young.

Thus, at a second glance, we must be aware of emphases and clarifications added to the Coptic text: the indefinite ἄνθ[ρωπος παλαιὸς] ("*A* m[an old]") is changed to a definite ⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲛ̄ϩⲗ̄ⲗⲟ ("*The* man old") to highlight his primary function in the logion, whereas πα[ιδίον] ("a little ch[ild]") is translated to ⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲉⲓ ⲛ̄ϣⲏⲣⲉ ϣⲏⲙ (lit. "a little, young child").[19] Interestingly, such emphases in the Coptic fit a monastic context well, since monastic readers would recognize such wording from their everyday life. The senior person ("the old/elder [ⲡϩⲗ̄ⲗⲟ]") is the title of an experienced monk (or even a monastic leader), and the junior person ("a little, young child") could refer to a monk in training, not necessarily a young person but a newcomer to the monastic group, as Melissa H. Sellew has pointed out when comparing *Thomas* with the *Apophthegmata Patrum*.[20] In monastic literature, an "elder" is far more honourable than an untrained "young" person. Yet, we have an intriguing example of the opposite in the *Bohairic Life of Pachomius*, where Pachomius asks his future successor, Theodore, to attend the instruction of his fellow monks:

When he came to [our father] who stood (ⲟϩⲓ ⲉⲣⲁⲧϥ) speaking God's word to the brothers, Pachomius immediately took him by the hand in the midst of the brothers and said to him, "Stand (ⲟϩⲓ ⲉⲣⲁⲧⲕ) here and speak the holy words of God." Although unwillingly, he began to speak in front of all the brothers who stood (ⲟϩⲓ ⲉⲣⲁⲧⲟⲩ), including our father Pachomius who listened too like the brothers. Immediately some among them, out of pride, were angry and returned to their houses without listening to the Lord's word. They said, "He is young (ⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ) in age, but it is us who are elders (ⳅⲉⲗⲗⲟ), and it is to him that he gives order to instruct us!" In fact, Theodore was 33 the day our father made him stand (ⲧⲁϩⲟϥ ⲉⲣⲁⲧϥ) to give the instruction, knowing that he was farther advanced than they. (SBo 69)[21]

This passage replays quite closely the scenario of logion 4 with the two persons of either "old (ϩⲗ̄ⲗⲟ)" or "little/young (ⲕⲟⲩⲉⲓ)" age. In the *Bohairic Life*, the "elders (Bo. ⳅⲉⲗⲗⲟ = Sa. ϩⲗ̄ⲗⲟ)" are also in need of instruction from the "young (Bo. ⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ = Sa. ⲕⲟⲩⲉⲓ)" Theodore. Even if he here is 33 years old, he clearly

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[19] It may be that ϣⲏⲣⲉ ϣⲏⲙ equals παῖς, of which παιδίον is the diminutive, thus adding ⲕⲟⲩⲉⲓ to explicate παιδίον. ϣⲏⲣⲉ may also mean "child," and not necessarily "son," since it could refer to children in general.

[20] Sellew, "Reading Jesus," 95.

[21] Text: Louis-Théophile Lefort, ed., *S. Pachomii Vita Bohairice Scripta,* (CSCO 89, Scriptores Coptici 7; Leuven: Durbecq, 1953), 71–72; translation (modified): Armand Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia: The Lives, Rules, and Other Writings of Saint Pachomius and His Disciples* (3 vols.; CS 45–47; Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1980–1982), 1:91.

is a junior compared to the more senior monks but nevertheless "farther advanced than they." Just after this passage, Pachomius scolds the angry elders for not paying attention to Theodore, and even quotes the New Testament saying, "Anyone, who may receive a little one (ογαλου, Gr. παιδίον) in my name, receives me" (Matt 18:5).[22] If we read logion 4 in such a monastic setting, the present passage of the *Bohairic Life* may also indicate whom the final sentence of logion 4 refers to when saying, "and *they* will be single ones," since both the old and the young would be "single ones (ογα ογωτ)" in such a context.

We also need to notice the widespread use of the notion "to stand (Bo. ωρι ερατ≠)" in the *Bohairic Life* since this notion is closely related to ογα ογωτ and μοναχος in *Thomas* too, as we saw in logion 23, "and they will stand (Sa. ωρε ερατ≠) since they are single ones (ογα ογωτ)" (NHC II 38.2–3). We will soon return to this matter, but for now we must be aware that the peculiar combination of "to stand" and "single ones/monks" is attested in both *Thomas* and monasticism.

Attention to differences between the Greek and Coptic text of logion 4 provides data on the fluid textual transmission of *Thomas*.[23] The following logion 30 attests even more fluidity in the transmission from the Greek to the Coptic text.[24] Indeed, the two texts differ not only in wording and length but also in meaning, where scholars find coherence in the Greek but consider the Coptic almost incomprehensible.

[λέγ]ει [Ἰ(ησοῦ)]ς· ὅπ]ου ἐὰν ὦσιν [τρ]ε[ῖς], ε[ἰσὶ]ν ἄθεοι· καὶ [ὅ]που ε[ἷ]ς ἐστιν μόνος, [λ]έγω· ἐγώ εἰμι μετ' αὐτ[οῦ]. ἔγειρον τὸν λίθο(ν) κἀκεῖ εὑρήσεις με· σχίσον τὸ ξύλον κἀγὼ ἐκεῖ εἰμι.

πεχε ιс χε πμα εγν ϣομτ ννογτε μμαγ ρννογτε νε πμα εγν снаγ н ογα ανοκ` †ϣοοπ` νμμαϥ`

[Jesus says, "Wh]ere they are [three (persons), they are] godless, but where o[ne] is alone, I say I am with him; raise the stone, there you will find me, split the wood, there I am." (Logion 30; P. Oxy. 1.23–30 *verso*)[25]

Jesus said, "Where there are three gods, they are gods; where there are two or one, I am with him." (Logion 30; NHC II 39.3–5)[26]

Our first concern is the Greek, which in the main seems dependent on the saying in Matthew, "where two or three (τρεῖς) gather together in my name, there I am (ἐκεῖ εἰμι) among you" (18:20). Matthew presents here an early cultic service setting with the promise that Christ will be present when a minimum of two persons meet in his name. Since the Greek *Thomas* prefers one instead of more persons, only one person is promised closeness to Christ ("I am with him … you will find me"); such an intimacy is not possible for a group of people ("[three … are] godless").[27] Whether or not polemic against Matthew can be detected here, the service setting is still intact if we compare "raise the stone … split the wood" with the Septuagint's descriptions of Jacob who sets up a stone (Gen 28) and Abraham who splits wood (Gen 22) in order to perform service to God.[28]

Even if the Coptic version mentions Matthew's numbers and "I am" saying, it hardly makes sense in relation to Christian service since the Coptic text is more concerned with gods in relation to numbers. Our 4th–5th century readers may have had problems with the Greek saying that "three (persons)" gathered in service would be "godless," which is quite understandable in a monastic

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[27] The main text-critical discussion concerning the Greek logion 30 centres on whether or not θεοι appears with the alpha-privativum. The question comes down to whether we have one or two letters between the lacuna and θεοι since two letters are needed to have room for the alpha. Based on autoptic inspection with ultraviolet light, Attridge comes to the conclusion, in agreement with the *editio princeps* (Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt), that there are two letters; cf. Harold W. Attridge, "The Original Text of Gos. Thom., Saying 30," *BASP* 16 (1979), 155. Gathercole suggests otherwise: "In my own inspection of the manuscript, I found it very difficult to see an *alpha* before θεοι. Because of the Coptic [parallel], and the strangeness of a reference to ἄθεοι, θεοι is more probable" (Gathercole, *Gospel of Thomas*, 339). I have not scrutinised the fragment myself but tend to follow Attridge's reading (ἄθεοι) since inspection using ultraviolet light tends to be more accurate than inspection by the naked eye under normal lighting.

[28] This last part of the Greek logion has been relocated in the Coptic version to logion 77, where it primarily has been interpreted in a pantheistic manner; cf., e.g., Gathercole, *Gospel of Thomas*, 493–95. However, the liturgical context seems more appropriate in logion 30, especially when compared to the service settings in the Septuagint: Abraham goes up to the mountain to sacrifice Isaac, "after he had split wood (σχίσας ξύλα) for a whole burnt offering" (Gen 22:3). After Jacob awakens from his dream, "he took the stone (λίθον) … and set it up (ἔστησεν) for a stele and poured oil on top of it" (Gen 28:18; cf. also v. 22). And in addition, when the Ark is brought back to Israel, "they set up (ἔστησαν) … a great stone (λίθον), and they split up the wood (σχίζουσιν τὰ ξύλα) ... and offered the cows as a whole burnt offering to the Lord" (1 Sam 6:14); all Greek texts: Alfred Rahlfs, *Septuaginta* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2019); translation: Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 19, 24, 252–53. A similar interpretation of the Greek logion 30 is found in A. F. Walls, "'Stone' and 'Wood' in Oxyrhynchus Papyrus I," *VC* 16 (1962), 73.

context where the monks would indeed gather together for such a purpose.[29] Furthermore, it has been suggested that the text polemicizes against a triune understanding of the godhead.[30] Nevertheless, we can confirm that the Greek makes more sense than the later Coptic translation. In his study on logion 30, Harold W. Attridge sums up the main findings in the text:

> Instead of an absolutely cryptic remark about gods being gods [in the Coptic], the fragment [in Greek] asserts that any *group* of people lacks divine presence. That presence is available only to the "solitary one." The importance of the solitary (μοναχός) is obvious in the Gospel. Cf. Sayings 11, 16, 22, 23, 49, 75 and 106. This saying must now be read in connection with those remarks on the "monachos."[31]

He points to the fact that the only instance in the Greek text of *Thomas*, where we have an extant attestation of wording related to μοναχός, is here when logion 30 says, "where o[ne] is alone (ε[ἷ]ς ἐστιν μόνος), I say I am with him." Thus, we may conclude that the nomenclature of εἷς ("one") and μόνος ("alone") belongs to an earlier text of *Thomas*.[32] As we soon will see, though,

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[29] This may also explain the reason for removing the Greek ending to the Coptic logion 77, where it no longer concerns Christian service but rather the ability of readers to discover the Jesus-figure in the everyday life of worldly labour. Such a scheme in logion 77 matches the context of hardworking monks in their daily life in a monastery too.

[30] Namely as a "criticism of Christian doctrine as tritheism" (Robert M. Grant and David Noel Freedman, *The Secret Sayings of Jesus. With an English Translation of the Gospel of Thomas by William R. Schoedel* [Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1960], 149), or as a "distrust for the theology of the mainstream church with its tendency toward a Trinitarian concept of God" (Petr Pokorný, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Thomas: From Interpretations to the Interpreted* [Jewish and Christian Texts in Contexts and Related Studies; London: T&T Clark, 2009], 76). Yet, I do not think that such polemic would make sense in the 1st–2nd centuries, since triune speculation on the Christian godhead came to emerge in the centuries following. Therefore, in a 4th–5th century context, we may actually translate the text, "Where there are three divine (persons), they are in God." Such a translation of the logion would still work in Coptic, even if "they are in God" would call for the emendation ϩ<ⲙ̄ ⲡ>ⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲛⲉ; cf. Gathercole, *Gospel of Thomas*, 341 n. 11. Moreover, logion 44 expands the synoptic saying on the Son of Man and the Holy Spirit (i.e., Matt 12:32 par. Luke 12:10) by including the Father, thus operating with a positive concept of a triune God.

[31] Cf. Attridge, "Original Text," 156 (his cursive).

[32] If we return to the last sentence of logion 4, "and they will be *single ones* (ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛ̄ⲥⲉϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ)," which I left unrestored in the Greek (καὶ [± 10–15]σιν), the occurrence of εἷς and μόνος is found in earlier restoration suggestions: Kasser, "and [th]ey [will remain *alone*] (καὶ [μόν(αχ)οι μενοῦ]σιν)" (Rodolphe Kasser, *L'Évangile selon Thomas: Présentation et commentaire théologique* [Bibliothèque théologique; Neuchatel: Éditions Delachaux & Niestlé, 1961], 34), and Marcovich, "and [th]ey [will come to be *one*] (καὶ [εἷς ἐν καταντήσου]σιν)," restored on the basis of Eph 4:13 and John 17:11, 21–23 (Miroslav Markovich, "Textual Criticism on the *Gospel of Thomas*," *JTS* 20 [1969]: 61) – later on followed by, e.g., Attridge, "Fragments," 115; Lincoln H. Blumell and Thomas A. Wayment, eds., *Christian Oxyrhynchus: Texts, Documents, and Sources* (Waco, TX: Baylor University

the scribe also added ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ (and ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ) elsewhere in the text. So, whether a 4th–5th century scribe *either* translated εἷς/μόνος into ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ/ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ *or* added ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ/ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ to *Thomas*, this scribe's intention was to designate contemporary persons who lived by the self-same ideal of solitude in their everyday life among others of a similar orientation; that is, fellow "single ones (ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ/ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ)."

2. Further Instances of ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ and ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ in *Thomas*

The expression "single one(s)" occurs in different, but intertwining, social, scriptural, and soteriological contexts in logia 4, 16, 22, 23, 49, and 75. Again, it is one thing to interpret the logia of *Thomas* in a 1st–2nd century setting and another to read them in the later milieu of 4th–5th century monasticism.

In contemporary monasticism, the *social* context was multifaceted. The ideal was to live in solitude, but in reality this was often situated in a wider group of people living together in a community. As we saw in logion 4 and the *Bohairic Life of Pachomius*, social relations such as old and young, experienced monks and newcomers, can potentially be loaded with social tension. The ideal often succumbs to reality. To monastic readers, this may be a meaningful context for the following passage:

(Jesus said,) "… For there will be five in a house, there will be three against two and two against three, the father against the son and the son against the father, and they will stand since they are single ones (ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ)." (Logion 16; NHC II 35.36–36.5)[33]

The first part of the quotation of logion 16 is clearly dependent on the New Testament, "Five in one house will be divided, three against two, two against three; they will be divided, father against son, son against father" (Luke 12:52–53). To monastic readers, the "house" could be taken to refer to a monastery, or to separate buildings or organizational units therein.[34] The "father" could be

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Press, 2015), 240; Miroshnikov, *Gospel of Thomas*, 104. Even if these restoration suggestions might attest the use of μόνος (Kasser: μόνοι) or εἷς (Markovich: ἕν) in the early text of *Gos. Thom.*, these Greek terms still do not parallel the Coptic ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ exactly. Kasser's alternative, καὶ [μοναχοί μενοῦ]σιν ("and [th]ey [will remain *single ones*])," hits the mark, but cannot belong to the early text of *Gos. Thom.*, since μοναχός is not attested elsewhere before the 4th century. Hence, in the Coptic logion 4, the scribe possibly translated εἷς or μόνος into ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ.

[33] ⲟⲩⲛ̄ ϯⲟⲩ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲛⲁϣⲱⲡⲉ ϩⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲏⲉⲓ ⲟⲩⲛ̄ ϣⲟⲙⲧ ⲛⲁϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲉϫⲛ̄ ⲥⲛⲁⲩ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲥⲛⲁⲩ ⲉϫⲛ̄ ϣⲟⲙⲧ` ⲡⲉⲓⲱⲧ` ⲉϫⲙ̄ ⲡϣⲏⲣⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲡϣⲏⲣⲉ ⲉϫⲙ̄ ⲡⲉⲓⲱⲧ` ⲁⲩⲱ ⲥⲉⲛⲁⲱϩⲉ ⲉⲣⲁⲧⲟⲩ ⲉⲩⲟ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ (text: Layton, "Gospel," 60).

[34] For the physical organization in a Pachomian setting, cf. Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia*, 1:vii–viii (see the above quotation from the *Life of Pachomius*, "some among them, out of pride, were angry and returned to their *houses*"); Tutty, "Monks of the Nag Hammadi Codices," 71–73; as for the Shenoutean setting, cf. Bentley Layton, "Rules, Patterns, and the

the Abba or monastery leader, and the "son" could be a brother, a fellow monk, who is subordinate in relation to the Abba.[35] Such quarrels between higher- and lower-ranking monks could be one of the negative consequences of living a communal monastic life.[36]

The last sentence of logion 16 ("and [ⲁⲩⲱ] they will stand since they are single ones [ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ]") is identical with the final sentence of our logion 23 ("and they will stand since they are single ones [ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ]"). In logion 23, this statement is clearly positive, which indicates that it is a positive statement in logion 16 too. In that regard, the use of the final ⲁⲩⲱ ("and") in logion 16 seems a bit odd, since it does not contrast this positive sentence with the preceding negative description of quarrels among fathers and sons. It would actually be a better fit if the sentence presented "but (ⲁⲗⲗⲁ/ⲇⲉ)" instead of "and (ⲁⲩⲱ)" in order to highlight that contrast. Does this indicate that the final sentence is an addition? It seems clear that logion 16 is dependent on Luke 12:52–53 and that its final sentence is added to this Lukan saying. The question is if it happened in the early text of *Thomas* or later on in its Coptic version. I will return to this question below.

In *Thomas*, social conflicts similar to those in logion 16 are solved by "making the two one."[37] Moreover, the concept of making the two into one also has

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Exercise of Power in Shenoute's Monastery: The Problem of World Replacement and Identity Maintenance," *JECS* 15 (2007): 47–50.

[35] Sellew, "Reading Jesus," 95.

[36] Cf. the first of the *Instructions of Pachomius*, where Pachomius advices a monk and describes social conflicts within the monasteries: "My son, never condemn anyone. If you see someone being honoured, do not say, 'He already has received his reward'. Guard yourself from such a thought, for it is very bad, and God detests the man who has praise only for himself, scorning his brother" (1.12; cf. 1.58); "Sit alone by yourself like a prudent general; sift your thoughts whether you are an anchorite or live with others. In a word, judge yourself every day. For it is better for you to live with a thousand people in all humility than alone with pride in an hyena's den" (1.55); "The churches are filled with quarrellers and wrathful people; monastic communities have become ambitious; pride reigns; there is no one left who is dedicated to his neighbour" (1.60); translation: Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia*, 3:16, 39, 41.

[37] Accordingly, Jesus is said to ask the rhetorical question: "On the day you were one you became two; but when you are two, what will you do? (ⲥⲙ̄ ⲫⲟⲟⲩ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲟ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲁ ⲁⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲉⲓⲣⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲥⲛⲁⲩ ϩⲟⲧⲁⲛ ⲇⲉ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ϣⲁϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲛ̄ⲥⲛⲁⲩˋ ⲟⲩ ⲡⲉ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲛⲁⲁϥˋ)" (logion 11 [NHC II 34.22–25]; text: Layton, "Gospel," 56, 58). The answer is given, when combining two logia that explicate the social context: "When you make the two one, you will be children of the human being, and when you say, 'O Mountain, move away!' – it will move (ϩⲟⲧⲁⲛ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ϣⲁⲣ̄ ⲡⲥⲛⲁⲩ ⲟⲩⲁ ⲧⲉⲧⲛⲁϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲛ̄ϣⲏⲣⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ϣⲁⲛϫⲟⲟⲥ ϫⲉ ⲡⲧⲟⲟⲩ ⲡⲱⲱⲛⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗˋ ϥⲛⲁⲡⲱⲱⲛⲉ)" (logion 106 [50.18–22]; text: Layton, "Gospel," 90) and "If two make peace with each other in this single house, they will say to the mountain, 'Move!' – and it will move (ⲉⲣϣⲁ ⲥⲛⲁⲩ ⲣ̄ ⲉⲓⲣⲏⲛⲏ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲛⲟⲩⲉⲣⲏⲩ ϩⲙ̄ ⲡⲉⲓⲏⲉⲓ ⲟⲩⲱⲧˋ ⲥⲉⲛⲁϫⲟⲟⲥ ⲙ̄ⲡⲧⲁⲩ ϫⲉ ⲡⲱⲱⲛⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲁⲩⲱ ϥⲛⲁⲡⲱⲱⲛⲉ (logion 48 [41.24–27]; text: Layton, "Gospel," 72). Making "the two one" aligns here with "two (who) make peace with each other in this single house"; thus, making

a *scriptural* context, as is the case in logion 22. From the outset, this logion is related to logion 4, where readers needed to reconfigure the status of "a little (ⲕⲟⲩⲉⲓ) child of seven days" in order to enter "the place of life." In a similar manner logion 22 begins with Jesus beholding "little ones (ⲕⲟⲩⲉⲓ) given milk" and telling his disciples, "These little ones receiving milk are like those who enter the kingdom"; they respond to Jesus by asking, "Then we, being little ones, will enter the kingdom?" (NHC II 37.20–24).[38] In light of our monastic interpretation of logion 4, the "little ones given/receiving milk" may again refer metaphorically to unexperienced or junior monks and not to newborn babies in a literal sense, an interpretation supported by the disciples who explicitly compare themselves to infants ("we, being little ones").[39] In the passage following in logion 22, Jesus clarifies what he expects from people who wish to prepare themselves for entrance into that kingdom:

Jesus said to them, "When (ϩⲟⲧⲁⲛ) you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside, and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below, and you shall do that in order to make the male and the female into this single one (ⲫⲟʼⲟⲩⲧ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲧⲥϩⲓⲙⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ), so that the male will not be male and the female not female, when (ϩⲟⲧⲁⲛ) you make eyes instead of eye, hand instead of hand, foot instead of foot, image (ϩⲓⲕⲱⲛʼ) instead of image, then (ⲧⲟⲧⲉ) you shall enter [the king]dom." (Logion 22; NHC II 37.24–35)[40]

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a divided house whole is compared to the power of making mountains move (cf. Matt 17:20; 21:21 par. Mark 11:22). Again, the reconciliation of broken relationships is appraised in *Gos. Thom.*, which of course was of importance in the fragile social context of monks too. Another context of logion 106, also presented as the outcome of making "the two one," is the promise to become "children of the human being (ⲛ̄ϣⲏⲣⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ)," which could relate readers to "the Son of Man (ⲡϣⲏⲣⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ)" (text: Layton, "Gospel," 84), who is found in logion 86 (cf. Matt 8:20 par. Luke 9:58). These "children of the human being" could additionally relate to the first chapter of the Bible, where the original human being is promised to rule over creation (cf. Gen 1:26–28), and thus enabled to make mountains move in logion 106 (cf., e.g., Gathercole, *Gospel of Thomas*, 582). See also the epistemology in logion 2, where the enlightened reader is promised a similar power, as "he will rule over the universe (ϥⲛⲁⲣ̄ⲣ̄ⲣⲟ ⲉϫⲛ̄ ⲡⲧⲏⲣϥ)" (32.18–19 [par. P. Oxy. 654.8]; text: Layton, "Gospel," 52).

[38] ⲁⲓ̄ⲥ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲁϩⲛ̄ⲕⲟⲩⲉⲓ ⲉⲩϫⲓ ⲉⲣⲱⲧⲉ ⲡⲉϫⲁϥ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉϥⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲏⲥ ϫⲉ ⲛⲉⲉⲓⲕⲟⲩⲉⲓ ⲉⲧϫⲓ ⲉⲣⲱⲧⲉ ⲉⲩⲧⲛ̄ⲧⲱⲛ ⲁⲛⲉⲧⲃⲏⲕʼ ⲉϩⲟⲩⲛ ⲁⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲣⲟ ⲡⲉϫⲁⲩ ⲛⲁϥʼ ϫⲉ ⲉⲉⲓⲉⲛⲟ ⲛ̄ⲕⲟⲩⲉⲓ ⲧⲛ̄ⲛⲁⲃⲱⲕʼ ⲉϩⲟⲩⲛ ⲉⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲣⲟ (text: Layton, "Gospel," 62).

[39] In the New Testament, milk for babies are contrasted with food for adults, thus indicating lower and higher stages of comprehension (cf. 1 Cor 3:1–2; Heb 5:12–14), but babies' milk in itself is also worth striving for (cf. 1 Pet 2:2–3).

[40] ⲡⲉϫⲉ ⲓ̄ⲥ̄ ⲛⲁⲩ ϫⲉ ϩⲟⲧⲁⲛ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ϣⲁⲣ̄ⲡⲥⲛⲁⲩ ⲟⲩⲁ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ϣⲁⲣ̄ⲡⲥⲁ ⲛϩⲟⲩⲛ ⲛ̄ⲑⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲥⲁ ⲛⲃⲟⲗ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲡⲥⲁ ⲛ̄ⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ⲑⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲥⲁ ⲛϩⲟⲩⲛ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲡⲥⲁ (ⲛ)ⲧⲡⲉ ⲛ̄ⲑⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲥⲁ ⲙ̄ⲡⲓⲧⲛ̄ ⲁⲩⲱ ϣⲓⲛⲁ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛⲁⲉⲓⲣⲉ ⲙ̄ⲫⲟʼⲟⲩⲧ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲧⲥϩⲓⲙⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ ϫⲉⲕⲁⲁⲥ ⲛⲉ ⲫⲟⲟⲩⲧʼ ⲣ̄ϩⲟⲟⲩⲧʼ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲧⲥϩⲓⲙⲉ ⲣ̄ⲥϩⲓⲙⲉ ϩⲟⲧⲁⲛ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ϣⲁⲉⲓⲣⲉ ⲛ̄ϩⲛ̄ⲃⲁⲗ ⲉⲡⲙⲁ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲃⲁⲗʼ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲟⲩϭⲓϫ ⲉⲡⲙⲁ ⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲩϭⲓϫ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲟⲩⲉⲣⲏⲧⲉ ⲉⲡⲙⲁ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲉⲣⲏⲧⲉ ⲟⲩϩⲓⲕⲱⲛʼ ⲉⲡⲙⲁ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩϩⲓⲕⲱ(ⲛ) ⲧⲟⲧⲉ ⲧⲉⲧⲛⲁⲃⲱⲕʼ ⲉϩⲟⲩⲛ ⲉ[ⲧ]ⲙⲛ̄[ⲧⲉⲣ]ⲟʼ (text: Layton, "Gospel," 62).

Now, when readers "make the two one," they come to view humankind ("the inside like the outside, and the outside like the inside") and creation ("the above like the below") in a similar manner. In addition, they must combine "the male with the female into this single one (ⲡⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ)," which makes the single one of a two-gendered nature. Yet, this interpretation appears contradicted by the following statement, "so that the male will not be male and the female not female," which seems to make the single one of a non-gendered nature instead. So, how can we make sense of the text here? Part of the answer comes from the last saying that recapitulates Jesus' advices in logion 22, namely that readers must make "(one) image (ϩⲓⲕⲱⲛ) instead of (another) image."[41] Such a divine "image (ϩⲓⲕⲱⲛ, Gr. εἰκών)" is also mentioned together with the notions of "male/female (ϩⲟⲟⲩⲧ/ⲥϩⲓⲙⲉ, Gr. ἄρσην/θῆλυς)" in Gen 1:27 LXX, "God made the human being, in God's image (εἰκόνα) he made it (sg.), male and female (ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ) he made them (pl.)."[42] In the Septuagint, the divine image functions as an archetype for the original human being only ("in God's image he made *it*"), whereas the two genders are not produced explicitly in his image ("male and female he made *them*"). However, in our oldest Coptic version of Genesis (4th century), we have a relevant variant concerning the original human being, where Gen 1:27 says, "God created the human being in his image (ϩⲓⲕⲱⲛ), he created it male-female, he created them (ⲁϥⲑⲁⲙⲓⲟ ⲛϫⲉⲫϯ ⲙⲡⲓⲣⲱⲙⲓ ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ϯϩⲓⲕⲱⲛ ⲛⲧⲁϥ ⲁϥⲑⲁⲙⲓⲟϥ ⲛϩⲱⲟⲩⲧⲥϩⲓⲙⲓ· ⲁϥⲑⲁⲙⲓⲱⲟⲩ·)."[43] This version interprets the original human being as created two-gendered.[44]

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[41] A similar exchange of images is found in Paul, "Just as we have borne the image (εἰκόνα) of the dusty one, we will bear the image of the heavenly one" (1 Cor 15:49). The first image is that of Adam (cf. 1 Cor 15:45), the second image is that of Christ, whom Paul elsewhere presents as the image of God (cf. 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15), which Christ-believers eventually will obtain a share in (cf. Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18). If we transfer Paul's scheme to logion 22, readers are then to exchange the earthly copy for the divine model; that is, produce "(the divine) image instead of (the earthly) image."

[42] Καὶ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον, κατ᾽ εἰκόνα θεοῦ ἐποίησεν αὐτόν, ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ ἐποίησεν αὐτούς (text: Rahlfs, *Septuaginta*). I am well aware that the grammatical gender of the human being is masculine, ἐποίησεν αὐτόν ("he created *him*"), but since logion 22 is concerned with unity or division in gender, the neuter translation ("he created *it*") seems the more appropriate choice.

[43] Text: Rodolphe Kasser, ed., *Papyrus Bodmer III: Évangile de Jean et Genèse I–IV,2 en bohaïrique* (CSCO 177, Scriptores Coptici 25; Leuven: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1958), 48. His emendation, ⲛϩⲱⲟⲩⲧ <ϩⲓ> ⲥϩⲓⲙⲓ ("male <and> female"), is not followed.

[44] This Coptic version of Genesis is contemporary with the Coptic *Gos. Thom.* and was most likely even found in close proximity to the discovery location of the Nag Hammadi codices; cf. Brent Nongbri, *God's Library: The Archaeology of the Earliest Christian Manuscripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 211–12; Hugo Lundhaug, "The Dishna Papers and the Nag Hammadi Codices: The Remains of a Single Monastic Library?" in *The Nag Hammadi Codices and Late Antique Egypt* (ed. Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott; STAC 110; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 329–86. Accordingly, canonical scripture from the same time and place may confirm the male-female nature of first human being, so that it

Understanding the original human unity in the two genders is vital to the interpretation of the logion as a whole. In fact, such a scheme fits logion 22 better, both in relation to the two images and to the single one's male-female nature. Regarding the two images, readers can now be said to produce "(the original male-female) image instead of (the later male *or* female) image." As for the single one, this scheme fits exactly the goal of the logion to "make the two one," when readers must "make the male and the female into this single one." Consequently, the two genders are not annulled but merged into the single one, who then comes to represent the male-female human being of Gen 1:27, i.e. before the human separation into two genders (Gen 2) and the fall of Adam and Eve (Gen 3).

Now we are able to explain the problematic saying, which on the surface presented the single one as non-gendered ("so that the male will not be male and the female not female"), because the eschatological ideal of the single one is to regain the original state of the male-female human being. Not as an expression of the male separated from the female (as in Gen 2), but as an expression of both merged in unity (as in Gen 1). Then, the puzzle is solved, because in future redemption, "the male will not be male and the female not female," but both will be combined into a single amalgam in accordance with the original double-gendered human being. As it was in the beginning, it will be in the end. In between these two temporal poles, earthly existence determines gender-polarity expressed by either male or female nature, whereas heavenly existence determines gender-unity expressed by the original human being's male-female nature. A similar interpretation of the human being is found in a prayer from the *First Sahidic Life of Pachomius*:

He, who took some soil from the earth, formed it with his own hands as a human being in his image and in his likeness. You created it (= the human being) male and female, you breathed into its face a breath of life, and the human being became a living soul. (S^1 16 [fragment 3])[45]

The prayer combines Gen 1:27 and 2:7 but when focussing on the former, God is said to make the human being (sg.) "male and female," and not to make *them* (pl.) male and female, as we usually find Genesis to express. Again, an indication of the double-gendered nature of the original human being, this time in an explicitly monastic setting. Yet, this is hardly a 4th–5th century invention, as attested centuries before in a similar quote from *Second Clement* 14.2, "God

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remains a possibility that the first anthropogony in Genesis was interpreted likewise in a monastic context.

[45] ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁϥⲛⲟⲩⲕⲁϩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲙ̄ⲕⲁϩ · ⲁϥⲡⲗⲁⲥⲥⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ ϩⲛ̄ⲛⲉϥϭⲓⳁ ⲙ̄ⲙⲓⲛⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲕⲁⲧⲁⲧⲉϥϩⲓⲕⲱⲛ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲕⲁⲧⲁⲡⲉϥⲉⲓⲛⲉ· ⲁⲕⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟϥ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩϩⲟⲟⲩⲧ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲥϩⲓⲙⲉ· ⲁⲕⲛⲓϥⲉ ⲉϩⲟⲩⲛ ϩⲙ̄ⲡⲉϥϩⲟ ⲛⲟⲩⲡⲛⲟⲏ ⲛ̄ⲱⲛϩ· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ ϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲉⲩⳁⲩⲭⲏ ⲉⲥⲟⲛϩ̄ (text: Louis-Théophile Lefort, *S. Pachomii Vita Sahidice Scripta* [2 vols. CSCO 99-100, Scriptores Coptici 9-10; Leuven: L. Dubercq, 1952], 114B).

made the human being male and female."[46] Furthermore, two chapters earlier in *Second Clement* 12.2, we find one of two 2nd century Greek parallels to the early text of logion 22. The other parallel is from the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, which Clement of Alexandria quotes in Book III of his *Stromata*.[47] The literary relationship between these three, the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, *Second Clement*, and logion 22 of *Thomas*, is displayed in the following synopsis:

When	When	When
the two become one,	the two will be one,	you make the two one,
–	–	and … the inside like the outside,
–	and the outside	and the outside
–	like the inside,	like the inside,
–	–	and the above like the below,
and the male	and the male	and … the male
with the female,	with the female,	and the female
–	–	into *this single one* (ⲡⲓⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ),
neither as male	neither as male	so that the male will not be male
nor as female	nor as female	and the female not female
(*Stromata* III.13)[48]	(*2 Clement* 12.2)[49]	(Logion 22; NHC II 37.25–31)

From a source critical point of view, we may conclude that the more primitive text of the passage stems from an interpretation of Paul's saying in Galatians, "there is not male and female (ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ), for you are all one (εἷς) in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). In addition, our current Coptic version of logion 22 is more expanded in comparison to the two Greek parallels, which may attest the usual tendency for texts to grow in the course of textual transmission.[50] For

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[46] Ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ (text: Christopher Mark Tuckett, *2 Clement: Introduction, Text, and Commentary* [Oxford Apostolic Fathers; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012], 110).

[47] This is not the same text as the Coptic *Gospel of the Egyptians* (also known as the *Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit*) from NHC III and IV.

[48] Ὅταν γένηται τὰ δύο ἓν καὶ τὸ ἄρρεν μετὰ τῆς θηλείας οὔτε ἄρρεν οὔτε θῆλυ (text: Otto Stählin, Ludwig Früchtel, and Urusla Treu, eds., *Alexandrinus, zweiter Band: Stromata Buch I–VI. Herausgegeben von Otto Stählin, neu herausgegeben von Ludwig Früchtel, 4. Auflage mit Nachträgen von Ursula Treu* [GCS 52; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1985], 238).

[49] Ὅταν ἔσται τὰ δύο ἕν, καὶ τὸ ἔξω ὡς τὸ ἔσω, καὶ τὸ ἄρσεν μετὰ τῆς θηλείας οὔτε ἄρσεν οὔτε θῆλυ (text: Tuckett, *2 Clement*, 106).

[50] Another interesting feature of the parallel in *2 Clement* is not only that it quotes the early text of *Gos. Thom.* in 12.2, but also that it in the following verses comments on that quotation: "Now, 'the two' are 'one' when we speak truthfully to one another, and when one soul exists in two bodies without pretense. As for 'and the outside like the inside', he means this: 'the inside' means the soul and 'the outside' means the body; thus, in the manner your body is visible, so shall your soul be manifest in good works. As for 'and the male with the female, neither as male nor as female', he means this: that when a brother sees a sister he does not think of her as female, neither does she think of him as male" (τὰ δύο δὲ ἕν ἐστιν, ὅταν λαλῶμεν ἑαυτοῖς ἀλήθειαν καὶ ἐν δυσὶ σώμασιν ἀνυποκρίτως εἴη μία ψυχή, καὶ τὸ ἔξω ὡς τὸ ἔσω, τοῦτο λέγει· τὴν ψυχὴν λέγει τὸ ἔσω, τὸ δὲ ἔξω τὸ σῶμα λέγει· ὃν τρόπον οὖν

the present purposes, however, the most important feature in the synopsis is the fact that it becomes clear that "this single one (ⲡⲓⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ)" does not appear in the 2nd century parallels. It simply is not part of the early text of *Thomas* and therefore a probable addition to the later Coptic version.[51] If monastic readers added ⲡⲓⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ as a reference to themselves, it could refer to both male and female monks. In logion 4, the usual social norms for old and young are dealt with, which parallels the present case in logion 22 in the sense that usual cultural norms for male and female monks are under negotiation too.[52]

At the end of logion 22, the *telos* of the whole interpretative enterprise regarding Genesis, the original human being, and the single one can finally be reached, "then you shall enter (ⲧⲉⲧⲛⲁⲃⲱⲕˋ ⲉϩⲟⲩⲛ) [the king]dom," thus ending up on a soteriological note. Even if *Thomas* here presents admittance into heavenly existence in the Future tense, one still gets the impression that such an entrance is accessible in the present life of the monastic readers.[53]

σου τὸ σῶμα φαίνεται, οὕτως καὶ ἡ ψυχή σου δῆλος ἔστω ἐν τοῖς καλοῖς ἔργοις. καὶ τὸ ἄρσεν μετὰ τῆς θηλείας, οὔτε ἄρσεν οὔτε θῆλυ, ταῦτο λέγει· ἵνα ἀδελφὸς ἰδὼν ἀδελφὴν οὐδὲν φρονῇ περὶ αὐτῆς θηλυκόν, μηδ' φρονῇ τι περὶ αὐτοῦ ἀρσενικόν) (12.3–5; text: Tuckett, *2 Clement*, 106). This commentary indicates that the author of *2 Clement* understood the Thomasine text as an authentic saying of Jesus, as may be the case in Origen's quotation of logion 23; cf. n. 63 (example 2) below.

[51] In the Coptic (Sahidic) translation of the New Testament, we find remarkable nomenclature related to *Gos. Thom.*'s use of ⲡⲓⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ, which also is associated with the first chapters of Genesis. In Romans, Adam is three times presented as "this single one (ⲡⲓⲟⲩⲁ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲱⲧ; Gr. εἷς or εἷς ἄνθρωπος)"; cf. Rom 5:16, 17, 19 (Coptic text: Horner)." In the Divorce Pericope (Mark 10:7–9), ⲟⲩⲁ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲱⲧ occurs after the quotation of Gen 2:24, "Therefore, the man will leave his father and mother, and he will join himself to his wife and they will together become one single flesh; now, let no person divide what God has made a single one (ⲟⲩⲁ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲱⲧ; Gr. συνέζευξεν, "united together")" (Coptic text: Horner). The text of logion 22 ("the male and the female into this single one") may also mirror Gen 2:24, which originally functioned as an aetiology of marriage, where "the *two* (= man and woman) will become *one* flesh (ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν; text: Rahlfs, *Septuaginta*)." Not that *Gos. Thom.* here is interested in physical marriage, which also would fit the monastic context poorly, but logion 23 seems more concerned with the nature of the divine and double-gendered image from Gen 1:27.

[52] Female monks and their monastery are attested close to where the Nag Hammadi codices where found; cf. Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 25–30, 113, 167. In addition, a compelling case has been made for the addition of female monastic readership of the Nag Hammadi-texts in Sarit Kattan Gribetz, "Women as Readers of the Nag Hammadi Codices," *JECS* 25 (2018): 463–94.

[53] "In both Antony's and Ammonas' letters [4th century] this participation in the restoration is expressed in terms of inheriting the kingdom … Although a future and final spatial translation to heaven, and complete transformation is implied, everything it signifies is already present. The ascetic is 'as already translated to the kingdom' [*Letters of Ammonas* 8.2]" (cf. Rubenson, "'As Already Translated to the Kingdom While Still in the Body': The Transformation of the Ascetic in Early Egyptian Monasticism," in *Metamorphoses: Resurrection, Body and Transformative Practices in Early Christianity* [ed. Turid Karlsen Seim

The *soteriological* context of the final three logia that attests our nomenclature deals with the concept of election, i.e. who will be permitted entrance into the heavenly regions.

Jesus said, "I will select (ⲥⲉⲧⲡ) you, one from a thousand and two from ten thousand, and they will stand (ⲱϩⲉ ⲉⲣⲁⲧⲟⲩ) since they are single ones (ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ)." (Logion 23; NHC II 38.1–3)[54]

Jesus said, "Blessed are the single ones (ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ) and (those) who are elect (ⲥⲟⲧⲡ), for you will find the kingdom; for you are from it, and to it you will return." (Logion 49; 41.28–30)[55]

Jesus said, "Many are standing (ⲁϩⲉⲣⲁⲧⲟⲩ) at the door, but it is the single ones (ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ) who will enter the wedding hall (ⲡⲙⲁ ⲛ̄ϣⲉⲗⲉⲉⲧ`)." (Logion 75; 46.11–13)[56]

In the introduction we divided logion 23 into two parts, one of election ("I will select you, one from a thousand and two from ten thousand") and one related to the standing persons ("and they will stand since they are single ones [ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ]"). In logion 49, these two parts are combined in the blessing of "the single ones (ⲛⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ) and (those) who are elect." Thus, they are able to realise the place ("the kingdom") from which they originate and to which they will return. Logion 75 seems inspired by the parable of the Ten Bridesmaids (Matt 25:1–13), where the wise bridesmaids enter "the wedding celebrations (τοὺς γάμους; Sa. ⲡⲙⲁ ⲛ̄ϣⲉⲗⲉⲉⲧ)" (25:10), whereas the unwise are left outside "the door" (25:10–11). In *Thomas*, the unwise bridesmaids may parallel the majority of people "standing at the door," whereas the wise bridesmaids may parallel "the single ones (ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ)," who are, by implication, the elect minority destined to enter that door to "the wedding hall (ⲡⲙⲁ ⲛ̄ϣⲉⲗⲉⲉⲧ`)," i.e. the kingdom.

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and Jorunn Økland; Ekstasis 1; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009], 288). Accordingly, the monastic life is viewed as living in Paradise as also explained in O. Mon. Epiph. 62 (6th–7th century), although in a context a bit later than the Coptic version of *Gos. Thom.* This ostracon describes how Adam and Eve, before the fall, lived passionless by keeping the divine command, but by their transgression, they were clothed in the mortal garments of skin, thus introducing carnal procreation. The ostracon sums up, saying, "So then indeed, this is the way it is for us too, as long as we are in Paradise – I mean the life of monasticism (ⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲙⲟⲛⲟⲭⲟⲥ) in which we dwell – and (as long as) we are zealous to keep the commandments of the gospel, which is the cultivation of Paradise. Let us speak with one another in what belongs to God, without passion" (translation: Jenott, "Adam's Lost Glory," 229; Coptic text: Walter Ewing Crum and Hugh G. Evelyn White, *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes: Part II* [Egyptian Expedition; New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1926], 18). This idea of presently attaining Paradise and living an angelic life on earth is, of course, a concept that predates monasticism (cf., e.g., Luke 20:34–36).

[54] ⲡⲉϫⲉ ⲓ̄ⲥ̄ ϫⲉ ϯⲛⲁⲥⲉⲧⲡ ⲧⲏⲛⲉ ⲟⲩⲁ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ ϣⲟ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲥⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ ⲧⲃⲁ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲥⲉⲛⲁⲱϩⲉ ⲉⲣⲁⲧⲟⲩ ⲉⲩⲟ ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ (text: Layton, "Gospel," 64).

[55] ⲡⲉϫⲉ ⲓ̄ⲥ̄ ϫⲉ ϩⲉⲛⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲟⲥ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲉⲧⲥⲟⲧⲡ ϫⲉ ⲧⲉⲧⲛⲁϩⲉ ⲁⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲣⲟ ϫⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲱⲧⲛ̄ ϩⲛ̄ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧⲥ̄ ⲡⲁⲗⲓⲛ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛⲁⲃⲱⲕ ⲉⲙⲁⲩ (text: Layton, "Gospel," 72).

[56] ⲡⲉϫⲉ ⲓ̄ⲥ̄ ⲟⲩⲛ ϩⲁϩ ⲁϩⲉⲣⲁⲧⲟⲩ ϩⲓⲣⲙ̄ ⲡⲣⲟ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ ⲛⲉⲧⲛⲁⲃⲱⲕ` ⲉϩⲟⲩⲛ ⲉⲡⲙⲁ ⲛ̄ϣⲉⲗⲉⲉⲧ` (text: Layton, "Gospel," 80).

Where the use of "standing" in front of a door in logion 75 makes perfect sense in the context, its use in logion 23 does not.

Before concluding on this matter, we need to recall the passage from the *Bohairic Life of Pachomius* quoted above. There, "standing" points to the physical stature of the attentive monk when occupied with the teaching or hearing of "the holy words of God" without being distracted; that is, monks are standing when they engage in what they believe to be the most important focus of their life. Actually, we have extensive evidence in contemporary sources of this physical mode of standing, which often connects to the ideal practice of exemplary monks.[57] Along these lines, we therefore follow Michael A. Williams, who tentatively suggests that the use of ⲱϩⲉ ⲉⲣⲁⲧ⸗ ("to stand") in logia 16 and 23 may have a technical meaning associated with "the single ones."[58] Then, let us have a closer look at these two logia:

… the father against the son and the son against the father, and they will stand since they are single ones (ⲁⲩⲱ ⲥⲉⲛⲁⲱϩⲉ ⲉⲣⲁⲧⲟⲩ ⲉⲩⲟ ⲛ̄ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ). (Logion 16; 36.2–5)

I will select you, one from a thousand and two from ten thousand, and they will stand since they are single ones (ⲁⲩⲱ ⲥⲉⲛⲁⲱϩⲉ ⲉⲣⲁⲧⲟⲩ ⲉⲩⲟ ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ). (Logion 23; 38.1–3)

The two logia conclude with sentences on "the single ones," although these final statements hardly sum up the individual theme of each logion. In fact, these concluding sentences appear redundant in their contexts, not applying an immediate or coherent meaning to their logia. This may indicate that scribe has supplied these statements in the course of textual transmission. Furthermore, that the final sentences are *identical* in wording may indicate a technical monastic use, since monks stand while being attentive of their purpose in life. In social settings, when monks negotiate the status of age difference (logion 4),

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[57] Cf. Athanasius, *Vita Antonii* 14 (Antony); Palladius, *Historica Lausiaca* 18.14–17 (Macarius of Alexandria); 43.2 (the monk Adolius); *Historia Monachorum* 13.4 (the monk John); Theodoret, *Religiosa historia* 26 (Simeon the Stylite); 27 (Syrian monks); cf. Michael Allen Williams, *The Immovable Race: A Gnostic Designation and the Theme of Stability in Late Antiquity* (NHS 29; Leiden: Brill, 1985), 30–31, 86–89. "Now almost all of these accounts of the Christian monastic practice of standing unmoved for the purpose of attaining transcendence, or as a sign of communion with the heavenly realm, come from a period somewhat too late to provide certain evidence for the existence of the same or a similar practice in the third century C.E. ... But there are enough similarities between some of these instances in Christian monasticism and the description of mystical withdrawal in [the Nag Hammadi texts as for] the pursuit and achievement of a "standing" condition, to suggest that there could be some historical continuity involved. At the very least, we can observe that it is quite plausible that such a connection might have occurred to the fourth century C.E. owners of some of the Nag Hammadi codices" (ibid., 90). Of course, Williams' conclusion also applies to a connection between *Gos. Thom.* and monasticism in relation to the concept of 'standing'.

[58] *Gos. Thom.* "uses the term 'to stand' (*ōhe erat=*) in what might be a technical sense, to describe the *monachoi* (logion 16) [or] the chosen (logion 23)" (ibid., 89–90 n. 37).

disputes among each other (logion 16), difference in gender (logion 22), and divine election (logion 23, 49, and 75), they will, at the end of the day, come to stand tall, exactly *because* they are monks. Thereby, they believe themselves elected to serve a cause larger than life, no matter their age, quarrels, or gender.

In order to strengthen the arguments for a monastic redaction in *Thomas*, mainly concerning the last and identical sentences of logia 16 and 23, we now turn to a reception-historical study of logion 23. Focus will here be on its concept of election, "I will select you, one from a thousand and two from ten thousand," and especially on these elect, who "will stand since they are single ones."[59]

3. Manichaean Reuse of Logion 23

When scholars first began working on *Thomas*, the occurrence of ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ and the elect in logia 16, 49, and 75 was thought to indicate that the text was a product of 4th century monasticism and Manichaeism.[60] While acknowledging

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[59] A close parallel that relates to the nomenclature of standing, election, and the single ones in *Gos. Thom.* is found in *Dial. Sav.* from NHC III. In fact, remarkably similar vocabulary clusters are found in the first two pages of that text. In the first lines of the prologue, we find Christ saying to the disciples, "Time has already come, O brothers, that we shall leave our (worldly) labour and stand (ⲁⲝⲉⲣⲁⲧⲛ̅) at rest; for the one who stands (ⲱ̅ⲣⲉ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲉⲣⲁⲧϥ̅) at rest will rest forever (ⲏⲇⲏ ⲁⲡⲉⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓ(ϣ) (ϣ)ⲱⲡⲉ ⲛⲉⲥⲛⲏⲟⲩ ϫⲉⲕⲁⲁⲥ ⲉⲛⲁⲕⲱ ⲛ̅ⲥⲱⲛ ⲙ̅ⲡⲉⲛⲅ̅ⲓⲥⲉ· ⲛ̅ⲧⲛ̅ⲁⲝⲉⲣⲁⲧⲛ̅ ⲝⲛ̅ ⲧⲁⲛⲁⲡⲁⲩⲥⲓⲥ· ⲡⲉⲧⲛⲁ(ϣ)ⲣⲉ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲉⲣⲁⲧϥ̅ ⲝⲛ̅ⲧⲁⲛⲁⲡⲁⲩⲥⲓⲥ ϥⲛⲁⲙ̅ⲧⲟⲛ ⲙ̅ⲙⲟϥ ⲛ̅(ϣ)ⲁⲉⲛⲉⲝ·)" (120.2–8; text: Stephen Emmel, *Nag Hammadi Codex III,5: The Dialogue of the Savior* [NHS 24; Leiden: Brill, 1984], 40). On the same page at the bottom, Jesus continues, "Yes, when I came, I opened the way and taught them about the Passover which they will pass through, namely the elect (ⲥⲱⲧⲡ̅) and single ones (ⲙⲟⲛⲟⲭⲟⲥ) [who] knew the Father (ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲣⲓⲉⲓ ⲁⲉⲓⲟⲩⲱⲛ ⲉⲧⲉⲝⲓⲏ ⲁⲉⲓⲧⲥⲁⲃⲟⲟⲩ ⲉⲧⲇⲓⲁⲃⲁⲥⲓⲥ ⲉⲧⲉⲩⲛⲁϫⲱⲃⲉ ⲙ̅ⲙ[ⲟⲥ] ⲛ̅ϭⲓ ⲛ̅ⲥⲱⲧ`ⲡ̀ ⲙⲛ̅ ⲛ̅ⲙⲟⲛⲟⲭⲟⲥ [ⲛⲁⲓ̈] ⲛ̅ⲧⲁⲩϭⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲙ̅ⲡⲓⲱⲧ`)" (120.23–121.1; text: Emmel, *Nag Hammadi Codex III,5*, 40, 42). And on the second page of the text, "You are [the] thinking and the [complete] lack of anxiety of the single ones (ⲙⲟⲛⲟⲭⲟⲥ). [Hear] us again, as you heard your elect ones (ⲥⲱⲧⲡ), who by your sacrifice will enter by means of their good works (ⲛ̅ⲧⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ [ⲡ]ⲙⲉⲟⲩⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲧⲙ̅ⲛ̅ⲧⲁⲧⲣⲟⲟⲩ(ϣ) [ⲧ]ⲏⲣⲥ̅ ⲛ̅ⲙⲟⲛⲟⲭⲟⲥ· ⲡⲁⲗⲓⲛ ⲥⲱ[ⲧ]ⲙ̅ ⲉⲣⲟⲛ ⲕⲁⲧⲁⲑⲉ ⲛ̅ⲧⲁⲕⲥⲱⲧⲙ̅ ⲉⲛⲉⲕⲥⲱⲧⲡ̅ ⲛⲁⲓ̈ ⲝⲛ̅ ⲧⲉⲕⲡⲣⲟⲥⲫⲟ[ⲣ]ⲁ ⲉ.ⲛⲏⲟⲩ [= ⲉⲩⲛⲏⲟⲩ in note] ⲉⲝⲟⲩⲛ ⲝⲛ̅ ⲛⲉⲩⲝⲃⲏⲟⲩⲉ [ⲉⲧⲛⲁ]ⲛⲟⲩⲟⲩ)" (121.16–22; text: Emmel, *Nag Hammadi Codex III,5*, 42). Focussing on the 4th–5th century dating of the Nag Hammadi codices and as well the text's use of ⲙⲟⲛⲟⲭⲟⲥ (quite alike to our current take on *Gos. Thom.*), it has been suggested that *Dial. Sav.* might be a 4th century monastic composition, contrary to its former dating to the 2nd century; cf. Lundhaug, "*Dialogue of the Savior*," 337–38, 344–45.

[60] In 1958, Johannes Leipoldt says, "Der Text ist in seinem heutigen Bestande nicht alt. An drei Stellen erwähnt er Einsiedler (monachoi). An der ersten darf man wohl monachos = Einzelgänger nehmen ([logion] 16). An den beiden anderen dürfte aber eine verbreitete Askese vorausgesetzt sein (50 [= 49], 75). Man wird fragen, ob die Auserwählten, die einmal mit den monachoi zusammenerscheinen, manichäische Auserwählte sind (50 [= 49]).

that *Thomas* is not originally composed in the 4th century, we may still under-
stand its Coptic version to be a product of 4th–5th century monasticism, owing
to the production context of the Nag Hammadi codices. Whether Manichaeans
too have redacted the text of *Thomas* is an open question that yet needs a more
fully developed answer.[61] However, the reason why we presently linger on
Manichaeism is that they used and even quoted logion 23. We will now focus
on that logion in its two parts:

1. I will select you, one from a thousand and two from ten thousand (ϯⲛⲁⲥⲉⲧⲡ ⲧⲏⲛⲉ ⲟⲩⲁ
ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ ϣⲟ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲥⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ ⲧⲃⲁ),

2. and they will stand since they are single ones (ⲁⲩⲱ ⲥⲉⲛⲁⲱϩⲉ ⲉⲣⲁⲧⲟⲩ ⲉⲩⲟ ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ).

Part One consists first of an *explicit* saying on election ("I will select you")
followed by an *implicit* saying on the same election ("one from a thousand and
two from ten thousand"). Wolf-Peter Funk has published an important study
on the logion, where he first focusses on Part One, which turns out to be well-
attested outside *Thomas*. The earliest recorded use of Part One of logion 23 is
from the 2nd century; especially popular was the implicit saying with the num-
bers, but sometimes also in combination with the explicit saying on election.[62]

Jedenfalls führen uns diese Beobachtungen etwa ins vierte Jahrhundert" (Johannes Leipoldt,
"Ein neues Evangelium? Das koptische Thomasevangelium übersetzt und besprochen," *TLZ*
83 [1958]: 493–94). As for logion 49, he says, "Hier scheint verbreitetes Einsidlertum und
Manichäismus vorausgesetzt. Vgl. Spruch 75" (ibid., 488 n. 71). However, Leipoldt also
recognised that *Gos. Thom.* used older material, "Aber unser Sprüche-Sammler benutzt äl-
tere Quellen" (ibid., 494). One year later, Grant at first agrees with Leipoldt that *Gos. Thom.*
refers to "monks" (Robert M. Grant, "Notes on the Gospel of Thomas," *VC* 13 [1959]: 170),
but in an "Additional Note" he comes to change his mind and prefers the translation "single
ones/solitaries" instead (ibid., 179).

[61] On the basis of an analysis of logia 49 and 50, I have come to the conclusion that *Gos.
Thom.*, to some extent, may evidence Manichaean redaction: [1] In the peculiar use of the
expression "their image (ⲧⲟⲩϩⲓⲕⲱⲛ)" in *Gos. Thom.* (NHC II 42.1; text: Layton, "Gospel,"
72) and the *Kephalaia* (157.29; text: Hans J. Polotsky and Alexander Böhlig, *Kephalaia
Band 1: 1. Hälfte (Lieferung 1–10)* [Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1940], 157). [2] The strange
saying that the sign of God within humankind "is movement and rest (ⲟⲩⲕⲓⲙ ⲡⲉ ⲙⲛ̄
ⲟⲩⲁⲛⲁⲡⲁⲩⲥⲓⲥ)" (NHC II 42.6–7; text: Layton, "Gospel," 72) may have originated from the
Manichaean idea that the divine light 'rests' in heaven, in opposition to the divine but fallen
light that 'randomly moves' on earth; cf. René Falkenberg, "A Manichaean Reading of the
Gospel of Thomas," in *Manichaeism and Early Christianity: Selected Papers from the 2019
Pretoria Congress and Consultation* (ed. Johannes van Oort; NHMS 99; Leiden: Brill,
2020), 113–21. What makes Manichaean influence on *Gos. Thom.* a plausible possibility is
that Manichaeism came to Egypt almost a century before the production of the Nag Ham-
madi codices, thus providing ample time for Manichaean redaction to occur in the Coptic
stage of *Gos. Thom.*'s transmission; cf. ibid., 99.

[62] All in all, Funk lists eleven attestations: [1] Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I 24.6 (cf.
Funk, "Einer aus Tausend," 85), which is our earliest occurrence of the reuse of logion 23
(i.e. the 2nd century); [2] Origen of Alexandria, *Peri Pascha* I 101 (cf. Funk, "Einer aus

Of the eleven parallels that Funk presents, he finds only one to witness *both* Part One and Part Two of logion 23. This parallel is Manichaean and occurs in the *Kephalaia* chapter 119, here presented together with logion 23:

I have [selected] you, one [among a thousand], two among ten thousand, in the likeness of the First Man. (*Kephalaia* 285.24–25)[63]

I will select you, one from a thousand and two from ten thousand, and they will stand since they are single ones. (Logion 23; NHC II 38.1–3)[64]

Tausend," 85), which is especially interesting since the implicit saying on election in Part One of logion 23 seems quoted as if it was biblical, "As it (= scripture?) says, 'Maybe one [out of] a thousand, two out of ten thousand', [among whom] the blessed apostles also are (ὡς λέγει, εἷς που [ἐκ] χιλίων καὶ δύο ἐκ μυρίων, [ὧν] καὶ οἱ μ[α]κάριοι ἀπόστολοι [ὑπ]ῆρχον)" (text: Bernd Witte, *Die Schrift des Origenes "Über das Passa": Textausgabe und Kommentar* [ASKÄ 4; Altenberge: Oros, 1993], 126), thus indicating that Origen considered the saying of *Gos. Thom.* canonical; [3] Epiphanius, *Panarion* XXIV 5.4 (cf. Funk, "Einer aud Tausend," 86), which is reusing *Adversus Haereses* I 24.6; [4] *Pistis Sophia* 350.11–12 (cf. Funk, "Einer aus Tausend," 86); [5] the Mandaean *Right Ginza* 305 (cf. Funk, "Einer aus Tausend," 86); [6] the Manichaean *Psalm-Book* II 4.19–20 (cf. Funk, "Einer aus Tausend," 85–86); [7] a Manichaean *Monday-Hymn* in the Parthian M763 (cf. Funk, "Einer aus Tausend," 87); [8] a Manichaean fragment in the Parthian "Hs. T II D 129 [= M5805]" (cf. Funk, "Einer aus Tausend," 87 n. 47); [9] a Manichaean fragment in the Sogdian M635 (cf. Funk, "Einer aus Tausend," 87 n. 47); [10] the Manichaean *Kephalaia* chapter 76 (187.32–188.1) and [11] chapter 119 (285.24–25) (cf. Funk, "Einer aus Tausend," 87). As for the six Manichaean parallels to logion 23, cf. also Nils Arne Pedersen et al., eds., *The New Testament Gospels in Manichaean Tradition: The Sources in Syriac, Greek, Coptic, Middle Persian, Parthian, Sogdian, Bactrian, New Persian, and Arabic: With Appendices on the Gospel of Thomas and Diatessaron* (CFM Biblia Manichaica II; Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), 380.

[63] ⲁ̈ⲓ̈[ⲥ]ⲁⲧⲡ̄ ⲧⲏⲛ[ⲉ] ⲟⲩⲉ [ϩⲛ̄ ϣⲟ] ⲥⲛⲉⲩ ϩⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲧⲃⲁ ⲁⲡⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲙⲡϣⲁⲣⲡ ⲛ̄ⲣⲱⲙⲉ (text: Wolf-Peter Funk, *Kephalaia I (Der Berliner Kodex P. 15996): Zweite Hälfte (Seite 244–291). Neu Herausgeben von Wolf-Peter Funk* [Unpublished private edition; Quebéc: Chez l'éditeur, 2019], 284). I am grateful to W.-P. Funk for generously sharing his unpublished edition of the *Kephalaia*, which considerably improves the *editio princeps* of Alexander Böhlig (*Kephalaia Band I: Zweite Hälfte. Lieferung 11–12 (Seite 244–291)* [Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1966]). Contrary to Böhlig, Funk's edition attests the present *kephalaion* number, "119 (ⲣ̄ⲓ̄ⲑ̄)," and part of its title, "[…] First Ma[n …] ([. .]. ϣ[ⲁ]ⲣ̄ⲡ̄ ⲛ̄ⲣⲱ[ⲙⲉ . . .])" (*Kephalaia* 284.19–20; text: Funk, *Kephalaia*, 284), thus enabling us to determine the exact beginning of chapter 119 (i.e. 284.19) and the First Man as its overall theme. For an introduction to this figure in Manichaean myth, cf. Nicholas J. Baker-Brian, *Manichaeism: An Ancient Faith Rediscivered* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 110–13.

[64] ϯⲛⲁⲥⲉⲧⲡ ⲧⲏⲛⲉ ⲟⲩⲁ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ ϣⲟ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲥⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ ⲧⲃⲁ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲥⲉⲛⲁϣϩⲉ ⲉⲣⲁⲧⲟⲩ ⲉⲩⲟ ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ (text: Layton, "Gospel," 64).

In chapter 119, we have a fine quotation of Part One of logion 23.[65] The main difference is that Jesus is the speaker in *Thomas*, whereas Mani is the speaker in chapter 119.[66] However, Part Two of logion 23 ("and they will stand since they are single ones") does not parallel chapter 119 ("in the likeness of the First Man"), which instead seems to urge the Manichaean elect to imitate the First Man. Yet, on the same page, a few lines before, occurs a striking parallel to Part Two, where we find the First Man as role model for the elect:

He (= the First Man) was called Unique because he stood firm (ⲧⲱⲕ ⲁⲣⲉⲧ⸗), alone as a single one (ⲟⲩⲉ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲱⲧ), in the midst of his enemies. (*Kephalaia* 285.18–20)[67]

When combining this text with the one above ("in the likeness of the First Man"), we actually find alignment with Part Two of logion 23.[68] Both use the notion of the "single one(s)," ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ in logion 23 and ⲟⲩⲉ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲱⲧ in chapter 119, and both share the important concept of "standing."[69] Even if the wording in chapter 119 is not fully identical with Part Two of logion 23, I will confirm Wolf-Peter Funk's suggestion that we here have significant points of contact between *Thomas* (i.e. the elect ones "stand as single ones") and the *Kephalaia* (i.e. the elect one, imitating the First Man, "stands firm as a single one"). Therefore, the *Kephalaia* chapter 119 quotes Part One and paraphrases Part Two, which indicates that the Manichaean text is dependent on both parts of logion 23.

In addition to Funk's example in chapter 119, a similar kind of Manichaean reuse of logion 23 may also be at work in the *Kephalaia* chapter 76:[70]

I have selected each one from among many [… I], a single Mani (ⲟⲩⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲭ̄ⲥ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲱⲧ), came to the world and […] all the mighty ones of the world moved (ⲕⲓⲙ), a disturbance [arose] from me. If there ever was a way that t[wo] Manis (ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲭ̄ⲥ ⲥⲛ̣[ⲉⲩ]) [came] to the world, what places could bear them or [what lands would] welcome them? (*Kephalaia* 187.32–188.6)[71]

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[65] Other minor differences are found in the tenses, Perfect in the *Kephalaia* (ⲁⲓ̈[ⲥ]ⲁⲧⲡ̄) and Future in *Gos. Thom.* (ϯⲛⲁⲥⲉⲧⲡ), and in the prepositions, "among (ϩⲛ̄)" in the *Kephalaia* and "from (ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄)" in *Gos. Thom.*

[66] This also happens when logion 44 is quoted twice in the *Kephalaia* from Dublin. In the first quotation, Jesus is the speaker (416.12–16), and in the quotation on the page following, Mani utters the exact same words (417.25–29); cf. Funk, "Einer aus Tausend," 80–81.

[67] ⲁⲩⲙⲟ[ⲩⲧ]ⲉ ⲁ[ⲣ]ⲁϥ ϫⲉ ⲙⲟⲛⲟⲅⲉⲛⲏⲥ ⲉⲡⲉⲓⲇⲏ ⲁϥⲧⲱⲕ ⲁⲣⲉⲧϥ ⲟⲩⲁϩⲉ[ⲧ]ϥ ⲟⲩⲉ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲱⲧ ϩⲛ̄ ⲧ[ⲙ]ⲏ̣ⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉϥϫⲁϫⲉ (text: Funk, *Kephalaia*, 284).

[68] Funk, "Einer aus Tausend," 87–92, esp. 90 n. 58.

[69] In logion 23, ⲱϩⲉ ⲉⲣⲁⲧ⸗ means "to stand" (lit. "to stand on one's feet"), simply referring to the physical posture of standing. In chapter 119, ⲧⲱⲕ ⲁⲣⲉⲧ⸗ translates "to stand firm" (lit. "to be strong on one's feet"), referring to standing strong or even standing in opposition to someone else, alike to the First Man who "stood firm … in the midst of his enemies."

[70] Here, Funk mentions only the first sentence (187.32–188.1) as a likely parallel to logion 23 (Funk, "Einer aus Tausend," 87–88).

[71] ⲁⲓⲥⲱⲧⲡ ⲛ̄ϩⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲉ ⲟⲩⲉ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ ⲟⲩⲧⲱ ⲛ̄ⲙⲏⲛϣⲉ ϣⲱ[. . . . . ⲁⲛⲁⲕ] ⲟⲩⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲭ̄ⲥ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲱⲧ ⲛⲧⲁⲓ̈ ⲉⲓ ⲁⲡⲕⲟⲥⲙⲟⲥ ⲁⲩⲱ [. . . .]. . ⲁ ⲛϭⲁⲙ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ ⲙ̄ⲡⲕⲟⲥⲙⲟⲥ ⲕⲓⲙ ⲁⲩϣⲧⲁⲣⲧⲣ ϣ[ⲱⲡⲉ ⲙ̄]ⲡⲁⲙⲏⲧ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ ⲉⲛⲉ

Part One with logion 23's explicit saying on election ("I will select you") finds a parallel in chapter 76 ("I have selected"), which is strengthened by the reuse of logion 23's implicit saying on election ("one from a thousand and two from ten thousand"), although less precisely in chapter 76 ("each one from among many").[72] Of the two Mani figures in chapter 76, focus is on the first, "a single (ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲧ) Mani," who causes "all the mighty ones of the world" to be "moved (ⲕⲓⲙ)." This may parallel Part Two of logion 23 ("they will stand since they are single [ⲟⲩⲱⲧ] ones"), since the negative movement of the worldly rulers reciprocates the positive status of the "single Mani" as *not* being "moved," i.e. as unmoved (or standing firm). Thus, chapter 76 can be said to present an allusion to logion 23's Part One (i.e. "I have selected each one from among many") and seemingly also to paraphrase Part Two (i.e. the unmoved [or firmly standing] "single [ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲧ] Mani").

So, building on the important findings of Wolf-Peter Funk, we can now confirm that all of his eleven parallels rather strongly attest Part One of logion 23 ("I have selected you, one from a thousand and two from ten thousand"), which is found in other sources as far back as the 2nd century. Hence, Part One must have been extant in the early text of *Thomas*. However, logion 23's Part One in tandem with Part Two is *not* equally strongly attested outside *Thomas*. Only two Manichaean texts seem to confirm such a combination, namely the *Kephalaia* chapters 76 and 119. These two chapters quote or allude to Part One, but their attestation of Part Two is weaker, since they only seem to paraphrase "the standing single ones," which indicates that they did not invent Part Two, but instead used the later and rewritten Coptic version of *Thomas* as their model.[73]

Now, exactly *when* did the Manichaean use of this form of logion 23 take place? The two chapters of the *Kephalaia* are from the Medinet Madi codices,

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ⲧϩⲉ ϩⲱϥ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲭⲥ̄ ⲥⲛ̄[ⲉⲩ ⲉⲓ] ⲁⲡⲕⲟⲥⲙⲟⲥ ⲉⲣⲉ ⲉϣ ⲛ̄ⲙⲁ ⲛⲁϣⲃⲓ ϩⲁⲣⲁⲩ ⲏ ⲉⲣⲉ [ⲉϣ ⲛ̄ⲕⲁϩ ϣ]ⲉⲩⲡⲟⲇⲉⲭⲉ ⲛ̄ⲙⲁⲩ (text: Polotsky and Böhlig, *Kephalaia*, 187–88).

[72] This allusion to logion 23 in chapter 76 occurs in another Manichaean text, which in addition even quotes the same logion, namely the Parthian M763, "*Selected* and chosen you are *from among many*, one among thousand and two among ten thousand" (translation: Pedersen et al., *New Testament Gospels*, 380). Logion 23 is here quoted together with an allusion to Matt 22:14 ("many [πολλοί] are called but few selected [ἐκλεκτοί]"), which is the case in chapter 76 too. – Furthermore, the two numbers from logion 23's implicit saying on election, "one (ⲟⲩⲁ) … two (ⲥⲛⲁⲩ)," may also have been reused in chapter 76, "each one (ⲟⲩⲉ ⲟⲩⲉ) … t[wo] (ⲥⲛ̄[ⲉⲩ]) Manis."

[73] As for the relationship between *Gos. Thom.* and Manichaeism, we can be sure that Manichaeans used and cherished the text. This is confirmed by the recent volume of the reference work *Biblia Manichaica*, where 73 parallels are attested between *Gos. Thom.* and the Manichaean sources; cf. Pedersen et al., *New Testament Gospels*, 371–93; Falkenberg, "Manichaean Reading," 100–13. Of these 73 examples, 67 are Manichaean allusions whereas six are quotations of *Gos. Thom.*

which also were produced in the 4th–5th century.[74] Consequently, we can conclude that logion 23's Part One together with Part Two is not attested *anywhere else* before the 4th century, since the reception of Part One together with Part Two is only found outside *Thomas* in the 4th–5th century Manichaean material. Subsequently, we are justified in assuming that Part Two, in contrast to Part One, does *not* belong to the early text of *Thomas*, but has instead been added to the text in the course of its textual transmission sometime during the 4th–5th centuries. If Manichaeans are not responsible for adding Part Two to logion 23, Christian monks are the most likely candidates to have done so in the Coptic version of *Thomas*.

4. Conclusions

The Greek noun μοναχός is attested from the 4th century onwards, when monasticism arose in Egypt. The noun designates the social category of a "monk" that lives in community with other monks, a "single one" living among other single ones. In the Coptic version of *Thomas*, this noun surprisingly appears as ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ or ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ, which needs explanation since the text usually is dated to the 1st–2nd century. Relying on the study of Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott, I have here followed their suggestion that the production of the Nag Hammadi codices (where *Thomas* is found) took place in a 4th–5th century monastic environment. So, at that time monks read and copied *Thomas*. Since ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ occurs in the text and since μοναχός is not attested before the 4th century, I suggested that monks did more than just read and copy *Thomas*, they also *changed* the text to fit their own circumstances in a monastic milieu.

To prove such a late redaction of *Thomas*, the Greek witnesses (3rd century) of logia 4 and 30 were compared to their Coptic version (4th–5th century) in order to highlight the textual fluidity of the text. In logion 4, small differences were detected that indicated the negotiation of age difference among monks, especially when read together with the *Bohairic Life of Pachomius*. The Greek and Coptic logion 30 attested even more textual fluidity, clearly demonstrating, that the Coptic text of *Thomas* is just as fluid as is the case with other Nag

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[74] A 4th century dating is suggested on the basis of paleography (cf. Carl Schmidt and Hans J. Polotsky, *Mani-Fund in Ägypten: Originalschriften des Mani und seiner Schüler* [SPAW.PH; Berlin: Akademie des Wissenschaften, 1933], 35, 84), whereas a 4th–5th century dating is based on radiocarbon tests of codex samples, thus indicating this dating range for all seven Medinet Madi codices (cf. Jason BeDuhn and Greg Hodgins, "The Date of the Manichaean Codices from Medinet Madi, and its Significance" in *Manichaeism East and West* [ed. Samuel Lieu et al.; CFM Analecta Manichaica I; Turnhout: Brepols, 2017], 21–22). BeDuhn and Hodgins say in conclusion, "it is most probable that the Medinet Madi codices date to somewhere within the last quarter of the 4th century to the early decades of the 5th centuries AD" (ibid., 22).

Hammadi writings. Furthermore, I took Harold W. Attridge's suggestion that the nomenclature of the "single one" in the Coptic version relies on the Greek text of logion 30, as attested in P. Oxy. 1.25 *verso* (εἷς and μόνος). Thus, ογα ογωτ/μοναχος were either translated from εἷς/μόνος or even added to the text of *Thomas*.

Then we analysed other logia that use μοναχος and ογα ογωτ, which occur in social, scriptural, and soteriological contexts. In a monastic reading, the social context of logion 16 indicates disputes among higher- and lower-ranking monks. In the scriptural context, logion 22 presents male and female monks as imitators of the original male-female human being in a special interpretation of Gen 1:27. Moreover, this logion may also address a mixed audience of both male and female monks. In the soteriological context of the single ones, *Thomas* focuses on them as elect (logion 23) who ultimately will come to enter heaven, i.e., the kingdom (logion 49) or wedding hall (logion 75).

I followed Michael A. Williams' suggestion that *Thomas* displays a technical use of "standing as single ones" in logia 16 ("and they will stand since they are single ones [μοναχος]") and 23 ("and they will stand since they are single ones [ογα ογωτ]"). This technical use finds support in the widespread practice of contemporary exemplary monks, who physically "stand" as part of the ideal service to their people and godhead. Also the *Bohairic Life of Pachomius* attests to such a practice of standing monks. Even if the two sentences conclude the logia in which they occur, none of them connects to the general theme of each logion. Thus, the final sentences of these logia fail to sum up or provide each logion with coherent meaning. The simplest explanation of such a redundancy is that these technical sentences were added later to logia 16 and 23 in the course of textual transmission.

Lastly, I analysed the reception-history of logion 23, which for heuristic reasons was divided into part one ("I will select you, one from a thousand and two from ten thousand") and part two ("and they will stand since they are single ones"). I here relied on Wolf-Peter Funk's study that presents eleven strong attestations – from the 2nd century onwards – of part one of logion 23. Two of the eleven testimonies also parallel part two, though not as much as part one. Since these two testimonies are from Manichaean sources dating to the 4th–5th century, part one and part two are not attested together outside of *Thomas* before the 4th century. Together with our observation that the final sentences of logia 16 and 23 are redundant in each logion's context, the reception-historical analysis of logion 23 further strengthened the conclusion that the sentence, "and they will stand since they are single ones" (both logia 16 and 23), was not part of the early text of *Thomas*.

To sum up our findings: a monastic reader most likely supplied *Thomas* with the technical nomenclature of μοναχος and ογα ογωτ in the 4th–5th century in order to make the text more meaningful in his or her life as one among other Egyptian single ones, i.e. monks. In such a monastic reading of *Thomas*, male

and female monks are described as an elect minority set apart from a non-elect majority, living a double life in regard to temporality (both current and eschatological forms of existence) and spatiality (both earthly and heavenly forms of existence). Without losing sight of the eschatological and heavenly ideals, these readers are with *Thomas* in hand reminded of their present and earthly conditions in everyday life, however cumbersome, when negotiating contemporary issues of age, disputes, gender, and election with their fellow monks.

Finally, I want to point out further implications of the present study. Here I have operated with the idea of "an early text" and "a later text" of *Thomas*; that is, the 1st–2nd century of its "original" composition (as attested by, e.g., the Greek fragments) in relation to its 4th–5th century manuscript context (as attested by the Coptic text). Such a dating range has been adopted for heuristic reasons in order to highlight the elements of revision and rewriting in the fluid textual tradition of *Thomas*. The weak point in such heuristics is the assumption of a so-called "original" composition. I think my study has demonstrated clearly that *Thomas* is not as stable a text as we would like it to be. In fact, the present form of the Coptic text shows how difficult it is to date the "original" text of *Thomas*, since it most likely continued to evolve from the 1st–2nd to the 4th–5th centuries, where it only stopped evolving when it was buried in the ground with the other Nag Hammadi texts.

Much effort has hitherto been invested in studies of the "early text" of *Thomas*, and rightly so because the text is an important sibling of New Testament texts; but we are able to say more about its current shape and why it later on became so popular outside the emerging Bible canon. It is my view that new and fruitful ways to revisit *Thomas* and its latest readers will emerge from further studies in its *manuscript* context.

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The *Gospel of Thomas* in a Monastic Context: Reading the Text as a Spiritual Exercise

André Gagné

This essay aims at offering an assessment, which is by no means complete or exhaustive, of the way scholars read and understand the Nag Hammadi codices, and more specifically the *Gospel of Thomas*.

1. The Dating Game

By way of introduction, I would like to briefly compare the Nag Hammadi discovery with another more famous find, that is, the Dead Sea Scrolls. Both the Nag Hammadi Codices (1945) and the Dead Sea Scrolls (1947), discovered in the mid-1940s, are of tremendous importance for our understanding of religious groups in Antiquity. The Dead Sea discovery captured more attention than the Nag Hammadi texts, causing a shockwave in the scientific community and the general public. The texts found at Qumran are usually classified into three categories: first, Biblical texts (every book of the Bible is represented, except the book of Esther); second, non-canonical literature from the Second temple period (Enoch, Jubilees, etc.); and third, sectarian writings (*pesharim*, community rules, and letters). In many cases, the Dead Sea Scrolls library contains multiple copies of the same texts. We are now quite aware of the profound impact of the Qumran discovery for our understanding of Second Temple Judaism, since the finding also provided insight into how the Hebrew Bible was transmitted over time. The scrolls are a window into how sectarian Judaic groups interpreted the Jewish scriptures and give a somewhat clear idea of the beliefs and practices of people at the time of their writing. This is what I think should also be one of the aims of Nag Hammadi scholars; a difficult task when less material is readily available to them.

The Nag Hammadi texts had been discovered two years earlier, in December 1945, but received much less publicity.[1] As the story goes, two Egyptian peasants discovered thirteen codices containing fifty-two Coptic tractates, near Nag

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[1] One version of the story of the Nag Hammadi discovery can be found in James M. Robinson, "From the Cliff to Cairo. The Story of the Discoverers and the Middlemen of the Nag Hammadi Codices," in *Colloque international sur les textes de Nag Hammadi. Québec,*

Hammadi, near the site of several Pachomian monasteries.[2] These texts contain over 1200 pages of papyri, and among the tractates of Codex II is the *Gospel of Thomas*.[3] Scholars are still quite divided on the date of composition[4] and the place of writing of this collection of sayings.[5] In terms of the place of composition, some are of the opinion that the name Didymus Judas Thomas – and its

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22–25 août 1978. (ed. Bernard Barc; BCNH.É 1; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1981), 21–58.

[2] There are only six texts that are found in multiple copies: *Gos. Eg.* (NHC III,2; IV,2), *Gos. Truth* (NHC I,3; XII,2), *Orig. World* (NHC II,5; XII,2), *Eugnostos* (NHC III,3; V,1), *Wis. Jes. Chr.* (NHC III,4 + BG,3), *Ap. John* (NHC II,1; III,1 + BG,2).

[3] For more on the *status quaestionis* on *Gos. Thom.*, see Francis T. Fallon and Ron Cameron, "The Gospel of Thomas: A Forschungsbericht and Analysis," *ANRW* II.25.6 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1988), 4195–251; Stephen J. Patterson, "The Gospel of Thomas and the Synoptic Tradition: A Forschungsbericht and Critique," *Forum* 8 (1992): 45–97; Gregory J. Riley, "The Gospel of Thomas in Recent Scholarship," *CRBS* 2 (1994): 227–52; Nicholas Perrin, "Recent Trends in Gospel of Thomas Research (1991–2006): Part I, The Historical Jesus and the Synoptic Gospels," *CRBS* 5 (2007): 183–206; Nicholas Perrin and Christopher W. Skinner, "Recent Trends in *Gospel of Thomas* Research (1989–2011). Part II: Genre, Theology, and Relationship to the Gospel of John," *CRBS* 11 (2012): 65–86; Christopher W. Skinner, *What are they Saying about the Gospel of Thomas*? (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2012).

[4] Some explored ways of dating the collection by looking at the manuscript covers; see Berthe van Regemorter, "La reliure des manuscrits gnostiques découverts à Nag Hamadi [sic]," *Scriptorium* 14 (1960): 225–34; Jean Doresse, "Les reliures des manuscrits gnostiques coptes découverts à Khénoboskion," *RdE* 13 (1961): 43–45; James M. Robinson, "The Construction of the Nag Hammadi Codices," *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honour of Pahor Labib* (ed. Martin Krause; NHS 6; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 170–90, and Linda K. Ogden, "The Binding of Codex II," in *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7 together with XIII,2*, Brit. Lib. OR. 4926(1), and P. Oxy 1, 654, 655* (ed. Bentley Layton; NHS Vol. 1; Leiden: Brill, 1989), 19–25.

[5] See the debate between Klijn and Ehlers, which has certainly fueled the discussion: Albertus Frederik Johannes Klijn, "Das Thomasevangelium und das altsyrische Christentum," *VC* 15 (1961): 146–59; Barbara Ehlers, "Kann das Thomasevangelium aus Edessa stammen? Ein Beitrag zur Frühgeschichte des Christentums in Edessa," *NovT* 12 (1970): 284–317; A. F. J. Klijn, "Christianity in Edessa and the Gospel of Thomas: On Barbara Ehlers, 'Kann das Thomasevangelium aus Edessa stammen?'" *NovT* 14 (1972): 70–77. In more recent research, April D. DeConick dates what she calls the "kernel" of *Gos. Thom.*, which would have originated in Jerusalem between 30–50 CE. Others like John D. Crossan and Thomas Zöckler date the first stratum of *Gos. Thom.* around 50 CE in Jerusalem under the patronage of James. The Antiochene (Syria) connection is privileged by Michel Desjardins and Pierluigi Piovanelli between 50–70 CE. See April D. DeConick, *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas: A History of the Gospel and Its Growth* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 153; Michel Desjardins, "Where was the Gospel of Thomas Written?" *Toronto Journal of Theology* 8 (1992): 121–33; John D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1991), 427; Thomas Zöckler, *Jesu Lehren im Thomasevangelium* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 23–25; Pierluigi Piovanelli, "Thomas in Edessa? Another Look at the Original Setting of the *Gospel of Thomas*,"

comparison with the Acts of Thomas – suggests that the Thomasine gospel could have originated from Edessa, in Syria.[6] Scholars tentatively try to date Thomas either in the first century CE – relying on the assumption that a sayings collection (as a genre) would place the text around the same time as "Q" (30–50s) –, or somewhere in the second century CE because of the three Greek Oxyrhynchus fragments which scholars have dated between 200–250 CE.[7] It is however highly problematic to take the Oxyrhynchus fragments as evidence that the *Gospel of Thomas* was a complete text in the second century CE, and there is no real evidence that it existed in the first century. Grenfell and Hunt did not initially establish any link between P. Oxy. 655 and the two other fragments (P. Oxy. 1 and 654). At first, they thought that fragment 655 derived from a gospel which could have been written in Egypt before 150 CE. Connections are made for the first time between the *Gospel of Thomas* and the P. Oxy. fragments in 1954 by H.-C. Puech.[8] Since then, scholars have continued to see P. Oxy. 1, 654, and 655 as evidence of the existence of the *Gospel of Thomas* as early as the second century CE.[9] Are these fragments to be regarded as proof that an early Greek version of the *Gospel of Thomas* existed? It is really difficult to say. First, the three fragments are all independent from one another; second, the order and content of some of the sayings vary; third, most of the sayings have to be restored, and the guesswork rests mainly on what scholars read in the Coptic version of Thomas and/or sayings found in the New Testament gospels. In fact, the least damaged fragment is P. Oxy. 1, which seems to correspond to *logia* 26–33, and even there, *logion* 30 is combined with the first part of saying 77. Could it be more prudent to see these fragments as simply independent scraps of papyri containing sayings of Jesus? Maybe scholars should refer to P. Oxy. 1, 654, and 655 as "Jesus Sayings at Oxyrhynchus"

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in *Myths, Martyrs, and Modernity: Studies in the History of Religions in Honour of Jan N. Bremmer* (ed. Jitse Dijkstra, Justin Kroesen, and Yme Kuiper; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 443–61.

[6] For thorough review and assessment of the questions surrounding the Edessan origin of the *Gos. Thom.*, see J. Gregory Given, "'Finding' the *Gospel of Thomas* in Edessa." *JECS* 25 (2017): 501-30.

[7] Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt, eds., *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* Part IV (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1904), 28; also Charles W. Hedrick, "An Anecdotal Argument for the Independence of the *Gospel of Thomas* from the Synoptic Gospels," in *For the Children, Perfect Instruction: Studies in Honor of Hans-Martin Schenke on the Occasion of the Berliner Arbeitskreis für koptisch-gnostische Schriften's Thirtieth Year* (ed. Hans-Gebhard Bethge et al.; NHMS 54; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 114–16.

[8] Jean Doresse, *L'Évangile selon Thomas. Les paroles secrètes de Jésus* (Monaco: Le Rocher, 1988), 39.

[9] See for example Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Oxyrhynchus Logoi of Jesus and the Coptic Gospel According to Thomas," in *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1974), 355–433.

instead of a Greek version of the *Gospel of Thomas*?[10] In any case, these P. Oxy. fragments still allow for partial, though important, comparisons with the Coptic text of the *Gospel of Thomas*. They are helpful in understanding the evolution of certain Jesus sayings which later became part of the *Gospel of Thomas* at Nag Hammadi.

Now concerning Thomas and the New Testament, some scholars still pursue the inquiry into whether or not the *Gospel of Thomas* is dependent or independent of the synoptic gospels.[11] We are currently at a complete standstill, and there seems to be no reason to continue debating this question; we might never reach a consensus. Maybe this incessant quest comes from the fact that most people working on *Gospel of Thomas* have been New Testament scholars, and very few have actually specialized themselves in the Nag Hammadi corpus as a whole. In any case, the only reliable and complete text of *Gospel of Thomas* is the Coptic version dated to the fourth century. It might therefore be best to work with what is available instead of postulating and reconstructing a possible Greek *Vorlage* of Thomas, based on comparative philological work with the New Testament.

Other arguments for an early date for Thomas come from what is considered to be early *testimonia* found in quotes from Christian writers of the second and third centuries CE. H. W. Attridge gives a list in Brill's critical edition, but even there, only one *testimonium* can be considered reliable.[12] In reality, scholars have no real evidence for the existence of a complete text of the *Gospel of Thomas* other than the version found at Nag Hammadi. It is quite possible that the Thomasine gospel grew over time, as one readily sees with April De-Conick's rolling corpus proposal. However, the reconstruction of stages of accretions based on what is understood as crises in the Thomasine community is,

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[10] If such a nomenclature is to be adopted, it could also be applied to other Oxyrhynchus texts where the figure of Jesus appears, and as a result, we could simply refer to this material as "Jesus at Oxyrhynchus" or "The Oxyrhynchus Jesus Stories" or something along those lines; for example, P. Oxy. 210, 840, 1224, 5072. This might not apply to an Oxyrhynchus fragment which is *clearly* identified as a copy of a New Testament or other apocryphal text; but then again, scholars might want to re-evaluate the criteria used in determining a copy or variant of an existing text.

[11] For recent work on the relationship between Thomas and the New Testament, see Simon Gathercole, *The Composition of the Gospel of Thomas: Original Language and Influences* (SNTSMS 151; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) and Mark Goodacre, *Thomas and the Gospels: The Making of an Apocryphal Text* (London: SPCK, 2012); also Stephen J. Patterson, "The Gospel of (Judas) Thomas and the Synoptic Problem," in *New Studies in the Synoptic Problem: The Oxford Conference, April 2008* (ed. Paul Foster, Andrew Gregory, John S. Kloppenborg, and Joseph Verheyden; BETL 239; Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 783–808.

[12] Harold W. Attridge, "Gospel of Thomas: Greek Fragments," in *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7 together with XIII,2*, Brit. Lib. OR. 4926(1), and P. Oxy. 1, 654, 655* (ed. Bentley Layton; 2 vols.; NHS 20–21; Leiden: Brill, 1989), 1:103–9.

in my humble opinion, too speculative. This dating game also stems from the way scholars interact with the second and third century heresy hunters, where researchers try to compare what is read in Irenaeus of Lyon with the myths found in the *Apocryphon of John*, for example. This is surely interesting, but even such comparisons are imperfect, and discrepancies are found between the many myths. Simply put, what one reads in the Nag Hammadi codices does not correspond perfectly to what the heresiologists were saying. All this brings us to a problem concerning research on the Nag Hammadi collection since its dis-covery: scholars have been building their ideas about this collection on very little evidence, including the work of the present author. I construct my own work – like all of us do – on the arguments and hypotheses of others, and I wonder if our assessment of the material is sufficiently founded on the empir-ical evidence we have, as is required of genuine scientific inquiry, or if we have been operating in the realm of wishful thinking, such as dating texts too early, and as a result, are we misunderstanding the collection we have before us?

2. How Can One Read Thomas?

Returning to our initial question: How should one read the *Gospel of Thomas* found in the Nag Hammadi collection? Very little work in Thomasine research has been devoted to the meaning of the collection of sayings as a whole. How could a plausible historical implied reader have interpreted this text? Can one aspire to find *Thomas'* own internal logic, and does the text have any coherent meaning? In 1987, Jean-Marie Sevrin already raised this issue insisting that scholars first needed to approach the text on its own terms, and engage in its exegesis, without of course ignoring its literary and doctrinal background, but focusing primarily on its own coherence, that is, figuring out what it has to say, and how it says what it says?[13] According to Sevrin, one should engage in what he calls "une exégèse différentielle," that is:

… une analyse qui ne se borne pas à inventorier les similitudes et les divergences pour ins-crire ou non les textes dans une histoire commune, mais qui cherche à reconstruire, par con-traste, le fonctionnement propre à chaque texte: ce qu'il dit, comment il le dit […] Il n'est légitime d'interpréter l'EvTh à partir d'éclairages extérieurs et de le situer dans une trajec-toire historique qu'après avoir mené à bien, ou du moins suffisamment conduit, une telle

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[13] Jean-Marie Sevrin, "Un groupement de trois paraboles contre les richesses dans l'Évangile selon Thomas. EvTh 63, 64, 65," in *Les Paraboles évangéliques. Perspectives nouvelles. XIIᵉ Congrès de l'ACFEB, Lyon 1987* (ed. Jean Delorme; Lectio Divina 135; Pa-ris: Cerf, 1989), 426.

interprétation du texte à partir de lui-même, sans quoi l'on y projettera fatalement ce qu'on s'attend à y trouver."[14]

Such a perspective was also espoused by Philip Sellew a few years later:

I suggest that we should now seek literary questions and literary answers about the *Gospel of Thomas*. […] The text obviously must have meant something, […] perhaps the arrangement or sequence of statements and groups of statements *does* indeed convey meaning, though not necessarily the sort of meaning that we see even in other gospel sayings or in wisdom books. To explore this possibility requires adopting a more literary sensibility, a focusing of attention on reading the text in its own terms, searching out its hermeneutical soteriology. The task is difficult, and the meanings provided by stark juxtapositions are not always obvious. Perhaps that obscurity is part of the point.[15]

To better understand the possible *milieu* of the *Gospel of Thomas*, it might be time for us to ask what the text *means* or how ancient readers / audiences could have read and understood these sayings. This goes along the lines of something Stephen Patterson admitted a few years ago:

Thomas, interestingly, operates on a heuristic model that might be regarded as thoroughly post-modern: the real meaning of the text resides not in the text itself, but in the reader, the seeker after wisdom and insight. […] When the implied author indicates that the meaning of the text will not be obvious, our approach must be completely different. Interpreting Thomas must be a matter not of disclosing the intended meaning of the implied author, but rather, exploring the possibilities of meaning that a particular saying might hold for an ancient reader / hearer. […] One should probably assume that the author, or more properly, the collector, is content not to give the seeker too much of an agenda, but to leave more room for thought.[16]

The *incipit* of the *Gospel of Thomas* invites readers to find the interpretation of Jesus' secret sayings. At first, the *Gospel of Thomas* seems to be a disorganized collection of sayings, loosely connected by catchwords, but the opening lines stress the idea that the sayings are to be interpreted, so this clearly has some implications; something is expected from the readers. There is no reason to doubt that the implied author / compiler arranged the sayings in a meaningful

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[14] Jean-Marie Sevrin, "L'interprétation de l'Évangile selon Thomas, entre tradition et rédaction," in *The Nag Hammadi Library After Fifty Years. Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration* (ed. John D. Turner and Anne McGuire; NHMS 44; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 355–57.

[15] Philip Sellew, "The Gospel of Thomas: Prospects for Future Research," in *The Nag Hammadi Library After Fifty Years. Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration* (ed. John D. Turner and Anne McGuire; NHMS 44; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 335; see also Melissa H. Sellew, "Reading Jesus in the Desert: The *Gospel of Thomas* meets the *Apophthegmata Patrum*," in *The Nag Hammadi Codices and Late Antique Egypt* (ed. Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott; STAC 110; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 81-106.

[16] See Stephen J. Patterson, "The Gospel of Thomas and Historical Jesus Research," *Coptica – Gnostica – Manichaica. Mélanges offerts à Wolf-Peter Funk* (ed. Louis Painchaud and Paul-Hubert Poirier; BCNH.É 7; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2006), 680.

way, with the purpose of inciting readers to find the text's internal logic.[17] If there is a purpose in reading Thomas, it might then be possible to understand the disorganized feature of this collection of sayings as a pedagogical tool used to teach secret wisdom. The *Gospel of Thomas* could then be characterized as a group of enigmatic sayings leading to salvation and transformation.[18] The quest leads the reader to build a network of sayings that are to be correctly linked to each other. Starting with a particular saying, one can then detect a chain of themes which link sayings together. Therefore, the meaning of the text unfolds like a cascade from one saying to another, as if one is literally running after the meaning of the text, which seems to slip away if one ceases to read! Readers must make out a complex network of themes and participate in the meaning of the text.[19] This network of meaning is elaborated intra-textually.

This way of constructing and reading texts is clearly attested in Antiquity. Charles Meunier, for example, explains how texts serve as a way to teach and train individuals in how to live:

(This method) gradually leads the reader from one theme to another, by offering newer aspects in the development of an argument. Progress is mainly made by association of ideas or variations from keywords or synonyms and sections of entire sentences that uncover in a veiled way the new theme [...]. This method, which has specific pedagogical goals, has been abundantly practiced in antiquity, especially by philosophers. It is not so much a way to expound on every topic, but rather, to alert and sensitize the listener or reader to a doctrine or teaching of life.[20]

The idea of "scripture as a veil" is close to what we read in Thomas, especially when the reader needs to "find the interpretation of the secret sayings (incipit)," but also with what is said in *logion* 2: "He who seeks, let him not stop seeking

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[17] See Jean-Marie Sevrin, "L'interprétation," 353–58. Richard Valantasis' commentary also adopts a similar approach; see *The Gospel of Thomas* (New Testament Readings; New York: Routledge, 1997), 24–27.

[18] John S. Kloppenborg described *Thomas* as leading the reader to a "hermeneutics of penetration"; *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 305–6. A similar perspective is shared by Jean-Marie Sevrin in "Remarque sur le genre littéraire de l'*Évangile selon Thomas* (II,2)," in *Les Textes de Nag Hammadi et le problème de leur classification. Actes du colloque tenu à Québec du 15 au 19 septembre 1993* (ed. Louis Painchaud and Anne Pasquier; BCNH.É 3; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1995), 272–78; and "Thomas, Q et le Jésus de l'histoire," *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus* (ed. Andreas Lindemann; BETL 158; Leuven: University Press, Peeters, 2001), 463 and 469.

[19] This idea has already been put forth in my article: "Connaissance, identité et androgynéité. Conditions du salut dans l'*Évangile selon Thomas*," in *Pratiques et constructions du corps en christianisme* (ed. Maxime Allard, Denise Couture, and Jean-Guy Nadeau; Héritage et Projet 75; Montréal: Fides, 2009), 131–47.

[20] My translation from French; see Charles Munier, "La méthode apologétique de Justin le martyr (suite)," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 62 (1988): 228.

until he finds, and when he finds, he will be troubled; being troubled, he will be rendered speechless[21] and will rule over all things."

This veiling of Scripture is also found in Clement of Alexandria's *Stromata*.[22] According to Clement, the interpretation of his own work is tedious, and only the true Gnostic Christians can understand God's divine secrets:

It is written, "There is nothing secret which shall not be revealed, nor hidden which shall not be disclosed," let him also hear from us, that to him who hears secretly, even what is secret shall be manifested. This is what was predicted by this oracle. And to him who is able secretly to observe what is delivered to him; that which is veiled shall be disclosed as truth; and what is hidden to the many, shall appear manifest to the few. […] Some things my treatise will hint; on some it will linger; some it will merely mention. It will try to speak imperceptibly, to exhibit secretly, and to demonstrate silently. […] For I do not mention that the *Stromata*, forming a body of varied erudition, wish artfully to conceal the seeds of knowledge. As, then, he who is fond of hunting captures the game after seeking, tracking, scenting, hunting it down with dogs; so truth, when sought and got with toil, appears a delicious thing.[23]

The *Gospel of Thomas* is in fact quite similar to Clement's *Stromata*. Like the *Stromata*, readers also need to actively engage in the interpretation of the text to gain access to its hidden meaning. Understanding comes through some kind of labor or toil, a type of spiritual exercise. It has been noted that reading and meditating on scripture were practiced by monks in the fourth and fifth centuries – and onwards, of course. Is it possible that the *Gospel of Thomas* was a monastic tractate, serving as a way to attain spiritual knowledge and transformation?

3. The ⲘⲞⲚⲀⲬⲞⳞ Readers

Many scholars keep pushing the *Gospel of Thomas* into the first and / or second centuries, despite the presence of the word ⲘⲞⲚⲀⲬⲞⳞ (which came to mean "monk") in *logia* 16, 49, and 75. The presupposition of an early date for the *Gospel of Thomas* has prevented an understanding of the word ⲘⲞⲚⲀⲬⲞⳞ as potentially problematic for the usual dating game. In saying 16, for example, it is clear that the text addresses family tensions over Jesus' message; the best way to avoid this is to become a single-one, and this could well be understood

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[21] Literally can be translated as: "astounded," "amazed," or "astonished." This state of being corresponds to *Thomas'* own revelatory experience as described in Saying 13.

[22] On this see Alain Le Boulluec, "Voile et ornement: le texte et l'addition de sens selon Clément d'Alexandrie," in *Questions de sens. Homère, Eschyle, Sophocle, Aristote, Virgile, Apulée, Clément* (ed. Pierre Salat; Études de littérature ancienne 2; Paris: Les Presses de l'École Normale Supérieure, 1982), 53–64.

[23] *Stromata* I 1.13.3; 1.15.1; 2.20–21.

as a call to renounce marriage in favor of celibacy. In *logia* 49 and 75, the same meaning can apply: becoming a single one.

The Greco-Coptic noun ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ has been the subject of several philological analyses and commentaries. Most have traced the origin of the term to early Christian monasticism.[24] Some scholars have explored the Syriac connection with Thomas, and see ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ as the equivalent of *iḥidaya*, a technical term found in some of the 4th century Syriac writers such as the *Demonstrations* of Aphrahat and the *Homilies* of Ephraim, the Syrian.[25] Indeed, in the Syriac church, the term *iḥidaya* designated a single-one (male or female) who were also called "sons of the covenant" (the *bnayyâ qyāmâ*), a group of elect individuals.[26] Scholars have also made the connection between the *Gospel of Thomas* and the Syriac tradition through the association of Thomas with Edessa. Is such an indirect connection sufficient to establish a link between the Coptic Thomas and the Syriac tradition?[27] It might be a tenuous leap, as is the idea that Thomas was first written in Syriac because it supposedly contains a sequence of key words similar to that of the Diatessaron![28] The only thing we have at our disposal as empirically verifiable evidence is the 4th century Coptic text, and that the expression ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ is clearly found therein.

It would make sense to understand the *Gospel of Thomas* as a tractate used by "monks" or "single-ones" who considered themselves as being "elect."[29] Who exactly are these "elect," and what does Thomas have to say about them? Sayings 49–50 clearly stress that the ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ are the elect, and that they originate from the Kingdom and will return therein. Another possible way to speak of the Kingdom is the image of the bridal chamber found in *logion* 75, where there is also a mention of the ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ. These elect also originate from the

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[24] The bibliography concerning ΜΟΝΑΧΟΣ is extensive. Here are the most recent titles: Malcolm Choat, "The Development and Usage of Terms for 'Monk' in Late Antique Egypt," *JAC* 45 (2002): 5–23; Dmitrij F. Bumazhnov, "Some Ecclesiological Patterns of the Early Christian Period and Their Implications for the History of the Term ΜΟΝΑΧΟΣ (Monk)," in *Einheit der Kirche im Neuen Testament: dritte europäische orthodox-westliche Exegetenkonferenz in Sankt Petersburg, 24–31 August, 2005* (ed. Anatoly A. Alexeev, Christos Karakolis, and Ulrich Luz; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 251–64.

[25] See Sidney H. Griffith, "Asceticism in the Church of Syria: The Hermenuetics of Early Monasticism," in *Asceticism* (ed. Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 229.

[26] Sebastian P. Brock, "Early Syrian Asceticism," *Numen* 20 (1973): 7–8.

[27] The Edessan origin has been assessed by J. Gregory Given, "'Finding' the *Gospel of Thomas* in Edessa." *JECS* 25 (2017): 501–30.

[28] See for example Nicholas Perrin, *Thomas and Tatian. The Relationship Between the Gospel of Thomas and the Diatessaron* (Academia Biblica 5; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002).

[29] Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott give some examples of how monks could have read the term ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ in the *Gos. Thom.*; see Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (STAC 97; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 261.

light, and are called the sons of the living Father (*logion* 50). It is then possible to connect the idea of light with that of the Kingdom and bridal chamber. Note that in Thomas, returning to one's origin corresponds to the notion of "standing at the beginning," as mentioned in Saying 18, as well as "knowing the place of life" in *logion* 4. Such an experience is understood as being in a state of "oneness," the famous ογα ογωτ found in several sayings in the Thomasine gospel – I am thinking in particular about the enigmatic Saying 22.[30] This state of being – which can be understood as a transcendence of sorts – is only attainable through the spiritual exercise of seeking after the meaning of Jesus' secret sayings (*logion* 1); for this is truly how one will "not taste death." If the *Gospel of Thomas* incites its readers to a kind of asceticism, it is precisely in this sense: as the pursuit of wisdom and knowledge of Jesus' hidden teaching which requires complete and utmost dedication.

4. Conclusion

The *Gospel of Thomas* could therefore be understood as a tractate used by the solitary/elect (ϻοναχος/ϲοτπ) who wished to engage in the spiritual quest of unravelling the meaning of the secret sayings of Jesus. The correct interpretation of Jesus' words is what leads to a transformative and everlasting life.

More work needs to be done to show how Thomasine language or ideas could have been understood in a Monastic context. For example, there seems to be references to the idea of "oneness" in monastic literature, as a way to describe the unity between certain members of the community (see SBo 146; 197; 200; 204). There are also examples where members of monastic communities understood themselves as "vessels of election" (see SBo 108; G[1]; 123). It is quite possible that sayings 49–50 of the *Gospel of Thomas*[31] could have resonated with the concept of election which circulated in a monastic context. More comparative analyses between the *Gospel of Thomas* and monastic literature could likely lead scholars to revisit the *milieu* of Thomas and learn to read it with a monastic frame of mind.

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[30] See André Gagné, "Lire un apocryphe en synchronie. Analyse structurelle et intratextuelle du *logion* 22 de l'*Évangile selon Thomas*," in *En marge du canon: études sur les écrits apocryphes juifs et chrétiens* (ed. André Gagné and Jean-François Racine; L'écriture de la Bible 2; Paris: Cerf, 2012), 225–49; also Régine Charron, "À propos des ογα ογωτ et de la solitude divine dans les textes de Nag Hammadi," in *Coptica – Gnostica – Manichaica. Mélanges offerts à Wolf-Peter Funk* (ed. Louis Painchaud and Paul-Hubert Poirier; BCNH.É 7; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2006), 109–33.

[31] For more on *logia* 49–50 and the role of the solitary/elect, see André Gagné, "Des étrangers issus du Royaume et de la lumière (EvTh 49–50). Les solitaires dans l'*Évangile selon Thomas*," *LTP* 70 (2014): 105–17.

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"This is the Teaching of the Perfect Ones":
The *Book of Thomas* and Early Egyptian Monasticism[*]

Hugo Lundhaug

In the *Book of Thomas*, preserved to us as the last of seven texts in Nag Hammadi Codex II, Jesus urges Thomas and the rest of his apostles to listen to him, for he has important things to tell. Indeed, he lets them know that it is nothing less than "the teaching of the perfect ones" (ⲧⲉⲥⲃⲱ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲗⲉⲓⲟⲥ),[1] which is to be understood as required knowledge in order to achieve perfection. But who exactly are these perfect ones, and what do the apostles, and others looking to attain perfection, need to know? As it turns out, Jesus sets out to explain to his apostles how they may free themselves from their captivity to bodily passions and attain rest among the holy ones in heaven – in short, he will provide them with ascetic instruction. The *Book of Thomas* is a fascinating discourse on the challenges and goals of the ascetic life that, in stark contrast to the *Gospel of Thomas* found in the same codex, has received surprisingly scant attention in scholarship, especially in recent years after the publication of the English, French, and German critical editions.[2] On the one hand, this lack of attention may be ascribed to the fact that it has no claim to having been composed as early as the *Gospel of Thomas*, and on the other hand, unlike another famous text in this codex, the *Apocryphon of John*, the text does not conform well to many of the cliches associated with the category of "Gnosticism," nor does it contain any reference to a "Gnostic myth." There is good reason, however, to return to this text armed with different scholarly perspectives, as its ascetic focus certainly appears to lend itself well to a reading in light of its manuscript

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[1] *Book Thom.* 140.10–11 (Coptic text ed. Bentley Layton, and trans. John D. Turner. "The Book of Thomas the Contender," in *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7 Together with XIII,2**, Brit. Lib. Or. 4926(1), and P. Oxy. 1, 654, 655* [ed. Bentley Layton; 2 vols.; NHS 20–21; Leiden: Brill, 1989], 2:186). All translations of Coptic texts are my own unless otherwise stated.

[2] Raymond Kuntzmann, *Le Livre de Thomas (NH II,7): Texte établi et présenté* (BCNH.T 16; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1986); Hans-Martin Schenke, *Das Thomas-Buch (Nag-Hammadi-Codex II,7): Neu herausgegeben, übersetzt und erklärt* (TUGAL 138; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1989); Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender."

context, i.e., a reading from the point of view of the monastics who copied and read the Coptic text as we have it at the end of Nag Hammadi Codex II.[3] Not in order to argue that the *Book of Thomas* has necessarily influenced monastic literature, but in order to understand how, and why, the monastics who owned this copy of the text may have read it.

The *Book of Thomas* is probably one of those Nag Hammadi texts that is easiest to imagine being read by monks. Certainly, its heavy ascetic emphasis, not least its strong stance against women and sexuality, with its exclamation of "Woe unto you who love intimacy (ⲥⲩⲛⲏⲑⲉⲓⲁ) with womankind (ⲧⲙⲛ̅ⲧⲥⲅⲓⲙⲉ) and its polluted intercourse (ⲡⲉⲥϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲛⲙ̅ⲙⲁⲥ ⲉⲧⲥⲟⲟϥ),"[4] makes it highly amenable to such a context. But it is not simply the general ascetic stance of the text that brings it into the orbit of late-antique Egyptian monasticism. As we shall see, numerous motifs, metaphors, biblical allusions, and turns of phrase found in it are paralleled in monastic literature, making the inclusion of the *Book of Thomas* in an early monastic library in Upper Egypt, even a Pachomian one, easily understandable.

Most previous scholarship on the *Book of Thomas* has had a rather different perspective, focusing primarily on the text's authorship, sources, and redaction. Hans-Martin Schenke, for instance, characterized the *Book of Thomas* as a collection of sayings gathered around the keyword of light/fire, which was only secondarily, and artificially, forced into the framework of a dialogue between Jesus and Thomas,[5] and he presented a highly imaginative suggestion as to how it might have developed from an original composition, which he proposed may have been a pseudepigraphical *Epistle of James the Contender*.[6] A similarly creative hypothesis has been presented by John Turner. Suggesting that the text

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[3] On the monastic provenance of the Nag Hammadi Codices and the interests of the monastics who copied and read them, see esp. Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (STAC 97; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015) and the introduction to the present volume.

[4] *Book Thom.* 144.8–10 (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 200).

[5] Hans-Martin Schenke, "Sprachliche und exegetische Probleme in den beiden letzten Schriften des Codex II von Nag Hammadi," *OLZ* 70 (1975): 9; cf. Martin Krause, "The Christianization of Gnostic Texts," in *The New Testament and Gnosis: Essays in Honour of Robert McL. Wilson* (ed. Alaistair H. B. Logan and Alexander J. M. Wedderburn; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983), 191, also describing the dialogue as artificial.

[6] See Hans-Martin Schenke, "The Book of Thomas (NHC II,7): A Revision of a Pseudepigraphical Epistle of Jacob the Contender," in *The New Testament and Gnosis: Essays in Honour of Robert McL. Wilson* (ed. Alaistair H. B. Logan and Alexander J. M. Wedderburn; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983), 213–28. Cf. also Jean Doresse, *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics: An Introduction to the Gnostic Coptic Manuscripts Discovered at Chenoboskion: With an English Translation and Critical Evaluation of the Gospel According to Thomas* (trans. Leonard Johnston; London: Hollis & Carter, 1960), 226, 336, who speculated that the text might perhaps be identical with the *Gospel of Matthias* referred to by Origen and Eusebius, or the *Traditions of Matthias* mentioned by Clement of Alexandria.

in its current form can be said to consist of two rather distinct parts, the first being a *dialogue* between Thomas and Jesus, with questions and answers, and the second part consisting of a *monologue* by Jesus with warnings and beatitudes, Turner presents an elaborate redactional theory, the gist of which is that these two parts originally existed separately before being combined into what now constitutes the *Book of Thomas* as it has been preserved to us at the end of Nag Hammadi Codex II.[7]

Whether these redactional theories come close to actual historical reality is, however, impossible to know, as the single surviving witness cannot provide us with any answers to this question. Nor does it furnish us with any solid indications as to the date of authorship of the text's hypothetical constituent parts or the time when it was brought into a form close to the present one. What we may say with greater certainty is that the transmission of the text up to its presently preserved version was probably fluid, although to what degree we do not know.[8] Much may have changed from its initial composition, from small details to larger chunks of text added or subtracted, but without additional attestation we are left largely in the dark as to the exact nature of such changes. We may thus do well to stick to what we do know, namely that someone in the

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[7] John D. Turner, *The Book of Thomas the Contender from Codex II of the Cairo Gnostic Library from Nag Hammadi (CG II,7): The Coptic Text with Translation, Introduction and Commentary* (SBLDS 23; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 215–39.

[8] Cf. Hugo Lundhaug and Liv Ingeborg Lied, "Studying Snapshots: On Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology," in *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology* (ed. Liv Ingeborg Lied and Hugo Lundhaug; TUGAL 175; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 1–19; Hugo Lundhaug, "An Illusion of Textual Stability: Textual Fluidity, New Philology, and the Nag Hammadi Codices," in *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology* (ed. Liv Ingeborg Lied and Hugo Lundhaug; TUGAL 175; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 20–54; idem, "Textual Fluidity and Post-Nicene Rewriting in the Nag Hammadi Codices," in *Nag Hammadi à 70 ans: Qu'avons- nous appris? Colloque international, Québec, Université Laval, 29–31 mai 2015* (ed. Eric Crégheur, Louis Painchaud, and Tuomas Rasimus; BCNH.É 10; Leuven: Peeters, 2019), 47–67; idem, "The Fluid Transmission of Apocrypha in Egyptian Monasteries," in *Coptic Literature in Context (4th–13th cent.): Cultural Landscape, Literary Production and Manuscript Archaeology* (ed. Paola Buzi; PaST Percorsi di Archeologia 5; Rome: Edizioni Quasar, 2020), 213–27; Lance Jenott, "Reading Variants in *James* and the *Apocalypse of James*: A Perspective from New Philology," in *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology* (ed. Liv Ingeborg Lied and Hugo Lundhaug; TUGAL 175; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 55–84; Stephen Emmel, "Religious Tradition, Textual Transmission, and the Nag Hammadi Codices," in *The Nag Hammadi Library After Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration* (ed. John D. Turner and Anne McGuire; NHMS 44; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 34–43.

late fourth or early fifth century copied this Coptic text into this particular co-
dex, presumably with the intention that someone should read it.[9]

1. Quest for Perfection

Rather than focusing on the compositional and redactional history of the text,
I will instead concentrate on its likely reception in the community represented
by the scribe of the codex, who after having copied the end of the *Book of
Thomas*, added a colophon asking the readers to "Remember me too, my broth-
ers, [in] your prayers" (ⲁⲣⲓⲡⲁⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ ϩⲱ ⲛⲁⲥⲛⲏⲩ ϩ[ⲛ̅]ⲛⲉⲧⲛ̅ⲡⲣⲟⲥⲉⲩⲭⲏ), before
adding the final blessing "Peace to the holy ones and the spiritual ones"
(ⲉ[ⲓ]ⲣⲏⲛⲏ ⲧⲟⲓⲥ ⲁⲅⲓⲟⲓⲥ ⲙⲛ̅ⲛⲓⲡⲛⲉⲩⲙⲁⲧⲓⲕⲟⲥ).[10] Those intended readers, who were
almost certainly monks, and most likely Pachomian monks,[11] would not have
been confronted with an earlier version of the text, but with the text as we have
it in Codex II as its seventh and final text, with its current dialogue frame and
paratextual matter, followed by the abovementioned scribal colophon, and car-
rying the title the *Book of Thomas*.

When we look closer at the paratextual frame of the *Book of Thomas* in Co-
dex II we find that this title is closely followed by what may perhaps be another
reference to the scribe of the codex, but which is more likely a reference to the
apostle Matthias,[12] the pseudepigraphical scribe of the dialogue between Jesus
and his apostles. At the beginning of the *Book of Thomas* we are told that it
was Matthias (ⲙⲁⲑⲁⲓⲁⲥ) who wrote down this text, having listened to Jesus and
Thomas speaking with each other.[13] In the line directly following the title at
the end of the text, we read that "The athlete writes to the perfect ones"
(ⲡⲁⲑⲗⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲉⲩⲥϩⲁⲓ̈ ⲛ̅ⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲗⲉⲓⲟⲥ). That this "athlete" is not to be equated with
Thomas, despite the common designation of the text in English-language

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[9] On the date of the Nag Hammadi Codices, see now Hugo Lundhaug, "Dating and Con-
textualising the Nag Hammadi Codices and Their Texts: A Multi-Methodological Approach
Including New Radiocarbon Evidence," in *Texts in Context: Essays on Dating and Contex-
tualising Christian Writings of the Second and Early Third Century* (ed. Joseph Verheyden,
Jens Schröter, and Tobias Nicklas; BETL 319; Leuven: Peeters, 2021), 117–42.

[10] *Book Thom.* 145.20–23 (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 204).

[11] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*; Lundhaug and Jenott, "Production, Distribu-
tion and Ownership of Books in the Monasteries of Upper Egypt: The Evidence of the Nag
Hammadi Colophons," in *Monastic Education in Late Antiquity: The Transformation of
Classical Paideia* (ed. Lillian Larsen and Samuel Rubenson; Cambridge: Cambridge Uni-
versity Press, 2018), 306–25.

[12] This character should probably be identified with the apostle who is described in Acts
1:23–26 as having taken Judas' place among the twelve.

[13] *Book Thom.* 138.1–4 (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 180).

scholarship as the *Book of Thomas the Contender*,[14] was already pointed out by Hans-Martin Schenke in 1975.[15] That the two parts of the title should be read separately is indeed made clear by the text itself, when it states that it was Matthias who wrote down Thomas' dialogue with Jesus. It is thus Matthias who "writes to the perfect ones," and not Thomas.[16] For monastic readers of the *Book of Thomas*, Matthias the athlete is also an ideal identification figure, as they listen to Jesus' ascetic teachings through him. That the entire text is written specifically to those who are perfect is also something that is made clear elsewhere in the text, where Jesus states that the reason why it is important for him to speak with his disciples is the fact that he is telling them "the teaching of the perfect ones" (ⲧⲉⲥⲃⲱ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲗⲉⲓⲟⲥ).[17] And in order to become perfect, he says, they will have to "observe" (ⲁⲣⲉϩ) these teachings.[18] If they do not do so, Jesus warns, they will be called "ignorant" (ⲁⲧⲥⲃⲱ).[19] Jesus also chastises those who lack such knowledge, exclaiming: "Woe unto you, for you have not received the teaching (ⲧⲥⲃⲱ)!"[20]

The teachings contained in the *Book of Thomas* are thus the ones that are necessary in order to *become* perfect, but at the same time, these teachings are intended *for* the perfect. The designation "the perfect ones" (ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲗⲉⲓⲟⲥ) is indeed an apt description of the intended readers or hearers of the *Book of Thomas* in its present form, as is indicated by the statement following the title of the text proper, namely that it is written "to the perfect ones" (ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲗⲉⲓⲟⲥ).[21] And one may surmise that the scribe of Codex II would also include those he

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[14] E.g., Turner, *Book of Thomas the Contender*; idem, "The Book of Thomas the Contender (II,7): Introduction and Translation." Pages 199–207 in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (ed. James M. Robinson; 3rd rev. ed.; San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990), 199–207; Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender"; Jesse Sell, *The Knowledge of the Truth – Two Doctrines:* The Book of Thomas the Contender *(CG II,7) and the False Teachers in the Pastoral Epistles* (EUS Series 23, Theology 194; Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1982).

[15] Schenke, "Sprachliche und exegetische Probleme," 12; cf. also Paul-Hubert Poirier, "The Writings Ascribed to Thomas and the Thomas Tradition," in *The Nag Hammadi Library After Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration* (ed. John D. Turner and Anne McGuire; NHMS 44; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 296 n. 6, stating that this common translation of the title "is a mistranslation and should be avoided."

[16] Cf. Schenke, "Sprachliche und exegetische Probleme," 11. Schenke, however, would later go on to argue that the contender in question was originally Jacob. See Schenke, "Book of Thomas," 213–28. If we simply read the text as it has been preserved, however, the contender in question must be Matthias, or possibly the scribe of this codex or an earlier codex in the chain of transmission.

[17] *Book Thom.* 140.10–11 (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 186).

[18] *Book Thom.* 140.11–12 (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 186); cf. 1 Tim 5:21.

[19] *Book Thom.* 140.13 (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 186).

[20] *Book Thom.* 144.37–38 (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 202).

[21] *Book Thom.* 145.18–19 (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 204).

refers to in the colophon as his "brothers" (ⲥⲛⲏⲩ) and "the holy ones and the spiritual ones" (ⲧⲟⲓⲥ ⲁⲅⲓⲟⲓⲥ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲛⲓⲡⲛⲉⲩⲙⲁⲧⲓⲕⲟⲥ), in this category.[22] These are common designations used of monks in the Pachomian writings, where references to perfect monks, and to monks on their way to attaining perfection, abound.[23] As we shall see, perfection and its attainment is connected to the notion of perfect knowledge in the *Book of Thomas* and Pachomian literature alike.

2. Knowledge and Ignorance

A pervasive feature of the *Book of Thomas* is its emphasis on the necessity for the righteous Christian ascetic of acquiring knowledge in order to enable him to avoid the traps and stumbling blocks that may hinder his progress towards eternal rest in the heavenly realms. As the risen Jesus states in one of his beatitudes at the end of the text, "Blessed are you who have foreknowledge of the stumbling blocks (ⲛ̄ⲥⲕⲁⲛⲇⲁⲗⲟⲛ) and who flee before the unnatural things (ⲛ̄ⲁⲗⲗⲟⲧⲣⲓⲟⲛ)."[24] The importance of this beatitude is indicated by the fact that it recalls a statement in Jesus' opening address to Thomas, where he proclaims that Thomas has "seen what is hidden from men (ⲡⲉⲑⲏⲡ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲅ̄ⲛ̄ⲣⲣⲱⲙⲉ), namely what they stumble against in ignorance (ⲉⲧⲟⲩϫⲓϫⲣⲟⲡ ⲉⲣⲟϥ ⲉⲛⲥⲉⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲁⲛ)."[25] How has Thomas gained this ability to detect what ignorant people stumble against? We are told that the key is to know the true identity of Christ, and that Thomas has acquired this by knowing himself, since, after all, he is called Jesus' brother.[26] He will also be called "he who knows himself" (ⲡⲣⲉϥⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛⲉ ⲉⲣⲟϥ ⲙ̄ⲙⲓⲛ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ).[27] This is important, for we are told that "he who has known himself has also already acquired knowledge of the depth of everything" (ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁϥⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛϥ ⲇⲉ ⲟⲩⲁⲁⲧϥ ⲁϥⲟⲩⲱ ⲟⲛ ⲉϥϫⲓⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛⲉ ⲁⲡⲃⲁⲑⲟⲥ ⲙ̄ⲡⲧⲏⲣϥ).[28] While it was common in the early phases of research on the Nag Hammadi texts to connect such statements on the importance of knowledge and self-knowledge to "Gnosticism," I aim to show how the treatment of knowledge in the *Book of Thomas* is by no means out of place in the context

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[22] *Book Thom.* 145.20–23 (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 204).

[23] SBo 3, 27, 29, 60, 79, 82, 107, 128, 134, 142, 193, 194, 199, 202, 204, 205; G¹ 2, 32, 54, 98, 91, 99, 106, 118, 120, 126, 129, 136; Hors., *Test.* 20; cf. Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 185–89.

[24] *Book Thom.* 145.1–3 (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 202).

[25] *Book Thom.* 138.19–21 (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 180).

[26] *Book Thom.* 138.10. Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 180, here erroneously has ⲥⲉⲛⲁⲙⲟⲩⲧⲉ, while the manuscript reads ⲥⲉⲙⲟⲩⲧⲉ. Kuntzmann, *Le Livre de Thomas*, 26, and Schenke, *Das Thomas-Buch*, 24, both have the correct reading.

[27] *Book Thom.* 138.15–16 (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 180).

[28] *Book Thom.* 138.17–18 (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 180).

where Nag Hammadi Codex II was most likely produced and used. As we shall see, it has especially close parallels in monastic writings of the fourth and fifth centuries, making recourse to the category of "Gnosticism" unnecessary for the interpretation of the text as it appears in this codex.[29]

According to the Bohairic *Life of Pachomius*, for instance, Apa Palamon teaches Pachomius early on in his career that getting to know oneself is at the heart of the monastic life, and he speaks to him about the time it takes "until you get to know yourself" (ϣⲁⲛⲧⲉⲕⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛⲕ ⲙⲙⲓⲛ ⲙⲙⲟⲕ).[30] Palamon tells Pachomius in no uncertain terms that in order to understand "the measure of the monastic life" (ⲡϣⲓ ⲛ̄ⲧⲙⲉⲧⲙⲟⲩⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ), he first has to go away and examine himself.[31] Pachomius too, in one of his letters (Letter 3), speaks of those who did not follow Joshua's commands in the Old Testament as "stupid men" (ἄνθρωποι ἄφρονες) who were ignorant of "the place of wealth and the dwelling place of wisdom," and who "called light darkness"; but most importantly, "they did not find their own heart," despite the fact that Joshua had given them "directives by which they should walk."[32]

Jesus in the *Book of Thomas* does not suffer fools lightly, going so far as to state that "it is impossible for a wise man to dwell with a fool" (ⲙⲛ̄ϣϭⲟⲙ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲟⲩⲣⲙⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧ ⲟⲩⲱϩ ⲙⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲥⲟϭ),[33] a statement that also serves as an answer to one of the questions posed by Thomas, namely: "Is it profitable for us, Lord, to rest ourselves amongst our own?" (ⲥⲣ̄ⲛⲟⲩϥⲣⲉ ⲛⲁⲛ ⲡϫⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲁⲙ̄ⲧⲟⲛ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲛ ϩⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲉⲛⲱⲛ ⲛⲉ)[34] This question, which is one that would doubtlessly have resonated with the Upper Egyptian monastic owners of Codex II, is answered by

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[29] For general critiques of the use of "Gnosticism" as a heuristic category, see Michael A. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); idem, "Was There a Gnostic Religion? Strategies for a Clearer Analysis," in *Was There a Gnostic Religion?* (ed. Antti Marjanen; Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 87; Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society, 2005), 55–79; Karen L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 2003).

[30] SBo 10; Louis-Théophile Lefort, ed., *S. Pachomii Vita Bohairice Scripta* (CSCO 89, Scriptores Coptici 7; Leuven: Durbecq, 1953), 8. Armand Veilleux, a monk himself, found this to be "a beautiful expression of the aim of monastic *ascesis*" (Armand Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia: The Lives, Rules, and Other Writings of Saint Pachomius and His Disciples* [3 vols.; CS 45–47; Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1980–82], 1:268 [SBo 10 n. 2]).

[31] SBo 10: ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲕϣⲉ ⲛⲁⲕ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲕⲉⲣⲇⲟⲕⲓⲙⲁⲍⲓⲛ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲕ ⲛ̄ϣⲟⲣⲡ (Lefort, *Vita Bohairice Scripta*, 9).

[32] Pachomius, *Letter* 3.8; cf. Num 14:6; Isa 5:20 (Hans Quecke, *Die Briefe Pachoms: Griechischer Text der Handschrift W. 145 der Chester Beatty Library* [Textus Patristici et Liturgici 2; Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1975], 103; trans. Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia*, 3:56).

[33] *Book Thom.* 140.13–14 (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 186).

[34] *Book Thom.* 141.3–4 (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 190).

Jesus in the affirmative, and thus serves nicely to buttress a communal monas-
tic lifestyle – away from common, ignorant, people, but together with other
good people on their way to, or having already attained, a state of perfection.

The "teaching of the perfect ones" given by Jesus to Thomas was also in-
tended for further distribution by the apostles and their successors through
preaching. As Jesus puts it, those who seek the truth from a wise person "will
provide wings (ϩⲉⲛⲧⲛ̅ϩ) for himself in order to fly, fleeing from the desire
(ⲧⲉⲡⲓⲑⲩⲙⲓⲁ) that burns the spirits of men (ⲙ̅ⲡⲛ̅ⲁ̅ ⲛ̅ⲛ̅ⲣⲱⲙⲉ). And he will provide
wings for himself, fleeing from every visible spirit (ⲡⲛ̅ⲁ̅ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲟⲛϩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ)."[35]
By gaining true knowledge, the true Christian ascetic also comes to know the
difference between the good and the bad, which is the opposite of the fool, who
sees no distinction between these things.[36] Likewise it is said about the good
monks in the tenth Sahidic *Life* that "those who shall purify their hearts greatly
from every evil thought shall discern between good and evil."[37] The use of the
imagery of acquiring wings is also notable. The true Christian ascetic will ac-
quire wings by gaining knowledge of the truth by way of true teaching. While
this imagery may recall the wings of the soul as described by Plato,[38] acquiring
wings could be also be seen as an elegantly evocative way for the *Book of
Thomas* to describe both the process and gains of becoming like the angels,
which in this context is equal to becoming a perfect monk.[39] Or, as Pachomius
states in the Bohairic *Life*, if someone is "zealous for perfection ... he will live
in the purity of the angels. Then the Holy Spirit will dwell in him and sanctify
him; he will go and become a monk and serve the Lord in all purity and up-
rightness."[40]

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[35] *Book Thom.* 140.1–5 (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 186).

[36] *Book Thom.* 140.15–16 (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 186,
188); cf. Louis Painchaud and Jennifer Wees, "Connaître la différence entre les hommes
mauvais et les bons: Le charisme de clairvoyance d'Adam et Ève à Pachôme et Théodore,"
in *For the Children, Perfect Instruction: Studies in Honor of Hans-Martin Schenke on the
Occasion of the Berliner Arbeitskreis für koptisch-gnostische Schriften's Thirtieth Year* (ed.
Hans-Gebhard Bethge et al.; NHMS 54; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 139–55.

[37] S[10] 5 (Louis-Théophile Lefort, ed., *S. Pachomii Vitae Sahidice Scriptae* [CSCO 99–
100, Scriptores Coptici 9–10; Leuven: Durbecq, 1952] 72–73; trans. Veilleux, *Pachomian
Koinonia*, 1:455).

[38] See, e.g., D. D. McGibbon, "The Fall of the Soul in Plato's Phaedrus," *CQ* 14 (1964):
56–63.

[39] See, e.g., *Historia Monachorum*, prologue 5; *Life of Onnophrios* (BL Or. 7027, 13);
Karl Suso Frank, *ΑΓΓΕΛΙΚΟΣ ΒΙΟΣ: Begriffsanalytische und Begriffsgeschichtliche Unter-
suchung zum "engelgleichen Leben" im frühen Mönchtum* (BGAM 26; Münster: As-
chendorff, 1964); Ellen Muehlberger, "Ambivalence about the Angelic Life: The Promise
and Perils of an Early Christian Discourse of Asceticism," *JECS* 16 (2008): 447–78.

[40] SBo 107: ⲉϣⲱⲡ ⲇⲉ ⲟⲛ ⲁϥϣⲁⲛⲭⲟϩ ⲉϯⲙⲉⲧⲧⲉⲗⲓⲟⲥ (...) ϥⲛⲁϣⲱⲡⲓ ϩⲱϥ ϩⲉⲛⲡⲧⲟⲩⲃⲟ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲛⲓ-
ⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ ⲟⲩⲟϩ ⲧⲟⲧⲉ ⲡⲓⲡⲛ̅ⲁ̅ ⲉⲑⲟⲩⲁⲃ ϥⲛⲁϣⲱⲡⲓ ⲛ̅ϧⲏⲧϥ̅ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉϥⲧⲟⲩⲃⲟϥ ⲟⲩⲟϩ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉϥϣⲉ ⲛⲁϥ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉϥ-

In the *Book of Thomas*, as we have seen, self-knowledge is also closely related to knowledge of Christ. Thomas is described as Jesus' brother, and the process of getting to know oneself should ideally make the ascetic as Christ-like as possible.[41] We see this aspect also in the Pachomian literature, where abbot Theodore quotes 1 Cor 11:1 in his description of the importance of Christ-likeness in the Pachomian monks' quest for eternal rest: "Be like me as I have been like Christ, which is this single manner of all the holy ones and the fathers of the *Koinonia* who have nobly completed their struggle and rested themselves from their sufferings by entering their place of everlasting rest."[42] Like the *Book of Thomas*, Theodore presents the denial of bodily passions as an *imitatio Christi*.[43] And as in the *Book of Thomas*, Theodore also highlights the importance of knowledge, referred to by Theodore as "the perfect knowledge of the Holy Scriptures and the manner in which God taught the holy ones and the fathers of the *Koinonia*."[44] In the *Book of Thomas*, Christ is also said to incorporate true knowledge: "I am the knowledge of the Truth" (ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲙⲏⲉ), as he puts it.[45] And knowledge versus ignorance is furthermore connected to metaphors of light and darkness, with Jesus being identified as the light, who shines the light that hides the darkness of ignorance.[46]

The positive effects on the ascetic of gaining knowledge of the truth can also be described using botanical metaphors. The *Book of Thomas* quotes from the Book of Psalms, promising that "the wise man (ⲡⲥⲟⲫⲟⲥ) will be nourished by the truth (ⲧⲙⲏⲉ), and 'he will become like the tree that grows by the running water'."[47] Similarly, in Pachomius' *First Instruction* we are told that the monks should "progress like young plants" (ⲡⲣⲟⲕⲟⲡⲧⲉⲓ ⲛ̄ⲑⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲓ̈ⲧⲱⲟϭⲉ ⲛ̄ⲃⲉ̄ⲣ̄ⲣⲉ).[48]

ⲉⲣⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ ⲟⲩⲟϩ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉϥⲉⲣⲃⲱⲕ ⲙ̄ⲡⲟⲥ̄ ϧⲉⲛⲟⲩⲧⲟⲩⲃⲟ ⲛⲉⲙⲙⲉⲑⲙⲏⲓ ⲛⲓⲃⲉⲛ (Lefort, *Vita Bohairice Scripta*, 143; trans. Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia*, 1:154).

   41 Cf. Rom 8:29.

   42 Theodore, *Instr.* 3.6: ⲧⲛ̄ⲧⲛ̄ⲑⲩⲧⲛ̄ ⲉⲣⲟⲓ̈ ⲕⲁⲧⲁⲑⲉ ⲉⲛⲧⲁⲓ̈ⲧⲛ̄ⲧⲱⲛⲧ̄ ⲉⲡⲉⲭⲥ̄ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲉⲓϭⲓⲛⲣ̄ϩⲱⲃ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲱⲧ ⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ ⲙⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲉⲓⲟⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲕⲟⲓⲛⲱⲛⲓⲁ ⲛⲁⲓ̈ ⲉⲛⲧⲁⲩϫⲉⲕⲡⲉⲩⲁⲅⲱⲛ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲙⲛ̄ⲧ-ⲅⲉⲛⲛⲁⲓⲟⲥ ⲉⲁⲩⲙ̄ⲧⲟⲛ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲩϩⲓⲥⲉ ϩⲙ̄ⲡⲧⲣⲉⲩⲃⲱⲕ ⲉϩⲟⲩⲛ ⲉⲡⲉⲩⲙⲁ ⲛ̄ⲙ̄ⲧⲟⲛ ϣⲁⲉⲛⲉϩ (Louis-Théophile Lefort, ed., *Œuvres de S. Pachôme et de ses disciples* [CSCO 159, Scriptores Coptici 23; Leuven: Durbecq, 1956], 43).

   43 I.e., "in the distress of our bodily needs" (ϩⲙ̄ⲡϩⲟϫϩⲉϫ̄ ⲛ̄ⲛⲁⲧⲉⲭⲣⲓⲁ ⲙ̄ⲡⲥⲱⲙⲁ), as he puts it (Theodore, *Instr.* 3.6; Lefort, *Œuvres de S. Pachôme*, 43).

   44 Theodore, *Instr.* 3.6: ⲡⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲟϫ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲛⲉⲅⲣⲁⲫⲏ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ⲙⲛ̄ⲧϭⲓⲛⲣ̄ϩⲱⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲡⲁⲓⲇⲉⲩⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧⲥ̄ ⲙⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲉⲓⲟⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲕⲟⲓⲛⲱⲛⲓⲁ (Lefort, *Œuvres de S. Pachôme*, 42).

   45 *Book Thom.* 138.13 (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 180).

   46 *Book Thom.* 139.18–20 (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 184).

   47 *Book Thom.* 140.16–18, quoting Ps 1:3 LXX (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 188).

   48 Pachomius, *Instr.* 1.55 (Lefort, *Œuvres de S. Pachôme*, 22).

3. Burning Passions

One of the main lessons of Jesus' teaching in the *Book of Thomas* is that it is necessary to break away from the influence of the passions of the material world. Just like the *Life of Pachomius* points out the dangers of having a "carnal mind" (σαρκικὸν φρόνημα),[49] and Pachomius admonishes a spiteful monk to "flee from desire (ⲉⲡⲓⲑⲩⲙⲓⲁ), for that is what makes the mind dark and prevents it from knowing the mystery of God (ⲡⲙⲩⲥⲧⲏⲣⲓⲟⲛ ⲙ̄ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ),"[50] the *Book of Thomas* admonishes its readers to flee from "the desire that burns the spirits of men" (ⲧⲉⲡⲓⲑⲩⲙⲓⲁ ⲉⲧⲣⲱⲕ ⲛ̄ⲙ̄ⲡⲛ̄ⲁ̄ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲣⲱⲙⲉ).[51] The importance of staying away from the carnal is indeed a major theme in the *Book of Thomas*, which warns its readers in no uncertain terms against the passions of the body, described metaphorically both as a burning fire within people's bodies, as well as something that either leads people astray or restrains them from doing or thinking what is proper. Jesus utters multiple warnings against being in the grip of the burning passions, proclaiming: "Woe unto you who are in the fire that burns within you, for it is insatiable!"[52] And: "Woe unto you in the grip of the burning that is in you, for it will visibly consume your flesh, and it will secretly break your souls."[53]

Similar use of the metaphor of burning is found in the writings of Shenoute. When describing the problems arising among the monks of the White Monastery owing to the undue influence of bodily desire, he uses the metaphor of a fire burning within an orchard, threatening to destroy it if it is not put out.[54] Shenoute talks about "an evil fire" (ⲟⲩⲕⲱϩⲧ̄ ⲉϥϩⲟⲟⲩ) burning within it and states that the trees "have desired and they have burned, and the greater part of all the trees in the orchard have withered in the burning fire that burns the trees that the fire has ruled."[55] In terms close to what we see in the *Book of Thomas*,

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[49] G¹ 126 (François Halkin, *Sancti Pachomii Vitae Graecae* [Subsidia hagiographica 19; Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1932], 80; trans. Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia*, 1:386).

[50] Pachomius, *Instr.* 1.19: ⲡⲱⲧ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲡⲓⲑⲩⲙⲓⲁ, ϫⲉⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲥ ⲧⲉⲧⲉϣⲁⲥⲣ̄ⲡⲟⲩⲥ ⲛ̄ⲕⲁⲕⲉ ⲙⲉⲥ-ⲕⲁⲁϥ ⲉⲥⲟⲩⲛ̄ⲡⲙⲩⲥⲧⲏⲣⲓⲟⲛ ⲙ̄ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ (Lefort, *Œuvres de S. Pachôme*, 6).

[51] *Book Thom.* 140.3–4 (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 186).

[52] *Book Thom.* 143.15–16: ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓ ⲛⲏⲧⲛ̄ ϩⲣⲁⲓ̈ ϩⲙ̄ⲡⲕⲱϩⲧ ⲉⲧⲣⲱⲕϩ ϩⲣⲁⲓ̈ ϩⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲛⲉ (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 198).

[53] *Book Thom.* 143.18–21: ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓ ⲛⲏⲧⲛ̄ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲟⲧϥ̄ ⲙ̄ⲡⲙⲟⲩϩ ⲉⲧϩ[ⲛ̄]ⲧⲏⲛⲉ ϫⲉϥⲛⲁⲟⲩⲱⲙ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲛ̄-ⲥⲁⲣ̄ϩ ϩⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲱⲛϩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲁⲩⲱ ϥⲛⲁⲡⲱϩ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲯⲩⲭⲟⲟⲩⲉ ϩⲛ̄ⲟⲩϩⲱⲡ (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 198).

[54] See Shenoute, *Canon* 1, MONB.YW 81–82.

[55] Shenoute, *Canon* 1, MONB.YW 81–82: ⲁⲩⲟⲩⲱϣⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲩⲣⲱⲕϩ̄ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲡⲉϩⲟⲩⲟ̄ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ϣⲏⲛ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ ⲉⲧϩⲙ̄ⲡⲙⲁ̄ ⲛ̄ϣⲏⲛ ⲁⲩϣⲱⲃⲉ̄ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲙ̄ⲡϣⲁϩ ⲉⲧϫⲉⲣⲟ̄ ⲉⲧⲣⲱⲕϩ̄ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ϣⲏⲛ ⲉⲛⲧⲁϥⲣ̄ϫⲟⲓⲥ ⲉⲣⲟⲟⲩ ⲛ̄ϭⲓⲡⲕⲱϩⲧ̄ (Coptic text from unpublished transcription made by Stephen Emmel. I am grateful to Emmel for sharing it with me).

where Jesus utters a "Woe unto you who are in the fire that burns within you,"[56] Shenoute exclaims: "Woe unto us all, those who have sinned among us, whether male or female, but especially woe unto this one in whom a fire has burned like a tree that a flame has come out of, and it ran like lightning, and slithered itself into storehouses and burned youths and children, like wooden branches."[57]

The *Book of Thomas* frequently uses the metaphor of the passions as a fire burning within, and warnings against "the desire that burns the spirits of men" (ⲧⲉⲡⲓⲑⲩⲙⲓⲁ ⲉⲧⲣⲱⲕ ⲛ̅ⲙ̅ⲡⲛ̅ⲁ̅ ⲛ̅ⲛ̅ⲣⲱⲙⲉ)[58] are voiced by Jesus himself: "O bitterness of the fire that burns in the bodies of men and (in) their marrow, burning within them night and day, and which burns the members of men and [causes] their hearts to become drunk, and their souls to become deranged."[59] He castigates those who give in to the bodily passions: "you are drunk on the fire and you are [filled] with bitterness while your minds are deranged due to the burning that is within you."[60] Here Jesus also describes the burning of desire in terms of the effects of alcohol, in a way that is highly reminiscent of Pachomius' invectives against the consumption of wine in his *First Instruction*,[61] where he admonishes the monks not to become "deranged with pleasure" (ⲡⲱϣⲥ̅ ϩⲛ̅ⲟⲩϩⲩⲇⲟⲛⲏ).[62]

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[56] *Book Thom.* 143.15–16: ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓ ⲛⲏⲧⲛ̅ ϩⲣⲁⲓ̈ ϩⲙ̅ⲡⲕⲱϩⲧ ⲉⲧⲣⲱⲕϩ ϩⲣⲁⲓ̈ ϩⲛ̅ⲧⲏⲛⲉ (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 198).

[57] Shenoute, *Canon* 1, MONB.XC 121–22: ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓ ⲛⲁⲛ ⲧⲏⲣⲛ̅ ⲛⲉⲛⲧⲁⲩⲣ̅ⲛⲟⲃⲉ ϩⲣⲁⲓ̈ ⲛ̅ϩⲏⲧⲛ̅ ⲉⲓⲧⲉ ϩⲟⲟⲩⲧ ⲉⲓⲧⲉ ⲥϩⲓⲙⲉ ⲛ̅ϩⲟⲩⲟ̄ ⲇⲉ ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓ ⲙ̅ⲡⲁⲓ̈ ⲉⲛⲧⲁⲩⲕⲱϩⲧ̅ ϩⲉⲣⲟ ϩⲣⲁⲓ̈ ⲛ̅ϩⲏⲧϥ̅ ⲛ̅ⲑⲉ ⲛ̅ⲟⲩϣⲏⲛ ⲉⲁϥⲉⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲙ̅ⲙⲟϥ ⲛ̅ϭⲓⲟⲩϣⲁϩ ⲁϥⲡⲱⲧ ⲛ̅ⲑⲉ ⲛ̅ⲟⲩⲉⲃⲣⲏϭⲉ ⲁϥⲟϭϥ̅ ⲉϩⲟⲩⲛ ⲉϩⲉⲛⲧⲁⲙⲉⲓⲟⲛ ⲁϥⲟⲩⲱϣⲉ ⲛ̅ϩⲉⲛϩⲣ̅ϣⲓⲣⲉ ⲙⲛ̅ϩⲉⲛϣⲏⲣⲉ ϣⲏⲙ ⲛ̅ⲑⲉ ⲛ̅ϩⲉⲛⲕⲗⲁⲇⲟⲥ ⲛ̅ϣⲉ (Coptic text from unpublished transcription made by Stephen Emmel. I am grateful to Emmel for sharing it with me).

[58] *Book Thom.* 140.3–4 (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 186).

[59] *Book Thom.* 139.33–37: ⲱ̅ ⲡⲥⲓϣⲉ ⲙ̅ⲡⲕⲱϩⲧ ⲉⲧϫⲉⲣⲟ ϩⲣⲁⲓ̈ ϩⲛ̅ⲛ̅ⲥⲱⲙⲁ ⲛ̅ⲛ̅ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲙⲛ̅ⲛⲉⲩⲁⲧⲕⲁⲥ ⲉϥϫⲉⲣⲟ ϩⲣⲁⲓ̈ ⲛ̅ϩⲏⲧⲟⲩ ⲛ̅ⲧⲟⲩϣⲏ ⲙⲛ̅ⲡ[ⲟⲟⲩ] ⲁⲩⲱ ⲉⲧⲣⲱϩϫ ⲛ̅ⲙⲙⲉⲗⲟⲥ ⲛ̅ⲛ̅ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲉ[ⲧⲧⲣⲉⲛ]ⲉⲩϩⲏⲧ ϯϩⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛⲉⲩⲯⲩⲭⲏ ⲉⲥⲧⲣⲟⲩⲡⲱϣⲥ̅ (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 184, 186).

[60] *Book Thom.* 143.27–29: ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛ̅ⲧⲁϩⲉ ϩⲙ̅ⲡⲕⲱϩⲧ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲧⲉⲧⲛ̅[ⲙⲉϩ] ⲛ̅ⲥⲓϣⲉ ⲉⲣⲉⲡⲉⲧⲛ̅ϩⲏⲧ ⲡⲱϣⲥ̅ ⲉⲣⲱⲧⲛ̅ ⲉⲧⲃⲉⲡ[ⲙ]ⲟⲩϩ ⲉⲧ[ϩ]ⲛ̅ⲧⲏⲛⲉ (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 198).

[61] See Pachomius, *Instr.* 1.45–46. See also Ps-Athanasius, *On Charity and Continence*, a text that overlaps major parts of Pachomius' *First Instruction*, and which may also have a Pachomian origin, as has recently been suggested by Carolyn M. Schneider, *The Text of a Coptic Monastic Discourse,* On Love and Self-Control*: Its Story from the Fourth Century to the Twenty-First* (CS 72; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017). Schneider argues that the text was likely not authored by Athanasius, but by the Pachomian abbot Horsiesios. In this context is also noteworthy that Christoph Joest has similarly argued that Horsiesios may indeed have edited Pachomius' *First Instruction*. See Christoph Joest, "Horsiese als Redaktor von Pachoms Katechese 1 'An einen grollenden Mönch': Eine stilkritische Untersuchung," *JCoptS* 9 (2007): 61–94.

[62] Pachomius, *Instr.* 1.45 (Lefort, *Œuvres de S. Pachôme*, 18).

The *Book of Thomas* argues that bodily desire, like wine, causes people to become drunk and crazy, and to do things they would not otherwise do. And like wine it causes people to see apparitions, and to regard illusions as truth: "For that which guides them, which is the fire, will give them an illusion (φαντασια) of truth."[63] Indeed, "it will illuminate them with perishing beauty, and it will capture them in dark sweetness and seize them with fragrant pleasure. And it will make them blind with insatiable desire, and it will cook their souls."[64] Moreover, it will lead people astray, "like a bridle (χαλινος) in the mouth" drawing them "according to its own wish."[65]

But not only will the bodily passions lead people to do what they should not, but they also restrain people from doing what they should. The *Book of Thomas* describes this using the metaphor of captivity: "it has tied them with its chains, and it has bound all their members with the bitterness of the chain of the desire of these visible things that will perish and change and turn according to the flow. They have always been drawn down from heaven. Being killed, they are drawn upon all the beasts of pollution."[66] Captivity to the bodily passions is also described with an allusion to Plato's parable of the cave: "Woe unto you, captives, for you are bound in the caves!"[67] Thus captivity to the passions is again associated with a lack of knowledge and insufficient focus on what is truly important: "You do not think about your destruction. Neither do you think about where you are, nor have you understood that you exist in darkness and death. But you are drunk on the fire and you are [filled] with bitterness while your minds are deranged due to the burning that is within you."[68]

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[63] *Book Thom.* 140.20–21: ⲡⲉⲧϫⲓⲙⲟⲉⲓⲧ ⲅⲁⲣ ϩⲛⲧⲟⲩ ⲉ̣[ⲧ]ⲉⲡⲕⲱϩⲧ ⲡⲉ ϥⲛⲁϯ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲫⲁⲛⲧ-ⲁⲥⲓⲁ ⲙ̄ⲙⲏⲉ (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 188).

[64] *Book Thom.* 140.22–26: ϥⲛⲁⲣ̄ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲛ ⲉⲣⲟⲟⲩ ϩⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲥⲁⲉⲓⲉ ⲉϥⲛⲁⲧⲉ[ⲕⲟ] ⲁⲩⲱ ϥⲛⲁⲣ̄ⲁⲓⲭⲙⲁ-ⲗⲱⲧⲓ�zⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲟⲩ ϩⲛ̄ⲟⲩϩⲗⲟϭⲉ ⲛ̄ⲕⲁⲕⲉ ⲛ̄ϥⲧⲟⲣⲡⲟⲩ ϩⲛ̄ⲟⲩϩⲏⲇⲟⲛⲏ ⲉⲥϯⲥⲧⲟⲉⲓ ⲁⲩⲱ ϥⲛⲁⲁⲩ ⲛ̄ⲃⲗ̄ⲗⲉ ϩⲣⲁ̈ⲓ ϩⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲡⲓⲑⲩⲙⲓⲁ ⲛ̄ⲁⲧⲥⲉⲓ ⲁⲩⲱ ϥⲛⲁⲭⲁϥϭ̄ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲩⲯⲩⲭⲟⲟⲩⲉ (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 188).

[65] *Book Thom.* 140.28–30: ⲛ̄ⲑⲉ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲭⲁⲗⲓⲛⲟⲥ ϩⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲧⲁⲡⲣⲟ ⲉϥⲥⲱⲕ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲁⲡⲉϥⲟⲩⲱϣⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲓⲛ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 188).

[66] *Book Thom.* 140.30–37: ⲁϥⲙⲟⲣⲟⲩ ϩⲛ̄ⲛⲉϥϩⲁⲗⲩⲥⲓⲥ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛⲉⲩⲙⲉⲗⲟⲥ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ ⲁϥⲥⲟⲛϩⲟⲩ ⲛ̄ϩⲣⲁ̈ⲓ ϩⲙ̄ⲡⲥⲓϣⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲙⲣⲣⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲡⲓⲑⲩⲙⲉⲓⲁ ⲛ̄ⲛⲁⲉⲓ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲟⲛϩ̄ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉⲧⲛⲁⲧⲉⲕⲟ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲉⲧⲛⲁϣⲓⲃⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲉⲧⲛⲁⲡⲱⲛⲉ ⲕⲁⲧⲁⲡⲥⲱⲕ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲩⲥⲟⲕⲟⲩ ⲛ̄ⲧⲡⲉ ⲁⲡⲓⲧⲛ̄ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲱ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲉⲩϩⲱⲧⲃ̄ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲉⲩⲥⲱⲕ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲟⲩ ϩⲓⲭⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲃⲛⲟⲟⲩⲉ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ ⲙ̄ⲡϫⲱϩⲙ̄ (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 188).

[67] *Book Thom.* 143.21–23: ⲟⲩⲟ̈ⲓ [ⲛ]ⲏⲧⲛ̄ ⲛ̄ⲁⲓⲭⲙⲁⲗⲱⲧⲟⲥ ϫⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲙⲏⲣ ϩⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲥⲡⲏⲗ[ⲁⲓ]ⲟⲛ (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 198).

[68] *Book Thom.* 143.24–29: ⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲣ̄ⲛⲟⲉⲓ ⲁⲛ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲕⲟ ⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲧ[ⲉ̣]ⲧⲛ̄ⲣ̄ⲛⲟⲉⲓ ⲁⲛ ϩⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄-<ⲛ̄>ϩⲏⲧⲟⲩ ⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲙⲡ[ⲉⲧ]ⲛ̄ⲙ̄ⲙⲉ ϫⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ϣⲟⲟⲡ ϩⲙ̄ⲡⲕⲁⲕⲉ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲡⲙⲟ[ⲩ] ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲧⲁϩⲉ ϩⲙ̄ⲡⲕⲱϩⲧ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄[ⲙⲉϩ] ⲛ̄ⲥⲓϣⲉ ⲉⲣⲉⲡⲉⲧⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧ ⲡⲟϣ̄ϭ ⲉⲣⲱⲧⲛ̄ ⲉⲧⲃⲉⲡ[ⲙ̄]ⲟⲩϩ ⲉⲧ[ϩ̄]ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲛⲉ (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 198).

4. Struggle and Adversity

In the *Book of Thomas*, Jesus utters numerous stark warnings to those who are led by bodily desire, proclaiming "woe unto you who are in the grip of the powers of your body, for they will afflict you."[69] Interestingly, and in a way highly similar to what we see in monastic writings, he goes on to connect this situation directly to the struggle with demons: "Woe unto you who are in the grip of the powers of the wicked demons!"[70] These demons can be equated with the so-called "visible spirits," which the perfect ascetic, described as an angel, can escape using his wings, which, as we saw above, the ascetic gains by acquiring true knowledge.[71]

Pachomius similarly talks about demons as spirits, speaking of having been attacked by them since childhood, but when, as he puts it, "I flee to God weeping and humble with fasting and nightly vigils, the enemy grows weak before me with all his spirits."[72] Like the *Book of Thomas*, Pachomius warns against demons in the context of bodily passions, admonishing a monk he is chastising to "Guard yourself, O my son, against fornication. Do not destroy the members of Christ. Do not obey demons."[73] Moreover, just like the *Book of Thomas*, Pachomius adds the threat of post-mortem punishment: "Remember the anguish of the punishments," and "remember the anguish of the moment when you will leave the body."[74]

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[69] *Book Thom.* 144.10–12: ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓ ⲛⲏⲧⲛ̄ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲟⲧⲟⲩ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲍⲟⲩⲥⲓⲁ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲥⲱⲙⲁ ϫⲉⲛⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲙⲟ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲥⲉⲛⲁⲑⲗ̄ⲃⲉ ⲧⲏⲛⲉ (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 200). Cf. Horsiesios, *Test.* 25.

[70] *Book Thom.* 144.12–13: ⲟⲩⲟⲓ̈ ⲛⲏⲧⲛ̄ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲟⲧⲟⲩ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲛⲉⲣⲅⲉⲓⲁ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲇⲁⲓⲙⲱⲛ ⲙ̄ⲡⲟⲛⲏⲣⲟⲛ (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 200). Cf., e.g., Pachomius, *Instr.* 1.30, 55; *Paral.* 6a, 12, 24, 39; *Ep. Am.* 21, 24; Horsiesios, *Test.* 25; SBo 102.

[71] *Book Thom.* 140.1–5 (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 186).

[72] Pachomius, *Instr.* 1.11: ⲉⲓϣⲁⲛⲡⲱⲧ ⲇⲉ ⲉⲣⲁⲧϥ̄ ⲙ̄ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲉⲓ̈ⲟⲩⲣⲓ̈ⲙⲉ ⲙ̄ⲛⲟⲩⲑⲃ̄ⲃⲓ̈ⲟ ⲙ̄ⲛⲟⲩⲛⲏⲥⲧⲁ ⲙ̄ⲛϩⲉⲛⲟⲩ̄ϣⲛ ⲛ̄ⲣⲟⲉⲓⲥ ϣⲁⲣⲉⲡϫⲁϫⲉ ⲣ̄ϭⲱⲃ ⲛ̄ⲛⲁϩⲣⲁⲓ̈ ⲙ̄ⲛⲛⲉϥⲕⲉⲡⲛⲉⲩⲙⲁ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ (Lefort, *Œuvres de S. Pachôme*, 3).

[73] Pachomius, *Instr.* 1.30: ϩⲁⲣⲉϩ ⲉⲣⲟⲕ ⲱ ⲡⲁϣⲏⲣⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ⲧⲡⲟⲣⲛⲓⲁ ⲙ̄ⲡⲣ̄ⲧⲁⲕⲉⲙ̄ⲙⲉⲗⲟⲥ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲭⲣⲓⲥⲧⲟⲥ ⲙ̄ⲡⲣ̄ⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄ ⲛ̄ⲥⲁⲛ̄ⲇⲁⲓⲙⲟⲛⲓⲟⲛ (Lefort, *Œuvres de S. Pachôme*, 12).

[74] Pachomius, *Instr.* 1.30: ⲁⲣⲓⲡⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲛⲁⲅⲕⲏ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲕⲟⲗⲁⲥⲓⲥ (...) ⲁⲣⲓ̈ⲡⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ ⲛ̄ϯⲁⲛⲁⲅⲕⲏ ⲙ̄ⲡⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲧⲉⲕⲛⲏⲩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ⲥⲱⲙⲁ (Lefort, *Œuvres de S. Pachôme*, 12); cf. also SBo 82. Indeed, the references to post-mortem punishments in *Book Thom.* has clear parallels in both the Pachomian literature and in later Coptic apocrypha, such as the *Investiture of the Archangel Michael*, Ps-Timothy, *On Abbaton the Angel of Death*, and Ps-Timothy, *On the Feast of the Archangel Michael*, to mention but a few. See also Christian H. Bull, "The Great Demon of the Air and the Punishment of Souls: The *Perfect Discourse* (NHC VI,*8*) and Hermetic and Monastic Demonologies," in *Nag Hammadi à 70 ans: Qu'avons nous appris? Colloque international, Québec, Université Laval, 2931 mai 2015* (ed. Eric Crégheur, Louis Painchaud, and Tuomas Rasimus; BCNH.É 10; Leuven: Peeters, 2019), 105–20.

This emphasis on demons goes hand in hand with imagery of struggle and fighting. The centrality of the struggle against the passions of the flesh in the monastic life is vividly described by Pachomius himself. While admitting that he is himself tormented by desire, and asking for prayers on his own behalf, he tells the monk he is castigating in his *First Instruction* to "be sober in everything, labor, do the work of a preacher, stand firm against temptation" (ⲛⲏⲫⲉ ⲙ̅ⲙⲟⲕ ⲋ̅ⲛ̅ϩⲱⲃ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲱ̅ⲡ̅ϩⲓ̈ⲥⲉ ⲁⲣⲓ̈ⲡ̅ϩⲱⲃ ⲙ̅ⲡⲣⲉϥⲧⲁϣⲉⲟⲉⲓϣ ϩ̅ⲩⲡⲟⲙⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲡⲡ̅ⲡ̅ⲣⲁⲥⲙⲟⲥ) and to "complete the struggle of the monastic life" (ϫⲱⲕ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲙ̅ⲡⲁⲅⲱⲛ ⲛ̅ⲧⲙ̅ⲛ̅ⲧⲙⲟⲛⲟⲭⲟⲥ), which among other things include "guarding your virginity" (ⲉⲕϩⲁⲣⲉϩ ⲉⲧⲉⲕⲡⲁⲣⲑⲉⲛⲓ̈ⲁ) as well as "withdrawing yourself from your lack of moderation and these strange polluted voices" (ⲉⲕⲥⲓϩ ⲙ̅ⲙⲟⲕ ⲉⲧⲉⲕⲡⲁⲣⲁⲙⲉⲧⲣⲟⲛ ⲙⲛ̅ⲛⲉⲓ̈ⲥⲙⲏ ⲛ̅ϣⲙ̅ⲙⲟ ⲉⲧⲃⲏⲧ).[75] This is the kind of struggle that puts the metaphor of the athlete in the *Book of Thomas* in its proper context. And just like the *Book of Thomas* makes clear that one should imitate the apostles, and ultimately Christ, we find the Pachomian *Paralipomena* stating that being a good ascetic athlete involves the imitation of other good Christian athletes, asserting that "the noble athlete does not see the one among (the Christians) who is defeated, but he emulates those who conquer, in order to imitate them in a good manner, worthy of the same crown."[76] It is also worthy of note, in light of the *Book of Thomas*' use of the designation "athlete" for the apostle Matthias, that in addition to archbishop Athanasius and Antony the Great, the Pachomian writings generally apply the term "athlete" to leaders of the Pachomian *koinonia*.[77]

A metaphor that is related to that of struggle is that of being on guard, watching against the influence of desire and demons. In the *Book of Thomas*, Jesus tells Thomas, the apostles, and ultimately the readers of the text in Codex II, to "watch and pray that you will not remain in the flesh, but that you will leave the bond of the bitterness of life, and praying, you will find rest."[78] Likewise, Pachomius *First Instruction* abounds with reminders to his monastic readers to be watchful and on guard against various passions and evil spirits.[79]

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[75] Pachomius, *Instr.* 1.61 (Lefort, *Œuvres de S. Pachôme*, 24).

[76] Paral. 40 (Halkin, *Sancti Pachomii Vitae Graecae*, 164; trans. Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia*, 2:65)

[77] See SBo 133, 134, 136, G¹ 136 (Athanasius); G¹ 12 (Palamon); G¹ 22 (Antony and Pachomius); G¹ 79 (the ancient brothers in the Pachomian *koinonia*, Cornelios, Psentaesios, Souros, Psoi, Pecos, another Pachomius, Paul, John, Paphnutius, and many others, most of whom were appointed by Pachomius as leaders and fathers of the monasteries); G¹ 84 (Titoue, housemaster of the stewards in Pbow).

[78] *Book Thom.* 145.8–11: ⲣⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛ̅ⲥⲟⲡ̅ⲥ̅ ϫⲉⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛⲁϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲁⲛ ϩ̅ⲛ̅ⲧⲥⲁⲣⲝ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ϫⲉⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛⲁⲉⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩ̅ⲛ̅ⲧⲙⲣ̅ⲣⲉ ⲙ̅ⲡⲥⲓϣⲉ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲡⲃⲓⲟⲥ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛ̅ⲥⲟⲡ̅ⲥ̅ ⲧⲉⲧⲛ̅ⲁϭⲓⲛⲉ ⲛ̅ⲟⲩⲙ̅ⲧⲟⲛ (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 204).

[79] Pachomius, *Instr.* 1.10, 13, 20, 26, 36, 41, 43, 51, 55, 61.

Metaphors of struggle can also be combined with imagery of cleansing. We see this reflected in the *Testament* of the Pachomian abbot Horsiesios, who freely adapts the letter of Jude and an extended quotation from Ephesians to make this point:

Jude says in his letter, "snatching them from the fire and hating the soiled garment of the flesh" (cf. Jude 23). Let us beware of this kind of garment and "put on instead God's armor so as to be able to resist the devil's snares. For our fight is not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of darkness, and against the spirits of wickedness in the heavens" (Eph 6:11–12).[80]

The metaphor of the material body and its desires as a bad garment also seems to be reflected in the *Book of Thomas*, although the passage in question is unfortunately badly damaged.[81]

5. Conclusion

The burning question underlying the *Book of Thomas* is thus how to quench the insatiable fire of the bodily passions and attain rest. Or, as the *Book of Thomas* puts it, "Who will rain dew of rest on you so that it will extinguish many fires from you and your burning? Who will give you the sun to shine upon you to dissolve the darkness that is in you and to hide the darkness and the defiled water?"[82] The answer, of course, is the Savior, who provides both the blueprint of the perfect ascetic and the instructions on how to become one and live like one. And, importantly, they are also instructed to pass on the knowledge they have received, thus enabling others to reach the same state.

In the Pachomian literature we find that the abbot Theodore similarly describes the monastic life as "the life of the apostles," when he in his *Second Instruction* describes the virtues and way of life of the Pachomian *koinonia* with the following words: "[the holy] *Koinonia*, by which (God) [has shown]

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[80] Horsiesios, *Test.* 25: *Et Iudas in epistula sua loquitur: Et hos quidem de igne rapientes, et odio habentes carnis commaculatam tunicam. Caueamus huiuscemodi uestimentum, et induamur potius armatura Dei, ut possimus resistere contra insidias diaboli. Non est enim nobis pugna contra carnem et sanguinem; sed aduersus principatus et potestates, aduersus rectores tenebrarum, aduersus spiritalia nequitiae in caelestibus* (Amand Boon, *Pachomiana Latina: Règle et épitres de S. Pachôme, épitre de S. Théodore et "Liber" de S. Orsiesius: Texte latin de S. Jérôme* [Bibliothèque de la Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique 7; Leuven: Bureaux de la Revue, 1932], 126; trans. Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia*, 3:190).

[81] *Book Thom.* 143.37–38 (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 198).

[82] *Book Thom.* 144.15–19: ⲛⲓⲙ ⲡⲉⲧⲛⲁϩⲱⲟⲩ ⲛⲏⲧⲛ̄ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲉⲓⲱⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲛ ϫⲉⲕⲁⲁⲥ ⲉⲥⲛⲁϩⲱⲧⲙ̄ ⲛ̄ϩⲁϩ ⲛ̄ⲕⲱϩⲧ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲛⲉ ⲙⲛ̄ⲡⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲣⲱⲕϩ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲡⲉⲧⲛⲁϯ ⲛⲏⲧⲛ̄ ⲙ̄ⲡⲣⲏ ⲁⲡⲣ̄ⲣⲓⲉ ⲁϫⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲛⲉ ⲁⲃⲱⲗ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲙ̄ⲡⲕⲁⲕⲉ ⲉⲧϩⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲛⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁϩⲱⲡ ⲙ̄ⲡⲕⲁⲕⲉ ⲙⲛ̄ⲡⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲉⲧⲥⲟⲟϥ (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 200).

forth the life [of the] apostle[s] to those who wish to [become like] them [before] the Lord of all forever."[83] The same Theodore also describes the goal of this life in terms very close to what we find at the end of the *Book of Thomas*, where Jesus tells the apostles that they will "reign with the king" (ⲣ̅ⲣⲟ ⲙⲛ̅ⲡ̅ⲣ̅ⲣⲟ) if only they "leave the toils and the passions of the body" (ⲉⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲅⲛ̅ⲛ̅ϩⲓⲥⲉ ⲙⲛ̅ⲙ̅ⲡⲁⲑⲟⲥ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲡⲥⲱⲙⲁ).[84] Theodore similarly points out, with a reference to Matt 19:28/Luke 22:30, that the apostles "were worthy to sit [on] the twelve glorious [thrones] and [judge the] twelve [tribes] of Israel."[85] The *Book of Thomas* in fact comes very close to describing the goal of the monastic life in the same way as it is articulated by Pachomius in his *First Instruction*: "Let us struggle, O my beloved, so that we may receive the crown that is prepared. The throne is spread out. The door of the kingdom is open. To the one who is victorious shall I give from the secret manna. If we struggle and are victorious against the passions, we shall reign forever."[86]

Moreover, just like the *Book of Thomas* is a text that presents perfect teaching intended for the perfect, in order to provide ascetics with perfect knowledge enabling them to act in accordance with proper ascetic behavior, keeping watch against the desires of the flesh, Pachomian abbot Horsiesios states in his so-called *Testament*, that "you who fear the Lord, arm yourselves with chastity, that you may deserve to hear, you are not in the flesh but in the spirit. And know that perfect things are given to the perfect, and that useless things are given to the useless."[87]

With all these parallels with the Pachomian literature in mind, it is not difficult to imagine how and why Pachomian monks would have been interested in copying and reading the *Book of Thomas*. At the same time it should also be pointed out that this text is by no means alone among the Nag Hammadi texts in having close affinities with Pachomian literature or other texts associated with early Egyptian monasticism, including not only such texts as the *Gospel*

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[83] Theodore, *Instr.* 2.1: [ⲧⲕⲟⲓ]ⲛⲱⲛⲓⲁ [ⲉⲧⲟ]ⲩⲁ[ⲁⲃ ⲧⲁⲓ ⲛ̅]ⲧⲁϥⲟⲩ[ⲉⲛϩ̅]ⲡⲃⲓⲟⲥ [ⲛ̅ⲛ̅ⲁ]ⲡⲟⲥⲧⲟ[ⲗⲟⲥ] ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲓⲧⲟⲟⲧⲥ̅ ⲛ̅ⲛ̅[ⲣⲱ]ⲙⲉ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲉⲱ̅[ϣⲱ]ⲡⲉ ϩⲙ̅ⲡⲉ[ⲥⲙⲟⲧ] ⲛ̅ⲛⲉⲧⲙ̅ⲙⲁⲩ [ϩⲁϩ]ⲧⲙ̅ⲡⲭ̅ⲥ̅ ⲛ̅[ⲟⲩ]ⲛ ⲛⲓⲙ ϣⲁⲉⲛⲉϩ (Lefort, *Œuvres de S. Pachôme*, 38).

[84] *Book Thom.* 145.12–14 (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 204).

[85] Theodore, *Instr.* 2.1: ⲁⲩⲣ̅ⲡⲙ̅ⲡϣⲁ ⲛ̅ϩⲙⲟ[ⲟⲥ ϩⲓ]ⲡⲙⲛ̅ⲧⲥⲛⲟⲟⲩⲥ [ⲛ̅ⲑ]ⲣⲟ[ⲛⲟⲥ] ⲛ̅ⲉⲟⲟⲩ ⲛ̅[ⲥⲉⲕⲣⲓⲛⲉ ⲛ̅ⲧ]ⲙⲛ̅ⲧⲥⲛ[ⲟⲟⲩⲥ ⲙ̅ⲫⲩⲗⲏ] ⲙ̅ⲡⲓⲏ̅ⲗ̅ (Lefort, *Œuvres de S. Pachôme*, 38).

[86] Pachomius, *Instr.* 1.50: ⲙⲁⲣⲛ̅ⲁⲅⲱⲛⲓⲍⲉ ⲱ ⲛⲁⲙⲉⲣⲁⲁⲧⲉ ϫⲉⲉⲛⲉϫⲓ ⲙ̅ⲡⲉⲕⲗⲟⲙ ⲉⲧⲥⲃ̅ⲧⲱⲧ ⲡⲉⲑⲣⲟⲛⲟⲥ ⲡⲟⲣϣ ⲡⲣⲟ̄ ⲛ̅ⲧⲙⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲣⲟ ⲟⲩⲱⲛ ⲡⲉⲧⲛⲁϫⲣⲟ †ⲛⲁ† ⲛⲁϥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲙ̅ⲡⲙⲁⲛⲛⲁ ⲉⲑⲏⲡ ⲉⲛϣⲁⲛⲁⲅⲱⲛⲓⲍⲉ ⲛ̅ⲧⲛ̅ϫⲣⲟ ⲉⲛⲡⲁⲑⲟⲥ ⲧⲛ̅ⲛⲁⲣ̅ⲣⲟ̄ ϣⲁⲉⲛⲉϩ (Lefort, *Œuvres de S. Pachôme*, 20).

[87] Horsiesios, *Test.* 20: *Qui timetis Dominum armate uos castitate, ut audire mereamini: Vos autem non estis in carne, sed in spiritu. Et scitote quod perfectis perfecta tribuantur, et inanibus reddantur inania* (Boon, *Pachomiana Latina*, 122; trans. Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia*, 3:185).

of *Thomas*[88] and the *Exegesis on the Soul*,[89] and even the *Apocryphon of John*,[90] all found in the same codex as the *Book of Thomas*,[91] but also such texts as the *Dialogue of the Savior*,[92] the *Sentences of Sextus*, and the *Teachings of Silvanus*,[93] just to mention the tip of the iceberg. Indeed, as Christian Bull has convincingly shown, even the eclectic Nag Hammadi Codex VI as a whole, including its heavily rewritten excerpt from Plato's *Republic*, seems highly amenable to a monastic context.[94]

Pachomius ends his *First Instruction* with the following words:

Now then, my brother, make peace with your brother and pray for me, too, for I cannot do anything, but I am afflicted by my desires. But you, be sober in everything, labor, do the work of the preacher, stand firm against temptation. Complete the struggle of the monastic

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[88] Melissa Harl Sellew, "Reading Jesus in the Desert: The *Gospel of Thomas* Meets the *Apophthegmata Patrum*," in *The Nag Hammadi Codices and Late Antique Egypt* (ed. Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott; STAC 110; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 81–106; Kimberley A. Fowler, "Reading *Gospel of Thomas* 100 in the Fourth Century: From Roman Imperialism to Pachomian Concern over Wealth," *VC* 72 (2018): 421–46; René Falkenberg and André Gagné in this volume.

[89] Hugo Lundhaug, "Monastic Exegesis and the Female Soul in the *Exegesis on the Soul*," in *Women and Knowledge in Early Christianity* (ed. Ulla Tervahauta et al.; VCSup 144; Leiden: Brill, 2017), 221–33; Kimberley A. Fowler, "The Ascent of the Soul and the Pachomians: Interpreting the Exegesis on the Soul (NHC II,6) within a Fourth-Century Monastic Context," *Gnosis* 2 (2017): 63–93.

[90] Christian H. Bull, "Women, Angels, and Dangerous Knowledge: The Myth of the Watchers in the Apocryphon of John and Its Monastic Manuscript-Context," in *Women and Knowledge in Early Christianity* (ed. Ulla Tervahauta et al.; VCSup 144; Leiden: Brill, 2017), 75–107; and Rosland in this volume.

[91] On Codex II as a whole, see Lance Jenott, "Recovering Adam's Lost Glory: Nag Hammadi Codex II in its Egyptian Monastic Environment," in *Jewish and Christian Cosmogony in Late Antiquity* (ed. Lance Jenott and Sarit Kattan Gribetz; TSAJ 155; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 222–43; Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, "Historiography as Anti-History: Reading Nag Hammadi Codex II," *ARG* 20 (2018): 77–90; Kimberley A. Fowler, "From the Apocryphon of John to Thomas the Contender: Nag Hammadi Codex II in its Fourth-Century Context," (PhD diss. University of Manchester, 2013); and Fowler in this volume.

[92] Hugo Lundhaug, "The *Dialogue of the Savior* (NHC III,5) as a Monastic Text," in *Studia Patristica XCIII: Papers Presented at the Seventeenth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford 2015: Volume 19: The First Two Centuries; Apocrypha and Gnostica* (ed. Markus Vinzent; StPatr 93; Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 335–46.

[93] Blossom Stefaniw, "Hegemony and Homecoming in the Ascetic Imagination: Sextus, Silvanus, and Monastic Instruction in Egypt," in *The Nag Hammadi Codices and Late Antique Egypt* (ed. Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott; STAC 110; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 107–38.

[94] Christian H. Bull, "An Origenistic Reading of Plato in Nag Hammadi Codex VI," in *Studia Patristica LXXV: Papers Presented at the Seventeenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2015. Volume 1: Studia Patristica; Platonism and the Fathers; Maximus the Confessor* (ed. Markus Vinzent; StPatr 75; Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 31–40; idem, "Great Demon of the Air"; and Bull in this volume.

life, being humble, being gentle, trembling at the words you have heard, guarding your virginity, and withdrawing yourself from your lack of moderation and these strange polluted voices. And do not be outside the Scriptures of the holy ones, but be firm in the faith in Christ Jesus our Lord, through whom be glory to him and his good Father and the Holy Spirit forever and ever! Amen! Bless us! (Pachomius, *Instr.* 1.61)[95]

This passage shows clearly how Pachomius' advice to the "spiteful monk" comes very close to what we see in the *Book of Thomas*. Both talk about the need to be watchful and struggle against material desires, and they both highlight the importance of preaching. Moreover, Pachomius' references to the "brothers," "peace," "prayer," and "the holy ones" resonate with the colophon following the *Book of Thomas*, with its call to the readers to "remember me, too, my brothers, in your prayers. Peace to the holy ones and the spiritual ones!"[96]

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[95] ⲧⲉⲛⲟⲩ ϭⲉ ⲡⲁⲥⲟⲛ ⲁⲣⲓⲉⲓⲣⲏⲛⲏ ⲙⲛⲡⲉⲕⲥⲟⲛ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛⲧⲉⲧⲛϣⲗⲏⲗ ⲉϫⲱⲓ ϩⲱ ϫⲉⲛϯⲉϣⲣ̄ⲗⲁⲁⲩ ⲁⲛ ⲛ̄ϩⲱⲃ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ϯⲑⲃ̄ⲕⲏⲩ ⲉⲧⲃⲉⲛⲁⲟⲩⲱϣ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲕ ⲇⲉ ⲛⲏⲫⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲕ ϩⲛ̄ϩⲱⲃ ⲛⲓⲙ ϣ̄ⲡ̄ϣ̈ⲓⲥⲉ ⲁⲣⲓⲡϩⲱⲃ ⲙ̄ⲡⲣⲉϥⲧⲁϣⲉⲟⲉⲓϣ ϩⲩⲡⲟⲙⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲡⲡ̈ⲓ̈ⲣⲁⲥⲙⲟⲥ ϫⲱⲕ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲙ̄ⲡⲁⲅⲱⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲙⲟⲛⲟⲭⲟⲥ ⲉⲕⲉⲃⲃ̈ⲓ̈ⲏⲩ ⲉⲕⲟ̄ ⲛ̄ⲣⲙ̄ⲣⲁϣ ⲉⲕⲥⲱⲧ ϩⲏⲧⲟⲩ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ϣⲁϫⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲕⲥⲟⲧⲙⲟⲩ ⲉⲕϩⲁⲣⲉϩ ⲉⲧⲉⲕⲡⲁⲣⲑⲉⲛⲓ̈ⲁ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲉⲕⲥⲓϩⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲕ ⲉⲧⲉⲕⲡⲁⲣⲁⲙⲉⲧⲣⲟⲛ ⲙⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲓ̈ⲥⲙⲏ ⲛ̄ϣⲙ̄ⲙⲟ ⲉⲧⲃⲛⲧ ⲛⲅ̄ⲙ̄ⲡⲃⲟⲗ ⲁⲛ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲅⲣⲁⲫⲏ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲉⲕⲧⲁϫⲣⲏⲩ ϩⲛ̄ⲧⲡⲓⲥϯⲥ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲭⲣⲓⲥⲧⲟⲥ ⲓⲏⲥⲟⲩⲥ ⲡⲉⲛϫⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲡⲁⲓ̈ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲓⲧⲟⲟⲧϥ̄ ⲡⲉⲟⲟⲩ ⲛⲁϥ ⲙⲛ̄ⲡϥ̄ⲉⲓⲱⲧ ⲛ̄ⲁⲅⲁⲑⲱⲥ ⲙⲛ̄ⲡⲉⲡⲛⲉⲩⲙⲁ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ϣⲁⲉⲛⲉϩ ⲛ̄ⲉϩⲉϩ ϩⲁⲙⲏⲛ ⲥⲙⲟⲩ ⲉⲣⲟⲛ (Lefort, *Œuvres de S. Pachôme*, 24).

[96] *Book Thom.* 145.20–23: ⲁⲣⲓⲡⲁⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ ϩⲱ ⲛⲁⲥⲛⲏⲩ ϩ[ⲛ̄]ⲛⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲡⲣⲟⲥⲉⲩⲭⲏ ⲉ[ⲓ]ⲣⲏⲛⲏ ⲧⲟⲓⲥ ⲁⲅⲓⲟⲓⲥ ⲙⲛ̄ⲛⲓⲡⲛⲉⲩⲙⲁⲧⲓⲕⲟⲥ; cf. also the colophon at the end of Codex VII (*Steles Seth* 127.28–32) with its call for blessings: ⲡⲉⲓ̈ϫⲱⲱⲙⲉ ⲡⲁϯⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲓⲱⲧ ⲡⲉ ⲡϣⲏⲣⲉ ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁϥⲥⲁϩϥ̄ ⲥⲙⲟⲩ ⲉⲣⲟⲓ̈ ⲡⲱⲧ ϯⲥⲙⲟⲩ ⲉⲣⲟⲕ ⲡⲱⲧ ϩⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲉⲓⲣⲏⲛⲏ ϩⲁⲙⲏⲛ (Layton and Turner, "Book of Thomas the Contender," 204).

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"Not as Moses said" Revisited:
Christ as Interpreter of Scripture in the *Apocryphon of John*[*]

Kristine Toft Rosland

ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲇⲉ ⲡⲉϫⲁⲓ̈ ϫⲉⲡϫⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲟⲩ ⲡⲉ ⲉⲕⲥⲧⲁⲥⲓⲥ ⲁϥⲥⲱⲃⲉ ⲡⲉϫⲁϥ ϫⲉⲁⲕⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ ϫⲉⲕⲁⲧⲁⲑⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲙⲱⲩⲥⲏⲥ ϫⲟⲟⲥ ϫⲉⲁϥⲧⲣⲉϥⲛ̄[ⲕ]ⲟⲧⲕ· ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲛ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϥϩⲱⲃⲥ̄ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ [ⲉ]ϫ̄ⲛⲛⲉϥⲁⲓⲥⲑⲏⲥⲓⲥ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲁⲛⲁⲓ<ⲥ>ⲑⲏⲥⲓⲁ ⲕⲁⲓⲅⲁⲣ ⲁϥϫⲟⲟⲥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲓⲧⲟⲟⲧϥ̄ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲡⲣⲟⲫⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲉϥϫⲱ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ ϫⲉϯⲛⲁ[ⲑⲣ̄]ϣⲟ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲙⲁⲁϫⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲩϩⲏⲧ· ϫⲉ[ⲕⲁⲁⲥ] ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲩⲛⲟⲉⲓ· ⲟ[ⲩ]ⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲩⲛⲁⲩ [ⲉⲃⲟⲗ]

I said: "Lord, what is 'trance'"? He laughed and said: "Did you think it is as Moses said, 'He made him sleep?' No, it was his perception (ⲁⲓⲥⲑⲏⲥⲓⲥ) he covered with unconsciousness (ⲁⲛⲁⲓⲥⲑⲏⲥⲓⲁ). For indeed, he said through the prophet: 'I will [make] the ears of their hearts heavy so [that] they will not understand and will not see.'" (*Ap. John* III 29.2–12)[1]

In the quote from the *Apocryphon of John* above, Christ reveals that the creator deliberately obscured the senses of Adam.[2] This is one of several instances in

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[1] Translations from Coptic in this article are my own. Coptic text of *Ap. John* based on Bernard Barc and Wolf-Peter Funk, *Le livre des secrets de Jean recension brève* (BCNH.T 35; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2012); supplemented by Michael Waldstein and Frederik Wisse, *The Apocryphon of John: Synopsis of Nag Hammadi Codices II,1, III,1, and IV,1 with BG 8502,2* (NMHS 33; Leiden: Brill, 1995).

[2] *Ap. John* is known from four different Coptic manuscripts, Nag Hammadi Codices (NHC) II, III and IV, and Codex Berolinensis 8502 (BG). Conventionally these four texts are considered to represent two recensions, NHC III and BG (the short recension) are seen as two different translations from the same Greek version, NHC II and IV (the long recension) are considered a result of a translation from another Greek version. These Nag Hammadi Codices are dated to the fourth to fifth century, while BG is younger, quite possibly by a century or more. See Waldstein and Wisse, *The Apocryphon of John*; Myriam Krutzsch

the narrative where the creator deliberately acts to conceal the truth about the world from humanity. The quote demonstrates the *Apocryphon of John's* ambiguous use of scripture. First, Christ corrects Gen 2:21, seemingly denying the text's authority, while at the same time offering another piece of scripture, Isa 6:10, in support of his correction. The use of a proof-text in such an explicit manner is not repeated in the work.[3] However, this simultaneous dependence on, and rewriting of, scripture is found throughout the *Apocryphon of John*. If we understand the Nag Hammadi Codices as monastic books as this volume presupposes,[4] the explicit criticism of Genesis found in the *Apocryphon of John* challenges our understanding of what early monastics may have read.[5] Four

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and Günter Poethke, "Der Einband des koptisch-gnostischen Kodex Papyrus Berolinensis 8502," *Forschungen und Berichte* 24 (1984), 37–40; Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (STAC 97; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 9–11. In BG the name/title of the revealer is Christ (x̄c̄). In the versions of *Ap. John* found in the NHC II, III and IV John addresses him as "Lord" (ⲡϫⲟⲉⲓⲥ). NHC II also frequently uses the title "the Savior" (ⲥⲱⲧⲏⲣ or ⲥ̄ⲱ̄ⲣ̄), which is only rarely used in the other versions. Christ is used as a title for the Son of the Invisible Spirit and Barbelo in all the versions of *Ap. John*.

[3] The use of Gen 2:24 in the passage on the creation of woman is a possible exception.

[4] See Lundhaug and Jenott, *The Monastic Origins*, where it is not claimed that the works contained in the Nag Hammadi Codices necessarily originated in monastic circles, although they may have been edited or rewritten in such a context, but that the codices themselves were likely produced and used in a monastic setting.

[5] The first scholar to investigate the alleged discovery site, Jean Doresse, wrote "Already the contents of these Gnostic collections had led us to suppose that, whoever may have possessed them, they cannot have been monks." Jean Doresse, *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics: An Introduction to the Gnostic Coptic Manuscripts Discovered at Chenoboskion: With an English Translation and Critical Evaluation of the Gospel According to Thomas* (trans. Leonard Johnston; London: Hollis & Carter, 1960), 135. John W. B. Barns, who suggested a monastic provenance based on materials found in the cartonnage, still could not believe the codices were meant as reading material for monks, their purpose must rather have been to combat heresy. John W. B. Barns, "Greek and Coptic Papyri from the Covers of the Nag Hammadi Codices: A Preliminary Report," in *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts: In Honour of Pahor Labib*, (ed. Martin Krause; NHS 6; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 9–18. Other scholars who have opposed the monastic hypothesis are: Alexandr Khosroyevv, *Die Bibliotehek von Nag Hammadi: Einige Probleme des Christentums in Ägypten während der ersten Jahrhunderte* (ASKÄ 7; Altenberge: Oros, 1995); Ewa Wipszycka, "The Nag Hammadi Library and the Monks: A Papyrologist's Point of View," *JJP* 30 (2000): 249–66; James E. Goehring, has been more postive to the monastic hypothesis. "New Frontiers in Pachomian Studies," in *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity* (ed. Birger A. Pearson and James E. Goehring; SAC; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1986), 236–57; James E. Goehring, "Monastic Diversity and Ideological Boundaries in Fourth-Century Christian Egypt," *JECS* 5 (1997): 61–84; James E. Goehring, "The Provenance of the Nag Hammadi Codices Once More," in *Studia Patristica XXXV: Papers Presented at the Thirteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 1999: Ascetica, Gnostica, Liturgica, Orientalia* (ed. Maurice F. Wiles and Edward Y. Yarnold; Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 234–53. Kimberley A. Fowler's

times a variation of the phrase "Not as Moses said" is used and an alternative to the Genesis story given.[6]

This article offers a reexamination of these corrections of Moses. How do they function in the *Apocryphon of John*? Can they offer an understanding of how scripture may have been understood by the monastic readers of the Nag Hammadi Codices?

1. Perspectives for Understanding the *Apocryphon of John*'s use of Scripture

1.1 Apocryphon of John as a Monastic Text

The impulse to read the Nag Hammadi codices as monastic books comes from the codices themselves. Their covers, decorations, cartonnage and colophons contain evidence that support the monastic hypothesis.[7] Reading the preserved manuscripts of the *Apocryphon of John* as monastic books shifts the timeframe. The *Apocryphon of John* has traditionally been read as a second century work. Irenaeus summarizes a cosmogony in *Adversus Haereses* 1.29 that is very similar to the cosmogony rendered in the *Apocryphon of John*. This, however, does not mean that the *Apocryphon of John* as we know it existed at that point, even

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dissertation, "From the Apocryphon of John to Thomas the Contender: Nag Hammadi Codex II in Its Fourth-Century Context" (University of Manchester, 2013), accepts the monastic hypothesis. See also Kimberley A. Fowler, "Reading the Gospel of Thomas 100 in the Fourth Century: From Roman Imperialism to Pachomian Concern over Wealth," *VC* 72 (2018): 421–46. Another example of a study in favor of the monastic hypothesis is Sarit Kattan Gribetz, "Women as Readers of the Nag Hammadi Codices," *JECS* 26 (2018): 463–94.

[6] Codex Berolinensis 8502,2 (BG) 45.7–19/Nag Hammadi Codex (NHC) II 13.19–26; Nag Hammadi Codex III 29.4–7/BG 58.16–59.1/II 22.22–25; III 29.21–24/BG 59.17–19/II 23.3–4; III 37.22–38.5/BG 73.4–12/III 29.6–12.

[7] John W. B. Barns, the scholar first responsible for editing the papyri from the cartonnage from the covers of the Nag Hammadi codices suggested, based on the many letters with monastic writers or addressees, that a monastic setting was likely for the production of the codices. Barns, "Preliminary Report." Barns died before the edition of the papyri was published. John C. Shelton, who together with Gerald M. Browne finished the edition, opposed the monastic hypothesis and argued against it in his introduction to the edition, John W. B. Barns, Gerald M. Browne, and John C. Shelton. *The Nag Hammadi Codices: Greek and Coptic Papyri from the Cartonnage of the Covers*. (NHS 16; Leiden: Brill, 1981). An evaluation of all the material evidence from the covers is found in Lundhaug and Jenott, *The Monastic Origins*. The dissertation of Paula Jean Tutty, "The Monks of the Nag Hammadi Codices: Contextualising a Fourth Century Monastic Community" (PhD, University of Oslo, 2019), offers arguments for the monastic hypothesis by specifically analyzing and contextualizing the monastic letters from the covers of the Nag Hammadi Codices.

if traditions similar to (parts of) the work circulated in the second century.[8] The Nag Hammadi manuscripts we have of the *Apocryphon of John* belong to the fourth or fifth century,[9] and so do their monastic readers.

The monastic readers of the *Apocryphon of John* read this work as it appears to us in the manuscripts.[10] This means that they read the whole text, including the frame narrative and other Christian traits found in its present versions. In many studies of the *Apocryphon of John* and scripture, these elements receive little attention since they are regarded as secondary. Approaches informed by traditional philology's search for the original text, combined with a focus on the origin and development of Gnosticism in scholarship,[11] have resulted in the

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[8] Frederik Wisse warns against dating the compositional stage of the work early, "After the Synopsis: Prospects and Problems in Establishing a Critical Text of the *Apocryphon of John* and in Defining Its Historical Location," in *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years. Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration* (ed. John D. Turner and Anne McGuire; NHMS 44; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 149.

[9] Waldstein and Wisse, *The Apocryphon of John*, 1.

[10] My work is influenced by insights from New Philology. New, or Material Philology, takes as its starting point that texts are fluid, and that variation among manuscripts is the norm. Rather than using the variants of a given work to reconstruct a text as close to the original as possible, like traditional philology, New Philology does not prioritize earlier over later, but studies texts as they are found in the manuscripts we have. See Stephen G. Nichols, "The New Philology: Introduction: Philology in a Manuscript Culture," *Speculum* 65 (1990): 1–10. Stephen G. Nichols, "Why Material Philology? Some Thoughts," *Zeitschrift für Deutsche Philologie* 116. Sonderheft (1997): 10–30; Hugo Lundhaug and Liv Ingeborg Lied, "Studying Snapshots: On Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology," in *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology* (ed. Liv Ingeborg Lied and Hugo Lundhaug; TUGAL 175; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 1–19; Hugo Lundhaug, "The Nag Hammadi Codices: Textual Fluidity in Coptic," in *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies: An Introduction* (ed. Alessandro Bausi et al.; Hamburg: COMSt, 2015), 419–23; Lance Jenott, "Reading Variants in James and the Apocalypse of James: A Perspective from New Philology," in *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology* (ed. Liv Ingeborg Lied and Hugo Lundhaug; TUGAL 175; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 55–84.

[11] For some examples of theories about the development of *Ap. John*, see Tardieu, *Écrits gnostiques: Codex de Berlin* (Sources gnostiques et manichéennes 1; Paris: Cerf, 1984); Alastair H. B. Logan, *Gnostic Truth and Christian Heresy: A Study in the History of Gnosticism* (T & T Clark, 1996); Tuomas Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered in Gnostic Mythmaking: Rethinking Sethianism in Light of the Ophite Evidence* (NHMS 68; Leiden: Brill, 2009); Tuomas Rasimus, "The Johannine Background of the Being-Life-Mind Triad," in *In Gnosticism, Platonism and the Late Ancient World : Essays in Honour of John D. Turner* (ed. Kevin Corrigan and Tuomas Rasimus; NHMS 82; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 369–409; John D. Turner, "Sethian Gnosticism: A Literary History," in *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism and Early Christianity* (ed. Charles Hedrick and Robert Jr. Hodgson; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1986), 55–86. See also John D. Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition* (BCNH.É 6; Leuven: Peeters, 2001).

Apocryphon of John often not being considered as a whole, but split into original and later redactions.[12] The hypothetical original has been seen as a Jewish[13] or non-Christian[14] text only superficially Christianized.

According to Birger Pearson, a Christian Gnostic text was created by "adding a framework according to which "Christ" is providing revelation to John, by opening up the text at ten different points so as to create a dialogue between "Christ" and his interlocutor, John, and by adding a few easily recognizable glosses."[15] The logical extension of this argument is that these glosses, and the frame narrative, can be removed and a non-Christian work can be found.[16]

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[12] Søren Giversen, "The Apocryphon of John and Genesis," *ST* 17 (1963): 60–76 is a very early exception to this. Giversen bases his analysis on the work as we have it in BG and interprets it without sorting it in earlier and later traditions. See also Zlatko Pleše, *Poetics of the Gnostic Universe: Narrative and Cosmology in the Apocryphon of John* (NHMS 52; Leiden: Brill, 2006). In Pleše's view "While this sort of archeological search for sources, cultural stimuli, and intellectual borrowings may be revealing, it tends to remove from view a more important question of what the *Apocryphon of John* was intending to convey in its own right. Furthermore, such a search shows little respect for the unity of a literary creation, let alone for the ancient view of the literary text as a unified living being" (ibid., 15).

[13] Nils A. Dahl, "The Arrogant Archon and the Lewd Sophia: Jewish Traditions in Gnostic Revolt," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism, Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, Vol. 2: Sethian Gnosticism* (ed. Bentley Layton; SHR 41; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 689–712; Birger A. Pearson, "Use, Authority and Exegesis of Mikra in Gnostic Literature," in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (ed. Martin J. Mulder and Harry Sysling; CRINT 2.1; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 635–52; Birger A. Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity* (SAC; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990).

[14] Cf. Hans-Martin Schenke, "The Phenomenon and Significance of Gnostic Sethianism," in *Der Same Seths: Hans-Martin Schenke's Kleine Schriften zu Gnosis, Koptologie und Neuem Testament* (ed. Gesine Schenke Robinson, Gesa Schenke, and Uwe-Karsten Plisch; NHMS 78; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 524: "Gnostic Sethianism not only is in substance pre-Christian, but it is also so autonomous and non-Christian in its essence that, when it encountered and coexisted with Christianity, despite the attraction that Christianity exerted here and there, no genuine combination with Christianity resulted, and indeed could not result." The article was originally published in in *Sethian Gnosticism* (*The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut, March 28–31, 1978 2*; ed. Bentley Layton; SHR 41; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 588–616. Schenke also suggests that Sethianism may have originated among Samaritans (Schenke, "Das sethianische System nach Nag Hammadi-Handschriften" in *Studia Coptica* [ed. Peter Nagel; Berliner byzantinistische Arbeiten 45; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1974], 165–72).

[15] Pearson "Use, Authority and Exegesis," 648–49.

[16] Michael Waldstein sees the frame narrative, as well as most of the dialogue between Christ and John, as secondary, but still holds that it is impossible to isolate a non-Christian layer in the work. Merging of (some) Christian and Sethian ideas has, in his opinion, happened before the text was written. "Das Apokryphon des Johannes (NHC II,1; III,1; IV,l und BG2)," in *Nag Hammadi Deutsch: 1. Band: NHC I,1–V,1* (ed. Hans-Martin Schenke, Hans-Gebhard Bethge, and Ursula Ulrike Kaiser; GCS; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2001), 95–150, 98.

However, for our purposes the narrative framework, dialogue, and title are important interpretive keys. Secondary or not, the monastic readers of the *Apocryphon of John* read a work called "The Secret Book of John."[17] John is explicitly identified as the brother of James and son of Zebedee, in an opening scene drawing on gospel material and containing Johannine language. It is while sharing his revelation with John that Christ corrects Moses. This is the interpretive framework our versions of the *Apocryphon of John* offer their readers, and it is within this framework we must investigate what the correction of Moses entails.[18]

1.2 Apocryphon of John and Scripture

Bentley Layton, in his book *The Gnostic Scriptures,* draws on the phrase "Not as Moses said" to argue that the *Apocryphon of John* and other works were "meant to attack or replace parts of the already accepted body of scripture."[19] This is just one example of how the phrase seemingly confirms the established scholarly understanding that Gnostics[20] rejected or subverted scripture.[21]

Waldstein bases his argument on Schenke, "The Phenomenon and Significance." Schenke, in the same essay, still sees Sethian gnosticism as pre-Christian, and in essence non-Christian.

   [17] All the manuscripts containing *Ap. John* have subscript titles. NHC III and BG have the title ⲡⲁⲡⲟⲕⲣⲩⲫⲟⲛ ⲛ̄ⲓ̈ⲱⲅⲁⲛⲛⲏⲥ, NHC II and IV ⲕⲁⲧⲁⲓ̈ⲱⲅⲁⲛⲛⲏⲛ ⲛ̄ⲁⲡⲟⲕⲣⲩⲫⲟⲛ. NHC IV uses an abbreviated form of John's name.

   [18] While it is worthwhile to identify editorial layers, it is important to remember that it cannot bring us back to the earliest text. We may hypothesize about what layers were, at different points in time, added to a given text. It is, however, important to note that we cannot know what kind of interpretive framework this earlier text(s) or traditions were part of. Texts do not develop simply by aggregating new material. Peeling away what we believe to be later additions will not necessarily bring us back to an earlier version that ever actually existed. This hypothetical earliest possible text may in fact be a quite new text, never read by anyone except a scholarly audience of our time.

   [19] Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures: A New Translation* (London: SCM, 1987), xviii.

   [20] The work of Michael Allen Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), demonstrates the shortcomings of the term "Gnosticism" as an analytical category. Karen L. King, *What Is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003) shows how the term has functioned as a way of othering opponents in inner-Christian debate. I avoid the term Gnosticism, since it is loaded with connotations that hinder the understanding of the Nag Hammadi texts.

   [21] Hans Jonas is a prime example. He claims that Gnostic exegesis was willfully shocking and rebellious, turning the values of good and evil upside down in protest against the ignorant and evil demiurge. Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity* (2nd rev. ed.; Boston, MA: Beacon, 1963). Cf. Kurt Rudolf, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1987), 54: "We may frankly speak of a 'protest exegesis' in so far as it runs counter to the

Early studies of the Nag Hammadi material concluded along similar lines, but over time this understanding has shifted, and Birger Pearson may serve as an example of the development that such scholarship has undergone. In his 1976 article "Biblical Exegesis in Gnostic Literature" Pearson states "this hermeneutical principle can be described as one of revolt."[22] In a later work, however, Pearson writes, "there is a great variety in the range of attitudes adopted by Gnostics vis-à-vis the Bible."[23] As the research on the Nag Hammadi codices have grown, the views on how these texts approach Biblical texts have become more nuanced.[24] Michael A. Williams work *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category*, not only made Nag Hammadi scholars reconsider their terminology, but also showed how the use of scripture in the *Apocryphon of John* and other works previously categorized as "Gnostic" was best understood as "hermeneutical problem solving."[25] The biblical passages reinterpreted in the *Apocryphon of John* presented challenges to many interpreters, and both Jewish and Christian writers struggled to make sense of them. The *Apocryphon of John* may have given these hermeneutical problems different solutions than many other Christian writings did. However, there is no reason to solve problems in texts that have no authority. The fact that the *Apocryphon of John* engages problematical passages from Genesis indicates that whoever produced and used the work accepted Genesis as an authoritative text, i.e., as scripture.

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external text and the traditional interpretation"; Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism: A Survey of the Proposed Evidence* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1983), 145: "most of the Old Testament materials are used in quite a perverse way."

[22] Birger A. Pearson, "Biblical Exegesis in Gnostic Literature," in *Armenian and Biblical Studies* (ed. Michael E. Stone; Jerusalem: St. James Press, 1976); reprinted in Birger A. Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity* (SAC; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 29–38, 37. It is worth noting that his argument is based on an analysis of *Ap. John*. "despite the narrowness of focus I think some valid observations of a general nature will be possible regarding the nature of gnostic myth and the religious-historical context out of which it arose in late antiquity" (Ibid, 29).

[23] Birger A. Pearson, "Use, Authority and Exegesis." This variety he groups in three different hermeneutical presuppositions, 1) wholly negative, 2) wholly positive and 3) intermediate positions. *Ap. John* belongs to neither of these groups, as it, according to Pearson, represents the earliest form of Gnostic association with the Jewish Scriptures, "Rewritten Bible," 647–51.

[24] An introductory textbook on Gnosticism from 2013, Nicola Denzey Lewis, *Introduction to "Gnosticism": Ancient Voices, Christian Worlds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 10, avoids such talk of attitude toward the Jewish Scriptures, but rather describes the Nag Hammadi texts as witnesses to the ongoing process of defining and reinterpreting the status of Jewish Scriptures in early Christianity.

[25] Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, 54–79.

1.3 Hermeneutical Problem Solving

Aaron Hughes' broad understanding of the concept of commentary[26] provides fruitful perspectives on the kind of hermeneutical problem-solving that we see in the *Apocryphon of John*. Hughes explains how commentary makes an authoritative text meaningful to a community, while he presents canon as "the raw data" organized by commentary.[27] Commentary is the manner in which "a community manipulates its past in such a way that it contextualizes the present."[28] The canon represents the community's idealized past, a past that is used to think with in a process that interprets the present and gives meaning to it.[29] This is not the same as taking everything written in a canonical text at face value. In many ways it is the opposite. Through commentary, "exegetes are able to manipulate the canon in such a manner that differs from, or even contradicts, the literal level of the text."[30] This process is not an attack on the authority of scripture; on the contrary it results from the authoritative status of the texts. If a certain text is authoritative it must be understood as such even when what the text claims and what the community presupposes seem to differ. The negotiation of these truth-claims happens in the commentary. For this reason, problematical passages in the canon frequently appear in commentary.[31] Hughes points to the example of the Song of Songs in Jewish and Christian tradition. It is difficult to understand why this work is part of the canon, but it is precisely for this reason it has received so much attention in commentaries. Since it is part of the canon it must be understood as such, even if it requires creative and symbolic interpretation.

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[26] Aaron Hughes, "Presenting the Past: The Genre of Commentary in Theoretical Perspective," *MTSR* 15 (2003): 148–68. It is worth noting that Hughes uses "commentary" very broadly. All interpretation of authoritative texts fits his definition, not just works belonging to the genre commentary. Hughes' theoretical framework has been applied in an analysis of Nag Hammadi Codex II by Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, "Contextualizing the Present, Manipulating the Past: Codex II from Nag Hammadi and the Challenge of Circumventing Canonicity," in *Canon and Canonicity: The Formation and Use of Scripture* (ed. Einar Thomassen; Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2010), 91–108. Seeing commentary as a group's way to express their identity by adapting a mythical past she finds two purposes behind the compilation of the texts in Codex II: "The first is to interlock the biblical demiurgical myth firmly with a Jesus tradition, thus furnishing this particular reading of Genesis – which introduces a demiurge distinct from the highest god – with an explicit Christian legitimation. The second is to promote an ascetic worldview and support ascetic practice" (ibid., 100–1).

[27] Hughes, "Presenting the Past," 151: "a finite set of authoritative texts or objects or even a physical landscape that people relate to and try to manipulate. A canon is intimately connected to the perceived origin of a community."

[28] Hughes, "Presenting the Past," 149.

[29] Hughes, "Presenting the Past," 149.

[30] Hughes, "Presenting the Past," 158.

[31] Hughes, "Presenting the Past," 157.

Elizabeth A. Clark's *Reading Renunciation*[32] provides good examples of how canonical material could be reinterpreted to fit current concerns. As ascetic practices were becoming a Christian ideal, Christian ascetics sought to find their praxis supported in scripture. "Their 'problem' arose because the Bible only sporadically supported their agenda, many verses appeared rather to assume that marriage and reproduction were the norm for good living."[33] Rather than choosing between asceticism and scripture, interpretation, or Hughes' commentary, provided a way to combine those. Clark demonstrates how different exegetical strategies employed by patristic authors served this purpose.[34] This reinterpretation was necessary to bridge the gap between scripture and an ascetic praxis held by many as the ideal Christian life.

The reinterpretation of Genesis in the *Apocryphon of John* is done through a revelation narrated by Christ. It is Christ who provides the commentary on Moses.

2. The Reinterpretation of Genesis

2.1 Genesis in the Apocryphon of John

David Creech's study *The Use of Scripture in the Apocryphon of John*, [35] claims that the seemingly critical stance towards Moses in the *Apocryphon of John* is a rhetorical device, separating the milieu behind this text from the "early catholic."[36]

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[32] Elizabeth A. Clark, *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

[33] Clark, *Reading Renunciation*, 3.

[34] Clark identifies eleven such "modes of reading" (ibid., 104–52). Very common were strategies that combined Bible passages, to shift the interpretation of less ascetic passages in a more ascetic direction. The difference between the Old and New Testament would also be appealed to, as would the authority of the person speaking, or the tone of their utterance. The chronology of sentences, or storylines would also prove helpful, e.g., Adam and Eve did not have sex until after they were evicted from the garden. The unifying factor of all Clark's modes is the fact that they all are strategies for interpreting scripture. It is through scripture that problems of scripture are solved.

[35] David Creech, *The Use of Scripture in the Apocryphon of John* (WUNT II 441; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).

[36] For the reasoning behind the term, see Creech, *Use of Scripture,* 14–15.

According to Creech the biblical text is foundational for the *Apocryphon of John* on three levels; theologically,[37] structurally[38] and exegetically.[39] The *Apocryphon of John* alludes to biblical texts and uses them as proof-texts. This reveals "a desire and an effort on the part of the authors of the *Apocryphon* to let the biblical text speak."[40] Through a diachronic study of the passages where Moses is explicitly corrected, Creech compares the different versions of these passages and finds that "the disagreements [between the Genesis text and the new interpretation] are not substantive."[41] Even when there are clear disagreements, the versions do not present identical corrections of Moses' account. He draws the conclusion that since the disagreements are insubstantial and the versions do not agree on how Moses erred, the opposition is not to Genesis *per se*. Based on a theory on how the *Apocryphon of John* developed,[42] Creech holds that, through time, the text of the *Apocryphon of John* was brought closer to the Genesis text. However, Irenaeus' attacks on the Gnostics instigated the polemical insertions of "not as Moses said" in the text of the *Apocryphon of John*.

The authors of *Ap. John* explicitly maligned the early catholic scriptures not because they found them inherently misguided. Rather, their critical attitude is primarily rhetorical, drawing a clear boundary between themselves and their rivals through their "rejection" of Moses.[43]

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[37] Creech, *Use of Scripture,* 51–59. Williams*, Rethinking "Gnosticism",* 54–79, demonstrates convincingly that the passages reinterpreted in *Ap. John* were found problematic by many Christian and Jewish interpreters in Late Antiquity.

[38] Creech, *Use of Scripture,* 59–63. As demonstrated by Søren Giversen, "The *Apocryphon of John* and Genesis," 66–67, *Ap. John* repeatedly echoes passages from Gen 1–7, in the same order they appear in the biblical text. Giversen's list shows that the order is changed twice. Firstly, a reference to LXX Gen 2:15 appears before a reference to the two trees of Eden of Gen 2:9. However, both of these are part of an allegorical reinterpretation of the Garden of Eden narrative, and the rearrangement of them does little to change the narrative structure of *Ap. John* compared to Genesis. The second change is, however, more significant, a reference to Gen 6:1–4 (the Sons of God and the daughters of men) appears after the story of Noah, instead of as an introduction to the flood. In this manner, it functions as an explanation of how much of humanity is under the influence of a counterfeit spirit that deceives them and keeps them from learning the truth. On the story of the sons of God and daughters of men in Egyptian monasticism, Christian H. Bull, "Women, Angels and Dangerous Knowledge: The Myth of the Watchers in the Apocryphon of John and Its Monastic Manuscript-Context," in *Women and Knowledge in Early Christianity* (ed. Ulla Tervahauta et al.; VCSup 144; Leiden: Brill, 2017), 75–107.

[39] Creech, *Use of Scripture,* 63–67.

[40] Creech, *Use of Scripture,* 64.

[41] Creech, *Use of Scripture,* 27.

[42] Creech's understanding is informed by several earlier studies, and especially the development theory of Alastair H. B. Logan, *Gnostic Truth*.

[43] Creech, *Use of Scripture,* 27.

Taking another approach, Ismo Dunderberg argues that "a closer look at the passages mentioning Moses in *Secret John* shows that he always stands for a *literal* interpretation of the book of Genesis, as opposed to the allegorical reading promoted in *Secret John*."[44] However, in the article, Dunderberg does not himself provide his readers with such a closer look. To test his claims I will therefore analyze each of the four explicit "corrections" of Moses in dialogue with Creech' study.

2.2 The First Correction

ⲁⲥⲁⲣⲭⲉⲥⲑⲁⲓ ⲟ̄ⲉ ⲛ̄ⲟ̄ⲓⲧⲙⲁⲁⲩ ⲉⲉⲡⲓⲫⲉⲣ[ⲉ ⲉ]ⲁⲥⲉⲓⲙⲉ ⲉⲡⲉⲥϣ̄ⲧⲁ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϫⲉⲙⲡⲉⲡⲉⲥⲥⲩⲛⲍⲩⲅⲟⲥ ⲥⲩⲙⲫⲱⲛⲓ ⲛ̄ⲙⲙⲁⲥ ϩⲙ̄ⲡⲧⲣⲟⲩϯⲅⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲓ̄ⲧⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲥϫⲱⲕ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲇⲉ ⲡⲉϫⲁⲓ ϫⲉⲡⲉⲭ̄ⲥ̄ ⲟⲩ ⲡⲉ ⲉⲡⲓⲫⲉⲣⲉ ⲛⲧⲟϥ ⲇⲉ ⲁϥⲥⲱⲃⲉ ⲡⲉϫⲁϥ ϫⲉⲉⲕⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ ϫⲉⲕⲁⲧⲁⲑⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϥϫⲟⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ϭⲓⲙⲱ̈ⲩ̈ⲥⲏⲥ ϫⲉⲣ̈ⲓ̈ϫⲛ̄ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲩ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲛ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲁⲥⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲧⲕⲁⲕⲓⲁ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲡⲟⲥⲧⲁⲥⲓⲁ ⲉⲧⲛⲁϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲥϣⲏⲣⲉ ⲁⲥⲙⲉⲧⲁⲛⲟⲉⲓ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲉⲥⲛⲁ ⲉⲥⲛⲏⲩ ϩⲙ̄ⲡⲕⲁⲕⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲧⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲁⲥⲁⲣⲭⲉⲑⲁⲓ ⲉϣⲓⲡⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲉⲛⲥⲧⲟⲗⲙⲁ ⲁⲛ ⲉⲕⲧⲟⲥ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲛⲉⲥⲛⲁ ⲉⲥⲛⲏⲩ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲉⲥⲛⲁ ⲇⲉ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲡⲉⲥⲉⲓ ⲡⲁⲓ̈ ⲡⲉ ⲉⲡⲓⲫⲉⲣⲉ

Then the mother began to "move to and fro" (ⲉⲡⲓⲫⲉⲣⲉ) when she realized her deficiency, because her partner was not in agreement with her when she was blamed by her perfection. And I said, "Christ, what does 'to go to and fro' (ⲉⲡⲓⲫⲉⲣⲉ) mean?" And he laughed and said, "Do you think it is like Moses said, 'upon the water'? No, rather she saw the evil and apostasy which would happen through her son. She repented. And coming and going in the darkness of ignorance she began to be ashamed, and she did not dare to return, but she kept coming and going. And her coming and going, this is 'going to and fro' (ⲉⲡⲓⲫⲉⲣⲉ)." (*Ap. John* BG 44.19–45.19)[45]

According to Creech, this first correction shows the *Apocryphon of John* and Genesis disagreeing on where the "coming and going" occurred. In Genesis the Spirit of God moves upon the waters,[46] in the *Apocryphon of John* the fallen Wisdom (Sophia) moves about "in the darkness of ignorance."

Because Sophia is fallen she cannot be "over the waters" and is thus described as "coming and going" (ⲉⲥⲛⲁ ⲉⲥⲛⲏⲩ) in the darkness of ignorance, that is, the abyss (ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲛ) wherein Yaldabaoth and his minions reign.[47]

For this to be understood as a disagreement on location, however, a reference that to the casual reader would seem to designate a state – going about in the darkness of ignorance – must be reinterpreted and brought from a symbolic reading to a concrete location, the abyss. I would rather suggest that what

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[44] Ismo Dunderberg, "Gnostic Interpretations of Genesis," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible* (ed. Michael Lieb, Emma Mason, and Jonathan Roberts; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 392.

[45] The NHC III parallel is missing.

[46] Gen 1:2.

[47] Creech, *Use of Scripture,* 89. The identification of the darkness of ignorance with the abyss is based on Pleše, *Poetics*, 68–69.

Christ is doing in his answer to John is the opposite. He is lifting the interpretation from a concrete, historical level, to the spiritual or moral. The movement in question is not to be read as referring to a physical, historical referent "upon the water," but to the repentance, and the distress it caused Wisdom.[48] The alleged disagreement with Moses is not a disagreement on location, it is an indication that the meaning of the text in Genesis can be sought at a different level. As Ismo Dunderberg writes, "The audience should abandon the literal 'Moses' interpretation and understand that the notion of God's spirit moving over the waters (Gen 1:1) refers to Wisdom's agitation after she saw what Yaldabaoth, her son, did."[49]

This first correction of Moses is key to understanding the *Apocryphon of John*'s use of Genesis. Up until this point in the narrative the reader has no indications that this is a commentary on Genesis. Søren Giversen[50] has demonstrated how this changes with the reference to the Mother's (Wisdom's) movement. The word used in the BG version of the Apocryphon of John, ⲉⲡⲓⲫⲉⲣⲉ[51] is the same word LXX uses to describe the Spirit's movement in Gen 1:2. However, the reference would in all probability be lost on the reader without the question posed by John, about what "to go to and fro," means, combined with the savior's reply, "Do you think it is like Moses said, 'upon the water'?"[52] It is the repeated word ⲉⲡⲓⲫⲉⲣⲉ/ⲱⲉⲉⲓ and Christ's reference to Moses while quoting Genesis that helps the reader to connect Genesis and the *Apocryphon of John*.

As Louis Painchaud shows, when the identification of the relationship between these texts has been established, the entire story of creation is brought to the attention of the readers. From this point onward, all subsequent terms used in the *Apocryphon of John* that also appear in Genesis may be read as allusions to the creation story.[53]

The way this exchange is phrased indicates that "not as Moses said" should be understood "not at the literal level, like Moses tells it." This is not a rejection of Genesis, nor a correction of the literal level of the narrative. The question John poses is about a specific phrase. The literal reference to "above the water" is given a longer, spiritual explanation. And then, summing up, letting John and the reader understand that the correct interpretation of the word ⲉⲡⲓⲫⲉⲣⲉ

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[48] This connects Wisdom (Sophia) to the key concepts in *Ap. John* of stability/instability; see Michael Allen Williams, *The Immovable Race: A Gnostic Designation and the Theme of Stability in Late Antiquity* (NHS 29; Leiden: Brill, 1985).

[49] Ismo Dunderberg, "Gnostic Interpretations," 392.

[50] Søren Giversen, "The Apocryphon of John."

[51] NHC III is missing a leaf, and we therefore do not know how it rendered this. NHC II and IV uses a Coptic word, ⲱⲉⲉⲓ.

[52] Søren Giversen, "The Apocryphon of John," 64–65, Louis Painchaud, "The Use of Scripture in Gnostic Literature," *JECS* 4 (1996): 129–46.

[53] Painchaud "The Use of Scripture,"136–37.

("going to and fro") has been given, Christ sums up the explanation, "'and her coming and going' (ⲡⲉⲥⲛⲁ ⲇⲉ ⲙ̄ⲛⲡⲉⲥⲉⲓ), this is 'going to and fro' (ⲉⲡⲓⲫⲉⲣⲉ)."[54]

Understanding the phrase "not as Moses said" in this manner, makes sense throughout the *Apocryphon of John*.

2.3 The Second Correction

ⲁϥⲣ̄ϩⲛⲁϥ ⲉⲧⲱⲕ[ⲉ ⲛ̄]ⲧⲇⲩⲛⲁⲙⲓⲥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧϥ̄ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁϥⲥⲓⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲉⲕⲥⲧⲁⲥⲓⲥ ⲉϫ̄ⲛⲁⲇⲁⲙ

ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲇⲉ ⲡⲉϫⲁⲓ ϫⲉⲡϫⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲟⲩ ⲡⲉ ⲉⲕⲥⲧⲁⲥⲓⲥ ⲁϥⲥⲱⲃⲉ ⲡⲉϫⲁϥ ϫⲉⲁⲕⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ ϫⲉⲕⲁⲧⲁⲑⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲙⲱⲩⲥⲛⲥ ϫⲟⲟⲥ ϫⲉⲁϥⲧⲣⲉϥⲛ̄[ⲕ]ⲟⲧⲕ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲛ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϥϩⲱⲃⲥ̄ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ [ⲉ]ϫ̄ⲛⲛⲉϥⲁⲓⲥⲑⲏⲥⲓⲥ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲁⲛⲁⲓ<ⲥ>ⲑⲏⲥⲓⲁ ⲕⲁⲓⲅⲁⲣ ⲁϥϫⲟⲟⲥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲓⲧⲟⲟⲧϥ̄ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲡⲣⲟⲫⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲉϥϫⲱ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ ϫⲉϯⲛⲁ[ⲑ̄ⲣ]ϣⲟ ⲛ̄ⲧⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲁϫⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲩϩⲏⲧ· ϫⲉ[ⲕⲁⲁⲥ] ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲩⲛⲟⲉⲓ· ⲟ[ⲩ]ⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲩⲛⲁⲩ [ⲉⲃⲟⲗ]

He (Ialdabaoth) wanted to regai[n] the power within him (Adam). He cast a trance upon Adam. I said: Lord, what is "trance"?

He laughed and said, "Did you think it is as Moses said it, 'He made him sleep'? No, it was his perception (ⲁⲓⲥⲑⲏⲥⲓⲥ) he covered with unconsciousness (ⲁⲛⲁⲓⲥⲑⲏⲥⲓⲁ). For indeed, he said through the prophet, 'I will [make] the ears of their hearts heavy so [that] they will not understand and will not see.'" (*Ap. John* III 28.25–29.12)[55]

Similar to the first correction, John asks for an explanation of a single word, "trance" (ⲃ̄ϣⲉ). The answer, again, lifts the meaning from the literal to the spiritual level. The meaning is not literally sleep, Christ explains, but lack of perception. Creech, who sees these exchanges between John and Christ as instances of Christ drawing attention to and correcting errors in Genesis, is puzzled by the fact that the *Apocryphon of John* should feel the need to correct Moses when there was already an established opportunity for allegorization.[56] It was not unusual in biblical exegesis to interpret sleep in a non-literal way. I believe this is putting too much emphasis on the perceived criticism of Moses. If the correction is simply meant to point the reader towards a spiritual understanding of Genesis, there is no need for the word "sleep" to gain a completely new meaning in the *Apocryphon of John*. What the correction does, though, is to combine this allegorical meaning of sleep with Isa 6:10.

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[54] BG 45.18–19. Parallel in NHC II 13.26.

[55] The other parallels do not mention Christ laughing/smiling (ⲥⲱⲃⲉ). This smile/laughter has been understood as mocking, and has been read as a confirmation of the negative attitude towards Genesis, cf. Creech, *Use of Scripture,* 70–77. However, it does not have to signify a rejection of the books of Moses as scripture, but rather ridicules a literal understanding of said scripture. *Ap. John* II 22.18–28 does not mention the smile, but instead demonstrates the familiarity of the scribe and intended reader with Genesis by saying: "It is not as Moses wrote and you heard. For he said in his first book (…)" ⲛ̄ⲑⲉ ⲁⲛ ⲉⲛⲧⲁⲙⲱⲩⲥⲛⲥ ⲥϩⲁⲓ ⲉⲁⲕⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄ ⲁϥϫⲟⲟⲥ ⲅⲁⲣ ϩⲣⲁⲓ ϩⲙ̄ⲡⲉϥϣⲟⲣⲡ̄ ⲛ̄ϫⲱⲙⲉ ϫⲉⲁϥϫⲧⲟ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ` (22.22–24).

[56] Creech, *Use of Scripture,* 78–81.

The sleep of Adam is the ignorance maliciously brought upon humanity by the creator. The story takes a few twists and turns, and Adam regains his understanding, but the plural in the Isaiah quote makes it clear that this isn't just a predicament cast upon Adam.[57] This is the human condition, and it is only through divine intervention that humanity may regain its insight.

2.4 The Third Correction

The third correction is part of a longer section on the creation of woman. To Creech this correction is an example of a disagreement with Moses "so minor that the authors of the variant versions do not always agree with each other on where the Genesis account is wrong."[58] He argues that the long recension shows Genesis and the *Apocryphon of John* disagreeing on what woman was created from, while the short recension disagrees on the location of the creation.[59] The *Apocryphon of John*'s concern is not to correct the text of Genesis, but to tell the reader that Moses was wrong. "In the corrections of Moses in the *Apocryphon*, the subject, theme or content that cannot be altered is the fact of Moses' error. The actual content of the error is to a certain degree irrelevant."[60]

As already stated, I read the phrase "not as Moses said" differently from Creech. It does not indicate an error in the text of Moses. It should rather be read as a cue for the reader to lift the interpretation from the literal level to an allegorical. I also believe Creech puts too much emphasis on the idea that the *Apocryphon of John* identifies errors in the text of Genesis. It can be argued that all versions offer a reading where the woman was created from the spiritual power in Adam, rather than (just) his rib, and that it is this reinterpretation of rib that is the point on which Moses is "corrected." NHC II makes this interpretation explicit:

ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁϥⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ` ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲙⲉⲣⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲧⲉϥϬⲟⲙ` ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧϥ` ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁϥⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟ ⲛ̄ⲕⲉⲡⲗⲁⲥⲓⲥ ϩⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲙⲟⲣⲫⲏ ⲛ̄ⲥϩⲓⲙⲉ ⲕⲁⲧⲁⲡⲓⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲡⲓⲛⲟⲓⲁ ⲉⲧⲁϩⲟⲩⲱⲛϩ ⲛⲁϥ` ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁϥⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲙⲉⲣⲟⲥ ⲉⲛⲧⲁϥϫⲓⲧϥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ⲧϬⲟⲙ ⲙ̄ⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ ϩⲣⲁⲓ̈ ϩⲛ̄ⲡⲗⲁⲥⲙⲁ ⲛ̄ⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲥϩⲓⲙⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲕⲁⲧⲁⲑⲉ ⲁⲛ ⲉⲛⲧⲁ`ϥ´[61]ϫⲟⲟⲥ ⲛ̄Ϭⲓⲙⲱⲩ̈ⲥⲏⲥ ϫⲉⲧⲉϥⲃⲉⲧ ⲥⲡⲓⲣ`

And he (the Chief Ruler) brought a part of his (Adam's) power out of him (Adam). And he made another form in the shape of a woman according to the likeness of Insight who had appeared to him. And he brought the part which he had taken from the power of the man into the form of the female and not as Moses said, "his rib." (*Ap. John* II 22.32–23.4)[62]

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[57] Ironically, the Pharisee in the frame narrative accuses Christ of having led his followers astray, by quoting the same Isaiah text.

[58] Creech, *Use of Scripture,* 82.

[59] Creech, *Use of Scripture*, 82–86.

[60] Creech, *Use of Scripture,* 82.

[61] The manuscript has a correction, ϥ is placed above an ⲩ.

[62] NHC IV is very fragmented, but the preserved letters suggest it is very similar to II.

Where Moses refers to a literal rib, the Savior instead explains that the woman was formed and given a part of the divine power from the man. Thus the correction functions exactly as the two first corrections. The rib is to be interpreted as the power in Adam rather than his physical rib. While this is explicit in the NHC II version of the text, in the texts of NHC III and BG the reading of "power" for "rib" has to be inferred.[63]

[ⲁ]ϥⲟⲩⲉϣⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲇⲩⲛⲁⲙⲓⲥ [ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄]ϩⲏⲧϥ̄· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁϥⲉⲓⲣⲉ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲁⲛⲁ[. .]ⲱⲥⲓⲥ[64] ⲛ̄ⲙⲟⲣⲫⲏ ⲛ̄ⲥϩⲓⲙⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ [ⲁϥⲧ]ⲟⲩⲛⲟⲥⲥ̄ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉϥⲙ̄ⲧⲟ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ⲕⲁ[ⲧⲁⲑⲉ ⲁ]ⲛ̣ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϥϫⲟⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ϭⲓⲙⲱ̈ⲥⲏⲥ [ϫⲉ ⲛⲧ]ⲁϥϥⲓ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲃⲏⲧ` ⲛ̄ⲥⲡⲓⲣ ⲁϥⲧⲁ[ⲙⲓⲟ] ⲛ̣ⲟⲩⲥϩⲓⲙⲉ ⲁϥⲕⲱ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ ϩⲁⲧⲛϥ	ⲁϥⲣ̄ϩⲛⲁϥ ⲉⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧϭⲟⲙ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛϩⲏⲧϥ ⲉⲉⲓⲣⲉ ⲛⲟⲩⲡⲗⲁⲥⲓⲥ ⲛ̄ⲕⲉⲥⲟⲡ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲙⲟⲣ{ⲙⲏ}`ⲫⲏ´[65] ⲛ̄ⲥϩⲓⲙⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁϥⲧⲟⲩⲛⲟⲥ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉϥⲙ̄ⲧⲟ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲕⲁⲧⲁⲑⲉ ⲁⲛ ⲛⲧⲁⲙⲱ̈ⲥⲏⲥ ϫⲟⲟⲥ ϫⲉⲁϥϥⲓ ⲛⲟⲩⲃⲏⲧⲥⲡⲓⲣ ⲁϥⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟ ⲛⲧⲉⲥϩⲓⲙⲉ ϩⲁⲧⲛϥ
He (Ialdabaoth) wanted to bring the power [out] of him (Adam) and he made a female [shaped] form. And he raised her up before him (Adam). Not as Moses said, "he took a rib and created a woman and placed her beside him" (*Ap. John* III 29.18–24)	He (Ialdabaoth) wanted to bring the power out of him, to make a form again with a female shape. And he raised her up before him (Adam). Not like Moses said, "he took a rib and created the woman beside him" (*Ap. John* BG 59.12–19)

It is difficult to read a disagreement on the location of the creation of woman into the BG version. The *Apocryphon of John* claims Yaldabaoth "raised her up before him" (59.15–16) and refers to Genesis as saying: "he created the woman beside him" (59.19). The article translated "beside him" here ϩⲁϩⲧⲛ literally has the meaning "below the heart of," usually rendered by "with" or "beside." [66] This is an inaccurate rendering of Gen 2:22 that omits the woman being brought to Adam, the very detail that allows for a reading of geographical disagreement between the *Apocryphon of John* and Genesis. There is therefore

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[63] The parallel here is a comparison of NHC III and BG. These are very similar and are classified as the same recension. There are however differences, as can be seen here. Since the text of BG is the best preserved, it is that text that normally is contrasted to the "long" version of NHC II and IV, always represented by II since IV is very fragmented.

[64] Waldstein and Wisse suggest ⲁⲛⲁ[ⲡⲗⲁⲥ]ⲓ̣{ⲥⲓ}ⲥ due to dittography. According to them the size of the lacuna indicates more letters than [ⲡⲗⲁ]ⲥⲓⲥ, and they suggest the partial letter visible before ⲥⲓⲥ is ⲓ. Waldstein and Wisse, *The Apocryphon of John*, 130. The partial letter cannot be ⲁ, but the left part of the page is missing, and it is possible the margin is not perfectly aligned. I follow Barc and Funk, *Le livre des secrets de Jean*. Barc and Funk accept that the suggested ⲱ is uncertain, but they also claim that an ⲓ is "très improbable." They find a corrupt spelling of ⲁⲛⲁⲡⲗⲁⲥⲓⲥ as ⲁⲛⲁⲡⲗⲱⲥⲓⲥ the most plausible, 141.

[65] A scribe has attempted to correct ⲙⲟⲣⲙⲏ by adding ⲫⲏ without erasing ⲙⲏ (Barc and Funk, *Le livre des secrets*, 140).

[66] Walter Ewing Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939).

no reason to think that the correction in this case concerns a location. The woman, both according to Christ and Moses was created in Adam's presence in BG.

It is possible to read the NHC III version as a disagreement on location, if "before him" (ⲙ̄ⲡⲉϥⲙ̄ⲧⲟ) refers to Adam and not Yaldabaoth himself. However, it is not necessary to choose this interpretation over an allegorizing interpretation. Genesis provides a narrative in which God creates a woman from the man's rib to provide him company, the *Apocryphon of John* holds that there is more to the story than what Moses lets on. The intention behind the creation of woman is another – Yaldabaoth wants to retrieve the power from Adam. The rib is not simply a rib, it contains the divine power. Creech refers to Philo's interpretation of rib as power in *Legum Allegoriae* and concludes, "The shorter version of the *Apocryphon* reads similar to Philo. It allows for the possibility that the woman was created from the power that was hidden in the man and resided in the rib."[67] Since "the rib is not a problem, *per se*,"[68] Creech sees this as an argument for location as the error in Genesis. This is an overemphasis on the supposed fault in Genesis. If the "corrections" do not presuppose factual errors in Genesis that Christ draws attention to and alters, but rather signal an allegorical interpretation, there is no conflict between NHC II and III. The wording and details differ, but Christ explains that "rib" denotes "power."

2.5 The Fourth Correction

The fourth and last correction of the way Moses says things in Genesis constitutes a special case, and it is possible to question whether it functions the same way as the other three.

ⲕⲁⲧⲁⲑⲉ ⲁⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϥϫⲟⲟⲥ [ⲛ̄ϭⲓⲙⲱ]ⲩⲥⲏⲥ ϫⲉⲁⲩ︢ϩⲁⲡⲟⲩ ϩ̄ⲛⲟⲩⲕⲓ[ⲃⲱⲧⲟⲥ] ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲩⲥⲕⲉⲡⲁϩⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ ϩ̄ⲛⲟⲩⲧⲟⲡⲟⲥ ⲟⲩⲙⲟⲛ[ⲟⲛ ⲛⲱϩⲉ ⲟⲩ]ⲁⲁⲧϥ· ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ϩⲉⲛⲕⲉⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲧ︢ⲅⲉⲛⲉⲁ ⲉⲧⲉⲙⲉⲥⲕⲓⲙ·

It is not as Moses said, "they hid themselves in an ark," but he was sheltered in a place, not on[ly Noah a]lone, but also other men from the immovable race. (*Ap. John* III 37.22–38.3)[69]

This correction appears later in the narrative than the other corrections, after a section with eschatological questions and answers has broken the flow of the narrative. In this correction, Noah did not take shelter in "an ark," but at a place we elsewhere learn is sheltered by a luminous cloud.[70] The ark, as a protective

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[67] Creech, *Use of Scripture*, 85.

[68] Creech, *Use of Scripture*, 84.

[69] All versions agree on the correction. It was not an ark, but a place. In BG 73.6 it is "she" (Providence/Pronoia) who sheltered them. NHC II and III uses a plural form that may be translated as a passive, "they sheltered themselves/ they were sheltered" (NHC III 37.24) and "they hid themselves/they were hidden" (NHC II 29.7–8).

[70] NHC III 37.22–38.3/BG 73.8–10/NHC II 29.6–10. Creech suggest this correction is a response to the common image of the ark as a symbol of the church (*Use of Scripture*, 113).

container, is thus read as a metaphor of this place within the luminous cloud.[71] The literal level of the text from Genesis is given a new meaning by Christ. The description of the place indicates that this is no place on earth, but something different, somewhere with a divine presence that shelters from the darkness of the world.

When the *Apocryphon of John* says "Not like Moses said it," this indicates that Christ brings a higher level of interpretation than the literal meaning of the words as they appear in Genesis. He explains what the text really means. Christ thus steps into a well-established role in both Greek philosophic and Christian monastic milieus, that of a noetic teacher.

3. Christ's Spiritual Level of Interpretation

3.1 Noetic Exegesis

The term "noetic exegesis" was coined by Eric Osborn in an article on Alexandrian exegesis,[72] to designate an exegesis where "the deeper meaning (nous) of a biblical text was to be retrieved by the human mind (nous) in order to join the exegete to the godhead in a divine vision."[73] Blossom Stefaniw further developed the term in her study *Mind, Text, and Commentary: Noetic Exegesis in Origen of Alexandria, Didymus the Blind, and Evagrius Ponticus*.[74] Stefaniw understands noetic exegesis as the "entire project of becoming able to perceive intelligible things in a text, the act of doing so, and the use of this capacity."[75] Basic to noetic exegesis is the understanding of some texts as revelatory, and this revelation to be conveyed at different levels. According to Stefaniw, noetic exegesis was necessary for the interpreters in her study because of two related

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[71] For an introduction to metaphor theory and its application on two other Nag Hammadi texts, see Hugo Lundhaug, *Images of Rebirth: Cognitive Poetics and Transformational Soteriology in the Gospel of Philip and the Exegesis on the Soul* (NHMS 73; Leiden: Brill, 2010).

[72] Eric Osborn, "Philo and Clement. Quiet Conversion and Noetic Exegesis," *SPhilo* 10 (1998): 108–24.

[73] René Falkenberg, "Noetic Exegesis in the Nag Hammadi Library: Eugnostos the Blessed as a Point of Departure," in *Kanon in Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion: Kanonisierungsprozesse religiöser Texte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart: Ein Handbuch* (ed. Eve-Marie Becker and Stefan Scholz; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 504.

[74] Blossom Stefaniw, *Mind, Text, and Commentary: Noetic Exegesis in Origen of Alexandria, Didymus the Blind, and Evagrius Ponticus* (ECCA 6; Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2010), 13: "Noetic exegesis can preliminary be defined as exegesis which is concerned with perceiving the noetic content of an authoritative text by means of noetic comprehension of the higher significance of the text and with a view to rehabilitating and cultivating the interpreter's νοῦς." Her whole book can be seen as an extended explanation of the term.

[75] Stefaniw. *Mind, Text, and Commentary,* 30.

assumptions. The first, that there exists a visible, but material and illusory world, as well as an invisible reality that is divine, eternal and true. Second, that human language is not able to convey this reality.

These assumptions, with roots in Platonic traditions, are shared by the *Apocryphon of John*. The divine world is contrasted to the evil, material word. Moreover, the doubt in language's capability of conveying ultimate truth is also found in the *Apocryphon of John*:

ⲟⲩ[ⲡⲉ ⲉϯ]ⲛⲁϫⲟⲟⲩ ⲛⲁⲕ ⲉⲧⲃⲉⲡⲓⲁⲧ˙ⲧ[ⲁϩⲟϥ ⲉ]ϯⲙ̅ⲙⲁⲩ ⲡⲁⲓ̈ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲙ̅ⲡ[ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲛ] ⲕⲁⲧⲁⲑⲉ
ⲉϯⲛⲁⲉϣⲛⲟⲉⲓ ⲙ̅ⲙⲟⲥ [ⲛⲓ]ⲙ̅ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲉⲣ̅ⲛⲟⲉⲓ ⲙ̅ⲙⲟϥ ⲉⲛⲉϩ ϯⲛⲁϫⲟⲟⲥ ⲉⲣⲟⲕ ⲕⲁⲧⲁⲑⲉ ⲉϯⲛⲁⲉϣⲛⲟⲉⲓ ⲙ̅ⲙⲟϥ
ϯⲛⲁϫⲟⲟⲥ ⲡⲉϥⲁⲓⲱⲛ ⲟⲩⲁⲫⲑⲁⲣⲧⲟⲥ ⲡⲉ ⲉϥϩⲁⲣⲕ ⲉϥⲙ̅ⲧⲁⲛ ⲙ̅ⲙⲟϥ ϩⲙ̅ⲡⲓⲕⲁⲣⲱϥ ⲡⲉⲧϣⲟⲟⲡ˙ ϩⲁⲑⲛ ⲛ̅ⲕⲉ
ⲛⲓⲙ ⲧⲁⲡⲉ ⲛ̅ⲁⲓⲱⲛ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ ϫⲉⲧⲉϥⲙ̅ⲛ̅ⲧⲁⲅⲁⲑⲟⲥ ⲭⲟⲣⲏⲅⲉⲓ ⲛ̅ⲁⲓⲱⲛ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ ⲉϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲉⲩⲛⲗⲁⲁⲩ ϩⲁⲧⲏϥ
ⲙ̅ⲛ̅ⲗⲁⲁⲩ ⲙ̅ⲙⲟⲛ ⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲛ̅ⲛⲁⲡⲓⲁⲧⲱⲓⲧϥ̅ ⲉⲧⲙ̅ⲙⲁⲩ ⲉⲓⲙⲏ[ⲧⲓ] [. . . . ⲡⲉⲧⲙ̅]ⲙⲁⲩ ⲡⲉⲛ̅ⲧⲁϥ[. . .].

What shall [I] tell you about that in [. . .] one? This is the likeness of the [light] as I will be able to understand him. For [who] understands him ever? I will tell you, as I will be able to understand <it>, I will tell it. His aeon is incorruptible, quiet and resting in the silence, that which is before everything. (He is) the head of all the aeons, for its goodness supplies all the aeons. If there are any beside it, none of us knows those of the immeasurable one except [...It is] him who [. . .]. (*Ap. John* III 6.13–7.1)[76]

These negative assumptions would make it impossible to learn anything about the transcendent realities, were it not for a set of positive assumptions, described by Stefaniw:

the belief in the providential provision of a coherent and dependable relationship between the two categories [sensible and intelligible], such that one can proceed from knowledge of the visible to knowledge of the invisible realm by means of this constantly referenced and persistently implemented connection between the visible and the invisible.[77]

The *Apocryphon of John* also makes sure that the reader takes note of the relation between the intelligible and the sensible. The world, even if it is created

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[76] BG 26.1–14 reads: ⲉⲉⲓ[ⲛ]ⲁϫⲉⲟⲩ ⲛⲁⲕ ⲉⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧϥ̅ ⲡ[ⲓ]ⲁⲧⲧⲁϩⲟϥ ⲡⲁⲓ̈ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲙⲡⲟ[ⲩ]ⲟⲓⲛ
ⲡⲣⲟⲥ ⲡⲉϯⲛⲁϭⲛ̅ϭⲟⲙ ⲉⲛⲟⲓ̈ ⲙ̅ⲙⲟϥ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲡⲉⲧⲛⲁⲛⲟⲉⲓ ⲙ̅ⲙⲟϥ ⲉⲛⲉϩ ⲕⲁⲧⲁⲑⲉ ⲉϯⲛⲁϣ̅ϣⲁϫⲉ ⲛⲙ̅ⲙⲁⲕ
ⲡⲉϥⲁⲓⲱⲛ ⲟⲩⲁⲧⲧⲁⲕⲟ ⲡⲉ ⲉϥϩⲟⲩⲥ̅ϭⲣⲁϩⲧ ⲉϥⲙ̅ⲧⲟⲛ ⲙ̅ⲙⲟϥ ϩⲛⲟⲩⲕⲁⲣⲱϥ ⲡⲉⲧϣⲟⲡ ϩⲁⲧⲉϩⲛ ⲙ̅ⲡⲧⲏⲣϥ
ⲧⲁⲡⲉ ⲇⲉ ⲛⲁⲓⲱⲛ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲡⲉ ⲉϣϫⲉ ⲟⲩⲛⲕⲉϩⲱ[ⲃ] ϩⲁⲧⲏϥ ⲁⲛⲟⲛ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲙ̅ⲡⲉⲗⲁⲁⲩ ⲛ̅ϩⲏⲧⲛ̅
ⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛⲛⲁⲡⲓⲁⲧⲱⲓⲧϥ̅ ⲉⲓⲙⲏⲧⲓ ⲉⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁϥⲟⲩⲱϩ ⲛ̅ϩⲏⲧϥ̅.

"What will I tell you about the incomprehensible one? He is the likeness of the [light] as far as I will be able to understand him. For who will ever understand him, in the manner in which I will be able to speak with you? His aeon is an imperishable one which is quiet and resting silently, the one which is before everything, and he is the head of all the aeons, if there is anything beside him. For none of us knew the things which belong to the immeasurable one except the one who dwelled in him."

NHC II lacks a parallel to BG 26.2–6/NHC III 6.15–19 and it is very fragmented at this point (NHC II 4.15–19), but read together with NHC IV it can be established that the same idea, that the things of the divine world are ineffable, except to one, is expressed in the long version too.

[77] Stefaniw, *Mind, Text, and Commentary,* 151.

by an ignorant and evil demiurge, is modelled on the world above. BG only mentions this in passing,[78] but the long version is more elaborate, offering also an explanation as to how Yaldabaoth was able to create after the model of the divine world:

ⲛ̄ⲕⲁ ⲇⲉ ⲛⲓⲙ` ⲁϥⲧⲥⲉⲛⲟϥ ⲕⲁⲧⲁⲡⲓⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ϣⲟⲣⲡ [ⲛ̄]ⲁⲓⲱⲛ ⲉⲛⲧⲁϩϣⲱⲡⲉ ϩⲱⲥⲧⲉ ⲁⲧⲣⲉϥ`ⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟⲟⲩ ⲙ̄ⲡⲥⲙⲁⲧ ⲛ̄ⲁⲧ`ⲧⲉⲕⲟ ⲟⲩⲭ ϩⲟⲧⲓ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϥ` ϫⲉⲁϥⲛⲁⲩ ⲁⲛⲁⲧⲧⲉⲕⲟ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲧϭⲟⲙ` ⲉⲧⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧϥ` ⲧⲁⲓ̈ ⲉⲛⲧⲁϥϫⲓⲧⲥ̄ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲓⲧⲛ̄ⲧⲉϥⲙⲁⲁⲩ ⲉⲁⲥϫⲡⲟ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧϥ` ⲙ̄ⲡⲓⲛⲉ· ⲙ̄ⲡⲧⲥⲉⲛⲟ

And he (Yaldabaoth) ordered everything according to the likeness of the first aeons which had come to be, so that he might create them in the indestructible pattern. Not because he had seen the indestructible ones, but the power in him, which he had taken from his mother, had begotten the likeness of the cosmos in him. (*Ap. John* II 12.33–13.4)

The world Yaldabaoth creates therefore follows the pattern of the divine world. This safeguards the link between the visible and invisible worlds that is necessary for noetic exegesis to function. This link is not to be confused with any benign intent on the part of the creator, but it comes directly from the world above. It was the divine power in him that facilitated this. The same divine power that later is blown into the mind of the human to make him move and think better than the archons. Thus, the long version connects the ordering of the world and the human intellectual capacity.

For the exegetes treated in Stefaniw's study, this link between the world above and the world below, and the link between scripture and the human capacity to comprehend truth from it, originate at the same source. For Evagrius,

Scripture, like creation, both originates with and embodies Christ, who is also frequently referred to as the divine wisdom and as a perfect νοῦς. Thus Christ's role as creator and author is directly related to the possibility of discovering divine wisdom through contemplation. Christ is treated as a sort of contemplative or epistemological facilitator, first hiding divine wisdom in creation and in the Scriptures, at a level accessible to the fallen νοῦς, and then helping the monk, or any individual for that matter, to get his νοῦς to see the divine wisdom in creation or in the Scriptures. [79]

There are differences between the understanding of Christ in Evagrius' writings, and the understanding of Christ in the *Apocryphon of John*, though in the description of the begetting of Christ in the divine world he is connected with the mind (νοῦς) and the word.[80] He is also said to have created everything

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[78] BG 44.5–9: ⲛⲁⲓ̈ ⲟⲩⲛⲧⲁⲩ ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲩ ⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲩⲥⲧⲉⲣⲉⲱⲙⲁ ⲕⲁⲧⲁⲡⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲟⲩⲁⲓⲱⲛ ⲕⲁⲧⲁⲡⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲁⲓⲱⲛ ⲉⲧϣⲟⲡ ϫⲓⲛⲛ̄ϣⲟⲣⲡ ⲙ̄ⲡⲧⲩⲡⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲛⲓⲁⲧⲧⲁⲕⲟ ("These have a firmament corresponding to each heaven and an aeon according to the likeness of the aeon which exists from the beginning, in the pattern of the indestructible ones"). NHC III is missing a leaf containing pp. 19–20. We therefore do not know whether or how NHC III describes this correspondence.

[79] Stefaniw, *Mind, Text, and Commentary,* 115.

[80] NHC III 10.9–22; BG 31.5–18; NHC II 6.33–7.11.

through the Word,[81] and to know everything.[82] However, the connecting link between the upper and lower world, and the human capacity to see through the deceptions of this world, is "the power" Yaldabaoth got from his mother that he blew into the lifeless human. Christ functions as a teacher who reveals the hidden truth.

3.2 The Higher Meaning in the Narrative

As demonstrated above, the first exchange of a question and an answer with a correction of Moses, establishes Christ as the noetic teacher who supplies a higher meaning to the literal meaning of Genesis. From this point on, the reader is able to understand the *Apocryphon of John's* story as an interpretation of Genesis, but also to recognize the allegorizing throughout the text. When Christ talks about paradise, he allegorizes the Genesis account of the tree of life:

ⲡⲟⲩⲕⲁⲣⲡⲟⲥ ⲟⲩⲙⲁⲧⲟⲩ ⲡⲉ ⲉⲙⲛ̅ⲧⲁⲗϭⲟ ⲛ̅ϩⲏⲧϥ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲡⲉⲩⲉⲣⲏⲧ ⲟⲩⲙⲟⲩ ⲛⲁϥ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲉⲩϣⲏⲛ ⲇⲉ ⲛ̅ⲧⲁⲩⲕⲁⲁϥ ϫⲉⲡⲱϩⲛ ⲙ̅ⲡⲱⲛϩ ⲡⲉ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ †ⲛⲁⲧⲁⲙⲉⲧⲏⲩⲧⲛ̅ ⲉⲡⲙⲩⲥⲧⲏⲣⲓⲟⲛ ⲙ̅ⲡⲉⲩⲱⲛϩ ⲡⲁⲓ̈ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲉⲩⲁⲛⲧⲓⲙⲓⲙⲟⲛ ⲙ̅ⲡⲛ̅ⲁ̅ ⲉⲧϣⲟⲡ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̅ϩⲏⲧⲟⲩ ⲉⲧⲣⲉϥⲕⲟⲧϥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϫⲉⲛⲉϥⲣ̅ⲛⲟⲓ̈ ⲙ̅ⲡϥ̅ϫⲱⲕ ⲡϣⲏⲛ ⲉⲧⲙⲙⲁⲩ ⲟⲩⲧⲉⲉⲓⲙⲓⲛⲉ ⲡⲉ ⲧⲉϥⲛⲟⲩⲛⲉ ⲥⲁϣⲉ ⲛⲉϥⲕⲗⲁⲇⲟⲥ ϩⲛ̅ϩⲁⲓ̈ⲃⲉⲥ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲡⲙⲟⲩ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲉϥϭⲱⲃⲉ ⲟⲩⲙⲟⲥⲧⲉ ⲡⲉ ⲙⲛ̅ⲟⲩⲁⲡⲁⲧⲏ ⲡⲉϥⲕⲛ̅ⲛⲉ ⲟⲩⲧⲱϩⲥ ⲛⲧⲉⲡⲟⲛⲏⲣⲓⲁ ⲡⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲡ̅ϥ̅ⲕⲁⲣⲡⲟⲥ ⲧⲉⲡⲓⲑⲩⲙⲓⲁ ⲙ̅ⲡⲙⲟⲩ ⲧⲉ ϣⲁⲣⲉⲡⲉϥⲥⲡⲉⲣⲙⲁ ⲥⲱ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̅<ⲟⲩⲕⲁⲕⲉ> ⲛⲉⲧϫⲓ†ⲡⲉ ⲙ̅ⲙⲟϥ ⲁⲙⲛ̅ⲧⲉ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲉⲩⲙⲁ ⲛ̅ϣⲱⲡⲉ

Their (the rulers) fruit is incurable poison, and their promise is death to him (Adam). And their tree, which they set down, is the tree of life. I will tell you about the secret of their life. It is their counterfeit spirit, which is from them for the purpose of turning him away so that he might not know his perfection. That tree is of this kind: its root is shame, its branches are shadows of death. Its leaves are hatred and deception. Its sweetness is an ointment of evil, and its fruit is the desire of death. Its seed drinks from <darkness>. Those who taste it, their dwelling place is the netherworld. (*Ap. John* BG 56.7–57.8)[83]

The whole passage explains what the tree of life in the Genesis account truly is. It is called the tree of life by the rulers, but their version is not true. The tree is the counterfeit spirit, the imitation of the true spirit. The fruits of this tree are nothing but death and shame. And just as this literal referent – a tree – is given a spiritual and moral interpretation, so is the other tree in paradise:

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[81] The word(s) translated "everything" here is ⲛⲕⲁ ⲛⲓⲙ in NHC III 10.22 and BG 31.18, and ⲡⲧⲏⲣϥ in NHC II 7.10 and IV 10.28. The passage is alluding to the Prologue of John, while simultaneously expanding the cast of characters involved in creation and populating the divine world. An alternative translation could be "the All," at least for NHC II/IV, though neither translation fits very well with the narrative in *Ap. John*. It is Yaldabaoth who creates the sensible world, and many of the aeons are present before Christ or the Word appear in the divine All.

[82] ⲛⲕⲁ ⲛⲓⲙ (NHC III 11.13); ⲡⲧⲏⲣϥ (BG 32.17–18; NHC II 7.27; NHC IV 11.25–26).

[83] The NHC III parallel is quite fragmented, and I will therefore cite BG when referring to this part of *Ap. John*.

ⲡϣⲏⲛ ⲇⲉ ⲉⲧⲉϣⲁⲩⲙⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲉⲣⲟϥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲓ̈ⲧⲟⲟⲧⲟⲩ ⲉⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛⲡⲡⲉⲧⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩϥ ⲙ̄ⲡⲡⲉⲑⲟⲟⲩ ⲉⲧⲉⲛⲧⲟⲩ ⲡⲉ
ⲧⲉⲡⲉⲓⲛⲟⲓⲁ ⲙⲡⲟⲩⲟⲓ̈ⲛ ⲧⲁⲓ̈ ⲛⲧⲁⲩϯⲉⲛⲧⲟⲗⲏ ⲉⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧⲥ ⲉⲧⲙ̄ϫⲓ̈ϯⲡⲉ ⲉⲧⲉⲡⲁⲓ̈ ⲡⲉ ⲧⲙ̄ⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄ ⲛ̄ⲥⲱⲥ ⲉⲡⲓ
ⲧⲉⲛⲧⲟⲗⲏ ⲛⲉⲥϯ ⲟⲩⲃⲏϥ ⲡⲉ ϫⲉⲛ̄ⲛⲉϥϭⲱϣⲧ ⲉⲧⲡⲉ ⲉⲡⲉϥϫⲱⲕ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛ̄ϥ̄ⲣ̄ⲛⲟⲉⲓ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉϥⲕⲱⲕ ⲁϩⲏⲩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ
ϩⲙ̄ⲡⲉϥϫⲱⲕ

And the tree which they are calling among themselves "knowledge of good and evil," which
is the Insight (Epinoia) of light, the one about which they gave the command not to taste,
namely "Do not listen to her." For the commandment was against him, so that he would not
look up to his perfection and know that he was naked of his perfection. (*Ap. John* BG 57.8–
19)

The tree of knowledge signifies Insight (Epinoia). Likewise, the commandment
not to taste is not a prohibition against eating a physical fruit, but it is the evil
powers' desperate attempts to stop Adam listening to Insight. Throughout the
narrative, Christ is giving spiritual interpretations of the literal referents in Mo-
ses' story. Christ continues: "But I made them eat."[84] John then refers back to
the Genesis story and asks for clarification: "Christ, is it not then the serpent
who taught her?"[85] At this point Christ both confirms the traditional Christian
interpretation of the fall[86] – "It was the serpent who taught her regarding the
sowing of polluted desire and destruction, because these are valuable to him"[87]
– at the same time as he reserves the saving act for himself. Christ made them
eat[88] – but he has already made clear that he is not talking about tasting of some
literal fruit. Eating is here to be understood as listening to Insight, which re-
stores the ability to use the intellect uninhibited by the material reality of the
world. Her name indicates as much. The response that the serpent taught the
woman about desire is in keeping with a traditional Christian symbolic inter-
pretation of the fall. The serpent brought desire; Christ brought salvation.
Christ confirms this traditional understanding of the story, while at the same
time adding a higher level of understanding. What we are seeing here, in the
corrections, allegorizations, and the other uses of Genesis material is commen-
tary, in Hughes' sense, on the biblical text. And importantly it is Christ who
comments. The interpretations rest on Christ's authority. This is also a key

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[84] BG 57.20–58.1: ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲇⲉ ⲁⲓ̈ⲧⲁϩⲟⲟⲩ ⲉⲣⲁⲧⲟⲩ ⲉⲧⲣⲉⲩⲟⲩⲱⲙ.

[85] BG 58.2–3: ⲡⲉⲭ̄ⲥ̄ ⲙⲏ ⲫⲟϥ ⲣⲱ ⲁⲛ ⲡⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϥⲧⲟⲩⲛⲟⲩⲉⲓⲁⲧⲥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ.

[86] While understanding of both sexuality and what, in fact, the first sin was, varied among
Christian interpreters of *Genesis* in the first centuries C.E., they all agreed that sexuality was
linked to the fall. Unsanctioned sex was the form that disobedience towards God took. And
for those supporting marriage and procreation, like Clement, even the good sexuality – cre-
ated by God – was for the sake of procreation and had to be practiced with restraint. Desire
was always sinful. See Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Random
House, 1988), Chapter 1.

[87] BG 58.4–7: ⲫⲟϥ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϥⲧⲟⲩⲛⲟⲩⲉⲓⲁⲧⲥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉⲧⲉⲥⲡⲟⲣⲁ ⲛⲧⲉⲡⲓⲑⲩⲙⲓⲁ ⲙ̄ⲡⲥⲱϣϥ ⲙⲛ̄ⲡⲧⲁⲕⲟ
ϫⲉⲥⲉⲣ̄ϣⲟⲟⲩ ⲛⲁϥ.

[88] NHC III 28.16–17/BG 57.20–58.1/NHC II 22.9.

point in Giversen's understanding of the *Apocryphon of John's* interpretation of Genesis:

Christ gives the true account of what happened; the words of Moses are not quite exact, or otherwise they conceal a deeper meaning; the very question put by John shows that Moses' words must have a deeper significance, since he asks: What does it mean?[89]

In the *Apocryphon of John*'s account of creation, Christ is one of the divine emissaries[90] that brings divine revelation to humanity, and who awakens their ability to think. Through his role as the revealer in the frame narrative and as the voice of revelation through the main narrative, he fills the same role for John. In his role as noetic teacher he unlocks secrets hidden in the narrative of Genesis for both John and the readers of the *Apocryphon of John*. For the readers he also models and gives authority to a contested method of interpreting scripture. All this rests on the authority of Christ.

4. Reading the Corrections through the Figure of Christ

The corrections help readers connect the *Apocryphon of John*'s version of creation with the Genesis text. In a similar manner, the presence of Christ as the revealer in the frame narrative and the dialogue with John throughout the revelation signals to the reader that Christian scripture is relevant for the interpretation of the *Apocryphon of John*. It is worth noting that Christ two times quotes Hebrew Bible texts in the continuation of the correction given, namely Isa 6:10 and Gen 2:23–24. Both of these are passages quoted specifically by Jesus as proof-texts in the canonical gospels.

Comparing the *Apocryphon of John* text with the NT usage of the same quote is instructive. In the *Apocryphon of John*, Adam's sleep is explained as a veil covering his perception, another attempt by Yaldabaoth of keeping humanity from realizing the truth. In support of this interpretation the savior quotes Isa 6:10: "And he said through the prophet, 'I will [make] the ears of their hearts heavy so [that] they will not understand and will not see.'"[91] In Matthew 13 the same Isaiah quote is used to explain why Jesus told parables. The message was only available to most people in parable form, but the disciples would know "the secrets of the kingdom of heaven"[92] that "many prophets

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[89] Giversen, "The Apocryphon of John," 68.

[90] In the long version, the so called "Pronoia hymn" or "Providence monologue" identifies Christ and Pronoia, effectively connecting all important events of revelation to humanity to him.

[91] *Ap. John* III 29.8–12: ⲕⲁⲓⲅⲁⲣ ⲁϥϫⲟⲟⲥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲓⲧⲟⲟⲧϥ̄ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲡⲣⲟⲫⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲉϥϫⲱ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ ϫⲉϯⲛⲁ[ⲑⲣ]ϣⲟ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲙⲁⲁϫⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲩϩⲏⲧ· ϫⲉ[ⲕⲁⲁⲥ] ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲩⲛⲟⲓ· ⲟ[ⲩ]ⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲩⲛⲁⲩ [ⲉⲃⲟⲗ].

[92] Matt 13:11.

and righteous people longed to see."[93] This is a passage that affirms Christ's authority. He reveals the meaning behind the parables to his followers. He has access to secrets not previously revealed. This is the same understanding the *Apocryphon of John* conveys.

The other quote, Genesis 2:23–24, is in the *Apocryphon of John* used in the context of correcting a literal understanding of "the rib." The first part of the quote is spoken when Adam sees the woman. "This indeed is bone from my bone and flesh from my flesh."[94] But the quote is not complete. The last part of the verse: "she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of her husband"[95] is missing from all the versions of the *Apocryphon of John*. Instead the *Apocryphon of John* continues with the next verse, which in its reception history has been a key text in legitimizing marriage:

ετвепаї ереπрωμε κω мпе[ϥеı]ωτ · мῇ-τεϥμααγ �ῇcωϥ εϥεκολλ[α] �ῇμοϥ ετεϥ-cϩιμε εγναϣωπε �ῇπεcναγ ΰογcαρϩ ΰογωτ [ϫε]αγταῦογο ΰῇπιcγⲛⲍγⲅⲟⲥ ΰⲧ[μααγ] εταϩο εⲣⲁⲧⲟⲩ ΰⲛⲉⲥϩⲩⲥⲧⲉⲣⲏ[μα]	ετвепаї πрωμε νακω ΰcωϥ ΰⲡⲉϥ`ⲉıⲱⲧ` μῇⲧⲉϥ`ⲙⲁⲁⲩ ⲁⲩⲱ ΰϥⲧⲟⲟϥ` ⲁⲧⲉϥⲥϩⲓⲙⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ΰⲥⲉϣⲱⲡⲉ ΰⲡⲉⲥⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲩⲥⲁⲣϩ· ⲟⲩⲱⲧ ϫⲉⲥⲉⲛⲁ-ⲧ̄ⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲟⲩ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲛⲁϥ` ΰⲡⲉϥϣⲃ̄ⲣ̄ϩⲱⲧ̄ⲣ̄ ⲁⲩⲱ ϥⲛⲁⲕⲱ ΰcⲱϥ ΰⲡⲉϥⲉⲓⲱⲧ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧϥ̄ⲙⲁⲁⲩ ⲧ̄ⲛ̄-ⲥⲱⲛⲉ ⲇⲉ ⲧⲥⲟⲫⲓⲁ ⲧⲁⲓ̈ ⲉⲧⲁϩⲉ ⲉϩⲣⲁⲓ̈ ϩⲛ̄ⲟⲩ-ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲕⲁⲕⲟⲥ ϫⲉⲕⲁⲁⲥ ⲉⲥⲛⲁⲥⲱϩⲉ ΰⲡⲉⲥⲟⲧⲁ
Therefore the man will leave hi[s fath]er and his mother behind and unite with his wife and they will both become one flesh. [Because] the [mother's] partner was sent to rectify her deficiencies. (*Ap. John* III 30.7–12)[96]	Therefore the man will leave his father and his mother behind and unite with his wife and they will both become one flesh. For his partner will be sent to him and he will leave his father and mother behind. And our sister Wisdom, it is she who came down in innocence so that she might remove her deficiency. (*Ap. John* II 23.11–16, 20–22)[97]

Here, there are differences between the versions, and none of them are easy to interpret. In both recensions, Adam's perception is restored, and he regains his understanding when he sees the woman. The quote does not fit seamlessly into the context, but the short recension seems to create a parallel between the

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[93] Matt 13:17.

[94] NHC III 30.5–6: ⲧⲉⲛⲟⲩ ΰⲧⲟ· ⲟⲩⲕⲁⲥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩ̄ⲛⲛⲁⲕⲁⲥ ΰⲧⲉⲩⲥⲁⲣϩ· ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩ̄ⲛⲧⲁⲥⲁⲣϩ with parallels BG 60.5–7 and NHC II 23.10–11.

[95] Gen 2:23b LXX: αὕτη κληθήσεται γυνή ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς αὐτῆς ἐλήμφθη. English translation from Lancelot C. L. Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1986).

[96] BG 60.7–14: ⲉⲧⲃⲉⲡⲁⲓ̈ ⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲛⲁⲕⲱ ΰcⲱϥ ⲙⲡⲉϥⲉⲓⲱⲧ ⲙ̄ⲛⲧⲉϥⲙⲁⲁⲩ ΰϥⲧⲟⲟϥ ⲉⲧⲉϥⲥϩⲓⲙⲉ ΰⲥⲉϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲙⲡⲉⲥⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲩⲥⲁⲣϩ ⲛⲟⲩⲱⲧ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϫⲉⲥⲉⲛⲁⲧ̄ⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲟⲩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲙⲡⲓⲥⲩⲛⲍⲩⲅⲟⲥ ΰⲧⲙⲁⲩ ΰⲥⲉⲧⲁϩⲟⲥ ⲉⲣⲁⲧc̄. "Therefore the man will leave his father and his mother behind and he will unite with his wife and they will both become one flesh. Therefore they will be sent from the the mother's partner and she will be rectified."

[97] I have chosen to remove 23.17–20 due to dittography.

unification of man and woman and the unification of Wisdom with her partner, a union that was necessary to repair the damage she had caused in the world, and to bring her back to the heavenly realms.

In the long recension, the man will leave his father and mother because his partner will be sent to him. In this version, the Genesis text underpinning marriage is reinterpreted, through the extra clause that is added to the Genesis quote. The phrasing "his partner will be sent to him" as well as the following connection to Wisdom who descended to correct her deficiency suggest that the partner to be sent to the man is not a wife, but it is a spiritual entity and something for which it is worth cutting the ties to family.

The *Apocryphon of John* is not the only work in which Christ is described as interpreting this Genesis passage. Matt 19:3–9[98] tells the story of Jesus answering questions about marriage and divorce, explaining that Moses gave men the right to divorce their wives, but that this was not the original intention when God created man and woman. In this passage, where Jesus most strongly affirms marriage, he at the same time reinterprets scripture and limits the possibility of divorce. The way the *Apocryphon of John* has Christ claiming authority surpassing Moses thus has clear precedent in the canonical gospels. This authority makes it possible to claim Moses' literal rendering of the creation narrative as insufficient and to substantiate an allegorical reading.

5. Conclusion

Through a reexamination of the apparent corrections of Moses we have seen that the phrase "not as Moses said" does not indicate that the readers of the *Apocryphon of John* rejected the authority of Genesis. The text of Genesis is foundational for the *Apocryphon of John.* In all four instances variations of the phrase is used in the *Apocryphon of John,* Christ gives a spiritual interpretation of a word or phrase found in Genesis. This indicates that although the *Apocryphon of John* rejects a literal interpretation of the text as it is narrated by Moses, the text is still authoritative, because it can be interpreted on a higher level through Christ. It is in the corrections themselves, shaped as they are as a dialogue where questions from John are answered by Christ that the reinterpretation from literal to spiritual level happens. It is these questions and answers that connect the narrative in the *Apocryphon of John* with Genesis and signal to the reader that the narrative following the first correction can be read allegorically. This is important for understanding how monastic readers of the *Apocryphon of John* may have understood scripture, and the role of Christ.

In the *Apocryphon of John* Christ assumes the role of a noetic teacher. Through this role Christ opens Genesis to a new interpretation. In the canonical

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[98] See also Mark 10:1-12.

gospels Christ's authority is recognized as surpassing Moses. The *Apocryphon of John* depends on this authority to legitimize the interpretation of Genesis. However, by casting Christ as a noetic teacher, it is not only the interpretation of the creation narrative that is given authority, the same authority extends to the method of noetic exegesis itself.

Much research on the *Apocryphon of John* has missed this aspect, as it has approached the text from an understanding of what the hypothetical original work underlying our preserved versions must have looked like. In this hypothetical original work Christ plays no part. However, in all extant versions of the *Apocryphon of John* Christ is central to the interpretive framework. As I have demonstrated, a reading of the *Apocryphon of John* that does not include Christ as revealer cannot adequately account for its use of scripture, nor its use among early monastics.

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Eschatology in Nag Hammadi Codex II:
A Monastic Reading of the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (NHC II,4) and *On the Origin of the World* (NHC II,5)

Kimberley A. Fowler

This study considers the eschatological perspective/s present in two tractates from Nag Hammadi Codex II, specifically in terms of how a Pachomian monastic readership could interpret and respond to them. It argues that Codex II's strong focus on overcoming the flesh is central to its understanding of eschatology. In the *Hypostasis of the Archons*[1] and *On the Origin of the World*,[2] the

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[1] See the critical editions of Bentley Layton, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2–7 together with XIII, 2*, Brit. Libr. Or. 4926 (1), and P. Oxy. 1, 654, 655* (vol 1; NHS 20; Leiden: Brill, 1989), 234–59; Bernard Barc, *L'Hypostase des archontes. Traité gnostique sur l'origine de l'homme, du monde et des archontes (NH II,4), suivi de Noréa (NH IX,27,11-29,5)* (BCNH.T 5; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1980), who understands the present text to be the product of a redaction from two different sources (see 48–50); Ursula Ulrike Kaiser, *Die Hypostase der Archonten (Nag-Hammadi-Codex II,4): Neu herausgegeben, übersetzt und erklärt* (TUGAL 156; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006). For early treatments of the text, see Bentley Layton, "The Hypostasis of the Archons or the Reality of the Rulers," *HTR* 67 (1974): 351–425; 69 (1976): 1–71; Hans-Martin Schenke, "'Das Wesen der Archonten': Eine gnostische Originalschrift aus dem Funde von Nag Hammadi," *TLZ* 83 (1958): 661–70; Roger A. Bullard, *The Hypostasis of the Archons: The Coptic Text with Translation and Commentary* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1970); Rodolphe Kasser, "'L'Hypostase des Archontes': Bibliothèque gnostique X," *RTP* 22 (1972): 169–74; Martin Krause, "Zur 'Hypostase der Archonten' in CII von Nag Hammadi," *Enchoria. Zeitschrift für Demotistik und Koptologie* 2 (1972): 1–20.

[2] See Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II*, 2:28–134; Louis Painchaud, *L'écrit sans titre: Sur l'origine du monde (NH II, 5 et XIII, 2 et Brit. Lib. Or. 4926[1])* (BCNH.T 21; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1995); Hans-Gebhard Bethge, "Vom Ursprung der Welt (NHC II,5)," in *Nag Hammadi Deutsch 1. Band: NHC 1,1 – V,1* (ed. Hans-Martin Schenke, Hans-Gebhard Bethge, and Ursula Ulrike Kaiser; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2001), 235–62. For other key studies, see Hans-Martin Schenke, "Vom Ursprung der Welt. Eine titellose gnostische Abhandlung aus dem Fund von Nag-Hamadi," *ThLZ* 84 (1959): 243–56; Alexander Böhlig and Pahor Labib, *Die koptisch-gnostische Schrift ohne Titel aus Codex II von Nag Hammadi im Koptischen Museum zu Alt-Kairo* (Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin. Institut für Orientforschung, Veröffentlichung 58; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1962); Michel Tardieu, *Trois Mythes Gnostiques. Adam, Eros et les animaux d'Égypte dans un écrit de Nag Hammadi (II,5)* (Paris: Études Augustiniènnes, 1974); Hans-Gebhard Bethge, "Vom Ur-

physical world and the flesh are clearly linked to malevolent demonic powers, which a monastic life of renunciation could overcome. These two texts narrate the dramatic events of the end times where the "perfect" (with whom monastic readers would identify) win out over the rulers and their reign of fleshly temptation. However, eschatology in these texts is not limited to the violent wars and chaos of the final days. Rather, it is something related specifically to the individual's ascetic journey.

1. Nag Hammadi Codex II as a Developmental Unit

Various studies have argued in favour of the ideological and/or pedagogical coherence of individual Nag Hammadi Codices, interpreting them as coherent thematic units.[3] Recently, Eduard Iricinschi has analysed Codex II specifically as a pedagogical teaching aid for biblically literate, fourth-century Egyptian ascetics, viewing the collection as a response to the problem of how to read and meaningfully interpret the procreation command of Genesis while maintaining a life of renunciation.[4] The scribe of Codex II solved this problem, Iricinschi argues, by presenting in its seven tractates a "metanarrative" of the Bible's story of fall and redemption from Genesis to Revelation, influenced by second-century Pauline discussion of resurrection and non-sexual unity of the

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sprung der Welt: Die fünfte Schrift aus Nag-Hammadi-Codex II neu herausgegeben und unter bevorzugter Auswertung anderer Nag-Hammadi-Texte erklärt" (Theol. diss., Humboldt Universität, Berlin, 1975); Louis Painchaud, "The Redactions of the Writing without Title (CG II, 5)," *SecCent* 8 (1991): 217–34.

[3] See, for example, Louis Painchaud and Michael Kaler, "From the "Prayer of the Apostle Paul" to the "Three Steles of Seth": Codices I, XI and VII from Nag Hammadi Viewed as a Collection," *VC* 61 (2007): 445–69; Ingvild S. Gilhus, "Contextualising the Present, Manipulating the Past: Codex II from Nag Hammadi and the Challenge of Circumventing Canonicity," in *Canon and Canonicity: The Formation and Use of Scripture* (ed. Einar Thomassen; Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanem, 2010), 67–90; Lance Jenott, "Recovering Adam's Lost Glory: Nag Hammadi Codex II in its Egyptian Monastic Environment," in *Jewish and Christian Cosmogony in Late Antiquity* (ed. Lance Jenott and Sarit Kattan Gribetz; TSAJ 155; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 222–43; Lance Jenott and Elaine H. Pagels, "Antony's Letters and Nag Hammadi Codex I: Sources of Religious Conflict in Fourth-Century Egypt," *JECS* 18 (2010): 557–89; Michael A. Williams and Lance Jenott, "Inside the Covers of Codex VI," in *Coptica-Gnostica-Manichaica: Mélanges offerts à Wolf-Peter Funk* (ed. Louis Painchaud and Paul-Hubert Poirier; BCNH.É 7; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2006), 1025–52.

[4] Eduard Iricinschi, "The Teaching Hidden in Silence (NHC II 1,4): Questions, Answers and Secrets in a Fourth-Century Egyptian Book," in *Beyond the Gnostic Gospels: Studies Building on the Work of Elaine Pagels* (ed. Eduard Iricinschi et al.; STAC 82; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 297–319. See also Eduard Iricinschi, "Scribes and Readers of Nag Hammadi Codex II: Book Production and Monastic *Paideia* in Fourth-Century Egypt" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2009).

flesh achieved through the bridal chamber.[5] This "enable[d] the ascetic to turn back the wheels of moral and physical degeneration of the human race, described in Gen 2–3, and recreate its primordial unity while still living in flesh."[6] I take the now well-argued position that the Nag Hammadi Codices are the products specifically of *Pachomian* monastic scribal workshops, and like Iricinschi view them as having been produced for spiritual pedagogy. The main focus of this essay is to explore how the eschatological outlooks of two particular texts in Codex II speak particularly to Pachomian monastic identity and worldview.[7] The most explicit treatments of eschatology come in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (NHC II,4) and *On the Origin of the World* (NHC II,5). However, in order to understand how the eschatologies of these tractates supported fourth-century Egyptian monastic identity, we must first briefly contextualise them within Codex II more broadly.

1.1 From Primordial Deficiency to Glory Post-mortem

The opening text of Codex II, the *Apocryphon of John*, presents fleshly desires as the malicious attempts of the Demiurge, Ialdabaoth to remove humanity from its true origins with the divine. Notably, the serpent of Genesis is explicitly portrayed as being responsible for teaching Adam and Eve to eat of the "wickedness of sexual desire" (NHC II 22.3–14). Later on, however, Eve takes on the greater amount of responsibility for this, beginning with an episode unique to the long recension of the *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II,1 and IV,1)

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[5] Iricinschi draws here on the influential work in this area of Elaine Pagels: "Exegesis of Genesis 1 in the Gospels of Thomas and John," *JBL* 118 (1999): 477–96; Elaine Pagels, "Pursuing the Spiritual Eve: Imagery and Hermeneutics in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and the *Gospel of Philip*," in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism* (ed. Karen L. King; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 187–206; Elaine Pagels, "The 'Mystery of Marriage' in the Gospel of Philip," in *The Allure of Gnosticism: The Gnostic Experience in Jungian Psychology and Contemporary Culture* (ed. Robert A. Segal, June Singer and Murray Stein; Chicago: Open Court, 1995), 107–16; Elaine Pagels, "The 'Mystery of Marriage' in the Gospel of Philip Revisited," in *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester* (ed. Birger A. Pearson, A. Thomas Kraabel, George W. E. Nickelsburg, and Norman R. Petersen; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 442–54.

[6] Iricinschi, "The Teaching Hidden in Silence," 299.

[7] On the connection between Egyptian monasticism and the Nag Hammadi Codices, see most recently the various essays in Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott, eds., *The Nag Hammadi Codices and Late Antique Egypt* (STAC 110; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018). Specifically on Pachomian monasticism, see Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (STAC 97; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), esp. 129–39; 165–69; 246–56; Kimberley A. Fowler, "Reading Gospel of Thomas 100 in the Fourth Century: From Roman Imperialism to Pachomian Concern over Wealth," *VC* 72 (2018): 421–46; Kimberley A. Fowler, "The Ascent of the Soul and the Pachomians: Interpreting the Exegesis on the Soul (NHC II,6) within a Fourth-Century Monastic Context," *Gnosis* 2 (2017): 63–93; Iricinschi, "The Teaching Hidden in Silence," 316–18.

where Ialdabaoth sees her "preparing herself" (implying a seductive act) for Adam, and becomes desirous of her (NHC II 23.37–24.6). Ialdabaoth proceeds to cast Adam and Eve out of paradise, and rapes Eve (II 24.12–16).[8] The implantation of sexual lust into human beings is viewed as the Demiurge's most severe attack, and having tied this directly to malevolent forces, the scribe of Codex II must now explain how to go about combatting this.[9] The *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Gospel of Philip* respond to the cosmological narrative of the *Apocryphon of John* by offering some ethical and practical advice for the devoted ascetic. There is not space to discuss these complex aspects of the texts in detail here, but I will highlight some important points relevant for backgrounding the eschatological material that we will discuss in the subsequent tractates.

In the *Gospel of Thomas* reunification is the key to entering into the kingdom. However, rather than the spirit simply overcoming the prison of the body, the *Gospel of Thomas* understands the flesh too as undergoing part of a reinvention, losing its significance as a dividing characteristic.[10] The *Gospel of*

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[8] *Ap. John* appears in four different versions, three of which are from Nag Hammadi (NHC II, III, and IV – the text appears in the primary position in each of these manuscripts). The fourth is found in Codex Berolinensis Gnosticus (BG) 8505 (the Berlin Codex). The version in NHC IV appears to be copied from the same version as Codex II. The critical text consulted for this essay is the synoptic edition of Michael Waldstein and Frederik Wisse, *The Apocryphon of John: Synopsis of Nag Hammadi Codices II,1; III,1; and IV,1 with BG 8502,2* (NHMS 33; Leiden: Brill, 1995). It seems probable that the version of *Ap. John* in NHC II has been redacted by a monastic scribe with an agenda designed for male ascetics (see Waldstein and Wisse, *The Apocryphon of John*, 5–6). Initially, both Adam *and* Eve are implanted with sexual thoughts (NHC II 23.9–16). However, Codex II's version of the text shortly after deviates from the other accounts, stating specifically that Ialdabaoth "planted sexual desire in she who belongs to Adam" (NHC II 24.28–29). Codex III and BG at this juncture in the narrative both have sexual desire planted "in Adam" (NHC III 31.23; BG 63.5–6). It seems that in the mind of the scribe of Codex II, this sexual impulse does not stir up in Adam as much as his female partner, Eve; therefore, it is woman who proceeds to lead man astray. *Ap. John* is not alone in Codex II in its attribution of sexual desire to woman. We find the same notion in *Orig. World* (109.20–25), and *Book Thom.* also appears to be addressing a male ascetic audience when it chastises those who "love intimacy with women and polluted intercourse" (144.9–10).

[9] For a discussion of sexual lust in *Ap. John* see Christian H. Bull, "Women, Angels, and Dangerous Knowledge: The Myth of the Watchers in the *Apocryphon of John* and Its Monastic Manuscript-Context," in *Women and Knowledge in Early Christianity* (ed. Ulla Tervahauta, Ivan Miroshnikov, Outi Lehtipuu, and Ismo Dunderberg; VCSup 144; Leiden: Brill, 2017), 85–96; for discussion of *Ap. John* in relation to Egyptian monasticism, see 96–105.

[10] The question of *Gos. Thom.*'s ascetic stance, as well as its general attitude towards the physical world and the body has been a point of contention ever since the text's discovery. See Henri-Charles Puech, "Explication de L'Évangile selon Thomas et recherchessur les paroles de Jésus qui y sont résumées," *Annuaire du Collège de France* 58 (1958): 233–39; Henri-Charles Puech, "Un legion de Jésus sur bandelette funéraire," *RHR* 147 (1955): 126–

Thomas is littered with allusions to the fact that salvation is not universal. It is something that requires dedication and work (e.g. sayings 61, 99). One can choose to become a part of the spiritually "elect"; the physical world and the body are challenges to be overcome and mastered, providing an opportunity to grow in spiritual strength, and to come to "know oneself." As Marjanen once stated, the world provides a "stage" for the disciple to act upon.[11] The *Gospel of Philip* is similarly concerned with self-transformation, through acquisition of knowledge and subsequent willing participation in baptism, chrism and Eucharist. Earthly, fleshly experiences are something which must be progressed through in order to attain a renewed spiritual identity. Sexual activity is the "marriage of impurity" (64.36–37; 82.5), and is vastly inferior to the "marriage of purity," which is characterised by self-control.[12] In brief, the *Gospel of Philip* suggests that the souls of human men and women can be inhabited by evil spirits that also possess genders.[13] The malicious male spirits wish to join with the female souls, and the malicious female spirits the male souls. In order to be protected against these evil spirits, one must receive a bridegroom and a bride from the "mirrored bridal chamber"[14] (65.1–26). This probably refers to Christ's body, taken on through the Eucharist.[15] A monastic life of celibacy therefore fitted with the *Gospel of Philip*'s notion that avoidance of sexual union was the ultimate goal, pursuing instead a spiritual union with Christ through sacramental participation.

29; Henri-Charles Puech, "Une collection de paroles de Jésus récemment retrouveé: L'Évangile selon Thomas," *CRAI* 101 (1957): 146–67; Michel Desjardins, "Where was the Gospel of Thomas Written?" *TJT* 8 (1992): 121–33; April D. DeConick, *The Original Gospel of Thomas in Translation: With a Commentary and New English Translation of the Complete Gospel* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 9. Endorsement of celibacy has been seen in sayings 16, 22, 23, 27, 29, 49, 69 and 75. Furthermore, sayings 112 and 87 suggest that the physical body and the soul are unable to be isolated from one another, and therefore the actions of one have a direct impact on the other. See Risto Uro, *Seeking the Historical Context of the Gospel of Thomas* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 58–60.

[11] Marjanen, "Is Thomas a Gnostic Gospel?" in *Thomas at the Crossroads: Essays on the Gospel of Thomas* (ed. Risto Uro; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 126.

[12] April D. DeConick, "The True Mysteries: Sacramentalism in the 'Gospel of Philip,'" *VC* 55 (2001): 247.

[13] This notion of evil spirits with sexual motives being interiorised by human beings is also prevalent in *Ap. John* with the "counterfeit" (BG 71.3–5; III 36.16–17) or "despicable" (II 27.32) spirit, which is a product of Ialdabaoth and his angels and responsible for the presence of sexual lust (and, thus, offspring resulting from intercourse). For a recent discussion, see Bull, "Women, Angels, and Dangerous Knowledge," 87–96.

[14] Michael A. Williams, "Variety in Gnostic Perspectives on Gender," in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism* (ed. Karen L. King; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 2000), 17.

[15] Hugo Lundhaug, *Images of Rebirth: Cognitive Poetics and Transformational Soteriology in the Gospel of Philip and the Exegesis on the Soul* (NHMS 73; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 323.

As I will argue, the fourth and fifth tractates in Codex II, the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World*, validate the ethical and practical advice given in the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Gospel of Philip* by assuring the reader of their eternal, post-mortem reward in stark contrast to the miserable fate of the demonic world rulers. The final two documents in the codex, the *Exegesis on the Soul* and the *Book of Thomas*, continue to reinforce the ascetic message, but deal with this theme even more vividly, providing a scathing critique of sexual activity and everything associated with the flesh. It is in these final two texts that the health of the soul and its necessary salvation from the prison of the body takes central stage.

Understanding the function of the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World* in the way that I am suggesting helps us to see why the scribe of Codex II saw it necessary to include these two texts in addition to the *Apocryphon of John*, all of which address the creation of the material world and the beings responsible for it. I argue that the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World* are included not for the specifics that they contain about cosmic and earthly origins, but rather for their broader ideological stances. When placed at their respective junctures in Codex II, these texts reinforce its vital eschatological messages about the respective fates of those who remain consumed by earthly, fleshly passions and concerns, and those who manage to transcend the physical world. Towards this end, the *Hypostasis of the Archons* begins by making even more emphatic than does the *Apocryphon of John* the fact that the rulers are ultimately doomed, while the souls of the spiritual will reign supreme. *On the Origin of the World*, through a dramatic and detailed description of the end times, elaborates further on the descriptions in the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Hypostasis of the Archons* with graphic images of the rulers' demise, contrasted with the glory of the redeemed. By the end of *On the Origin of the World*, eschatology is transformed from a catastrophic global event into a more personalised, eternal reward for the individual. For a Pachomian monk, these two texts at this point in Codex II offered a vivid confirmation that sterling efforts to overcome the temptations of this world will be rewarded in the next.

2. The Afterlife in Pachomian Literature

Revealing of the concerns which the Pachomian leadership had, and the rhetoric they employed to further these, are various texts in the Pachomian literary corpus ranging from the time Pachomius was still alive in the first half of the fourth century, to several decades after his death.[16] Unsurprisingly, terrifying

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[16] For a survey of the Pachomian literature, see James E. Goehring, *Ascetics, Society and the Desert: Studies in Early Egyptian Monasticism* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1999), 164.

descriptions and visions of what awaits lapsed or wicked souls in the afterlife abound, countered by the glorious prospects that those who successfully complete their ascetic journey can look forward to. Exaggerated threats of torment in opposition to the promise of heavenly reward formed a highly individualised eschatology that was at the forefront of the Pachomian movement's strategy for keeping their ascetic community on track and in line. A few brief examples will be illustrative before moving to consider how the relevant texts from Codex II cohere with the Pachomian eschatological outlook.

In the Pachomian chronicle known as the *Paralipomena*, we find strong exhortation of the monastic brothers to strive towards salvation while enduring the hardship of their encratic lifestyle. Pachomius is here presented as instructing the community that if they only knew the rewards that await the faithful, and the punishment that awaits the negligent in the next world, they would be unrelenting in their efforts. He continues by warning them that they have a limited time on earth – repentance after death is impossible, and so they must not allow the meagre vanities of this short and contemptible existence to steal the glory of eternity.[17] In the *Vitae*, one of the most poignant images contrasting the fate of the soul of the exemplary ascetic with that of the lapsed or wicked comes in Pachomius' vision of angels ranking souls when they extract them from the body. Not only are weaker souls escorted by lower ranking angels, but when the soul reaches heaven its proximity to God is reflective of its conduct while in its earthly body. The worst is reserved of course for the most defiled of souls, which are beaten while still in the body, and then wrenched out by a fishhook and pulled into hell. The role of angels as tormenters of sullied souls after death appears elsewhere in the *Vitae*, with Pachomius witnessing in a vision their whipping by angelic beings in rivers of fire.[18]

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[17] Paral. 19–20 (trans. Armand Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia Volume 2: Pachomian Chronicles and Rules* [Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian, 1981]).

[18] SBo 82, 88; G[1] 93. See the following editions for the Bohairic and Greek *Vitae*: Louis-Théophile Lefort, ed., *Sancti Pachomii Vitae Bohairice Scripta* (CSCO 89, Scriptores Coptici 7; Paris: E. Typographeo Republicae, 1925); François Halkin, ed., *Sancti Pachomii Vitae Graecae Scriptae* (Subsidia hagiographica 19; Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1932). As argued by Christian Bull, we can see in visions such as this the probable influence upon Egyptian monastic culture of the Hermetic Great Demon. Located in the air between the earth and heaven the Great Demon condemns wicked souls to torture by other demons. Another particularly striking parallel from monastic literature can be found in Athanasius's *Vita Antonii* 66.3–4, which describes a vision where Antony sees a very similar character to the Great Demon standing in the clouds either violently apprehending or allowing souls to ascend up to heaven. See Bull, "The Great Demon of the Air and the Punishment of Souls: *The Perfect Discourse* (NHC VI,8) and Hermetic and Monastic Demonologies," in *Nag Hammadi à 70 ans: Qu'avons-nous appris? (Colloque international, Québec, Université Laval, 29-31 mai 2015)* (ed. Eric Crégheur, Louis Painchaud, and Tuomas Rasimus; BCNH.É 10; Leuven: Peeters, 2019), 106–18.

The *Regulations of Horsiesios* 2–3[19] preface the monastery rules with a fierce reminder of the punishments recorded in Scripture for the neglectful wedding guest and the foolish virgins of Matt 22:1–13 and 25:1–13 – the negligent soul risks being ostracised from and shunned by the Lord. Fervent reminders of what awaited successful and lapsed monks after death was vital for keeping the Koinonia's inhabitants focused on their daily ascesis and devotional tasks.[20] Each monk had the power to determine whether he would eventually rest in glory or endure eternal suffering. This choice between the flesh and the spirit is repeatedly emphasised in Codex II. Crucially, the eschatological imagery presented in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World* suitably enhances the message found in the Pachomian literature that adherence to the types of renunciatory lifestyle suggested by the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Gospel of Philip* would favourably impact one's chances in the afterlife.

3. The Monk Versus the Demonic Powers

Perhaps the most obvious feature that the Pachomian sources and both the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World* have in common, is the substantial influence upon human beings of demonic forces. Demons are a recurrent feature in the Pachomian literary corpus, just as they were in early-Christian hagiography more generally. The battles between the monk and demons became a powerful rhetorical tool to assert monastic holiness and authority.[21] The other prominent example stemming from the Egyptian desert is of course the *Vita Antonii*, in which Antony's battles with demons feature heavily. The *Pachomian Vitae* and the *Paralipomena*[22] warn against the very real threat posed by demonic enemies and argue that the way to overcome them is with a

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[19] See Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia 2*. For the edition, Louis-Théophile Lefort, ed., *Œuvres de S. Pachôme et de ses disciples* (CSCO 159, Scriptores Coptici 23; Leuven: Durbecq, 1956).

[20] Although see Philip Rousseau, *Pachomius: The Making of a Community in Fourth-Century Egypt* (London: University of California Press, 1985), 132, who preferred to see this rhetoric surrounding one's fate on the day of judgement as a spurring on into action rather than vengeful threat.

[21] For a detailed treatment of the phenomenon, see David Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk: Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity* (London: Harvard University Press, 2006); on Antony, see 23–7; and on Pachomius, 78–96. See also Miriam Raub Vivian, "Daniel and the Demons: The Battle against Evil as Central to the Authority of the Monk," in *Studia Patristica XXXV: Papers Presented at the Thirteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 1999: Ascetica, Gnostica, Liturgica, Orientalia* (ed. Maurice F. Wiles, Edward Yarnold, and Paul M. Pervis; Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 191–97.

[22] G[1] 56; SBo 5; 14; 21; 43; 44; 55; 64; 67; 71; 102; 105; 107–11; 113; 182; 191; 194; 210; Paral. 2.

combination of faithful humility and active power. Cosmic conflict is presented as just as much a part of Pachomius' early life as it is in Athanasius' account of Antony's. Commonly, this is portrayed as a test of the spirit and will, sanctioned by God, so that the ascetic might learn to know his demonic enemies and their words, never to confuse them with those of God. The *Letter of Ammon*, written by a monk who arrived at Phbow a few years after the death of Pachomius,[23] warns that one's own impure desires and misguided will are not always attributable to demonic forces. Pachomius teaches that the "appearance" of demons and the inner thoughts (λογισμοί) experienced as a result of their meddling are distinguishable from divinely inspired visions, as the latter involve the total loss of self-consciousness. λογισμοί would no longer occur if a vision was God-given.[24]

Of our two focal texts, the message of the *Hypostasis of the Archons* is particularly pertinent here since it describes a world where the rulers are the root of desires and passions in humans. The text also emphasises, however, that these demons, despite their malicious meddling in human affairs, are fated to certain demise. The text offered encouragement, therefore, for Pachomian ascetics battling daily with a challenging regime aimed at conquering demonically-inflicted passions and carnal thoughts. Moreover, the *Hypostasis of the Archons* provided a sense of personal agency for the monastic reader through its insistence that despite the rulers' inflictions, the individual is ultimately accountable for their response to their human situation, and chooses whether to actively pursue salvation or not. Essentially, the *Hypostasis of the Archons*' key message is that the malevolent demonic beings responsible for human error and ignorance can be overcome by dedicated individuals, who are spiritually superior owing to their divine heritage.

The *Hypostasis of the Archons* delivers its argument largely through over-emphasis, often in quite comical fashion, on the inadequacy, inability, and frequent failings of the rulers. The struggle between humanity and these evil forces is understood through a (pseudo-) Pauline lens with the citing of Eph 6:12[25] in the opening few lines:[26]

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[23] *Letter of Ammon* 24; see James E. Goehring, *The Letter of Ammon and Pachomian Monasticism* (PTS 27; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011).

[24] On this, see Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 140–41; Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia*, 285, n. 1 (see also SBo 113; G¹ 96, 112; and *Letter of Ammon* 16).

[25] There is also an apparent allusion to Col 1:13, "the authority of darkness." *Hyp. Arch.*, however, omits the reference to darkness (σκότος; ⲕⲁⲕⲉ) that appears in the Greek and Sahidic versions of Eph 6:12. See Pagels, "Pursuing the Spiritual Eve," 191.

[26] The translations of *Hyp. Arch.* and *Orig. World* are based on those of Bentley Layton and Hans-Gebhard Bethge (revised by Layton and the Societas Coptica Hierosolymitana) respectively, in Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II*, vols. 1 and 2, with slight modifications.

ⲡⲛ̄ϣⲱϫⲉ ϣⲟⲟⲡ ⲁⲛ ⲟⲩⲃⲉ ⲥⲁⲣϫ ϩⲓ [ⲥⲛⲟ]ϥ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲉϥ ⲟⲩⲃⲉ ⲛⲉϫⲟⲩⲥⲓⲁ ⲙ̄ⲡⲕⲟⲥ[ⲙⲟⲥ] ⲙⲛ̄
ⲙ̄ⲡⲛⲉⲩⲙⲁⲧⲓⲕⲟⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲡⲟⲛⲏⲣⲓⲁ

Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but it is against the powers of the world and the spirits of evil.[27] (*Hyp. Arch.* 86.23–25)

The subsequent text of the *Hypostasis of the Archons* is apparently offered as an exegesis on the comments made about the cosmic rulers, the "authorities of the darkness" (Col 1:13), by "the great apostle" (*Hyp. Arch.* 86.21–22).[28]

The *Hypostasis of the Archons* offers a more condensed version of the Sophia myth than we find in the *Apocryphon of John*, along with a similar inversion of the Genesis creation account. In much the same way as the *Apocryphon of John*, the text mixes elements of Jewish thought and Hellenistic philosophy. However, the appeal to the "great apostle" Paul together with the citation of Ephesians indicates that whatever the document's compositional history, its final form is a Christian text.[29] Pagels has argued compellingly that the interpretation of Genesis is entirely through the lens of Paul's letters. We do not simply have a Christianisation of various source materials, but a concerted effort to understand the creation narrative through the eyes of Paul. According to

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[27] When the citation from Ephesians is compared to the Greek and Sahidic New Testaments, the latter of which closely follows the former, some relevant differences can be observed. Some are minor and do not seem to make much interpretative difference – for example, *Hyp. Arch.* renders πάλη as ϣⲱϫⲉ (contest, wrestling) instead of ⲙⲓϣⲉ, which is the choice of the Sahidic New Testament. *Hyp. Arch.* also changes the Pauline order of αἷμα καὶ σάρκα ("blood and flesh") to ⲥⲁⲣϫ ϩⲓ ⲥⲛⲟϥ ("flesh and blood"). However, what is more immediately striking is that *Hyp. Arch.* omits the ἀρχάς and κοσμοκράτορας of Eph 6:12 completely, as well as the references to "this darkness" (although the previous line refers to "the authorities of darkness") and "the heavens." Notably, *Hyp. Arch.*'s title, given at the end of the tractate, uses the term ⲁⲣⲭⲱⲛ ("rulers/archons") whilst the opening sentence uses ⲉϫⲟⲩⲥⲓⲁ ("powers"). Böhlig attempted to address this conundrum by examining the terminology in the related *Orig. World*, where he argues for synonymous usage of the two: Böhlig and Labib, *Die koptisch-gnostische Schrift ohne Titel*, 29. From *Hyp. Arch.* 87.23–89.3, along with 92.4–93.23 ⲁⲣⲭⲱⲛ is almost exclusively used. See also Ingvild S. Gilhus, *The Nature of the Archons: A Study in the Soteriology of a Gnostic Treatise from Nag Hammadi (CG II, 4)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1985), 6, n. 18. The text simply paraphrases Eph, and with no perceived need to make any particular distinction in identity between "the powers," "the rulers," and the "world powers"; a shortened citation is deemed sufficient.

[28] For Barc, *L'Hypostase*, 74, these initial citations serve to frame the world origin myth and the myth of the rulers that will follow in the text as symbolic of the spiritual battle that the apostle warns of. On the other hand, Anne McGuire, "Virginity and Subversion: Norea Against the Powers in the *Hypostasis of the Archons*," in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism* (ed. Karen L. King; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 243, argues that the attentive reader is intended to understand that while a struggle still ensues, the myths elaborated upon in the text will ultimately reveal that the rulers have already been condemned and defeated by God's power, and the "eschatological victory is, in some sense, already obtained."

[29] Bullard, *The Hypostasis of the Archons*, 48, 113–14.

Pagels, the author wishes to show that creation has made the spiritual and psychic forces of the primordial realm incarnate in human beings. It is not "flesh and blood" that are problematic, but the forces which control them. Worldly affairs are not intrinsically evil but have been manipulated and used against humanity by the cosmic rulers.[30]

The strong emphasis in the Pachomian literature on demonic interference with the monk makes this insistence on the very real danger of the world rulers in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* particularly pertinent. Their everyday battles with the fleshly passions which constantly threatened to derail ascetic discipline found elaborate corroboration in this text, and as we shall see in the following sections, encouragement and assurance that as devoted spiritual warriors triumph was firmly within their reach.

4. Making a Mockery of Malice

A significant tactic that both the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World* employ to accentuate the fallibility of the world rulers is derisive mockery. This distinct ridiculing of the rulers is especially noticeable in the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, where it is indulged in to a greater degree than in other texts with a significant cosmogonic focus. This betrays a particular concern with humanity's superiority over the Demiurge and his offspring (particularly the superiority of the chosen "seed"). For Pachomian readers, this intense disparagement of the rulers would function in two important ways. Firstly, it confirmed the ever-present threat of demonic forces working to infect human minds, thereby offering cosmic justification for their strict ascetic lifestyle. Secondly, and even more crucially, it assured them that their efforts had the potential to be successful.

In a study discussing the imagined second and third-century readers of demiurgical texts such as the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World*, Michael Williams has cautioned against reading an un-nuanced disdain about the physical world and the human condition into their cosmological narratives.[31] This interpretation of blanket negativity has historically led scholars to see radically ascetic or libertine groups as the primary audiences for such

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[30] Pagels, "Pursuing the Spiritual Eve," 193.

[31] Michael Allen Williams, "A Life Full of Meaning and Purpose: Demiurgical Myths and Social Implications," in *Beyond the Gnostic Gospels: Studies Building on the Work of Elaine Pagels* (ed. Eduard Iricinschi et al.; STAC 82; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), esp. 21–8, 48. Williams draws attention to the fact that while the creative process is framed partly in language of malice, incompetence, and misdemeanour, it is ultimately done under the auspices of the highest divinity. Williams draws attention here to *Hyp. Arch.* 93.11–13, where Ialdabaoth and the rulers are patterned on the inhabitants of the heavenly realm and created according to the will of the Father.

texts, views which now enjoy little scholarly support.[32] Since this study is focusing specifically on the fourth-century reception of Codex II, however, I wish to draw out those particular aspects which an ascetic readership in this later context (without making any suggestion of radical ascetic use at earlier points in the texts' history) could align themselves *most* with. In this sense, the malevolent and inept depictions of the demonic world rulers, along with the promise of salvation for the select group who can attain to it, remain important points of intersection between these demiurgical narratives and Pachomian worldview.

The argument that the *Hypostasis of the Archons* offers is twofold: Firstly, it is the ignorant cosmic rulers who are responsible for humanity's unawareness of its true origins in the divine realm. The rulers have clouded the minds of human beings with fleshly temptations and repressed the Spirit's influence upon their thoughts and actions. Secondly, with the help of the Spirit, and the instruction of the saviour, humankind possesses the ability to escape the rulers' clutches, and attain to glory in the heavenly realm. This message is not fundamentally different to that put forward at length by the *Apocryphon of John*. However, the cogent reinforcement in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* of the very real, yet essentially vincible opposition faced by the monk focuses attention on the post-mortem reward.

The *Hypostasis of the Archons*' disdain for and mocking of the rulers is prevalent from its opening. In fact, every event that the text narrates is characterised by their inferiority and misplaced arrogance. Various scholars have argued that despite the document's title, their "hypostasis" (ϩⲩⲡⲟⲥⲧⲁⲥⲓⲥ), in terms of "nature" or "essence," is hardly discussed.[33] Early in the narrative, we simply learn that Pistis Sophia installed [Ialdabaoth's] children, according to their power, and after the model of the Pleroma (87.8–10). We also read that the rulers possess androgynous bodies in the forms of animals (87.27–30).

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[32] Although Williams does draw attention to some relatively recent attestations of this argument: "A Life Full of Meaning," 31. For Williams' earlier critique of this suggestion, see Michael Allen Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 139–87.

[33] See Bullard, *The Hypostasis of the Archons*, 42–43; Layton, "The Hypostasis of the Archons or the Reality of the Rulers," 44; Schenke is an exception, and translates the term as *Wesen* (character, nature, essence) in his German translation; this choice is followed by Gilhus. Schenke, "Das Wesen der Archonten"; Gilhus, *The Nature of the Archons*, 6. Anne McGuire, "Virginity and Subversion: Norea Against the Powers in the Hypostasis of the Archons," in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism* (ed. Karen L. King; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 242, proposes that "in referring to 'our struggle' against the Authorities, the prologue suggests that the Authorities have a continuing reality (*hypostasis*) against which the narrator and his or her readers must struggle…the narrative may serve to inform the readers about the reality and nature of the Authorities so they may better be prepared for the struggle that continues."

Later on, the narrating voice (who seems to take the place of Norea in her discourse with the angel Eleleth) asks Eleleth to elaborate upon how the powers came to be, from what material, and who it was that created them and their forces (93.33–94.1). It is probably this short section which gave rise to the titling of the document. The great angel's answer offers a slightly fuller account of Ialdabaoth's creation, as well as that of his subordinates. In brief, he is the product of Sophia's sole creative act without her partner, and therefore he resembles an abortion consisting of shadowy matter. He is androgynous, as are his offspring (94.5–19).

However, those interpreters who have not seen any discussion of the rulers' nature in the tractate have failed to appreciate that the treatise as a whole serves to make one overarching and fundamental point about their existence; specifically, that it is one of weakness, inferiority, and ignorance as to their ultimate fate. In effect, their nature truly is ignorance and fault. Bullard draws on the fact that the Greek loan word ὑπόστασις, as well as referring to something's existential property or essence, can also be used to describe something's origins, effectively as an equivalent for γένεσις; this is how he understands it in the *Hypostasis of the Archons*.[34] However, this seems insufficient, as the text does not pay much attention to the origins of the rulers either. The two short passages referred to above contain the most detail that we receive. The ignorance which *defines* their being, on the other hand, is prevalent throughout. Indeed, many features or characteristics of the rulers are simply implied in the course of the narrative. For instance, their inability both to raise their created man and to catch Eve in order to rape her, imply weakness and inefficiency. That they will eventually be trampled under the feet of the spiritual implies that they are finite, and doomed. That they fall victim to base passions such as envy and desire implies that they are just as captive as the human beings whom they attempt to enslave with such vices – worse off in fact, because they are void of the spiritual aspect that humankind possesses.

Norea's confrontation with the rulers uncovers their true character as misguided dominators. This seems to be what Luttikhuizen interprets from the text in his choice to translate the title as "*The True Nature of the Archons*."[35] The threat of the rulers is real, but against the power of God they cannot compete. In the eyes of our fourth-century monastic audience, the day-to-day combat with demons loomed large. The *Hypostasis of the Archons*, however, while going to pains to emphasise the demonic rulers as the source behind earthly struggles, is conspicuously emphatic about the fact that they are easy to defeat. For monastic readers of the codex, the rulers can be seen as a metaphor for all

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[34] Bullard, *The Hypostasis of the Archons*, 42.
[35] See Gerard Luttikhuizen, "Gnostic Ideas about Eve's Children and the Salvation of Humanity," in *Eve's Children: The Biblical Stories Retold and Interpreted in Jewish and Christian Traditions* (ed. Gerard Luttikhuizen; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 206.

that distracts the mind from the pursuit of the spiritual, be it the mundane concerns of daily life, or the all-consuming passions. The assertion that one's true battle is not with flesh, but with malevolent forces seeking to lead humanity astray brings the mythology of the *Hypostasis of the Archons* directly in line with the issues elaborated upon in the previous two tractates of Codex II.[36]

Immediately after the opening citation of Ephesians, the *Hypostasis of the Archons'* first comment relates to the rulers – specifically that they are presided over by a blind, ignorant chief, Samael (Ialdabaoth).[37] The claim of the Jewish God from Isa 45:5 that he alone is God is here placed onto Ialdabaoth's lips as a misguided statement of his significance, which is swiftly corrected by the Divine Realm:

Their chief is blind; [because of his] power and ignorance [and his] arrogance he said, with his [power], "I am God; there is none [apart from me]." When he said this, he sinned against [the entirety]. And this speech reached incorruptibility; then there was a voice that came forth from incorruptibility, saying, "You are wrong, Samael," which is "god of the blind."[38] (*Hyp. Arch.* 86.27–87.4)

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[36] That the antagonism is truly between the Divine Realm and the rulers of the lower world is exemplified by the fact that Norea destroys Noah's ark because, as Pearson states, it is built upon the command of the rulers. Norea acts here as a representative of the world above (*Hyp. Arch.* 92.15–18). See Birger Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 93.

[37] Bernard Barc, "Samaèl-Saklas-Yaldabaôth: Recherche sur la genèse d'un mythe gnostique," in *Colloque international sur les textes de Nag Hammadi, Québec, 22-25 août 1978* (ed. Bernard Barc; BCNH.É 1; Leuven: Peeters, 1981), 123–50, contends that all three names given for the demiurge (Ialdabaoth, Samael, and Saklas) in *Hyp. Arch.* (along with the long recension of *Ap. John* and *Trim. Prot.*) were originally separate figures.

[38] *Hyp. Arch.* 87.3–4 reads ⲕ̄ⲣ̄ⲡⲗⲁⲛⲁⲥⲑⲉ ⲥⲁⲙⲁⲏⲗ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲡ[ⲉ] ⲛ̄ⲃ̄ⲃⲗ̄ⲗⲉ, and 94.25–26 contains very similar text: ⲕ̄ⲣ̄ⲡⲗⲁⲛⲁⲥⲑⲉ ⲥⲁⲙⲁⲏⲗ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲡⲁⲉⲓ ⲡⲉ ⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲃ̄ⲃⲗ̄ⲗⲉ. Etymologically, Samael, from the Aramaic *sāmê*, means "blind god," and this meaning is evident in the statements about the chief ruler's blindness in the text more generally (in addition to the reference above, see *Hyp. Arch.* 86.27; 87.4). In *Orig. World* 103.18 we find a close parallel, and here Samael is described, as we might expect, as "blind god" (ⲕ̄ⲣ̄ⲡⲗⲁⲛⲁ ⲥⲁⲙⲁⲏⲗ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲡⲁⲉⲓ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲃ̄ⲃⲗ̄ⲗⲉ). Because *Hyp. Arch.* contains almost identical text at both 87.3–4 and 94.25–26, it is less likely that textual corruption is reflected here. See Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II*, 234–35, 252–53; Layton "The Hypostasis of the Archons or the Reality of the Rulers," 46–47; Bullard, *The Hypostasis of the Archons*, 51–52; Barc, *L'Hypostase des archontes*, 34; and for a more recent summary of the debate and discussion of this issue, see Kaiser, *Die Hypostase der Archonten*, 151–54. Regardless, Kaiser sums up the most crucial point for understanding what the text in its present form is trying to convey: "Genau das ist ja die Gefahr, die von Samael ausgeht: Nicht nur, dass er selbst für die höheren geistigen Welten blind ist, sondern dass er andere blind macht." Essentially, the danger Samael poses is that it is not just that he himself is blind, ignorant to the heavenly realms, but that he also makes others blind too. Kaiser, *Die Hypostase der Archonten*, 153. Elsewhere in Codex II, the association of blindness with the rulers is also made in *Gos. Phil.* 59.18–20.

Samael's mistaken claim in the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, followed by its im-
mediate rebuttal, is repeated a further two times in the latter half of the docu-
ment, in Eleleth's retelling of the Ialdabaoth story to the narrator – firstly at
Ialdabaoth's birth, and again when he repeats the claim to his offspring (94.21–
26; 95.5–7). Here begins a rulership characterised by ignorant hubris, as Sa-
mael's offspring are described as a product of their father's blasphemy, which
is his "power/might" (бом) (86.4–9). At this point, *On the Origin of the World*
can also be brought into the discussion, since this text claims similar ignorance
on the part of the Demiurge regarding his identity: while he calls himself Ial-
dabaoth, the "perfect" call him Ariel, on account of his leonine appearance
(100.25–26).

   In both texts, Samael's blindness is identified with his thoughts and his
power, and is essentially, therefore, his existential characteristic.[39] In a slightly
confusing episode in *On the Origin of the World*, Sophia's production of Ial-
dabaoth is said to bring about speech (пϣⲁϫⲉ) (100.14–15). From this point
on, verbal expression is established as a creative force, and is used by Ial-
dabaoth to bring about both his offspring and the heavens in which they reside
(101.11). The connection between Sophia's crying out to her son and the insti-
gation of speech is not made clear, but it is apparent that there is a difference
between this and creation which arises from sexual intercourse. This is clarified
later on in the text when the rulers defile the earthly Eve. They are described
as defiling not only her body, but also her voice, in an attempt to sully any
human being who later on tries to claim that they were born of speech (пϣⲁϫⲉ)
from the "true man" (ⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲛ̅ⲁⲗⲏⲑⲉⲓⲛⲟⲥ) (117.4–12). The implication here, of
course, is that their raping of the earthly Eve brings about sexual intercourse,
which will become the mode of reproduction for human beings, in contrast to
the pure method of creative speech used by the Divine Realm, and indeed ma-
nipulated by Ialdabaoth to his wicked ends. All three texts from Codex II which
relate the demiurgical myth place significant value on the act of speech – its
creative power is exemplified with the begetting of beings in the Pleroma, but
it also plays a central role in both the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the
Origin of the World* in their condemning of Ialdabaoth, with both texts narrat-
ing that his vocal assertions regarding his identity highlight his sheer oblivi-
ousness.[40]

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[39] For a recent study of the chief ruler's blasphemy, see Steve Johnston, *Du créateur
biblique au démiurge gnostique: Trajectoire et réception du motif du blasphème de l'Ar-
chonte* (JAOC 15; Turnhout: Brepols, 2021).

[40] *Orig. World* of course, draws upon Isa 45:5–6 in its relaying of Ialdabaoth's blas-
phemy, with Pistis' rebuke that he will be trampled like potter's clay recalling Isa 41:25.
This rebuke takes the words of YHWH in Isaiah and uses them to speak against Ialdabaoth's
vain claim. However, Louis Painchaud, "The Use of Scripture in Gnostic Literature," *JECS*
4 (1996): 141–42, suggests that *Orig. World* has in mind the LXX text of 41:28, which in-
cludes a pronouncement against false gods – specifically condemning their failure because

Some comparisons of the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World* with the *Apocryphon of John* will help to further illustrate the heightened denigration of the archons that we see particularly in the first of these texts. The first noteworthy incident is that which leads to the archons' creation of Adam. The *Hypostasis of the Archons* claims that when the image of Imperishability above is reflected in the waters of the regions below, the powers fall in love with it, but cannot reach this spiritual being on account of their own deficient psychic make-up (87.13–20). When compared to other accounts, the *Hypostasis of the Archons*' relaying of this incident is distinctively more focused on the rulers' weakness and helplessness than malice and desire. The *Apocryphon of John* omits any specific reference to their desire for the image, but like the *Hypostasis of the Archons* narrates that the divine image is the inspiration for their creation of Adam, in order to replicate it.[41] The account of Pistis Sophia appearing in the waters in *On the Origin of the World* is lengthy, but again does not seem to directly result in desire on the part of Ialdabaoth or the rulers to replicate the image. Here, Pistis shows her image, which is directly connected to that of the first spiritual human, in response to Ialdabaoth's vain claim that he alone is God. When the rulers see the Adam of Light, they scoff at Ialdabaoth for having claimed that there was no one in existence before him. In his embarrassment, Ialdabaoth coerces them to create an earthly model so that they might enslave him (112.26–113.5).

In *On the Origin of the World*, this part of the story relays Ialdabaoth's impulsiveness and misunderstanding, since he creates man as a jealous attempt to save his own pride. In the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, however, it is the sheer level of hopelessness on the part of the rulers that is stressed. Even the use of the term ⲙⲉⲣⲓⲧ (*Hyp. Arch.* 87.14) implies more a feeling of helpless longing than pure jealousy or malice. It is owing to the rulers' psychic nature, their weakness, that they are simply unable to touch the divine image. Their subsequent creative act follows suit, not quite matching up to their grand plans. They model Adam on their own appearance, as well as the divine image that appeared to them in the waters (87.30–32).[42] However, *On the Origin of the World* seems to add the suggestion that the rulers wish to trick Adam into becoming enamoured with his own likeness:

…let us create a man out of earth, according to the image of our body and according to the likeness of this being, to serve us; so that when he sees his likeness, he might become enamoured of it. (*Orig. World* 112.34–113.4)

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they cannot "declare anything," unlike Pisits who declares against Ialdabaoth. The editor has transformed the conflict between the true God of Israel and the false gods in Isaiah into that between Ialdabaoth and the Divine Realm (represented by Pisits).

[41] *Ap. John* II 14.26–15.2–4; *Hyp. Arch.* 87.12–15.
[42] Compare *Ap. John* II 15.2–4.

It makes most sense to interpret this as the rulers' plan to trick humankind into a preoccupation with the body, and all that is associated with it. This seems also to be the suggestion in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* 91.7–11, where the result of Ialdabaoth's cursing of humankind is that they "become preoccupied with worldly affairs" (ⲛⲁϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲛ̄ⲃⲓⲱⲧⲓⲕⲟⲥ), having no time for the Holy Spirit. No explicit references to sexual desire, wealth, or greed are made; rather, all that distracts from the spiritual seems to be implied. Their attempted entrapment of Adam, however, backfires upon them. In a somewhat comical episode in the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, the rulers persistently blow into their psychic man, who is lying motionless upon the ground (88.7–9). Moreover, in their weakness, they fail to realise that the Father of the All is in constant control of their actions, in order to bring about his will. We might recall here the notion in the Pachomian sources that demons can only act if God allows them to.

The power and will of the Divine stand in stark contrast to the weakness and ignorance of the rulers. Eventually, after the rulers' spectacular failure, the Spirit descends into the man and transforms him into a living, moving soul (88.10–15). The depictions of the rulers and their actions in the *Apocryphon of John* are almost always of malicious, jealous, deceptive beings. The Paradise account, for instance, describes their tree as one of death and poison (21.22–24). In the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, however, they appear feeble and the emphasis is upon their certain demise. That the rulers effectively have no free will is a notion shared by all three cosmogonic texts from Codex II. The will of the Father is always being played out, with all of the rulers' actions either being manipulated or eventually thwarted.

For example, the *Apocryphon of John* has the supreme Deity pre-empt Ialdabaoth's raping of Eve and removes Zoe (life) from her before the act is committed. However, Ialdabaoth is successful in fathering two sons as a result, Cain and Abel. The *Hypostasis of the Archons* on the other hand, attributes Cain and Abel to Adam (91.12–14). They are born after Adam and Eve are cast out of Paradise and have "become worldly" (91.7–11), there being an implied sexual component to the word ⲃⲓⲱⲧⲓⲕⲟⲥ ("worldly") in this phrase.[43] *On the Origin of the World* adds a further element of malice to this episode – the rulers intend to defile Eve in order that she will then be unable to ascend into her light, and that all her children will be under the rule of the rulers. As in the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, she laughs at them, this time causing a mist to obscure their eyes. She then becomes a tree in order to hide and leaves her likeness with Adam in order to fool them. Her plan works, and the rulers defile the likeness unawares (116.11–117.14).

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[43] Interestingly, John Chrysostom uses βιωτικός to describe the opposite to the lifestyle of the monk: *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 16.5; *Sacerdot.* 3.15; *In Lazarum* 3.1. References collected in G. W. H. Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), 298.

In the latter section of the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, we read of one last pathetic attempt of the rulers to gain mastery over humanity. Ialdabaoth attempts to compel Norea to submit to him in the same way that he claims her mother (Eve) did. Norea is not fooled and refuses him outright. Her knowledge proves greater than that of the rulers, as she breaks the news that they are cursed,[44] and have defiled only themselves:

'It is you who are the rulers of darkness; you are accursed. You did not know my mother; rather it was your female counterpart that you knew. For I am not your descendant; rather it is from the world above that I come.' The arrogant ruler turned, with all his might, [and] his face came to be like (a) black [...]; he said to her presumptuously, 'You must give service to us, [as did] your mother Eve.' (*Hyp. Arch.* 92.22–31)

A humorous mockery is again present here, as the powerlessness of the rulers manifests itself in rage, so much so that Ialdabaoth's face turns black. Norea cries out to the heavens for help, which is granted in the form of the angel Eleleth. The rulers swiftly depart from her and Eleleth turns to reassuring Norea that the rulers pose no threat to her. Indeed, he seems to find it unbelievable that she thinks they hold any power over her at all:

Do you think these rulers have any power over you? None of them can prevail against the root of truth; for on its account he appeared in the final ages; and these authorities will be restrained. And these authorities cannot defile you and that generation; for your abode is in incorruptibility, where the virgin spirit dwells, who is superior to the authorities of chaos and to their universe. (*Hyp. Arch.* 93.22–32)

Reference is made here to the chosen "generation," who originate in the Divine Realm. Unlike the *Apocryphon of John* and *On the Origin of the World*, the *Hypostasis of the Archons* does not elaborate on the origins of this special generation other than that they are the spiritual children of Norea (96.19). A surface reading of the *Hypostasis of the Archons* seems to suggest that there are two groups of people. The first are the descendants of Norea and are automatically saved because they possess the "true light." The second are the offspring of the earthly Eve, and only have the "mixed light" as a result of the rulers' defilement of Eve. This latter group possess the potential for salvation, but it is not predetermined. I would argue along with Gilhus, however, that Norea's seed are not identified by *birth*, but by *choice*. This is extremely important for the monastic reception of the text: one can become part of Norea's seed by choosing to abandon the defiled way of life instigated by the rulers, and seeking the spiritual instead.[45] In other words, the ascetic way of life done correctly offered substantial potential for soteriological triumph. The organisational

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[44] Bullard, *The Hypostasis of the Archons*, 99, notes that her statement of knowledge as to the rulers' true identity is reminiscent of Egyptian incantations whereby the soul must name hostile powers in order gain passage beyond them.

[45] Gilhus, *The Nature of the Archons*, 116–17.

structure of the Pachomian monasteries, with their model of communal support and accountability, was designed to maximalise this success.

5. The Chosen Generation through Monastic Eyes

The notion of spiritual election is another key motif which connects the outlooks of the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World* with that of Pachomian ascetics. The ways this theme manifests in both the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World* will now be explored in terms of its application for Pachomian self-identity. In the discussion above, we have seen that the *Hypostasis of the Archons* makes reference to a distinct generation who have authority over the world rulers (*Hyp. Arch.* 93.22–32). The text culminates with a vivid assurance from the angel Eleleth that this spiritual seed is untouchable by the spiritually-lacking rulers. This same lack of spirit that meant they could not reach the divine image in the water (87.33–88.11) separates them from the chosen generation; the opposing natures of the two are here vitally important. The explicitly eschatological section of the tractate is relatively short, serving simply to assure that the rulers will fall, and the spiritual will return to their rightful place with the Father:

Until the moment when the true man, in a modelled form, reveals the existence of [the spirit of] truth, which the father has sent. Then he will teach them about everything. And he will anoint them with the chrism of life eternal, given to him from the un-ruled generation. Then they will be freed of blind thought. And they will trample death under foot, which belongs to the authorities. And they will ascend into the limitless light, where this sown element dwells. Then the authorities will relinquish their times. And their angels will weep over their destruction. And their demons will mourn their death. Then all the children of the light will truly know the truth and their root, and the father of the entirety and the Holy Spirit. They will all say with one voice, "The father's truth is righteous, and the son presides over the entirety." And from everyone unto the ages of ages, "Holy, holy, holy! Amen!" (*Hyp. Arch.* 96.33–97.21)

Eleleth informs that when the True Man (Christ) appears in a modelled/manifest form he will teach the seed and wash away their blindness. The reference to the abolition of blindness is particularly striking here, as it is juxtaposed with the first characterisation of the chief ruler as blind at the document's opening (86.27). In contrast to the rulers, the chosen generation will gain realisation of their proper origins – it is the truth that is their root/source (ⲛⲟⲩⲛⲉ); they come from and are characterised by truth, which through proper instruction they will understand. The rulers, on the other hand, are characterised by ignorance

(blindness).[46] This recalls 93.24–25, where Eleleth affirms that none of the rulers will be able to "prevail against the root of truth." Eleleth makes it clear that because the rulers have only had the privilege of a finite period of time, they will never be party to the permanence of the Infinite Light (97.8).

As Bullard observed, this final section of Eleleth's revelation employs language reminiscent of that in John's Gospel.[47] The Spirit of Truth as a revealer evokes John 14:17, 26, and the description of the Man of Truth who will come in a created form seems to recall the Johannine notion of the Word becoming flesh (1:14). The reference to anointing in connection with teaching also seems to draw upon 1 John 2:20, 27.[48] What is important here for our purposes is that the fourth-century monastic readers of Codex II, in addition to picking up on these allusions to scripture (which surely strengthened the force of the message), could identify themselves as the offspring of Norea precisely because they had *chosen* a life that sought to quash the earthly trappings that the demonic forces advocate. The ethical message that underpins the *Hypostasis of the Archons* would have rung clear for these ascetics; through a choice to abandon the fleshly ways of the rulers one could ensure their status in the afterlife. The monks could align themselves with the "sons of Light" in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and the assurance that they will triumph.

Another related factor for a monastic readership is an intriguing feature appearing in both the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World*, namely the inclusion of the "repentance" of the ruler Sabaoth, one of Ialdabaoth's offspring.[49] Upon hearing the blasphemous outbursts of his father, Sabaoth repents his wickedness and is taken up into the heavens where he builds a chariot (as well as a throne and dwelling place in *On the Origin of the World*) for himself and creates angels to serve him (*Hyp. Arch.* 95.13–31; *Orig. World* 103.32–105.4). The portrayal of Ialdabaoth as the Jewish creator is well attested in Genesis reinterpretations such as we have in the Nag Hammadi Codices. However, here it is *Sabaoth* who can claim an association with the God of Israel. As Rasimus has pointed out, it seems as though the God of Jewish scriptures is divided in *On the Origin of the World*, his characteristics shared

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[46] Bullard, *The Hypostasis of the Archons*, 114, understands 97.13-16 to carry an adverbial rather than descriptive sense in relation to the "root," describing the children's "rooting" in the truth of the Father. He argues that the "root" combines with the Father and the Holy Spirit "into a Trinitarian formula." However, this seems an unnecessary complication. Rather, the root should be understood as describing the origin of truth which the children need to return to, and which is home to the Father and the Holy Spirit.

[47] Bullard, *The Hypostasis of the Archons*, 113–14.

[48] It is also possible that baptismal theology would be recalled here by the reader, with both teaching and anointing being central components.

[49] Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, 94, has pointed out that this concept is something that both Nag Hammadi texts seem to have in common with that lying behind the conversion of Elohim in Justin's *Baruch*.

between Ialdabaoth and Sabaoth. Those attributed to Sabaoth, however, are distinctively more positive – he is portrayed as a powerful ruler, whilst Ialdabaoth is demonic and jealous.[50] The two accounts of Sabaoth's repentance were examined in detail by Fallon, who concluded that the more developed account in *On the Origin of the World* was redacted specifically to represent Sabaoth as the ruler of the psychic class of men, who make up the wider Christian church.[51] Fallon's argument finds support in the fact that the eschatological discourse in the text is very clear about the separation of humanity, and the ultimate fate of each class. While the Pachomian readers would not have viewed themselves as being distinct from the mainstream church ideologically, they were still living a life that distinguished them from other Christians through their retreat to an ascetic community and their dedication to a physically and mentally straining spiritual path. The appeal of the spiritually elective worldview advocated by the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World* is clear.[52]

5.1 Monastic Identification as the Spiritually Elect: the "Kingless Generation"

The division of humankind that we find in both of our key texts was, I argue, important for monastic engagement with them. In order to illustrate this further, discussion will now turn to the language of election found in *On the Origin of the World*. The text is not overly concerned with the present condition and plight of humankind, and, therefore, its view on soteriology is somewhat cryptic. Four races of humankind are described in total. Initially, *On the Origin of the World* presents a tripartite separation of natures. This is expressed through three "stages" or incarnations of Adam; and it seems that humankind reflects the three Adams (*Orig. World* 117.28–36).[53] Here, the text shares with the

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[50] Tuomas Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered in Gnostic Mythmaking: Rethinking Sethianism in Light of the Ophite Evidence* (NHMS 68; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 116.

[51] Francis T. Fallon, *The Enthronement of Sabaoth: Jewish Elements in Gnostic Creation Myths* (NHS 10; Leiden: Brill, 1978).

[52] The Pachomian federation itself was structured according to levels of skill. Palladius refers to a classification system by which Pachomius divided his monks (*Lausiac History* 32.4–5), and Jerome refers in his Preface (2) to the *Rule of Pachomius* of "tribes" that houses of monks were divided into (see Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia Volume 2*, 134). The *Bohairic Life* also refers to "classes" in its description of monastery organisation (see SBo 26).

[53] Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 163, has argued that this understanding of Adam's creation, along with that in *Hyp. Arch.*, is dependent upon 1 Cor 15, as well as Philo's interpretation of Genesis. Rasimus suggests that Adam's creation in *Orig. World* allegorises Christ's passion. We saw earlier that Pagels takes a similar position with regard to Pauline interpretation in *Hyp. Arch.* more broadly. 1 Cor 15:45–47 makes reference to two Adams, citing Gen 2:7. Paul argues that a spiritual, life-giving Adam came from heaven only after a psychic Adam had been born of the earth. It seems likely that both Paul and the authors of

Apocryphon of John and the *Hypostasis of the Archons*[54] some common exegetical material relating to the creation of Adam, but deviates in other respects, such as the bringing in of a third Adam. It is possible this is owing to a slight ambiguity in Paul's language, which we see reinterpreted in the text – Paul speaks of a first, second and *last* Adam in 1 Cor 15:45, 47.[55] *On the Origin of the World* appears to be unique in its complication of 1 Corinthians. However, what is of chief concern here is how this concept of Adam's creation relates to the classification of humankind more generally in the text, and the subsequent consequences for salvation.

The immediately preceding text can shed some light on this, where reference is made to the carnal Eve as the first mother. Her rape by the rulers has resulted in her containing their "mixed seed," which begins the various races and generations that will come to inhabit the earth (*Orig. World* 117.18–28). The reference to Eve as the matriarch of humankind, along with the description of the various seed she will promulgate, is here connected directly to the eschatological fate of the universe, and indicates that the categories associated with the three Adams can be transferred to human beings, and specifically to Christians. This finds further support in the terminology of "mixed" (ⲧⲏϩ) seed (ⲥⲡⲉⲣⲙⲁ) to refer to the inhabitants of the Christian church subsequently in the document (see below). We later read of these Adamic divisions as the three ⲅⲉⲛⲉⲁ – the pneumatics being the only group who are eternal (122.8). However, *On the Origin of the World* speaks not only of these three races, but of four in total.

The text describes how humankind multiplies from the earthly Adam and Eve, yet is kept in ignorance by the rulers (123.34–124.4). The "immortal father," however, seeks to remedy the "deficiency of truth" that the rulers have brought to eternal realms by using their creations, human beings, to bring them to justice. In a statement that directly addresses the readers of the text (indicated by use of the second person plural) we read that he sent into the world their likenesses (ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲉⲓⲛⲉ), "blessed little open-minded spirits" (ⲡ̄ⲛ̄ⲁ ⲛ̄ⲃⲁⲗϩⲏⲧ ⲛ̄ⲕⲟⲩⲉⲓ ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲟⲥ), who are characterised by their familiarity with knowledge (124.9–12). I suggest that the fourth-century monastic readers of Codex II could identify themselves with these spirits, whose task it is to engage directly with the rulers by bringing condemnation upon them and exposing their perishability (124.18–21).

The spirits are in modelled (human) form upon the earth, and so the rulers, as we might expect, attempt to lead them astray by mixing their seed with their

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texts such as *Orig. World* draw upon similar traditions of Hellenistic Judaism. See Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 160, and Birger Pearson, *The Pneumatikos-Psychikos Terminology in 1 Corinthians: A Study in the Theology of the Corinthian Opponents of Paul and Its Relation to Gnosticism* (Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973), 24–26, 82–83.

[54] As well as Irenaeus' account of the Ophites in *Adversus Haereses* I.30.

[55] P[46] tries to make the second and last Adam one and the same by adding πνευματικός in between δεύτερος and ἄνθρωπος. See Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 167.

own, in much the same way as they did with Eve (124.23–24). They are unsuc-
cessful and cannot prevent the spirits from revealing their knowledge to the
visible "church" (ⲉⲕⲕⲗⲏⲥⲓⲁ) (124.29). The blessed spirits are described as ap-
pearing luminous and in a variety of ways, but that they are specially chosen
human beings is revealed not only by the fact that they are described as the
"likenesses" of *On the Origin of the World*'s readership, but also that their
mission is to enlighten the wider "visible church," which is made up of other
"modelled forms" (ⲡⲗⲁⲥⲙⲁ). This plasma language, in keeping with that of the
earlier creations by the rulers, designates specifically the church in its physical
form. Moreover, the church, we are told, contains many different "seeds" be-
cause the authorities have bred within it. Put simply, the Christian church con-
tains a variety of people, some of whom are more under the influence of the
demonic rulers than others, and some of whom who are tasked with enlighten-
ing those still in ignorance about divine truths. This maps nicely onto some of
the key elements of coenobitic monastic life: ascetics not only engaged in their
individual battle with the fleshly passions (the legacy of the demonic rulers),
they were the ultimate spiritual exemplars for the wider church.

　　These blessed little spirits, who vary in their "election" (ⲉⲕⲗⲟⲅⲏ), are iden-
tified as a fourth race, supplementing the three Adamic races:

Then the saviour created […] of them all – and the spirits of these [are manifestly] superior,
blessed and varying in election – and also many other beings, which have no king and are
superior to everyone that was before them. Therefore, four races exist. There are three that
belong to the kings of the eighth heaven; but the fourth race is kingless and perfect, the
highest of all. (*Orig. World* 124.32–125.7)

This elect group were sent to uncover that which is hidden, including the ille-
gitimacy of the rulers (125.19–23). They are likened to the Word, with a cita-
tion from Mark 4:22, who although referred to as a superior being, does not
appear to fulfil a role much different from theirs:

Now the Logos who is superior to all beings was sent for this sole purpose: that he might
proclaim what is not known. He said, "There is nothing hidden that is not apparent, and what
has not been known will be known." (*Orig. World* 125.14–19).

The proceeding section renames them as the "perfect" (ⲧⲉⲗⲉⲓⲟⲥ), who have ap-
peared in "modelled forms" (125.23–25) – they inhabit human bodies. They
bring the power of the rulers into dissolution, while they themselves enter into
eternal rest with the Father (125.7–11). In connection with this designation of
the elect fourth race as the "perfect," it should be highlighted that the subscript
after the final text in Codex II, the *Book of Thomas*, reads "The Book of
Thomas. The contender/athlete is writing to the *perfect ones*." It is highly likely
that the "perfect ones" refer to the scribe's fellow monks, especially as the Pa-
chomian *Vitae* use this terminology.[56] The motif of perfection that is common

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[56] See Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 185.

to both the *Book of Thomas* and Pachomian ideology is something that Hugo Lundhaug has discussed in his contribution to this volume.[57] That Pachomian readers would see themselves reflected in the fourth perfect race of *On the Origin of the World*, is probable.

The suggestion in *On the Origin of the World* is that the earthly church is mixed in terms of the level of spiritual knowledge that its members possess. A select portion are identified by the text as being blessed, enlightened spirits who have the ability to teach others, and condemn the rulers. These spirits are in the likeness of the readers of *On the Origin of the World*, who can therefore identify as the perfect, chosen ones tasked with overcoming the malevolent cosmic rulers and their fleshly inflictions, and acting as guiding lights to the wider church.

As I suggested above, it is not difficult to see where the appeal of this argument would lie with a monastic audience, whose entire calling was to be archetypal devotees to God and resist the temptations of the flesh at all costs. The coenobitic monastic houses of Upper Egypt were specifically characterised by their separation from society, including of course the wider Christian community. This did not mean that they had no interaction with those outside the monastery – far from it in fact.[58] However, the ascetics within the Koinonia had committed themselves to a strict encratism that the wider majority of the church did not adhere to. Their choice to take on the monastic life marked them out as superiorly holy men, and so the language in *On the Origin of the World* which speaks of an elect, spiritually enlightened section of the church capable of overcoming the rulers' fleshly curses aligned firmly with their self-understanding.

When discussing Pachomian monastic reception of *On the Origin of the World*, its description of the varying election of the blessed spirits is worth special consideration in connection with ideology that we find in Egyptian monastic literature. Notably in this regard, the third-century desert father Antony divides souls into three groups: 1. Those who never deviate from the goodness in which they were created and easily obtain the Spirit's guidance; 2. Those who repent and put effort into understanding the rewards for those who progress in virtue, and the suffering for the wicked; and 3. Those with hard, unreceptive hearts from the beginning, but who repent in the face of adversity.[59]

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[57] Hugo Lundhaug, "'This is the Teaching of the Perfect Ones': The *Book of Thomas* and Early Egyptian Monasticism," in this volume.

[58] On the close relationship between Pachomius's monks and nearby villages, see Roger Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 295, 300; Goehring, *Ascetics*, 139–40, both responding to the classic argument of Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *JRS* 61 (1971): 80–101.

[59] *Letter One*, 77–78. See Samuel Rubenson, *The Letters of Saint Antony: Monasticism and the Making of a Sain*t (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 197–202. Cited also in Karen L. King, *The Secret Revelation to John* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 336,

The great influence which the Antony literature, most significantly Athanasius' *Vita Antonii*, had upon the biographical tradition embraced by the Pachomian movement makes it particularly important. Antony's renown as a pioneering ascetic and great influence among the Egyptian monastic movement would have made him a spiritual role model for the coenobites who read the Nag Hammadi Codices.[60] The Pachomian literature too reflects the significant diversity within the Koinonia in terms of ability as well as character and temperament. In his *Lausiac History*, Palladius refers to a classification system by which Pachomius divided his monks (32.4–5) described as consisting of 24 classes each designated by a Greek letter. The impression given by Palladius is that Pachomius and his senior monks used this system as a way of talking in code about the other brothers. Palladius does not give a comprehensive account of what constituted each class, but offers a brief example of how the system worked: "To the simpler and purer you shall assign the Iota, but to the more difficult and devious the Xi."[61] Veilleux suggests a connection with what Jerome refers to in his Preface to the Pachomian *Rules*, in which he speaks of different monastic house "tribes."[62] Moreover, the *Life* describes the monastery as organised according to seniority and skill. The initial organisation of the community saw the most capable brothers tasked with looking out for the souls of the others, and it was from this superior group that the leader of the first house came. Under the house leader was a second charged with cooking and food service, while those who possessed decent speech were placed at the door

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n. 39. It should be noted that there are some scholars who doubt, to various degrees, Rubenson's argument for the authenticity of Antony's letters. See Alexandr Khosroyev, *Die Bibliothek von Nag Hammadi: Einige Probleme des Christentums in Ägypten während der ersten Jahrhunderte* (ASKÄ 7; Altenberge: Oros, 1995), 158–66; Graham Gould, "Recent Work on Monastic Origins: A Consideration of the Questions Raised by Samuel Rubenson's *The Letters of St. Antony*," in *Studia Patristica XXV: Papers Presented at the Eleventh International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 1991: Biblica et Apocrypha, Orientalia, Ascetica* (ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone; StPatr 25; Leuven: Peeters, 1993), 405–16; Graham Gould "The Influence of Origen on Fourth-Century Monasticism: Some Further Remarks," in *Origeniana Sexta: Origène et la Bible: Origen and the Bible: Actes du Colloquium Origenianum Sextum, Chantilly, 30 août-3 septembre, 1993* (ed. Gilles Dorival and Alain Le Boulluec; BETL 118; Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 591–98; Dmitrij F. Bumazhnov, "The Evil Angels in the *Vita* and the *Letters* of St. Antony the Great: Some Observations Concerning the Problem of the Authenticity of the *Letters*," *ZAC* 11 (2007): 500–16.

[60] See Jenott and Pagels, "Antony's Letters and Nag Hammadi Codex I."

[61] See Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia Volume 2*, 126–27.

[62] "They have in each monastery fathers and stewards, weekly servers, ministers, and a master of each house. A house has, more or less, forty brothers who obey the master and, according to the number of brothers, there are thirty or forty houses in one monastery, and three or four houses are federated into a tribe. They either go to work together or they succeed each other in the weekly service according to their rank." See Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia Volume 2*, 142 for the translation, and the note on the *Lausiac History* 32.4 at 134.

of the monastery to receive visitors and new recruits (these door greeters would speak specifically to those of their own rank).[63] That *On the Origin of the World* recognises diversity amongst the spiritually elect speaks particularly well to a coenobitic setting such as the Pachomian Koinonia, where ability naturally varied, and recognition of this was important for maintenance of the community.

It is not immediately apparent in *On the Origin of the World* why the elect individuals, the "blessed little open-minded spirits" are set apart from the eternal "pneumatics" that are earlier described (122.8). For Painchaud, this is due to differing anthropologies in the redactions of the text.[64] However, another clue may lie in another term that is used to describe this fourth race: "kingless" (ⲁⲧⲣ̄ⲣⲟ) (125.6). This seems to contradict the tripartite system which we see elsewhere in the text.[65] It could be that an allusion to the weakness of Israel is intended here – Israel's wish to be ruled by a king reflected a lack of trust in God, and led to its further estrangement (1 Sam 8, 13, 14). A reference to the Jewish people might be especially true given the association of the third, earthly Adam with the law (117.35). As Painchaud and Janz have noted,[66] there seems to be no obvious explanation in either the document's immediate or wider context as to why the tractate would hold these blessed, elect spirits above the Pneumatics.[67] An examination of the occurrences of the "kingless race," or "kinglessness" more generally in five Nag Hammadi tractates led Painchaud and Janz to conclude that the expression was the hallmark of a Christian group which saw themselves as superior even to the Pneumatics which various "gnosticising" texts held as the highest rank of humanity.[68] The Greek adjective ἀβασίλευτος does not have a precise Coptic equivalent, but *On the Origin of the World*, along with the *Tripartite Tractate* uses ⲁⲧⲣ̄ⲣⲟ. We also find a similar reference in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* 97.4 to the "un-ruled generation" (ⲧⲅⲉⲛⲉⲁ ⲧⲉⲧⲙ̄ⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲥⲣ̄ⲣⲟ) who will trample the authorities under their feet. *On the Origin of the World* first speaks of those without a king in 125.2, as well as the reference to the "kingless race" we have noted above in 125.6. There is also a reference at 127.14 to what can be translated as a place

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[63] G¹ 28; SBo 26.

[64] Painchaud, "The Redactions of the Writing without Title," 218.

[65] See Louis Painchaud, "Le Sommaire Anthropogonique de L'Écrit sans Titre (NH II, 117:27–118:2) a la Lumière de 1 Co 15:45–47," *VC* 44 (1990): 384–85.

[66] Louis Painchaud and Timothy Janz, "The 'Kingless Generation' and the Polemical Rewritings of Certain Nag Hammadi Texts," in *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration* (ed. John D. Turner and Anne McGuire; NHMS 44; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 452.

[67] The Pneumatics do in fact get described in such terms in other texts. See *Ex. Theod.* 58.1, *Tri. Trac.* (NHC I,5) 122.13–136.24.

[68] In addition to *Orig. World*, the term appears in *Tri. Trac.* (NHC I,5), *Eugnostos* (NHC III,3), *Wis. Jes. Chr.* (NHC III,4), *Apoc. Adam* (NHC V,5), and *Hyp. Arch.* (NHC II,4).

of "kinglessness" (ⲉⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲧⲣ̄ⲣⲟ) that the unperfected will never enter. Each of these occurrences specifically link the blessed, elect beings to the notion of kinglessness, holding them as "kings" themselves in the material world (125.11–12). *On the Origin of the World* in the form that we now have it reflects its possession by a readership which could identify meaningfully with this "kingless race,"[69] spiritually superior to other Christians, and engaged in a battle with the rulers and their implantation of the fleshly passions into human beings.[70] Ascetic coenobites reading *On the Origin of the World* would surely identify with this separation of earthy/fleshly individuals and the spiritual, and as suggested above, also on a further level with the division of the spiritual into superior and inferior sections, which reflected the way that monasteries were organised in terms of ability and seniority. For the monastic readers of Codex II, the "kingless generation" of *On the Origin of the World* represented the highest form of spirituality which they hoped to emulate.

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[69] Painchaud, *L'écrit sans titre*, 115, proposed that the final editor of the Greek text of *Orig. World*, probably in the latter part of the third century CE, saw himself as belonging to the kingless generation.

[70] Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 142, wonders whether Paul's identification of the Corinthian opponents as "kings" might be the inspiration. It has also been noted in connection with this that Shenoute of Atripe in his *Only I Tell Everyone Who Dwells in This Village*, at the beginning of the fifth century, mentions a group that were claiming to be "kingless." See Hugo Lundhaug, "Shenoute of Atripe and Nag Hammadi Codex II," in *Zugänge zur Gnosis: Akten zur Tagung der Patristischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft vom 02.–05.01.2011 in Berlin-Spandau* (ed. Christoph Markschies and Johannes van Oort; Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 217–18; Painchaud and Janz, "Kingless Generation," 460. While we do not know for certain who Shenoute's polemical description was referring to, it is probable that it was another Christian group, possibly another group of monks, who have adopted this identification having read texts such as *Orig. World* and *Hyp. Arch.* For further discussion, see Christian H. Bull, "The Panopolis Connection: the Pachomian Federation as Context for the Nag Hammadi Codices," in *Coptic Literature in Context (4th-13th Cent.): Cultural Landscape, Literary Production, and Manuscript Archaeology: Proceedings of the Third Conference of the ERC Project Tracking Papyrus and Parchment Paths: An Archaeological Atlas of Coptic Literature: Literary Texts in Their Geographical Context ('PAThs')* (ed. Paola Buzi; PAST 5; Roma: Edizioni Quasar, 2020), 141–42, where the case is made for a group who self-identified as the kingless race being present in Panopolis. In addition to Shenoute's criticisms mentioned above, Bull also considers in connection with this the mention in the *Life of Pachomius* of orthodox monks from the Panopolis monastery who spoke with non-Christian "esoteric-minded" philosophers (see SBo 55b; G¹ 82–83), and whether they might be understood as disciples of Zosimus, who according to Painchaud apparently understood himself as part of the kingless race: Louis Painchaud, "The Production and Destination of the Nag Hammadi Codices," in *The Nag Hammadi Codices and Late Antique Egypt* (ed. Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott; STAC 110; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 417–18, n. 120. See also Christian Bull "'Only in Egypt did These Great Signs Appear': Egyptian and Hermetic Motifs in *On the Origin of the World* (NHC II, 5)," in *Universum Hermeticum: Kosmogonie und Kosmologie in hermetischen Schriften* (ed. Niclas Förster and Uwe-Karsten Plisch; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 243–72.

6. Eschatology Cosmic and Individual

This final section will briefly consider how Codex II has organised its eschatological message, specifically as it appears in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World*. These two texts appear next to each other in Codex II with the latter offering a more sophisticated version of much of what is contained in the former. It has been suggested that this might be due to a prior pairing of the two texts in the source from which Codex II's scribe was working. While this may well be true, I argue that there is a thematic development which makes this particular ordering significant for its fourth-century audience. The crucial evidence here lies in the concluding section of *On the Origin of the World*, which deals explicitly with eschatology. Williams has hinted at this line of argument concerning thematic development being reflected in the organisation of the codex. He argues that the tractate following *On the Origin of the World*, the *Exegesis on the Soul*, draws the eschatology of its preceding text into a more personal struggle, relating it specifically to the experience of the individual.[71]

On the Origin of the World's detailed accounts of the rulers' doom in the end times confirms their utter futility.[72] The text comprises a more detailed and sophisticated version of the Sophia myth than is found in the *Hypostasis of the Archons*. As commentators have frequently noticed, however, its focus is steered more towards protology and eschatology, with little mention of earthly activity. By contrasting the eschatological fate of the rulers with that of the spiritually-perfected humans, the text draws the experience of the cosmic into the realm of the individual.[73] The soul of the individual believer now comes into closer focus, and it is the redemption and ascent of the soul through fierce

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[71] Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, 255.

[72] As we have seen, *Hyp. Arch.* has made this characterisation of the rulers explicit in the previous tractate of the codex.

[73] *Orig. World*'s syncretistic nature has been highlighted by some; for instance, see Tardieu, *Trois mythes gnostiques*, 297–35. However, Painchaud, "The Redactions of the Writing without Title," 217–18, 223–29, criticises overemphasis on this characteristic, as he claims that while there are contradictions in the text due to there being two redactions of the original, there is argumentative coherence evident in the document as we have it now. This latter view is in line with my own reading of this and the other texts of Codex II, having been copied and arranged in a monastic setting with an ideological agenda.

asceticism that Codex II goes on to develop and concludes with in its last two tractates, the *Exegesis on the Soul*[74] and the *Book of Thomas*.[75]

As previously stated, neither *On the Origin of the World* nor the *Hypostasis of the Archons* seem to be included in Codex II solely to supplement the mythology outlined in the *Apocryphon of John*. Especially in light of the differences between the three, some of which we have discussed in the course of this essay, their broader ideologies and potential for an ascetic hermeneutic was what made them appealing to a Pachomian readership. Thus far it has been argued that the *Hypostasis of the Archons* affirms the rulers (who are malevolent if at times laughably incompetent) as the source of human struggles with all that is physical and fleshly, and assures that these temptations can be overcome. *On the Origin of the World*, I suggest, despite its lengthy and detailed cosmological narrative, is perhaps most significant for its eschatological conclusion, which develops what is more subtly hinted at previously in the *Hypostasis of the Archons*. Moreover, it effects a transition into the concluding theme of the codex – the condition, struggle, and redemption process of the individual soul. The reader can understand him or herself as one of the spiritual children[76] described in the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, and knowing that their cosmic enemy will suffer defeat, can concentrate on understanding and purifying their own soul. This individualised eschatology would be of particular appeal to a monastic readership, whose spiritual journey was precisely characterised as a personal struggle against demonic adverse forces. My treatment of *On the Origin of the World* in the remainder of this essay, therefore, will be largely focused on its concluding sections, where the most significance for the theme of eschatology lies.

6.1 The End Times

Universal eschatology is a major theme in the text – the end times are repeatedly referred to, and eschatological events are described in fervid detail. *On the Origin of the World*'s eschatology, both universal and individual, is something that we find elaborated upon much more than in the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, which gives a relatively short account of the events of the end times.[77]

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[74] For an analysis of the soul's redemption and ascent in *Exeg. Soul* from a Pachomian perspective see Fowler, "The Ascent of the Soul and the Pachomians." For further parallels between both Pachomian and Shenoutian writings and *Exeg. Soul* see Hugo Lundhaug, "Monastic Exegesis and the Female Soul in the *Exegesis on the Soul*," in *Women and Knowledge in Early Christianity* (ed. Ulla Tervahauta, Ivan Miroshnikov, Outi Lehtipuu, and Ismo Dunderberg; VCSup 144. Leiden: Brill, 2017), 221–33.

[75] On which see Hugo Lundhaug, "'This is the Teaching of the Perfect Ones.'"

[76] This recalls an important theme in the third tractate of Codex II, *Gos. Phil.* (see 59.35–60.1; 72.20–22; 81.13–14).

[77] *Hyp. Arch.* describes in just a few lines how when the "true man" comes and grants the spirituals eternal life (96.33–97.3), the rulers will be trampled under the feet of the spiritual

On the Origin of the World gives a much lengthier and grittier description. We read similarly to in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* about the triumph of the perfect over the rulers, with the eschatological account proceeding as follows. The perfect put the rulers' (referred to as ⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ, "gods") wisdom to shame, resulting in their dominion ending, and the rulers mourning their lost age of authority. This is marked by a great thundering that shakes the earth. As the new age is ushered in, the kings of the earth will wage war against each other, and there will be much bloodshed, causing the seas to be disturbed, the sky to darken, and the stars to cease their courses. Pistis ("the woman," ⲥϩⲓⲙⲉ), responsible for the creation of the rulers, becomes clothed in wrath, and chases them into the abyss where they are completely destroyed and cannibalise each other on the orders of Ialdabaoth, who ultimately destroys himself also. Their realms are completely obliterated, and deficiency extracted by its root (125.23–127.17). However, of particular interest for our purposes are the text's concluding lines, which introduce the ultimate concern of Codex II – the fate of the soul. The closing sentences of the tractate transfer the grand eschatology of the preceding sections more specifically and intimately, to the individual:

For everyone must go to the place from which he has come. By his actions and knowledge each person will make his nature known. (*Orig. World* 127.14–17)

The use of the term ⲫⲩⲥⲓⲥ at the end of this concluding sentence is significant. The term, of course, recalls the theme of the previous tractate, the *Hypostasis of the Archons*. The first clause implies that fate is predetermined to a certain degree – one "returns" to where he/she has come from; human beings, created in the image of the perfect Divine Realm have their origins therein, and so will return. However, the mention of acts and knowledge complicates the picture somewhat. Is one's character and capacity for knowledge already entirely decided? Or, is one able to determine one's own fate by living virtuously and actively seeking the truth? The latter seems more likely in light of what we have already observed in Codex II.[78]

If through "nature" a person's eternal resting place has already been decided, then why the need to endure ascetic renunciation and act as spiritual exemplars for the rest of the "visible church"? The answer, I suggest, lies in *On the Origin of the World*'s explanation of the four "races," which we have discussed above. Immediately prior in 127.7–14, it is confirmed that it is only the kingless and perfect who will enter the "kingless realm" of the Father. Others who have not

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children and forced to renounce their reign of terror. The spirituals will then ascend into the "limitless light," and the authorities' reign will be over (97.5–13). This text's culmination is on a joyful note, with a Christian worship formula placed upon the lips of the "sons of Light" (97.16–21).

[78] This sort of deterministic concept as a traditional characteristic of so-called "gnosticism" is one of the paradigms that Williams shows to be inconsistent across the sources. See *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, 189–212.

quite managed to attain the greatest spiritual heights will only be rewarded in the lower – yet still immortal realms. The situation is more complex than simply a division in nature between humanity and the rulers; humanity itself is also varied in its spiritual capacity. Kurt Rudolph in his examination of so-called "Gnosticism" once argued that these closing words betray a notion that "right behaviour" is *somewhat* predetermined, yet must be made manifest during earthly life in order for salvation to be assured. That some individuals are born with a "pneumatic" capacity is not enough to guarantee redemption – one cannot simply live however one wishes.[79] In other words, the Pneumatics *are* given a head start, but the onus is on them to ensure that they fulfil their spiritual potential. As we have seen, the notion of spiritual elevation is also present in the account of Sabaoth's repentance, where he is transformed from a wicked minion of Ialdabaoth into a just ruler. Despite his "origins," he has managed to alter his fate. It might be a fair assumption, then, that this is also a possibility for human beings. In a similar vein to Rudolph, Luttikhuizen argues that an "ethical exhortation" best describes the final words of *On the Origin of the World*.[80] The practical advice given in the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Gospel of Philip*, and the strong ascetic standpoints of the *Exegesis on the Soul* and the *Book of Thomas* of course also support the argument that Codex II as a whole understands actions and choices to be of central soteriological importance. Concluding with this emphasis not on cosmic fate, but on that of the individual, *On the Origin of the World* sets the scene for the final two tractates, both of which provide the reader with the opportunity to contemplate the condition of the soul, and evaluate their journey towards spiritual perfection.

7. Conclusions

Despite the advantages that communal coenobitic life afforded Pachomian ascetics, the monastic journey was still physically and mentally demanding. The risk of monks lapsing or leaving the community altogether was always a significant risk. For this reason, the community needed teaching that justified their strict encratic lifestyle and made it clear why it was truly worth it in eschatological terms, as well as practical advice. The emphasis on eschatology in this contribution has focused mostly on the first two of these aspects in two enigmatic tractates from Nag Hammadi Codex II. As previous studies have rightly pointed out, when read as a thematically unified whole, the codex can be seen to set out a problem – namely, the fleshly (particularly sexual) passions in-

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[79] Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of an Ancient Religion* (Trans. Robert McL. Wilson; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983), 117–18.

[80] Luttikhuizen, "Eve's Children," 206.

flicted upon human beings, and proceed to offer some solutions to this by promoting an ascetic lifestyle. Through interpretation of key biblical narratives about the creation, and the end of days, the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World* (in conversation with the *Apocryphon of John*) argue that the sources of fleshly passions, the malevolent rulers, will ultimately be overcome in the final cosmic battle by the perfect, elect, spiritual individuals who are able to transcend the material world. The monastic readers of the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World* could understand themselves not only as superior to the demonic authorities, but also as unique within the wider church itself, identifiable as the "perfect," the "sons of Light," and the "kingless generation," whose commitment to renunciation flew in the face of the demonic forces. The ascetics' vast superiority to the wicked, yet ultimately incompetent authorities, is partly illustrated through the mocking narrative of the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, which serves to encourage and assure that while fleshly inflictions do pose a challenge, resistance is possible with dedication, and the eschatological victory will lie with them as the perfect ones. With this line of interpretation, which takes into account not only the specifics of the texts in question, but also their broader function within Codex II, the fantastical material of the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World* supports quite evocatively the eschatological concerns of fourth-century Pachomian coenobites.

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Why Monks Would Have Read the *Tripartite Tractate*: A New Look at the Codicology of Nag Hammadi Codex I

Paul Linjamaa

Many unanswered questions remain concerning the complex Christian text known as the *Tripartite Tractate*. One topic that has received relatively little attention concerns the question of who actually produced and read the text as it has been preserved, that is, the Coptic text found near Nag Hammadi in the year 1945. A Valentinian background is often attributed to the hypothetical Greek original of the *Tripartite Tractate*, but the only context we can apply with certainty to the text pertains to the Coptic manuscript of Nag Hammadi Codex I. The context of the Nag Hammadi Codices is Egypt around mid to late fourth century, possibly early fifth. This contribution investigates, from a codicological perspective, what we can say about who produced and read the *Tripartite Tractate* as we have it today.

The essay is divided into two parts. The first part investigates the material aspects of the *Tripartite Tractate* I present an analysis of the codicology of Codex I and discuss some new observations as to the practice of the scribes of the codex. I point out markings in the margin of the *Tripartite Tractate* that scholars have noted before but which still remain unstudied. These markings, I argue, could help us form an idea of how the text was read. The second part is devoted to interpreting the passages highlighted by these markings and asks the question: who would have been interested in reading the *Tripartite Tractate*? As the title of the essay indicates, the findings in the first and second part both support the newly restated argument that the Nag Hammadi Codices were most probably produced, owned and read by monks.

Before we turn to the codicology of Codex I, let me briefly present what scholars have said about the origins and composition of Codex I and of the Nag Hammadi library as a whole.

1. The Origins of the Nag Hammadi Library and Codex I as a Collection

Several suggestions have been presented over the years as to the origins of the Nag Hammadi library. Already from the beginning it was suggested that the texts could have been related to the Egyptian monastic movements which were active[1] in the area where the texts were found.[2] Many have found it hard to believe that monks owned the Nag Hammadi texts, much less read them for edification. Some have suggested that the texts belonged to one or a few wealthy and learned individuals, while others hypothesized a "Gnostic" group behind them. Scholars supporting the view that the texts could not have belonged to members of the mainstream Church are perhaps most clearly represented by Alexandr Khosroyev. Khosroyev argues that most of the evidence, including codicological evidence, points to a Gnostic, urban intelligentsia behind the codices, chiefly due to the "anti-biblical," "esoteric" and philosophically laden material in the texts.[3] According to Khosroyev, the Nag Hammadi

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[1] There have been many suggestions as to what kind of monks, for example Melitian, Origenist and Pachomian monks have all been suggested at one time or another. The Swedish scholar Torgny Säve-Söderberg suggested that the texts could have been read by monks, not for edification, but so as to get to know their theological opponents better ("Holy Scriptures or Apologetic Documentations? The 'Sitz im Leben' of the Nag Hammadi Library," in *Les textes de Nag Hammadi: Colloque du Centre d'Histoire des Religions (Strasbourg, 23-25 octobre 1974)* [ed. Jacques-É. Ménard; NHS 7; Leiden: Brill, 1975], 3–14). This is a view with few supporters today, the texts were most likely owned by people who valued them for more than reference works, which is suggested by, for example, the decorations on the covers as well as the importance placed on the order of the texts. For a brief overview of the history of scholarship, see Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (STAC 97; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015)*, 4–7.

[2] There has recently been some debate concerning the validity of the find story. For an overview of the debate and a much needed argument against the hypothesis that the Nag Hammadi texts were Christian Books of the Dead, used as grave goods among Christians, see Paula Tutty, "Books *of* the Dead or Books *with* the Dead? Interpreting Book Depositions in Late Antique Egypt," in *The Nag Hammadi Codices and Late Antique Egypt* (ed. Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott; STAC 110; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 287–326.

[3] Alexandr Khosroyev, *Die Bibliothek von Nag Hammadi: Einige Probleme des Christentums in Ägypten während der ersten Jahrhunderte* (ASKÄ 7; Altenberge: Oros, 1995)*. Khosroyev's perspective has, over the years, gained support by many, for example Alastair Logan, *The Gnostics: Identifying an Early Christian Cult* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), and Ewa Wipszycka, "The Nag Hammadi Library and the Monks: A Papyrologist's Point of View," *JJP* 30 (2000): 179–91. For a summary see Lundhaug and Jenott, *The Monastic Origins,* 2–3.

Codices were commercial products, made by professional booksellers, commissioned by urban religious group(s) with syncretistic tendencies, and they would not have interested monks.[4]

Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott have recently argued, convincingly in my opinion, that there are problems with Khosroyev's thesis. The Gnosticism-Christianity paradigm, which Khosroyev and others take as their point of departure, have permitted several flawed ideas to fester, for example that the Nag Hammadi texts are all "anti-biblical," "syncretistic"[5] and philosophically complex, and that these aspects would have made Christian monks reject them.[6] Lundhaug and Jenott thus develop Michael A. Williams' critique of the artificial Gnosticism-Christianity dichotomy,[7] and restate the argument for a monastic setting. They suggest that the codices were produced in book-exchange networks associated with monasteries and that the texts were read by monks who most likely would have found much of the content in the Nag Hammadi texts of great interest.

What then, has been said about the *Tripartite Tractate* and Codex I in particular? It is unclear if the twelve codices known today as the Nag Hammadi library formed a distinct collection or were part of a bigger collection, and if they belonged to a single or several owners.[8] Paleographic investigations have

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[4] Khosroyev, *Die Bibliothek von Nag Hammadi,* 10–13. This is mostly drawn from his analysis of Codex VI where we find a scribal note. Khosroyev is not alone in his opinion of the Nag Hammadi Codices as commercial products, this is also the conclusion drawn by Cornelia Eva Römer, "Manichaeism and Gnosticism in the Papyri," in *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology* (ed. Roger S. Bagnall; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 623–43; as well as Josep Montserrat-Torrents, "The Social and Cultural Setting of the Coptic Gnostic Library," in *Studia Patristica XXXI: Papers Presented at the Twelfth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford 1995* (ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone; Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 464–81.

[5] For a study of the problematic use of the term "syncretism," and an argument in favor of avoiding the term if not further qualified, see Paul Linjamaa, "Gnosticism as Inherently Syncretistic?: Identity Constructions among Ancient Christians and Protestant Apologetes," in *Theological and Philosophical Responses to Syncretism* (ed. M. Vähäkangas and P. Fridlund; Leiden: Brill, 2017).

[6] These arguments are systematically and thoroughly countered in Lundhaug and Jenott, *The Monastic Origins,* chapter 4.

[7] Michael A. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

[8] In support of the hypothesis that we are dealing with several collections is the fact that there are duplicates of some texts, a very rare feature in codices produced by the same scribal group. For more, see Michael A. Williams, "Interpreting the Nag Hammadi Library as 'Collection(s)' in the History of 'Gnosticism(s),'" in *Les textes de Nag Hammadi et le problème de leur classification* (ed. Louis Painchaud and Anne Pasquier; BCNH.É 3; Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 3–50.

shown scribal overlap between Codex I, VII and XI (and there are other group-
ings as well, based on palaeographical similarity).[9] The sequence of the texts
in Codex I also seem to have been of some importance. The pages of the fourth
text, the *Treatise on the Resurrection,* are unpaginated and the bottom half of
the last page is empty, suggesting that scribe A left these pages empty after
copying the preceding texts, the *Apocryphon of James* and the *Gospel of Truth*,
and before proceeding to copy the last text of the codex, the *Tripartite Trac-
tate*.[10] There must have been a reason not to copy the *Tripartite Tractate* di-
rectly after the *Gospel of Truth* or a reason why the *Treatise on the Resurrec-
tion* should follow the *Gospel of Truth* and not the *Tripartite Tractate*. Some
attempts have been made to read Codex I as a collection with a particular pur-
pose, and most have viewed the placement and topic of the *Tripartite Tractate*
as designed to give the preceding texts contextualization, placing the "mes-
sage" of Codex I into a bigger picture.[11] However, no one view has received
wide scholarly acceptance,[12] so if we can get closer to answering the question

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[9] Scribe B of Codex I copied one text in Codex I, *Treat. Res.*, and the first half of Codex
XI. The second scribe of Codex XI, who copied the second part of Codex XI, also inscribed
the whole of Codex VII. For more see Williams, "Interpreting," 11–20.

[10] *Pr. Paul* was most likely added later, on the flyleaf that was most likely also unpagi-
nated: the tenth page of the codex is given the page number nine, indicating that the first
page was an unpaginated flyleaf.

[11] The various different suggestions as to the order of texts in Codex I seem to have in
common the view that *Tri. Trac.'s* placement and role in the collection offers contextualiza-
tion (for what exactly, scholars disagree). *Tri. Trac.* takes up more than half of the codex
and seems to offer an attempt at a systematic theological overview, thus putting the previous
texts in the codex in perspective in relation to a larger whole. However, these observations
do not seem to answer the question why *Tri. Trac.* was placed last. Among the Nag Hammadi
codices (apart from Codex I) it is only Codex IX that has the obviously longest text at the
end (*Test. Truth*). The longest text is more often placed at the beginning, especially if it is a
systematic overview, from creation till salvation, as *Tri. Trac.* is often portrayed as. For
example, Codex III and IV where *Ap. John* is the first and longest text, and Codex VII:
Paraph. Shem and Codex VIII: *Zost.* In the case of Codex II we have three texts that are
almost the same length: *Ap. John, Gos. Phil.* and *Orig. World*, but as Williams argues, it
makes sense having the text that is most like an overview at the beginning (Williams, *"In-
terpreting,"* 20–32).

[12] Michael Williams reads Codex I as a collection like the New Testament, beginning
with words of Jesus and ending with commentary and elaborations. According to Williams
it makes sense to end the codex with an exposition on "systematic theology" as he interprets
Tri. Trac. to be. Previously in the codex we have read an introductory prayer (*Pr. Paul*), a
dialogue between Christ and the apostles (*Ap. Jas.*), a homily (*Gos. Truth*), and an eschato-
logical treatise (*Treat. Res.*). Ending with *Tri. Trac.,* according to Williams, puts what has
previously been discussed in Codex I into perspective. For this reason, Williams writes, *Tri.
Trac.* would fit just as well in the beginning. However, then the likeness to the New Testa-
ment would disappear, there are no Jesus saying nor much elaborations on Jesus' life in *Tri.
Trac.* (Williams, "Interpreting," 14–15). Louis Painchaud and Michael Kaler have gone fur-
ther and argue that there was a purpose for the whole collection of the texts connected to this

of how the codex was produced, how it was read and by whom, it would give much needed contextualization for further investigation into the meaning and purpose of Codex I as a whole. We should first briefly familiarize ourselves with the codicology of Codex I.

2. The Scribes and Quires of Codex I

Codex I consists of five texts: The *Prayer of the Apostle Paul,* the *Apocryphon of James,* the *Gospel of Truth,* the *Treatise on the Resurrection*, and the *Tripartite Tractate*.[13] The codex is usually dated to around the last half of the fourth century, by evidence from the cartonnage of Codex VII. The cover of

scribal group. They suggest that Codex I, XI and VII (read in this order) introduce the reader to "heterodox doctrine" which would have induced sympathy for a minority Christian group calling themselves the "lineage of the Father." Codex I and XI portray a context of conflict between different Christians and prepare the reader for what comes in Codex VII: expositions on revelation. See Louis Painchaud and Michael Kaler, "From the *Prayer of the Apostle Paul* to the *Three Steles of Seth*: Codices I, XI and VII from Nag Hammadi Viewed as Collection," *VC* 61 (2007): 445–69. Elaine Pagels and Lance Jenott have also presented a hypothesis on the purpose of Codex I as a whole. They read Codex I as a curriculum for a fourth century Christian seeking divine revelation. The first two tractates function to invite the reader to seek revelations and the last three tractates give more detailed advice and information on how to attain it. See Lance Jenott and Elaine Pagels, "Antony's Letters and Nag Hammadi Codex I: Sources of Religious Conflict in Fourth-Century Egypt," *JECS* 18 (2010): 557–89.

[13] It has been suggested, by Jean-Daniel Dubois, that the lack of titles in Codex I (except for *Pr. Paul* and *Treat. Res.*) was intentional because the Valentinians who owned them wanted to spread their work, but thought it better to remove the titles so as not to impede potential readers. Jean-Daniel Dubois, "Les titres du codex I (Jung) de Nag Hammadi," in *La formation des canons scripturaires* (ed. Michel Tardieu; Patrimoines; Paris: Cerf, 1993), 219–35. However, the title-less Valentinian tractates fit well into a monastic setting also, where texts would most likely have been deemed inappropriate to read if connected to groups associated with those Irenaeus, Clement and Origen combatted. However, we find the title "apocryphon" in the Nag Hammadi Codex II (*Ap. John*), which could mean that the text was written and circulated before the command really took hold, to get rid of apocryphal writings. The monastic context is in my opinion a less speculative suggestion than the one hypothesizing a proselytizing Valentinian group we have no evidence for in fourth-century Egypt. The title of *Treat. Res.* was possibly changed at some point. It might have been a letter at some point which content was so fascinating that someone interested in the technicalities of resurrection added the title "the Treatise on the Resurrection" (ⲡⲗⲟⲅⲟⲥ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲧⲁⲛⲁⲥⲧⲁⲥⲓⲥ) at the end. The letter-style of writing was, however, a very own form of genre and not all texts formed as letters were actually used as letters. For more, see J. Gregory Given, "Four Texts from Nag Hammadi amid the Textual and Generic Fluidity of the 'Letter' in Late Antique Egypt," in *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology*, (eds. Liv Ingeborg Lied and Hugo Lundhaug. TUGAL 175; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 201–20.

Codex VII has a *terminus post quem* of 348, a date found on a letter stuck in the cover to stiffen and thicken it. The cover of Codex VII could of course have been made later than the discarded cartonnage papyrus, but not before. As for the leather cover of Codex I, recent radiocarbon dating indicates that it likely predates Codex VII.[14] Thus, a date in the middle of the fourth century seems plausible for Codex I, considering the available evidence.[15]

As Stephen Emmel has shown, the codex consists of three quires.[16] The first quire, by far the largest, consists of 22 sheets made from two rolls of papyrus. Quire II consists of 8 sheets made from one roll and quire III of 6 sheets, also made from a single roll. Thus, the codex consists of one the first 86 pages together with the front flyleaf, which makes up quire I; pages 87–118 make up quire II and quire III starts with page 119 and ends with 142. The last four pages are not preserved so there might have existed a sixth text following the *Tripartite Tractate*. As Emmel has pointed out, there are ink-marks at the presumed end of the *Tripartite Tractate* indicating that there was most likely something following the *Tripartite Tractate*.[17]

Codex I is the only multi-quire codex in the Nag Hammadi library, but it does not follow regular multi-quire patterns.[18] Why the scribal team, or those who bound the codex, did not just make one large quire, as is the case with the other Nag Hammadi codices, or one additional quire with 14 sheets instead of two small quires in the end is unclear. It has been suggested that the construction of the codex was unplanned, that the two last quires came to impulsively.[19]

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[14] Hugo Lundhaug, "Dating and Contextualising the Nag Hammadi Codices and Their Texts: A Multi-Methodological Approach Including Radiocarbon Evidence," in *Texts in Context: Essays on Dating and Contextualising Christian Writings of the Second and Early Third Century* (ed. Joseph Verheyden, Jens Schröter, and Tobias Nicklas; BETL 319; Leuven: Peeters, 2021), 117–42.

[15] The evidence includes, as just mentioned, letters used to stiffen the covers – more precisely three separately dated letters from the cover of Codex VII (from the years 341, 346, and 348) – and the radiocarbon dating of Codex I.

[16] Emmel made an important observation about the flyleaf, A–B. *Pr. Paul.* It had previously been thought to have been located at the very back of the codex and was thus numbered 143–44 by the initial editors of the codex, led by Rodolphe Kasser, and thought to form the beginning of a fourth quire (Rodolphe Kasser, *Tractatus Tripartitus, Pars I* [Bern: Francke, 1973], 11–13). However, Emmel discovered that the horizontal fibers on the leaf matched those of the stump found glued to the inner margin of page 85. The leaf 85–86 and A–B thus formed an artificially constructed sheet. Emmel also found the same sort or erosion on *Pr. Paul* as on the first part of the codex, which indicates that this leaf was actually the opening page (Stephen Emmel, "Announcement," *BASP* 14 (1977): 56–57).

[17] Emmel, "Announcement," 56.

[18] E. G. Turner, *The Typology of the Early Codex* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977)*,* chapter 5; James M. Robinson, ed., *The Facsimile Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices: Introduction* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 39–40. Concerning Codex XII and XIII, they are too damaged to judge how many quires they contained.

[19] Kasser, *Tractatus Tripartitus,* 12, note 4.
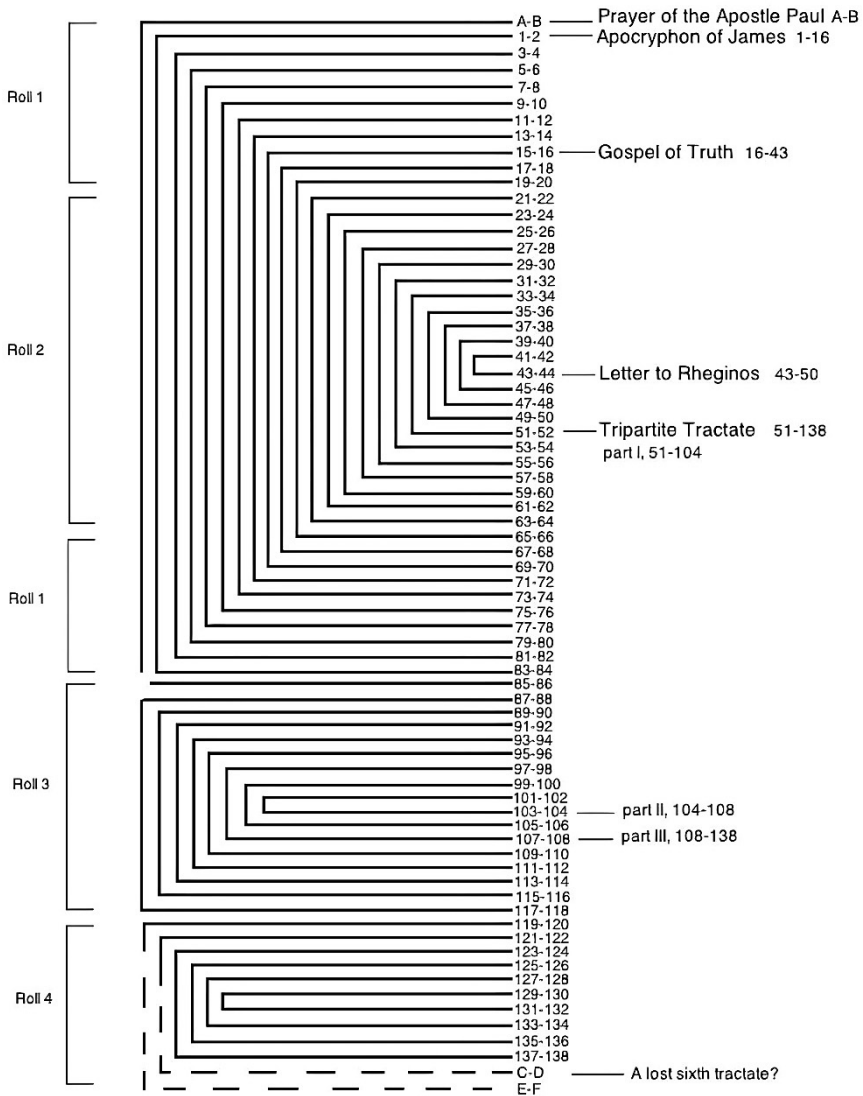
Fig. 1: The quire structure of Nag Hammadi Codex I, illustrated as described
in James Robinson ed., *The Facsimile Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices: Codex I*
(Leiden: Brill, 1977), vi–xxxi.

It is possible that this unusual multi-quire codex came to be due to the care-
lessness of the scribe who miscalculated the number of pages needed to copy
the last text. The *Tripartite Tractate* is a long text and if the *Vorlage* did not

have the same dimensions as the one in Codex I, or was contained in a different medium, for example in a scroll or a smaller or larger codex, it would have made the calculations harder.[20] In the two rolls that made up the first quire, the *kollemata* on the left overlap the ones on the right. This is typical since the roll from where the sheets were cut would most likely have been constructed so that a scribe, writing from left to right, could comfortably do his job without getting stuck on the joints.[21] In the two smaller quires the *kollemata* on the right overlap those on the left, suggesting that either the rolls used were rolled up from left to right (contrary to custom) or perhaps more likely that the sheets were accidentally turned the "wrong way" after being cut, maybe a period of time had elapsed after the sheets were cut and the work on the codex commenced.[22] Either way, this is another detail that makes the two last quires different from what one would expect.[23]

Scribe A is somewhat irregular, compared to Scribe B who copied the *Treatise on the Resurrection* and the first half of Codex XI, with significant variation in style (A is uneven) and word count per page. Compare for instance page 41 (*Gos. Truth*) and page 94 (*Tri. Trac.*). Page 41 has 35 lines, each line has between 14–21 letters, just over 600 letters in total. Page 94 has 40 lines and each line has between 20–26 letters, a total of over 900 letters. That is, scribe A's word count fluctuates with a difference of up to one third.[24] Could there be an explanation for this, other than just viewing it as the work of a careless or novice scribe? A closer look at where in the codex we find the cluttered pages with a relatively high word count and where we find most of the pages with a low word count and an airy scribal style, reveals a possible pattern. Many of the pages with a relatively low word count are at the very end of the codex while the cluttered pages, often with a high word count, are mostly found in

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[20] For different dimensions of early codices, see Turner, *Typology,* 14–22.

[21] James Robinson, "On the Codicology of the Nag Hammadi codices," in *Les textes de Nag Hammadi: Colloque du Centre d'Histoire des Religions (Strasbourg, 23–25 octobre 1974)* (ed. Jacques-É. Ménard; NHS 7; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 15–31; Robinson, *The Facsimile….: Introduction,* 39–40.

[22] An experienced scribe would probably not buy a roll which had the joints unfavorably placed if there were other rolls available, at least if one were to produce a scroll. So, the producers of the rolls would most likely be careful not to roll the papyrus the wrong way so as not to lose business. Robinson, "On the Codicology of the Nag Hammadi codices," 15–31.

[23] For details on how a codex was usually constructed, see Turner, *Typology,* chapter 4.

[24] The difference in word count is sometimes due to poor papyrus quality (e.g., pages 9–10, 25–26, 27–28, 39–40, 101–2), which makes it difficult to utilize all the space. However, many pages have a low word count without there being any obvious papyrus corrosion (at least as far as one can tell from the facsimile editions), for example pages 29, 35, and most of the final pages of quire III.

quire II.[25] Especially pages 113–18, the last page of quire II, appear cluttered (and includes many mistakes[26]) compared with the other parts of the codex. From the second half of quire III until the end (130–37) the word count drops considerably, to around 650 per page, from an average of around 800 up to 900 in quire II.[27] Furthermore, there is a noticeable difference between the length of the lines in the first quire compared to the second. In quire I the lines average between 8–10,5 cm while the lines in quire II average between 10,5–12 cm, a difference of over 18%.[28] Most parts of quire III keep the long lines, but in the last eight pages (those that are intact enough for us to see a whole line) there is a considerable drop off in line length (to about 9,5–10,5 cm) as well as word count, resulting larger letters and the appearance of a more airy style.[29]

These observations give us further clues concerning the production of this somewhat awkward multi-quire codex. James Robinson has suggested that only part I of the *Tripartite Tractate* (51–104) was originally meant to be included in the codex and that quire II had to be added to finish this part.[30] The scribe then decided to include part II (104–8), in order not to waste papyrus, and then continued with part III (108–38), which required yet a third quire.[31] If this was the case, one would have expected to find the pages with cramped style, high word count and long lines in quire I, or at least in the second half of quire I. Instead these are found in quire II, particularly towards the end. I would therefore suggest that part II and III of the *Tripartite Tractate* were most likely meant to be included from the beginning. Why else would the scribe have felt

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[25] There are exceptions also, with a more normal word count in quire II, for example leaf 99–100, 101–2, 103–4, 109–10. However, most of these papyrus leaves seem to have been of poor quality and thus been difficult to write on.

[26] The scribe made emendations and added a letter or a word over the line in the following places: 114.13, 116.7, 116.29, 117.15, 117.25, 118.2, 118.19. At several places the scribe has mistakenly copied a word or letters twice: at 113.38, 115.3, 117.3, 117.12, 119.2.

[27] The first text, *Ap. Jas.,* is also written with a relatively high word count but these pages are in a clean and controlled hand compared to how the scribe acts in quire II. There are few scribal emendations or mistakes in *Ap. Jas.,* as far as I can tell only two in the whole text, at 13.20 and 14.22 where a letter has been added above the line.

[28] The lines in quire I are usually between 8,5–10,5 cm = average 9,5 cm. The lines in quire II (counting from page 85) are considerably longer: 10,5–12 cm = an average of 11,25 cm. This is a difference of 18,4%. The last eight pages in quire III drops off again and average between 9,5–10,5 cm. The measurements are done on the basis of the manuscripts as they appear in the facsimile editions, which are not exactly in scale; they are somewhat smaller than the actual manuscripts. However, the result, in percentage, would be the same.

[29] A comparison of the margins could also have been fruitful but unfortunately the outer and inner margins in quire II and III are damaged to such a degree that a comparison is hard to make.

[30] Robinson, *The Facsimile…: Introduction,* 40; See also Kasser, *Tractatus Tripartitus,* 12, note 4.

[31] Robinson, *The Facsimile…: Introduction,* 40.

pressured for space after the second quire was added, when there would have been ample room for finishing part I. If part I was meant to have been the only part included from the outset, the scribe could simply have ended quire II in an airy and relaxed style, as he did instead in quire III.[32] The airy scribal hand toward the end of quire III indicates that the *Tripartite Tractate* was indeed meant to be the last text of Codex I. Yet it is still possible, even likely, that there was an *ad hoc* writing inscribed on the last four pages, similar to the seemingly improvised inclusion of the *Prayer of the Apostle Paul* which was placed in the front. This is indicated by the fact that there are, as has been mentioned above, ink marks following the *Tripartite Tractate* suggesting a sixth text. Consider also the drastic drop in word count in quire three indicating that the scribe miscalculated the amount of leaves needing to finish the *Tripartite Tractate*. This left whole pages empty allowing a sixth text to be inscribed, but it was most likely not a text with a content considered as the most urgent.

There is a word count difference of approximately 30% and line length difference of about 15% between the two top pages (from left to right: pages 117 and 118 in quire II) and the two on the bottom (from left to right: page 29 in quire I and page 134 in quire III). Notice the airy style on page 134, the end of quire III. Images taken from Robinson, *The Facsimile….: Codex I.*

Can we draw any other conclusions from the above findings? As mentioned above, there have been several different suggestions as to the origin and production of the Nag Hammadi codices.[33] The fact that there are indications of carelessness by scribe A, the fluctuating word-count and page lines and the sometimes erratic style, does not seem to support the hypothesis that this was work done by a professional scribal team working on a commission.[34] If the codex was a commercial product, the cost would have depended on the quality of the material and the quality of the writing.

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[32] This phenomenon, that the scribal style and word count change during inscribing, is not uncommon and is according to Turner sometimes due to the difficulty of calculating the space needed for copying a text (Turner, *Typology,* 73–74). For statistics see Turner, *Typology,* 86.

[33] Lundhaug and Jenott (*Monastic Origins,* chapter 7) represent the side who favor a more casual production, that the codices were in-house products made for monks. Others have suggested a professional bookseller scenario, for example Römer, "Manichaeism and Gnosticism in the Papyri"; Montserrat-Torrents, "The Social and Cultural Setting of the Coptic Gnostic Library"; implied also by Khosroyev, *Die Bibliothek von Nag Hammadi,* 10–13.

[34] As suggested by for example Römer, "Manichaeism and Gnosticism in the Papyri" and Montserrat-Torrents, "The Social and Cultural Setting."
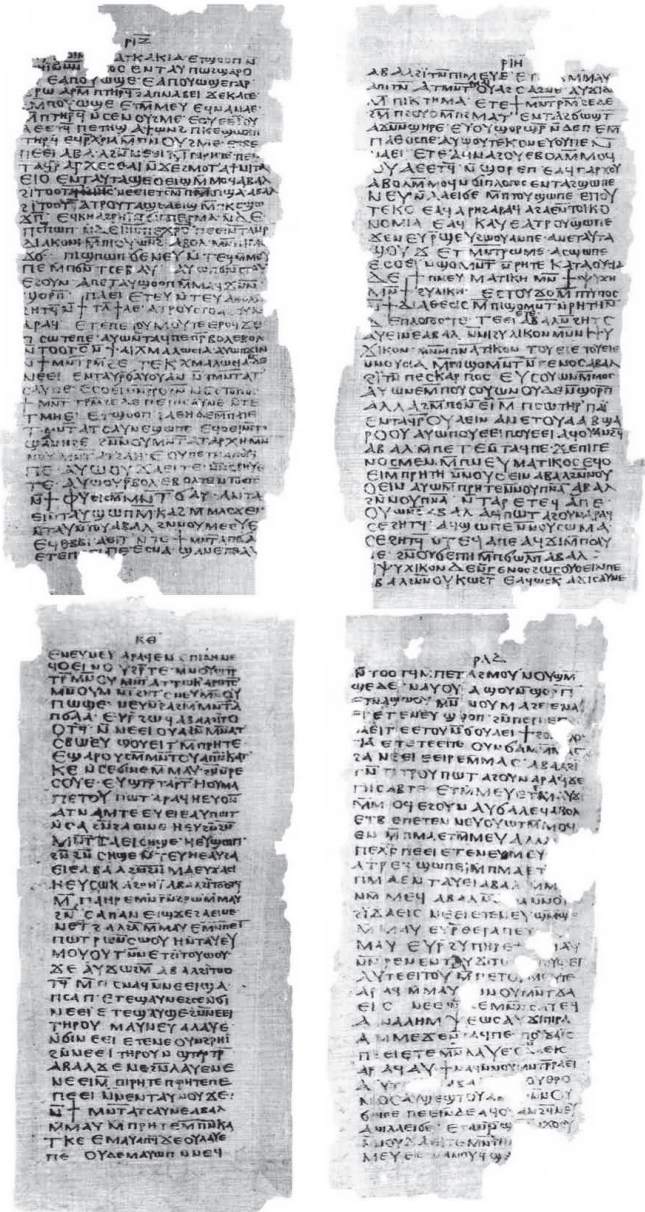
Fig. 2: Examples from Codex I. Top left and right images display page 117 and 118, from the crammed Quire II. Bottom left and right images display page 29 and 134, from Quire I and III, respectively, inscribed with plenty of space both in margin and between words.

Roger Bagnall divides the print quality ranging from calligraphy quality (the best) to documentary quality (the poorest).[35] The cost of a commercially produced book was dependent on the number of lines the scribe needed to copy. A sum was agreed upon per copied line. But considering that the line length fluctuates up to 18 percent throughout the work done by scribe A in Codex I, who also produced very mixed quality of writing, it would have been difficult to calculate the price for such an asymmetrical work, if this was a commercial product.[36] The observation that Codex I was produced more carelessly fits better with the hypothesis that Codex I was produced by monks and circulated in a monastic book-exchange network.[37]

As mentioned above, it has been suggested that the order of the texts in Codex I must have been important, why else would the scribe leave eight pages blank after the *Gospel of Truth* instead of just copying the *Tripartite Tractate* directly after it and leave the *Treatise on the Resurrection* for the end? Considering the uncertainty that seems to have surrounded the construction of Codex I as a whole, it might have been thought safer to leave eight pages empty in quire I instead of copying the very long *Tripartite Tractate* and risk running out of space. The order of the texts in Codex I was perhaps not important at all, only that the copying of the *Treatise on the Resurrection* took precedence over copying the whole of the *Tripartite Tractate*, which the scribe made certain by placing the *Treatise on the Resurrection* in quire I. It is also possible that Codex I was copied at several different occasions, which could explain the fluctuation in style, word count and size, as well as the multiple quires. The fact that scribe A left pages empty in order to make room for the *Treatise on the Resurrection* suggests this. The owners of the *Vorlage* of the different texts in Codex I might have been travelers who passed by only occasionally,[38] or perhaps Codex I was

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[35] See Roger Bagnall, *Early Christian Books in Egypt* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 56–58. He bases his estimate on the Edict on Maximum Prices by Diocletian, issued in the year 301.

[36] Compare for example pages 111–18 (with cramped style and long lines) with 1–16 (where lines are shorter and done straight and with a seemingly controlled hand).

[37] As Lundhaug and Jenott point out, the scenario that the codices were copied by a professional, "non-religious," scribal team does not fit well with the scribal notes and colophons. In Codex II, the colophon asks the recipient, his "brothers" to pray for him (the scribe), and in Codex VII the scribe, who calls himself "the Son," asks for his "Father's" blessing and in turn sends blessings to the "Father" (Lundhaug and Jenott, *The Monastic Origins,* 207).

[38] Wolf-Peter Funk has suggested that the Nag Hammadi codices, or at least some of them, were copied and recopied by migrating people who tried to conform the texts to fit their own dialects (Wolf-Peter Funk, "The Linguistic Aspect of Classifying the Nag Hammadi Codicies," in *Les textes de Nag Hammadi et le problème de leur classification: Actes du colloque tenu à Québec du 15 au 19 septembre 1993* [ed. Louis Painchaud and Anne Pasquier; BCNH.É 3; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1995], 107–47). This is because the codices include a mixture of Coptic dialects. However, as Lundhaug and Jenott

the result of different visits by the scribes to a place where the *Vorlage* were kept. After scribe A was finished copying the text 1–3 and 5 he could have given/sent the Codex to scribe B who had access to the *Treatise on the Resurrection*. There are multiple possible scenarios. However, the scribal note in Codex VI, page 65, where the scribe explains that he refrained from copying certain other texts that the future owner of the codex might already possess, indicates that there was some improvisation in the production of the Nag Hammadi codices. I would argue that the codicological features of Codex I fit the hypothesis of an informal production much better than a professional one. It would thus be similar to the one which can be discerned in a letter from Jerome (ca. A.D. 375) to his friend Florentinus. Jerome's letter reveals the practice of copying texts and sending the copy to friends at their request, or of lending out texts to be copied by those who borrowed them.[39]

Let us now turn to look at some previously unstudied aspects of the scribal features of Codex I, which will prove useful when exploring the question of who might have read the codex.

3. Scribal Features

As pointed out by Williams, and recently in more detail by Lundhaug and Jenott, the scribal markings on many of the Nag Hammadi codices show that the owners identified themselves as Christians. This is also the case in Codex I, which several facts reveal.[40] Apart from the fact that all of the texts in Codex I are thoroughly Christian, the codex is full of *nomina sacra*[41] and the colophon

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argue, the Pachomian monasteries could also have been a place where different peoples/dialects came together and they present evidence that monks did in fact acquire new reading material from people passing through (Lundhaug and Jenott, *The Monastic Origins,* 216).

[39] Jerome, *Epistle* 5.2. For more on the book-exchange networks, see Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins,* 197–206

[40] This has also been pointed out by others, see for example Jenott and Pagels, "Antony's Letters," 560–62.

[41] The *nomina sacra* in *Pr. Ap. Paul* include the following: Jesus Christ = ιнс хс (A.13), spirit = πνα (A.23). *Ap. Jas.* includes: Savior = cωρ (1.23, 2.17, 2.40, 16.25), Jesus = ιнс (2.23), Cross = c⳨ос (5.37, 6.4, 6.5–6), spirit = πνα (5.22, 12.2, 14.34, 15.25), Jerusalem = ιнλм (16.9). *Gos. Truth*: Jesus Christ = ιнс хрс (18.16), Jesus = ιнс (20.11, 20.24, 24.8), Cross = c⳨ос (20.27), spirit = πνα (24.11, 26.36, 30.17, 31.18, 34.11, 42.33, 43.17), Christ = хс (36.14). *Treat. Res.*: Jesus = ιc (50.1) or ιнс (48.19). *Tri. Trac.*: Jesus = ιнс (117.12), Christ = хрс (132. 18), хс (87.9, 132.28, 134.13) or хрнс (136.1), Jesus Christ = ιнс хрс (117.15), spirit = πνα (58.35, 63.36, 64.9, 66.27, 72.2, 72.18, 73.2, 101.4, 101.7, 101.16, 103.15, 103.18, 106.6, 106.22, 107.28, 118.21, 118.31–32, 119.16, 122.31, 127.32, 128.8, 138.24). Text from Harold W. Attridge, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Introduction, Text, Translation, Indices* (NHS 22; Leiden: Brill, 1985)*, passim*. Interesting to note is that the most common *nomina sacra*, THEOS, KYRIOS, does not occur in Codex I.

inscribed by scribe A on the flyleaf leaves no doubt of the Christian provenance of the codex.[42] At the end of the flyleaf, page B, we find the title *Prayer of the Apostle Paul* followed by "In peace."

<div align="center">

προϲεγχη πα[γλογ]

αποϲτολογ

εν ειρηνη

</div>
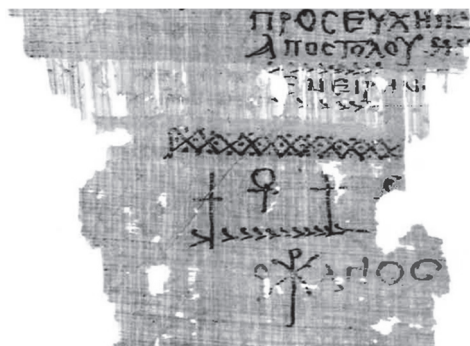
Fig. 3: Extract from the bottom of the fly leaf of Codex I, page B.

Then follows scribal markings, two Latin Crosses, *cruces ansatae* and ο χρ(ιϲτοϲ) ἁγιοϲ, i.e., the Greek nominative singular article, a *christogram* (☧) and the adjective ἅγιος, forming the phrase "Christ is Holy." We also find several *staurograms* (⳨), at least four visible in the facsimile of the Codex I,[43] and a *crux ansata* at the end of Part I of the *Tripartite Tractate* (104.3).[44] Jesus' crucifixion is not discussed in the *Tripartite Tractate*, nor does the word "cross" appear, but Hurtado has argued that the *staurogram* indicates the importance placed on the crucifixion.[45] Although it is difficult to extract ideas the

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The most frequent *nomen sacrum* in Codex I is without a doubt ⲡⲛⲁ, for the word πνεῦμα. It is interesting to note that according to Hurtado's analysis of early Christian manuscripts this is one of the more unusual *nomina sacra* (see Larry Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006], chapter 3).

[42] For the use of *nomina sacra* in early Christian manuscripts as signs of the scribes' religious affiliation, see Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, chapter 3.

[43] According to Francis E. Williams, who translated and transcribed *Ap. Jas.* for the Coptic Gnostic Library project, on page 5, line 17, there is a *rho* superimposed on a *tau,* symbolizing the word *cross* (which together with ⲉⲓⲣⲉ becomes crucifixion). See Attridge, *Nag Hammadi Codex I*, 34. However, this line is fragmented in the facsimile edition and neither the word, the *nomina sacra* or the *staurogram* is clearly visible. See Robinson, *The Facsimile…: Codex I,* 9.

[44] My thanks to René Falkenberg for calling my attention to this.

[45] Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts,* chapter 4. In Codex I, the *staurogram* occurs where we find the *nomen sacrum* ⲥ⳨ⲟⲥ, for the Greek σταυρός, "Cross." Three of the instances appear in *Ap. Jas.* 5.35–6.7: ⲡϫⲁⲉⲓⲥ ⲙ̄ⲡⲱⲣ ⲁⲧⲉⲩⲟ ⲁⲣⲁⲛ ⲙ̄ⲡⲥ⳨ⲟⲥ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲡⲙⲟⲩ ⲛⲉⲉⲓ ⲅⲁⲣ

scribes/owners had about the crucifixion from their use of the *staurogram* or *cruces ansatae*, I agree with Hurtado that the use reveals their Christian identity.

Contrary to scribe B, who did not include any reading aids as far as I can tell in the *Treatise on the Resurrection,* scribe A employs several techniques to improve legibility. All four texts copied by scribe A are equipped with punctuation, spacing and *diaeresis.*[46] These kinds of reading aids also aides a lector who performed the text, who could with the help of them more easily keep track of the text when reading it aloud. However, considering the cluttered pages in quire II, as well as the lack of reading aids in the *Treatise on the Resurrection,* it is unlikely that the reading aids in Codex I were added with the intent that the texts were first and foremost meant to be read/performed in a communal setting by a lector. Rather, the observations fit better a scenario where the texts were copied for private use where the performance was not as important (even though one of course could read aloud in private, too).

The *Tripartite Tractate* is set apart from the other texts in Codex I in several respects, such as the use of the particle ϫⲉ, for example. ϫⲉ occurs throughout the *Tripartite Tractate,* but often at unexpected places, for example as the very first word of a sentence or as a paragraph marker.[47] This peculiar use of ϫⲉ does not seem to be a scribal practice specific to scribe A, since it does not occur in any of the other texts in Codex I. It has been suggested that ϫⲉ in the *Tripartite Tractate* is a short form of ⲡⲉϫⲁϥ ϫⲉ and that the text is an anthology of sayings or a summary of doctrines from a longer work.[48] However, the *Tripartite Tractate* is obviously a continuous whole, largely dealing with the Logos, with a clear beginning, end and flow in argumentation. These factors do not support a reading of the text as an anthology. Due to it being peculiar to

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ⲥⲉⲟⲩⲏⲟⲩ ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲕ ⲁϥϧⲟ[ⲩⲱ]ⲱⲃ̄ ⲛ̄ϭⲓ ⲡϫⲁⲉⲓⲥ ⲡⲁϫⲉϥ ϫⲉ ϩⲁⲙⲏⲛ ϯϫⲟⲩ ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲥ ⲛⲏⲧⲛ̄ ϫⲉ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲗⲁⲁⲩⲉ ⲛⲁⲟⲩϫⲉⲉⲓ ⲉⲓⲙⲏⲧⲓ ⲛ̄ⲥⲉⲡⲓⲥⲧ̣[ⲉⲩⲉ] ⲁⲡⲁⲥ̄ⲣ̄ⲟⲥ ⲛⲉⲛⲧⲁ[ϩ̣]ⲡⲓⲥⲧⲉⲩⲉ̣ [ⲅⲁ]ⲣ̣ ⲁⲡⲁⲥ̄ⲣ̄ⲟⲥ· ⲧⲱⲟⲩ ⲧⲉ ⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲉ̣ⲣⲟ ⲙ̄ⲡⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ "'Lord, do not mention to us the cross and death, for they are far from you.' The Lord answered and said: 'Verily I say unto you, none will be saved unless they believe in my cross. But those who have believed in my cross, theirs is the kingdom of God.'" Translation by Dieter Mueller, in Attridge, *Nag Hammadi Codex I,* 36–37.

[46] There are a few instances in the codex that could be lines set forth in *ekthesis*, like at 21:38 and 43:10. However, these cases are most likely emendations made by the scribe who added letters to the left margin to complete a word. The lines do not form natural brakes in the narrative or even at the end of a sentence.

[47] Attridge, *Nag Hammadi Codex I,* 172–74; Einar Thomassen and Louis Painchaud, *Le traité tripartite: (NH I,5)* (BCNH.T 19; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1989), 9–10.

[48] Hans-Martin Schenke, "Zum sogenannten Tractatus Tripartitus des Codex Jung," *ZÄS* 105 (1978): 133–41.

the *Tripartite Tractate*, most have interpreted the use of ϫⲉ in this text as re-
flecting the Greek *Vorlage*, that ϫⲉ should be understood as γάρ, δε, οὖν or
some other particles to bind together paragraphs and sections in the text.[49]

We also find several instances of *diplai* (>>>>) and the *diple obelismene*
(>—) in Codex I. These mark the ending of the *Apocryphon of James* and the
Gospel of Truth and they are also used as line fillers and to mark off a sub-
section, but only in the *Tripartite Tractate*.[50] At other occasions, as Kasser has
noted,[51] we also find the *diple* sign in the margin (33.39, 40.1–2, 68.19, 75.32–
34, 82.2–3, 82.10, 83.21, 84.11–13, 119.23–27).[52] They do not seem to be used
only as paragraph markers because they appear most often in the middle of the
narrative, possible exceptions being 82.10 and 40.1–2.[53] Kasser suggested that
these markings could have been used to indicate quotes. However, the passages
so marked are not from any known scriptural text. Kasser suggests that the
markings could indicate passages of particular importance. We have several
instances where there is just a single *diple* next to the margin (68.19, 82.10 and
83.21). These single-lines seldom form a complete sentence, so here the *diplai*
make more sense as either markers for a new passage/paragraph (82.10) or per-
haps quotes in the text (68.19, 83.21).[54] However, at several points in the *Tri-
partite Tractate* we encounter instances where more than one *diple* has been

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[49] I agree that ϫⲉ is probably used to link together and introduce new paragraphs, apart
from when it is used in its normal conjunctional function and when preceding a quote.
Thomassen is probably right in viewing the opening ϫⲉ as subordinating casual conjunction,
but nevertheless, stylistically it is unusual to open with it. That ϫⲉ would be a substitute for
γάρ seems unlikely since the latter appears throughout the codex.

[50] See 13.25 (here there is also a dash: /), 59.38, 66.40, 89.36, 90.13, 93.37, 97.39, 101.35.

[51] Kasser, *Tractatus Tripartitus,* 15.

[52] Kasser also marks out 118:36 as including a *diple* but the left margin is not visible due
to lacunae and at the right margin there is a colon, not a *diple* (Kasser, *Tractatus Tripartitus,*
15). At page 32 the mark is used to indicate where to insert a line that the scribe failed to
copy, but which was then placed at the bottom of the page. In my opinion, the *diple* at 33.39
looks more like a *coronis*.

[53] At 82.10 the marking is placed in between two lines, followed by a ϫⲉ. This is most
likely a paragraph marker. The sentence marked out at 40.1–2 makes poor sense on its own.
The two lines read: ⲉⲛ ⲛ̄ϭⲓ ⲙ̄ⲙⲓⲥⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲟⲧϥ̄ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲉⲓ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϩⲙⲉⲥⲧⲟⲩ ϣⲁⲣⲡ̄. However, since the
above *diple* is placed in between line 1 and 2, I take it here as a marker for the beginning of
a new passage, which is also what seems to begin at the end of line 2. From the word ϣⲁⲣⲡ̄
onward, which is the beginning of a new sentence, the nature of "the Name" is being de-
scribed in detail.

[54] At 68.19 the Aeons were expected to say the following to honor the Father: "It is the
Father who is the All." Line 83:21 reads: [ⲧ]ⲁⲉⲓⲁⲉⲓⲧ· ⲉⲧⲣ̄ ϣⲁⲣⲡ̄ ⲛ̄ϣⲟⲟⲡ· "glorious preexistent
one." The first word starts on the preceding line: ⲡⲉⲧ|[ⲧ]ⲁⲉⲓⲁⲉⲓⲧ. Text from Attridge, *Nag
Hammadi Codex I*, 220, 245. This is perhaps not a quote but could be an indication for the
reader or made by a reader indicating to whom the prayer of the Logos is directed. Both of
these *diplai* occur in the middle of a narrative and highlight passages that underline the
greatness of the highest Father, a noteworthy topic for any Christian reader. At the bottom

placed in a vertical row next to the margin (75.32–34, 82.2–3, 84.11–13 and 119.23–27), thus marking longer passages.[55]

When discussing scribal features in early Christian manuscripts, Larry Hurtado emphasizes the importance of reader aids when trying to form an idea of how ancient texts were read.[56] The passages in Codex I marked out with *diplai* in the margin could very well tell us something about how the texts were read in fourth–fifth century Egypt.[57] What is more, it looks like it was scribe A who for some reason marked these lines, at least in the case of page 84 and 119, where the *diplai* do not extend into the left margin, as one would expect if they were added post-inscription. On page 75 and 82 the case is less certain. On page 75 the markings are on the right side of the margin, which is rare for scribe A. It is possible that they were added by a later reader. In the case of page 82, lines 2–3, the *diplai* are placed in ekthesis to the left of the text, but at the same time, the two lines do not extend as far to the left as the surrounding lines, suggesting that the *diplai* were added by the scribe when copying the text itself.

These markings could point to passages that for some reason were thought to be important or interesting. Perhaps the markings signaled that further information or explanations could be found in another text, or that the marked off area was a quote from another source, a common practice in Coptic manuscripts. Unfortunately, Kasser did not make further inquiries into why these passages were marked out and did not elaborate on their content.[58] As far as I know there have not been any studies on the content of these passages in the *Tripartite Tractate*.[59]

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of page 33 (33.39) we find a marking below the line, this might be the only occasion where a *coronis* sign is used, often used to signal a shift in focus or a new passage, but also a part of a particularly important subject. Here it was perhaps meant to highlight the *paraenetic* sections that are concentrated to page 33. It might also be a way to highlight the importance the following page 34 which discusses the nature of the Father.

[55] There is one other instance where there are more than one arrow in a line, at 40.1–2. I interpret this as markings indicating the following shift in topic, perhaps of particular interest considering that "the Name" seems to be of central import in *Gos. Truth.* However, since I am here chiefly interested in the *Tri. Trac.* I save the analysis of this part of Codex I for a later occasion.

[56] Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts,* 177–84.

[57] This of course presupposes that these features were not simply copied from the original Greek manuscript. However, this seems highly unlikely. See E. G. Turner, *Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971).

[58] Kasser, *Tractatus Tripartitus*, 15.

[59] Thomassen writes that the *diplai* sometimes probably point "out a passage of special interest" or "tend to be general and easily quotable dicta." Unfortunately, Thomassen does not elaborate on why these passages would be interesting or quotable and what this could tell us about the readers and owners of this codex. Cf. Einar Thomassen, "The Tripartite Tractate from Nag Hammadi" (PhD diss., University of St Andrews, 1982), 13 n. 3. This

In the following I will examine the four instances in the *Tripartite Tractate* where it is obvious that we are not dealing with a paragraph marker, because there are more than one *diple* in the margin, and I will consider what the marked off passages can tell us of how the *Tripartite Tractate* was read.

4. The Diplai in the *Tripartite Tractate*

At 75.32–34 we find three *diplai* in the right-hand margin marking the following passage: "He (the Logos) received a wise nature so as to inquire into the hidden order, since he was an offspring of wisdom."[60] This sentence describes the nature of the Logos and page 75 as a whole marks the entrance of the Logos in the narrative, the Logos being the main character of the *Tripartite Tractate*.
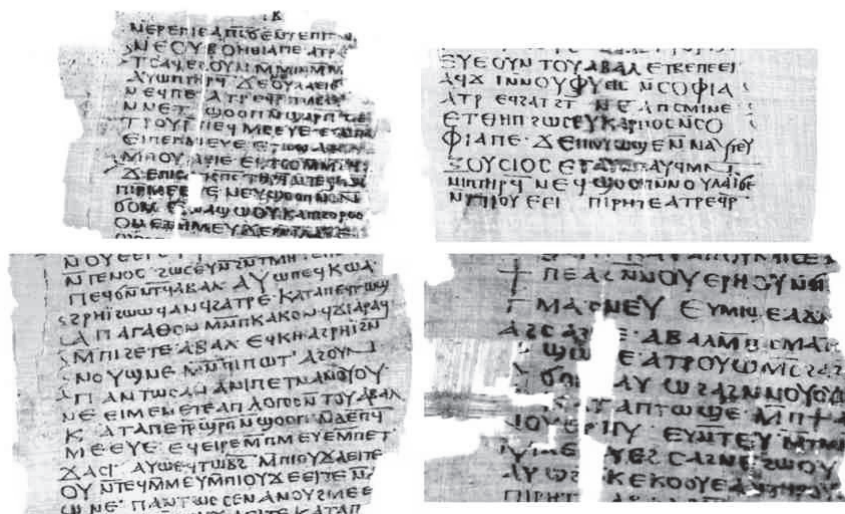
Fig. 4: Diplai on page 82 (top left), 75 (top right), 119 (bottom left), and 84 (bottom right).

Lines 82.2–3 have two *diplai* in the left margin, marking a discussion of the return of the Logos from his initial misstep from the harmony of the Pleroma. The marked off sentence reads: "It was a help, causing him to turn toward himself."[61] It is the "prayer of the blending" (ⲡⲓⲥⲁⲡ̅ⲥ̅ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉ ⲡⲓⲧⲱⲧ), mentioned on

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point seems to have been excluded in the published French version. See Thomassen and Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite,* 6.

[60] ⲁϥϫⲓ ⲛ̅ⲛⲟⲩⲫⲩⲥⲓⲥ ⲛ̅ⲥⲟⲫⲓⲁ ⲁⲧⲣⲉϥϣⲁⲧ̅ⲧ̅ ⲛ̅ⲥⲁ ⲡⲥⲙⲓⲛⲉ· ⲉⲧⲏⲡ ϩⲱⲥ ⲉⲩⲕⲁⲣⲡⲟⲥ ⲛ̅ⲥⲟⲫⲓⲁ ⲡⲉ· The last five letters are found on line 35. Text from Attridge, *Nag Hammadi Codex I,* 232.

[61] ⲛⲉⲟⲩⲃⲟⲏⲑⲓⲁ ⲡⲉ· ⲁⲧⲣⲉⲩⲧⲥⲁϥ ⲉϩⲟⲩⲛ ⲙ̅ⲙⲓⲛ ⲙ̅ⲙ[ⲁϥ]. Text from Attridge, *Nag Hammadi Codex I,* 242. As in the case of 40.1–2, one of the two arrows at page 82 seems to be placed

the line before, which is described as "a help" for the Logos. "Blending" (ⲡⲓⲧⲱⲧ) seems to be used as a technical term throughout the *Tripartite Tractate* for the rejoining with the harmony of the Pleroma, Christ and the unity of the Church.[62] There is a third *diple* a few lines further down, between lines 9 and 10, marking off a whole paragraph that start with the Logos turning toward himself. The passage as a whole, 82.1–9, reads: "The prayer of the blending was a help, causing him to turn toward himself and the Totality. A reason for him to remember the preexistent ones is that he is remembered. This is the thought which calls out from afar, bringing him back."[63] Here we are told that the Logos turns toward himself, prays and then remembers his previous life with the Totality (the harmony with other Aeons) and the Totality in turn remembers him. These events cause Logos' return to harmony.

Lines 84.11–13 has a *diple* as the first letter in the left margin and all three are in line with the bread text, which indicates that they were written in by the original scribe and meant to be included in the text from the beginning. The sentence on these lines comments on the emergence of different beings created in the aftermath of the fall of the Logos: "they were drawn down into forces

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between the lines. This could thus be understood as an indication that the whole following passage is of particular import. However, this does not fit the narrative on page 82 well at all, while at the same time the two lines together form a complete sentence with a crucial point being made. Thus, I instead think it more likely that just the two sentences are being highlighted.

[62] Paul Linjamaa, *The Ethics of* The Tripartite Tractate *(NHC I, 5): A Study of Early Christian Philosophy of Ethics and Determinism.* NHMS 95 (Leiden: Brill, 2019), chapter 1. Another word used for this is ⲙⲟⲩϫⲕ and these two terms are contrasted with ⲧⲱϩ and ⲧⲁϩⲧϩ ("mixing"), The words for mixing are used when the Logos gets "unmixed" (ⲁⲧⲧⲱϩ) from his erroneous creation on account of the Savior (90.17–18); when the Logos does not allow his superior powers to "mix" (ⲧⲱϩ) with the inferior (97.25); when the righteous Hebrews transcend the influence of the "mixed powers" (ⲛⲓϭⲟⲙ ⲉⲧⲉϩⲧⲁϩⲧ) and "attained to the level of the unmixed ones" (ⲁⲧⲁϩⲧϩ̄) (110.34); and to denote those humans and angels who will be lost and destroyed in the end, they are mixed (ⲧϩ̄ⲧϩ/ⲧⲉϩⲧϩ) (120.21, 121.22). This mixed state is the original human reality and would have been permanent if it was not for the grace of the Savior. This is contrasted to "blending" (ⲧⲱⲧ/ⲙⲟⲩϫⲕ), when the elect blend with the Savior (122.13–17); when the Logos is reintegrated (blends) with the Pleroma he fell away from (122.25–27); as the blended harmony of the Aeons (68.27, 71.11); and as a description of the ultimate restoration (ⲁⲡⲟⲕⲁⲧⲁⲥⲧⲁⲥⲓⲥ) of the Church and the Pleroma (123.11–27; 133.6–7). These aspects are influenced by Stoic discussions of physics.

[63] ⲛⲉⲣⲉⲡⲓⲥⲁⲡ̄ ϭⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲡⲓⲧⲱⲧ [ⲡⲉ] ⲛⲉⲟⲩⲃⲟⲏⲑⲓⲁ ⲡⲉ· ⲁⲧⲣⲉⲩⲧⲥⲁϥ ⲉϩⲟⲩⲛ ⲙ̄ⲙⲓⲛ ⲙ̄ⲙ[ⲁϥ] ⲁⲩⲱ ⲡⲧⲏⲣϥ̄ ϫⲉ ⲛⲉⲟⲩⲗⲁⲉⲓϭⲉ ⲛⲉϥ ⲡⲉ· ⲁⲧⲣⲉϥϥ̄ ⲡⲙⲉⲉⲩ[ⲉ] ⲛⲛⲉⲧϣⲟⲟⲡ ⲛ̄ϣⲁⲣⲡ̄ ⲡⲉⲧⲣⲟⲩϥ̄ ⲡⲉϥⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ· ⲉⲧⲉ ⲡⲁⲉⲓ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲙⲉⲩⲉ ⲉⲧⲱϣ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ ⲙ̄ⲡⲟⲩⲁⲉⲓⲉ· ⲉϥⲧⲥⲟ ⲙ̄ⲙⲁϥ· Text from Attridge, *Nag Hammadi Codex I,* 242. Cf. Thomassen and Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite,* 126–27, who read ⲛⲉⲣⲉⲡⲓⲥⲁⲡ̄ ϭⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲡⲓⲧⲱⲃ[ϩ̄] ⲛⲉⲟⲩⲃⲟⲏⲑⲓⲁ ⲡⲉ · ⲁⲧⲣⲉ[ϥ]ⲧⲥⲁϥ ⲉϩⲟⲩⲛ <ⲁⲣⲁϥ> ⲙ̄ⲙⲓⲛ ⲙ̄ⲙⲁ[ϥ] etc. and translate "Cette prière de supplication, donc, était une aide pour qu'[il] se retournât <sur> lui-même et (vers) le Tout, car qu'ils se souvinssent de lui fut pour lui la cause qu'il se souvînt des êtres pré-existants – c'est cette pensée qui appelle de loin, le faisant se retourner."

and substances in accordance with the state of being in conflict with [with] each other."[64] Here we encounter an explanation of how the angelic orders emerged, later called those on the left and the right: they were drawn down after the fall of the Logos into certain natures and substances that resulted in a perpetual conflict in the angelic world.

The last section marked off is 119.23–27, and here the *diplai* are found in the left margin. This passage discusses another important subject in the *Tripartite Tractate*: the psychic race. The pneumatics are described as those who react right away to the appearance of the Savior, these people are the natural leaders of the Church and described as the teachers (116.17–20). The role and identity of the psychics is uncertain. However, the lines marked off with *dipai* make things a bit clearer: "According to its (the psychic race) disposition for both good and evil, it receives the emanation that is established suddenly, and the complete escape to those who are good."[65] This is a crucial passage in the text. Here we find out that the psychic humans will receive a "complete escape" but that they are drawn to both good and evil on the account of the ephemeral nature of their situation. Later in the *Tripartite Tractate* we read that the psychics have to prove themselves by doing good works and act as instructed by the pneumatics (131.22–34).

The passages marked off with the *diplai* sign could be summed up in the following way:

75.32–34:   Logos as offspring of Wisdom
82.2–3:   Logos is aided to turn toward himself
84.11–13:   Angelic warfare
119.23–27:   The Psychics receive full salvation

How would the marked off sentences have been read and who would have found them interesting in fourth century Egypt? According to Lundhaug and Jenott, who propose a monastic origin for the Nag Hammadi codices, several topics in the Nag Hammadi texts would have interested monks, for example discussions of angels and demons, saving *gnosis*, visions of God or biblical interpretation and allegory.[66] If the *diplai* markings in the margins of page 75, 82, 84 and 119 reflect passages of special significance, they seem only to partly

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[64] ⲁⲧⲣⲟⲩⲱⲙⲥ̄ ϩⲁ ϩⲛ̄ϭⲟⲙ ⲁⲩⲱ ϩⲁ ϩⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲩⲟⲩⲥⲓ[ⲁ] ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲡⲧⲱϣⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡϯ ⲁ[ⲭⲛ] ⲛⲟⲩⲉⲣⲏⲩ Text from Attridge, *Nag Hammadi Codex I,* 246. Although, I emend the lacuna on line 13 with ⲁ[ⲭⲛ] instead of ⲁ[ϩⲛ], as Attridge and Pagels have it, thus following Einar Thomassen and Louis Painchaud in *Le traité tripartite: (NH I,5)* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1989), x.

[65] ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲡⲉϥⲧⲱϣ ⲁⲡⲁⲅⲁⲑⲟⲛ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲡⲕⲁⲕⲟⲛ ϥϫⲓ ⲁⲣⲁϥ ⲙ̄ⲡϩⲣⲉⲧⲉ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ ⲉϥⲕⲏ ⲁϩⲣⲏⲓ̈ ϩⲛ̄ⲛ ⲟⲩϣⲛⲉ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲡⲓⲡⲱⲧ ⲁϩⲟⲩⲛ ⲡⲁⲛⲧⲱⲥ ⲁⲛ ⲁⲛⲓⲡⲉⲧⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲟⲩ Text from Attridge, *Nag Hammadi Codex I,* 308.

[66] Lundhaug and Jenott, *The Monastic Origins,* 78–89, 246–62.

fit the monastic context drawn up by Lundhaug and Jenott. Page 84 would definitely have interested monks because it discusses a very popular *topos* in early Christianity, particularly in monastic literature: the cosmic war between angels and demons.[67] But at first glance the other three passages seem to deal with questions concerning details in Valentinian theology (the youngest Aeon and the psychic race), technicalities that are not topics considered to have interested monks. I will in conclusion revisit this topic.

5. Monks Reading Valentinian Material?

We know that many Church Fathers read Valentinian works and some wrote long treatises against them. Two of the most famous early Christian theologians, who we know read Valentinian texts, were Origen and Clement. Clement's paraphrase of Valentinian theology is often counted among the most reliable (for example, his recapitulation of a certain Theodotus). Origen read, wrote about and often agreed with Heracleon, one of the earliest theologians to have been influenced by Valentinus. Furthermore, we know that many monks read and admired Origen, which would eventually become controversial.[68] It does not seem unthinkable that monks would show interest in forms of Christian theology that Origen wrote about, and sometimes even agreed with, texts that also coincided with what was classified as Origenist theology. As many scholars have pointed out, the *Tripartite Tractate* coincides with Origen on several points. For example: on the doctrine of *apokatastasis*; seeing the Will of the Father as the origin of creation; the preexistence of Souls before the body; a resurrection without the physical body.[69] But what in the parts highlighted with

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[67] For this theme in Early Christianity with focus on the monastic movement, see especially David Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk: Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

[68] They read Clement too. For the influence Clement had on for example Evagrius, see Brakke, *Demons,* chapter 3. For the influence of Origen in early Egyptian monasticism, see Samuel Rubensson, "Origen in the Egyptian Monastic Tradition of the Fourth Century," in *Origeniana Septima: Origen in den Auseinandersetzungen des 4. Jahrhunderts* (ed. Wolfgang A. Bienert and Uwe Kühneweg; BETL 137; Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 319–37; Jon F. Dechow, "The Nag Hammadi Milieu: An Assessment in the Light of the Origenist Controversies (with Appendix 2015)," in *The Nag Hammadi Codices and Late Antique Egypt* (eds. Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott, STAC 110; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 11–51.

[69] For more on the Origenist tendencies in *Tri. Trac.* see Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins,* 242. One doctrine that Clement, Athanasius (who wrote *Life of Antony*), Evagrius and *Tri. Trac.* would agree on is that bad *phantasia* (impressions) could affect humans and are the result of demons (in *Tri. Trac.* called "mixed powers" or those comic powers from the "left" side) (109.24–110.1, 110.22–111.23). For a comparison of this doctrine in Clement, Evagrius and Athanasius see Brakke, *Demons,* 37–47. Alberto Camplani, "Un episode della ricezione del ΠΕΡΙ ΕΥΧΗΣ in Egitto: Note di eresiologia Shenutiana," in *Il dono e la*

diplai (except the part on cosmic warfare that would obviously have been of interest) could have spoken to a monastic reader?

The youngest Aeon is called Logos in the *Tripartite Tractate* but most often in Valentinian theology the youngest Aeon is called Sophia, as in the *Interpretation of Knowledge* and *A Valentinian Exposition,* which were copied by the same scribe who copied the *Treatise on the Resurrection* in Codex I.[70] 75.32–34 could have been read with special interest because here Logos is an offspring of Wisdom (Sophia). The doctrine that the Logos, identified with the Wisdom of God, carries out creation according to the providence of God (as it is described in the *Tripartite Tractate*), would not have sounded strange to a reader familiar with John's prologue, and even less strange to one who had knowledge of the writings of Philo and Origen.[71] There are of course points of departure also. For example, Origen would likely have opposed the *Tripartite Tractate* at the same point where he opposed Heracleon, who made the distinction that the Logos created "all things" (John 1:3) *outside* the Pleroma.[72] But there are clear similarities and points of comparison which in all likelihood

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sua ombra: Ricerche sul ΠΕΡΙ ΕΥΧΗΣ di Origene: Atti del I Convegno del Gruppo Italiano di Ricerca su 'Origene e la Traditione Alessandrina' (ed. Francesca Cocchini; SEAug 57; Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1997), 159–72; Alberto Camplani, "Sulla trasmissione di testi gnostici in copto" in L'Egitto Cristiano: Aspetti e problem in età tardoantica (ed. Alberto Camplani; SEAug 56; Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1997), 121–75.

[70] *Interp. Know.* is very damaged but most likely included a myth of the falling Sophia, see Paul Linjamaa, "The Female Figures and Fate in *The Interpretation of Knowledge,* NHC XI,I." *JECS* 24 (2016): 29–54. *Val. Exp.* is even more damaged, but from the little that remains, one can discern a Valentinian myth. See Elaine Pagels, "A Valentinian Exposition: Introduction," in *The Coptic Gnostic Library: Nag Hammadi Codices XI, XII, XIII*, (ed. Charles W. Hedrick; Leiden: Brill, 1990), 89–105.

[71] For Origen the Son was known as Wisdom in relation to the Father and Logos in relation to the World (*Peri Archon* I.2). For more on this, see, e.g., Panayiotis Tzamalikos, *Origen: Cosmology and Ontology of Time* (VCSup 77; Leiden: Brill, 2006). John's portrayal of Logos, as was well known, coincided with how some Jewish literature portrayed Wisdom (Genesis 1, Proverbs 8, Sirach 24). Already Philo saw creation taking place in the lines of God acting out his providential Will through his Wisdom and Logos. Burton Mack, *Logos und Sophia: Untersuchungen zur Weisheitstheologie im hellenistischen Judentum* (SUNT 10; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973).

[72] For Origen and Heracleon, see Carl-Johan Berglund, *Origen's References to Heracleon: A Quotation-Analytical Study of the Earliest Known Commentary on the Gospel of John* (WUNT 450; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020). Another obvious difference between Origen's view on Logos from that in *Tri. Trac.* is that Origen clearly associates Logos with the Son and Jesus, while in *Tri. Trac.* there is a difference between the Son as part of the Godhead and the Logos who is a lower aeon.

would have intrigued Christian readers familiar with Origen and the theological intricacies of these cosmological questions.[73] Furthermore, reading texts one does not fully agree with is not necessarily less alluring, interesting, or edifying than reading what confirms one's opinions.

The passage marked off at 82.2–3 also deals with the Logos and describes how the youngest Aeon is returned to the fold he fell away from by turning toward himself, through praying, and by the aid of remembrance. This is a part of the text where Valentinian theology coincides with what we know interested early Christians in Egypt, perhaps in particular those reading Origen. At 82.2–3 we read of how introspection and prayer lead to salvation, a salvation which is described as a "blending." The term *apokatastasis* is used in the *Tripartite Tractate* (123.19–27, 133.6–7)*,* in the same way as the doctrine supported by Origen, Evagrius and other Egyptian Christians was presented (as a return and integration into a whole).[74] Furthermore, that the Logos "turned toward himself" (82.2–3) would have sounded very familiar to monks engaged in introspection for gaining visions, who employed mnemonic techniques for reciting scripture when praying or warding off demons or unwanted emotions and cravings.[75] There was also a widespread idea among early Christians, especially in the early monastic world of Egypt, that earthly rituals corresponded with angelic rituals in heaven, that angels could aid humans, and that humans could gain powerful support through introspection and visualization of heavenly domains.[76] Thus, monks reading about how the Logos turned toward himself and through prayer, remembrance and introspection, experienced communion with the heavenly beings above, would have found it familiar indeed.

The Origenist controversy at the turn of the fifth century coincided with the ban of not just Origen's writings but of other material that the victors of the ecclesiastical struggles considered potentially harmful, like apocryphal books.[77] However, these materials seem to have persisted in monasteries long

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[73] Compare for example *Tri. Trac.* and Origen's *Peri Archon.* See Alberto Camplani, "Momenti di interazione religiosa ad Alessandria e la Nascita Dell'Élite Egiziana Cristiana," in *Origeniana octava: Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition (Pisa 2001), volume I* (ed. Lorenzo Perrone; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), 31–42, see note 15. Jean-Daniel Dubois, "Le *Traité Tripartite* (Nag Hammadi I, 5) est-il antérieur à Origène? in *Origeniana octava: Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition (Pisa 2001), volume I* (ed. Lorenzo Perrone; Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 303–16.

[74] See Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena* (VCSup 120; Leiden: Brill, 2013).

[75] See for example Evagrius' *Antirrhetikos* where he lists scriptural passages which should be memorized and which were useful against unwanted emotions.

[76] These themes are explored in great detail, partly with a focus on the monastic movement, in Ellen Muehlberger. *Angels in Late Ancient Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[77] For more on this see Lundhaug and Jenott, *The Monastic Origins,* chapter 6.

after they started to be banned.[78] Why were monks not allowed to read apocryphal material and Origen? Some actually believed that apocryphal books were edifying if handled correctly,[79] but several authorities in the early monastic period expressed concern that not everybody could handle material that were considered speculative.[80] It was thought that those who did not possess the necessary knowledge and firmness of faith could easily be led astray by what they read.

The *Tripartite Tractate*'s anthropology is structured around a hierarchy of different levels of knowledge.[81] The *diplai* appearing at 119.23–27 mentions the psychics. The version of Valentinian anthropology that envisioned three separate human "races," (pneumatics, psychics and material), was well known to several Church Fathers and the distinction would not have sounded alien to someone familiar with scripture and ancient physiology.[82] What we encounter in the *Tripartite Tractate* is most likely an adaptation of Paul's comment on different kinds of Christians (1 Corinthians 2:6–16), which in turn drew on contemporary anthropology. People were thought to comprise a material part, a psychic part animating the material, and a pneumatic (sometimes referred to as noetic) part which gave life to the psyche (Soul).[83] In 1 Corinthians (2:6–16) Paul makes a distinction between *pneumatic* Christians who had the ability to grasp spiritual wisdom and *psychic* Christians who did not understand this higher form of knowledge. This idea, that some people have spiritual gifts and some do not, is also found in the *Interpretation of Knowledge* (15.10–19.37), but in the *Tripartite Tractate* the distinction between pneumatics and psychics

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[78] As suggested by Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins,* 177.

[79] See Lundhaug and Jenott's discussion of Priscillian and Ps.-Evodius and the use of apocrypha in monasteries in *Monastic Origins,* chapter 6.

[80] For a work on this theme, that only certain people were thought to be able to handle advanced theological questions, and especially for Origen's thoughts on this, see Gunnar af Hällström, *Fides Simpliciorum According to Origen of Alexandria* (Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum 76; Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1984).

[81] Linjamaa, *The Ethics of* The Tripartite Tractate, 159–84.

[82] Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses,* 1.5.6; Clement, *Exc,* 56.2; Hippolytus, *Haer.* 6.35.5–7. For a study on Valentinian anthropologic models, and Church Fathers reactions on them, see Ismo Dunderberg, *Gnostic Morality Revisited* (WUNT 347; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), chapter 7.

[83] Philo seems to have married the ancient Greek model, where *nous* gave life and rationality to the Soul, with the "Judeo-Christian" version where this was attributed to the breath of god, *pneuma.* Philo withheld that the *pneuma* gave life to the *nous,* which in turn animated the Soul that then organized and structured the body. See Geurt Hendrik van Koote, *Paul's Anthropology in Context: The Image of God, Assimilation to God, and Tripartite Man in Ancient Judaism, Ancient Philosophy and Early Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

(and hylics) is more like fixed human categories.[84] In the *Tripartite Tractate* we read that the pneumatics "are the apostles and evangelists, the disciples of the Savior, and they are teachers of those who need teaching."[85] The *psychics* are those who were "instructed by voice" (ϩⲓⲧⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲥⲙⲏ ⲉⲩ†ⲥⲃⲱ) (119.3). Spiritual teaching is distinctive as Paul wrote, it is, in the words of the *Tripartite Tractate*: "not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit" (119.3). We are told in the *Tripartite Tractate* that the pneumatics are "instructed in an invisible manner" by the Savior directly (115.1–2).

Many monks would undoubtedly have thought in similar ways. The idea that there are people with spiritual gifts and that there are degrees in knowledge was a common theme among monastic writers. Evagrius writes much about the different stages of learning and differs between degrees of knowledge, between outside knowledge which is reasoned forth with words, and a higher form of knowledge which is revealed directly to the mind.[86] He cautions against reading literature that can be hurtful for the novice: "It is not necessary for the knowledgeable to tell the young anything, nor to let them touch books of this sort, for they are not able to resist the falls that this contemplation entails."[87] Evagrius, as many other monks before and after, emphasizes that teaching and learning was directly related to spiritual warfare.[88] In the *Tripartite Tractate* the distinction between pneumatics and psychics also seems to be related to the topic of spiritual warfare.[89] We read that the pneumatic people have come to

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[84] This could, and should in my opinion, be problematized. I argue that there was in practice flexibility between these groups, but in theory they were fixed. A psychic who proved to be a pneumatic, a person who rose to a leader position would most likely have been considered a pneumatic all along. With fixed categories it would have been easier to explain shifts in social dynamics, for example a leader (a pneumatic) who left the group could be explained as a person who always was a hylic but people were just not aware until his/her hylic nature made itself known. Thus, I would thus like to add a nuance to Buell's discussion of fluid categories in *Tri. Trac.* Denise Kimber Buell, *Why this New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 126–28.

[85] 116.17–20: ⲛⲓⲁⲡⲟⲥⲧⲟⲗⲟⲥ ⲛⲉ· ⲙⲛ̄ ⲛⲓⲣⲙ̄† ϣⲙ̄ ⲛⲟⲩϭⲉ· ⲛ̄ⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲛ̄ⲇⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲩ ⲙ̄ⲡⲥⲱⲧⲏⲣ· ⲛⲉ ϩⲛ̄ⲥⲁϩ ⲇⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲩ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲉⲓ· ⲉⲧⲣ̄ ⲭⲣⲉⲓⲁ ⲛ̄ⲥⲃⲟⲩ. Text from Attridge, *Nag Hammadi Codex I*, 302.

[86] In *Gnostikos* 4, Evagrius differentiates between knowledge pertaining to the outside world which is connected to words and the knowledge of the inside, which appears to the mind directly through the grace of God.

[87] *Gnostikos*, 25. What books Evagrius refers to is unclear. Translation: Dysinger, except that I above translate the word γνωστικοί to knowledgeable while Dysinger just transliterates it to *gnostikoi*. I do this in order not to get mixed up with discussions of the category "Gnosticism." http://www.ldysinger.com/Evagrius/02_Gno-Keph/00a_start.htm

[88] See Evagrius, *Eight Spirits of Wickedness* and *Antirrhetikos*.

[89] This is certainly a theme in *Interp. Know.* also, see 6.30–32, 14.34–35, 20.14–23; but here the distinction between pneumatic and psychic people is not made as far as we can tell from those parts that are left of the text. Compare also Rom 8:38–39; 1 Cor 2:8, 15:25.

this world to "experience evils and train themselves through it" (126.33).[90] The operative word here is ⲡ̄ⲅⲩⲙⲛⲁⲍⲉ (γυμνάζω) which is a word used in patristic sources for the *exercise* of the Christian life,[91] especially higher spiritual life and moral perfection.[92] However, in a monastic context ⲡ̄ⲅⲩⲙⲛⲁⲍⲉ is also used for *preparing* to withstand attacks by evil demons, as in the *Life of Antony*.[93] In the *Tripartite Tractate* 119.23–27 we read that even psychic people, those who are not made to fight evil, will receive full salvation, a concept that surely would have been a comfort to monks who did not have the stamina of a spiritual warrior like Antony, who spent time alone in the desert grappling with evil demons. This corresponds well to what has been argued by Elaine Pagels and Lance Jenott, that there is a close correspondence between Codex I and the Letters of Antony (where Anthony is also engaged in battle against demons).[94]

These readings of the passages the scribe has highlighted in the *Tripartite Tractate* should suffice to demonstrate that they would have spoken to many monastic readers. The *diplai*-highlighted passages, discussing angelic warfare, the Logos and the psychics – which should be read as biblical interpretation and allegory (on Genesis 6, the Gospel of John and Paul's letters for example) – would undoubtedly have interested monks.

6. Conclusions and Implications

The scribal signs, the *nomina sacra*, *staurograms,* and colophon on page B all indicate that the owners of Nag Hammadi Codex I were devoted Christians. The fluctuating line length, word count, scribal styles and quire-composition do not support the hypothesis that Codex I was constructed by a professional bookseller constructing a commercial product on commission. A more informal production scenario is much more likely, for example the scenario drawn

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[90] ⲉⲩⲛⲁⲭⲓⳁⲡⲉ· ⲛ̄ⲛⲓⲡⲉⲑⲁⲩⲟⲩ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛ̄ⲥⲉⲣ̄ⲅⲩⲙⲛⲁⲍⲉ· ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲩ ⲛ̄ϩⲣⲏ̈ⲓ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧⲟⲩ. Attridge, *Nag Hammadi Codex I*, 320.

[91] See γυμνάζω in Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon,* 324.

[92] Clement, *Stromata,* 6.10, 7.7; Origen, *Contra Celsum,* 4.50; Basil, *Is.,* 172; Cyril H., *Catech,* 4.3; Gregory of Nyssa, *Hom. 4 in Cant*; Chrysostomos, *Hom 8.4 Heb.*

[93] See the Coptic *Life of Antony* 88:2. That there are many resemblances between Codex I and Antony's letters have been argued before, see Jenott and Pagels, "Antony's Letters," 557–89.

[94] Jenott and Pagels, "Antony's Letters," 557–89. It should be pointed out, however, that there is a discrepancy between the Antony in the *Life* and the one behind the letters. See for example Blossom Stefaniw, "Of Sojourners and Soldiers: Demonic Violence in the Letters of Antony and the Life of Antony," in *Violence, Education and Social Reproduction* (eds. Kate Cooper and Jamie Wood; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 185–203.

up by Lundhaug and Jenott for the Nag Hammadi library overall, that the codices were produced by monks and circulated in a monastic book exchange network.[95]

The *diplai* in the margins of the *Tripartite Tractate* highlight topics that would most likely have interested all monks, but in particular "Origenist" monks. The marked off passages deal with scriptural interpretation, descriptions of cosmic warfare; they partly connect to topics that would most probably have been targeted by authorities enforcing anti-Origenist and anti-apocryphal orders, like the doctrine of *apokatastasis* (connected to "blending" in the *Tripartite Tractate*) and theories about the configuration of the heavenly worlds.

Furthermore, the marked off passages deal with important topics within the text of the *Tripartite Tractate* itself, containing elaborations on the main character of the text (Logos), the nature of the angelic world, and the salvation of less knowledgeable Christians. The passages could have been selected as a summary of main themes, of passages that were considered in need of commentary and deliberation, or for ease of reference (for readers to find the passages more easily).[96]

Concerning the order of the texts in Codex I, Michael Williams has suggested that the collection is similar to the New Testament, beginning with words of Jesus and ending with commentary and elaborations (and perhaps the last missing text was a short apocalypse).[97] Some suggestions have also been made as to the purpose of the codex as a whole. Louis Painchaud and Michael Kaler have read Codex I, VII and XI as one big collection intended to be read as a whole, proposing that Codex I and XI (which they suggest are the first two books) prepare the reader for the expositions on revelation that comes in Codex VII (the third book of the collection).[98] Elaine Pagels and Lance Jenott have read Codex I as a curriculum for a fourth century Christian, seeking divine

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[95] One should, however, be careful of overstating the case that because there are errors in a text it is less likely to be a commercial product. Harry Gamble has argued that copyists working commercially were likely less experienced than, say, secretaries or scribes employed (or enslaved) by a wealthy bibliophile with a large correspondence. It was more common to get copies made privately, and we have ample evidence that known people's scribes were praised for their copying skills (like Cicero's copyist Tiro), rather than a certain commercial book making establishment, an utterly uncommon thing in antiquity according to Gamble. Nevertheless, if NHCI was a commercial product, it would be hard to determine its price (if it was determined by number and length of lines), which is a fact that speaks against the idea that it was a commercial product. Harry Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 85–93.

[96] Turner, *Greek Manuscripts,* 17, see also the manuscript 16, 21, 22 and 55 in Turner's work which all have *diplai* in the margin not unlike *Tri. Trac.*

[97] Williams, "Interpreting," 14–15.

[98] Painchaud and Kaler, "From the *Prayer of the Apostle Paul*": 445–69.

revelation.[99] The *diplai* sections in the *Tripartite Tractate* do not immediately offer support for these hypotheses and future ventures to find a purpose for the collection as a whole would need to take such paratextual features into account. Another possibility, as I suggested above, is to view the order of the texts as simply due to practical reasons, i.e. that the texts were copied in no particular order and that the *Treatise on the Resurrection* was skipped over because it was not at hand at the time but the scribe still wanted make sure that there was room for it before giving the rest of the space to the longest text, the *Tripartite Tractate*. If there ever was a purpose for the codex as a whole, it does not negate likelihood that the texts were also read separately. Whatever the case might be concerning the overall purpose of Codex I, it is nevertheless clear that the *diplai*-passages in the *Tripartite Tractate* include central themes popular in early monastic literature. This strongly supports one of Pagels and Jenott's points about Codex I in general and the conclusions drawn by Lundhaug and Jenott about the Nag Hammadi Codices overall.

Further systematic studies of the paratextual features of the Nag Hammadi Codices are needed and currently ongoing in the project "Who Would Have Read Heresy? A Study of the Scribal Signs in the Nag Hammadi Codices."[100] This research will hopefully add yet another nuance to the understanding of why and how the texts were read in their Egyptian fourth–fifth century context.[101]

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[99] Jenott and Pagels, "Antony's Letters," 557–89.

[100] Generously funded by the Swedish Research Council and conducted jointly at Lund University and Helsinki University during the years 2020–2022.

[101] See for example René Falkenberg, "The Making of a Secret Book of John: Nag Hammadi Codex III in Light of New Philology," in *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology* (ed. Liv Ingeborg Lied and Hugo Lundhaug; TUGAL 175; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 85–125.

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The *Thunder: Perfect Mind* and the Notion of *Epinoia* in Early Christianity

Tilde Bak Halvgaard

Among the separate studies on the *Thunder: Perfect Mind* (NHC VI,2), of which there are few, the main interest seems to be in the function of paradox.[1] And for good reason, since that particular literary device is not only characteristic and thoroughgoing in the text, it is also what makes the text enigmatically captivating and difficult to grasp.

In this article I shall focus on another feature in the *Thunder: Perfect Mind* (hereafter *Thunder*), namely the notion of *epinoia* (ἐπίνοια). This notion holds a central position with regard to Early Christian discussions on language and epistemology, which I shall argue creates an unexplored link between *Thunder* and the Early Christian tradition. This link is of special interest regarding the overall theme of the present volume, in that it allows us to approach a nuanced understanding of how a complex text such as *Thunder* may have resonated in a fourth–fifth-century monastic context.

My point of reference is the study by Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices*, in which they argue that the Nag Hammadi Codices were produced in a monastic context.[2] Lundhaug and Jenott give us, in my opinion, quite convincing examples of themes and motives in the Nag Hammadi texts which point to a fourth–fifth-century monastic origin. For instance, the *Letter to Rheginos* (a.k.a. the *Treatise on the Resurrection*) and the *Gospel of Philip*, in which we find discussions concerning the

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[1] See for instance: George W. MacRae, "The Ego-Proclamations in Gnostic Sources," in *The Trial of Jesus: Cambridge studies in honour of C. F. D. Moule* (ed. Ernst Bammel; SBT 13; London: SCM, 1970), 122–34; Bentley Layton, "The Riddle of the Thunder (NHC VI,2): The Function of Paradox in a Gnostic Text from Nag Hammadi," in *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and Early Christianity* (ed. Charles W. Hedrick and Robert Hodgson Jr.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson 1986), 37–54; Anne McGuire, "Thunder, Perfect Mind," in *Searching the Scriptures* (ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza; vol. 2 of *A Feminist Commentary*; New York: Crossroad, 1994), 37–54; Nanna Liv Elkjær Olsen, "Tordenen: Den fuldkomne bevidsthed – en bevidsthedssønderslående aretalogi," in *Den Sammenklappelige Tid: Festskrift til Jørgen Podemann Sørensen* (ed. Tim Jensen og Mikael Rothstein; København, Forlaget Chaos, 2011), 361–68.

[2] Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (STAC 97; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015).

resurrection of the flesh or body, which most likely reflect the Origenist controversy. Likewise, other central theological issues, for instance concerning the Eucharist, the incarnation, the apokatastasis as well as allegorical interpretations of especially Genesis are clearly present within many Nag Hammadi texts. Examples like these make it quite compelling to understand the Nag Hammadi Codices within a monastic setting. On the other hand, there are always exceptions, or at least difficult material, which does not fit easily into the fourth–fifth-century theological debates. *Thunder* is one such exception.

The author of *Thunder* does not seem to be concerned with central Christian dogmas concerning the Eucharist or the resurrection, nor is the text an allegorical interpretation or rewriting of Genesis. The question is thus: Is it at all possible to understand the placement of *Thunder* in a monastic context? And if not: Is *Thunder* an exception that could question the *Monastic Origin of the Nag Hammadi Codices*?

In this article I shall argue that *Thunder*, in fact, would have resonated quite well in a fourth-century context, but for quite different reasons than, for example, the *Letter to Rheginos* or the *Tripartite Tractate*. Rather, I shall suggest that *Thunder* above all is concerned with epistemology and as such it would have represented a poetic voice in Early Christian discussions about the "know-ability" of God, or more precisely the "name-ability" of God and Christ as it is represented in the writings of especially Origen, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Eunomius. In the work of these Early Christian thinkers, it appears that the notion of *epinoia* (ἐπίνοια) was particularly developed, and therefore I shall focus on the different conceptions of that term and analyse how it relates to the function found in *Thunder*.

1. *Thunder*'s Linguistic Manifestation

To begin with, the challenge to our task is to puzzle out not only the structure but also the contents of *Thunder*. In all its beauty, the text does not provide its reader with a narrative framework apart from a prologue (13.2–16) where the female revealer proclaims to be sent forth from the power.[3] Moreover, its contents seem at first glance to be endless series of monotonous paradoxical "I am"-proclamations, and these proclamations also seem to dictate the structure of the text into a one-piece, wave-like structure.[4] However, as I have argued

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[3] The prologue was identified by Paul-Hubert Poirier, *Le Tonnerre, intellect parfait (NH VI,2)* (BCNH.T 22; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1995), 103–12, see also 341–48.

[4] As early as 1975 Søren Giversen identified four elements in *Thund.* (self-proclamations, appellations, exhortations, and rhetorical questions) by which he navigated in order to detect an overall structure: Søren Giversen, "Jeg-er teksten i kodeks VI fra Nag Hammadi," in

elsewhere, certain features in *Thunder* do create a structure, and they are essential for understanding what is, in my opinion, the key concern of the text.[5]

I would like to draw attention to two passages 1) 14.9–15 and 2) 20.28–35. The first one of these passages is located in the beginning of the text immediately after the famous and much cited passage in which the revealer identifies herself with different female identities: "the honoured and the scorned one," "the whore and the holy one," "the wife and the virgin," etc. This type of proclamation, which is concerned with explicit female identities, is not resumed later in the text, except perhaps when the revealer proclaims to be the "Sophia of the Greeks" in 16.3–4. Instead, these proclamations are followed by the first of the passages I would like to discuss:

It is I who am the Silence
that is incomprehensible, and the Thought[6]
whose Remembrance is great.
It is I who am the Voice whose Sound
is manifold, and the Word whose form
is manifold. It is I who am the Utterance
of my Name. (*Thunder* 14.9–15)[7]

This passage is replete with linguistic terminology. The female revealer proclaims that she is Silence, Thought, Voice, Word and Utterance, and in addition, we have terms which belongs to the same vocabulary: Remembrance, Sound and Name. What we have is a *cluster* of linguistic terms, which is very similar to the sequence of manifestations found in the *Trimorphic Protennoia*, where Protennoia/Barbelo descends into the Underworld as Sound, Voice, and

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Hilsen til Noack: Fra Kolleger og medarbejdere til Bent Noack på 60-årsdagen den 22. august 1975 (ed. Niels Hyldahl and Eduard Nielsen; København: Gad, 1975), 65–80. See also Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures: A New Translation with Annotations and Introductions* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 77–85, in which he also structures the text by the formal shifts between "identity riddles" and "exhortations." Even though these formal shifts in the text do seem to show a structure of clusters they do not account for the thematic shifts which presents a slightly different structure. Thus, Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 103–12. Here he identifies 15 paragraphs by both formal and thematic shifts in the text.

[5] Tilde Bak Halvgaard, *Linguistic Manifestations in the Trimorphic Protennoia and the Thunder: Perfect Mind: Analysed against the Background of Platonic and Stoic Dialectics* (NHMS 91; Leiden: Brill, 2016), 102–5. I argue that *Thund.* has the following four-part structure: 13.1–14.15 ("Beginning"), 14.15–18.8 ("opposite social concepts"), 18.9–19.20 ("female revealer"), and 19.20–21.32 ("end"). Within these four parts, the passages that I call the "linguistic passages" take up central positions, which again emphasise their importance.

[6] Epinoia/ⲉⲡⲓⲛⲟⲓⲁ

[7] All translations from Coptic are my own. The Coptic follows the edition by Poirier, *Le Tonnerre, intellect parfait*, 175–99.

Word.[8] Compared to the above passage from *Thunder*, we are told that Protennoia exists within the Silence as the incomprehensible Thought (35*.1–36*.3). Together with a number of other similarities this establishes a strong connection between the two texts.[9] The distinctive manifestations described in *Thunder* and the *Trimorphic Protennoia* may be visualised in the following sequence:

<div align="center">

Silence – Thought – Sound – Voice – Word[10]

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It seems clear that this indicates a development, in which the revealers become more and more perceptible, not only audibly, but also epistemologically. Hence it is a movement which goes from the unintelligible Silence towards the highest level of intelligibility: The Logos. The revealers of the *Trimorphic Protennoia* and the *Thunder: Perfect Mind* thus perform *linguistic manifestations* as I suggest calling them.[11]

2. The Philosophical Background

This type of sequence is not an invention by the authors of *Thunder* and the *Trimorphic Protennoia*. We find a striking parallel in the Stoic theory on voice, their τέχνη περὶ φωνῆς, as it is transmitted by Diogenes Laertius in *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* VII, 55–57.[12] Here we find a description of how voice comes forth from within thought, first as an unarticulated sound (ἦχος-φωνή), which then becomes an articulate but unintelligible speech (λέξις-φωνή) and finally becomes fully articulate and intelligible in the rational word/sentence: the λόγος-φωνή. In this way, the Stoic sequence of a verbal expression may be

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[8] The linguistic vocabulary of Protennoia's manifestations occurs throughout *Trim. Prot.* See for example: 35*.32–36*.3 or 36*.9–27.

[9] Esp. their shared genre, the revelation monologue containing the characteristic "I am"-proclamations, and moreover that both texts seem to be inspired by Jewish Wisdom traditions. Some scholars have emphasised the particular "linguistic" similarities between *Thund.* and *Trim. Prot.*, most explicitly Paul-Hubert Poirier, "La triade son – voix – parole/discours dans la Prôtennoia Trimorphe (NH XIII,1) et ses sources," in *Gnose et Philosophie : Études en Hommage à Pierre Hadot* (ed. Jean-Marc Narbonne and Paul-Hubert Poirier; Collection Zêtêsis, Série "Textes et Essais"; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2009), 101–21; Poirier, *Le Tonnerre, intellect parfait*, 97. Nicola Denzey, "What did the Montanists read?" *HTR* 94 (2001): 427–78; and John D. Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition* (BCNH.É 6; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2001), 153 n23.

[10] In *Thund.* the Coptic sequence appears as follows: ⲕⲁⲣⲱϥ - ⲉⲡⲓⲛⲟⲓⲁ - ϩⲣⲟⲟⲩ - ⲥⲙⲏ - ⲗⲟⲅⲟⲥ.

[11] Halvgaard, *Linguistic Manifestations*, 1.

[12] Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum, Vol. I. Libri I–X* (ed. Miroslav Markovich, Stuttgart: Teubner, 1999).

seen as an excellent model for understanding the manifestations of Protennoia and the *Thunder*-revealer. This supports the assumption made by John Turner that the descents of Protennoia, which reflect an "increasing articulateness of verbal communication," could probably be of Stoic provenance.[13]

There is no doubt that for the Stoics the highest semantic level lies within the Logos, since the Logos is more or less identified with the highest God, Zeus. However, the Stoics were naturalists, and in relation to their understanding of how language relates to reality this means that they believed that names, i.e., what we might call "words," are attached *naturally* to the thing they name.[14] Thus, to the Stoics language is very useful in that it may, in fact, tell us something about reality.

Plato thought differently. As it appears in the *Cratylus*, Socrates advocates a naturalistic understanding of the relation between a name and its referent, but with certain reservations, since a thing or a concept cannot be understood through its name entirely. The name may be misleading or at least insufficient for describing the essence of the thing in question.[15] According to Plato, it is thus necessary to look at the thing itself, and not its name, in order to understand its essence. Hence, in Plato we encounter scepticism towards the utility of language for understanding reality.[16] This scepticism grows in the 2nd century CE and continues to grow in Neoplatonism.[17] So, it would seem that an author's conception of language and its relation to reality depended on the kind of cosmology that he subscribed to. The same scepticism is reflected in apophatic descriptions of the divine, which we know so well, also from the Nag Hammadi texts.

The linguistic manifestations in the *Trimorphic Protennoia* and the *Thunder: Perfect Mind* are fruitfully understood against the background of the Stoic sequence of a verbal expression. However, as the two texts operate primarily with a transcendent and unknowable divinity, I suggest that we turn the levels of intelligibility of the sequence upside-down. In the two Nag Hammadi texts, the highest semantic level is not in the Logos, but at the other end of the line: in the Silence. The goal is the Silence, so to speak.

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[13] Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 153.

[14] For instance, Francis Henry Sandbach, *The Stoics* (2nd ed.; London: Duckworth, 1989); Anthony A. Long, "Language and Thought in Stoicism," in *Problems in Stoicism* (ed. Anthony A. Long; London: Athlone, 1971), 75–113.

[15] For the general presentation of the *Cratylus*, I rely primarily on David Sedley, *Plato's Cratylus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); idem, "The Etymologies in Plato's Cratylus," *JHS* 118 (1998): 140–54; Simon Keller, "An Interpretation of Plato's Cratylus," *Phronesis.* 45 (2000): 284–305.

[16] Timothy M. S. Baxter, *The Cratylus. Plato's Critique of Naming* (Philosophia Antiqua 58; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 176.

[17] Raoul Mortley, *From Word to Silence. I: The Rise and Fall of Logos* (Theophaneia 31; Bonn: Hanstein, 1986), 124–25.

The emphasis on silence is repeated throughout the Nag Hammadi collection[18] and fits, from a general view, quite well into a monastic setting where solitude is a central feature in the withdrawal from conventional life in the attempt to approach God. In line with the Platonic attitude towards language, and the apophatic tendencies in Early Christian thought, it would seem that in order to contemplate God, you must refrain from speaking. The language of this world cannot describe him, for even though names are naturally attached to the things they name, they can never capture and describe the essence of that thing, and that applies to God in particular.

Returning now to the first linguistic passage in *Thunder*, we see that the first of the linguistic terms with which the revealer identifies herself is Silence. In the entire text, it is mentioned only here, and of all the linguistic terms, Silence is the only term which is described in apophatic language: "It is I who am the Silence that is incomprehensible" she says (14.9–10). The fact that the revealer in *Thunder* claims to be Silence is in itself a paradox, since she is anything but silent, rather she speaks incessantly about herself. However, in this linguistic context, Silence represents the level before any kind of sound, even before any thought. In other words: a silent state of mind containing no inner speech, which it is tempting to call a "*Perfect Mind*," evoking the title of the text. This reading suggests that *Thunder* points beyond the Stoic notion of *logos endiathetos* – the inner logos, the thoughts – to a perfect state of mind, which is nothing but pure silence.[19]

How does one obtain that silence? I suggest that one of the key concerns of the author of *Thunder* is in fact to answer that question. I base this suggestion on a number of analyses, which all take their point of departure in the linguistic manifestations found in the text.

3. The Epinoia of *Thunder*

After Silence the linguistic cluster of terms is developed by "the Thought whose Remembrance is great" (14.10–11). To be exact, the Greco-Coptic noun is ⲉⲡⲓⲛⲟⲓⲁ, which is usually translated by "afterthought" but captures a range of different meanings, all related to the noetic faculty: notion, concept, idea, intelligence etc. This is furthermore reflected in the different modern translations of *Thunder*, which vary between *idea*, *thought*, *afterthought,* or simply transliterated as *epinoia*. I prefer to render it "thought," thus following

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[18] See for instance, *Ap. John* III,1 6.20; *Gos. Eg.* III,2 40.18; *Val. Exp.* XI,2 22.22 etc.

[19] The Stoic notion of λόγος ἐνδιάθετος and λόγος προφορικός is attested by Philo, *Mos.* 2.127–29 (*FDS*, 539).

Paul-Hubert Poirier and Anne McGuire,[20] in order to maintain the cluster of linguistic concepts which echo a verbal expression: beginning from within thought, moving through sound and voice, and ending in words and sentences.

Comparing with other Nag Hammadi texts, we find within the Codex II version of the *Apocryphon of John* a description of Epinoia as the "Epinoia of light" and as "life" (II 20.17–19).[21] As she is also called the "Epinoia of the luminous Pronoia" (II 28.1–2) she must be understood as a part or manifestation of Pronoia/Barbelo.[22] She is a female spiritual principle, sent into the world to restore the deficiency of Sophia. She is the helper of Adam, the one who awakens him by giving him gnosis and thus making him remember. She is the mediator between the invisible and the visible worlds. She is Adam's teacher, instructing him "about the descent of his seed and about the way of ascent" (II 20.21–24).

What is of special interest to us is the identification of Epinoia with the tree of knowledge of good and evil (II 22.4–6). In the long recension of the *Apocryphon of John*, Christ appears in the form of an eagle sitting in the tree of knowledge (II 23.27–28), but in the short versions it is Epinoia who appears as the eagle and teaches the human beings about knowledge (III 30.17–19). In the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, we find a similar picture. Here, the female spiritual principle plays the same enlightening role as Epinoia in the *Apocryphon of John*. However, whereas Epinoia in the *Apocryphon of John* is identical with the tree of knowledge and/or the eagle, the female spiritual principle in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* incarnates in the snake in order to make the humans eat (II 89.31–90.18).[23] Regardless of the apparent differences, it seems clear that eating from the tree in both instances provides Adam and Eve with the divine knowledge of good and evil, and that they are made to eat by an aspect of Pronoia/Barbelo. In the *Apocryphon of John* we may even say that they eat *of* Epinoia, since she is the tree. As Karen King explains: "the

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[20] Poirier, *Le Tonnerre, intellect parfait*, 180–81; Anne McGuire, "The Thunder: Perfect Mind (CG VI,2 13.1–21.32)," http://stoa.org/diotima/anthology/thunder.shtml (website visited Oct. 2018).

[21] All references to *Ap. John* follow the critical edition of Michael Waldstein and Frederik Wisse, eds., *The Apocryphon of John: Synopsis of Nag Hammadi Codices II,1; III,1; and IV,1 with BG 8502,2* (NHMS 33; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 12–177.

[22] Cf. John Turner's description of her as an "avatar" of Pronoia/Barbelo in Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism,* 227.

[23] All references to *Hyp. Arch.* follow the critical edition of Bentley Layton, "The Hypostasis of the Archons," in *Gospel According to Thomas, Gospel According to Philip, Hypostasis of the Archons, and Indexes* (vol. 1 of *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7 Together with XIII,2*, Brit. Lib. Or. 4926(1), and P. Oxy. 1, 654, 655*; ed. Bentley Layton; NHS 20; Leiden: Brill, 1989), 234–59.

Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil ... is associated with the teaching of Ep-inoia (and Christ)."[24] Against this background, I do not think we ought to be indifferent to the fact that the female revealer in *Thunder* presents herself ex-plicitly as Epinoia. To the best of my knowledge, only Bentley Layton, in his introduction to *Thunder* in *The Gnostic Scriptures*, has previously emphasised this fact.[25] However, he does not elaborate further on this point.

The link between *Thunder* and the *Hypostasis of the Archons* is strengthened even further when we remember that the two texts share some material. The passage in the beginning of *Thunder*, which revolves around female identities, is parallel to passages in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (89.11–17) and in *On the Origin of the World* (also referred to as the *Treatise without Title*) (114.4–15). Bentley Layton analysed these parallels already in 1986 and suggested that the common literary antecedent could have been a certain "Gospel of Eve" mentioned by Epiphanius, but unknown to us.[26] I shall not go further into this, but point out the interesting feature that the passage in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* is located where Adam is awakened by the female spiritual principle inside Eve, and Adam addresses her as the mother, the midwife, and she who has given birth (89.4–16). She is the same figure who afterwards possesses the snake in order to make the human beings eat.[27]

In these interpretations of the Genesis account from Nag Hammadi, Epinoia and the female spiritual principle are thus associated with the life-giving knowledge. She is the one who awakens the human being, teaches him about good and evil, and at the same time she is herself identified with that teaching.[28]

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[24] Karen L. King, *The Secret Revelation of John* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 104; Halvgaard, *Linguistic Manifestations*, 118–19.

[25] Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 77.

[26] Layton, "The Riddle of the Thunder," 37–54.

[27] The relation between the female spiritual principle, Epinoia and Eve is complex due to their overlapping identities and functions regarding life, knowledge, and wisdom which, in the Nag Hammadi reinterpretations of Genesis, is connected to their identification with the trees of life and knowledge. A few scholars have dealt with this issue in detail, esp. Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, *The Nature of the Archons: A Study in the Soteriology of a Gnostic Treatise from Nag Hammadi (CG II,4)* (StOR 12; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1985); Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, "The Tree of Life and the Tree of Death: A Study of Gnostic Symbols," *Religion* 17 (1987): 337–53; Elaine Pagels, "Exegesis and Exposition of the Genesis Creation Accounts in Selected Texts from Nag Hammadi," in *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and Early Christianity* (ed. Charles W. Hedrick and Robert Hodgson; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1986), 257–85; Elaine Pagels, "Pursuing the Spiritual Eve: Imagery and Hermeneutics in the Hypostasis of the Archons and the Gospel of Philip," in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism* (ed. Karen L. King; SAC; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1988), 187–206.

[28] For the full version of my analysis of the role of the female spiritual principle and Epinoia in *Hyp. Arch.* and *Ap. John* and its relation to the Epinoia of *Thund.* see: Tilde Bak Halvgaard, "Life, Knowledge and Language in Classic Gnostic Literature," in *Women and*

The identification of Epinoia with opposite concepts such as good and evil is also what we meet in *Thunder*. Here the revealer proclaims that she is nothing but opposite concepts: She is war and peace, knowledge and ignorance, the wife and the virgin.[29] Even though *Thunder* is neither a rewriting of Genesis nor mentions the tree of knowledge, the parallel passages in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World*, together with the notion of *epinoia* in the *Apocryphon of John* demonstrate an inevitable link between *Thunder* and these texts. In my opinion, this link allows us to understand *Thunder's* linguistic manifestation in relation to the Genesis account of how Adam and Eve achieved the ability to conceptualize and differentiate between good and evil. Like Epinoia in the *Apocryphon of John* the revealer in *Thunder is* good and evil, she *is* the knowledge from the tree, which means that she provides the human beings with the ability of reflection and conceptualization which includes the ability of language.[30]

Consequently, I suggest that we do not consider the numerous paradoxes and antitheses in *Thunder* as pure nonsense, as has been suggested by Patricia Cox Miller among others.[31] They are not similar to the vocal mysteries, which we find in other Nag Hammadi texts,[32] which at some level *are* nonsense, at least to rational human minds. But the paradoxes in *Thunder* consist of logical words of things and concepts which are perfectly intelligible, they are simply paradoxes because they are contained in a single being.

I shall now jump to the end of *Thunder*, to the last linguistic passage:

It is I who am the Hearing that is receivable in everything.
It is I who am the Speech that cannot be grasped.
It is I who am the Name of the Voice and the Voice of the Name.
It is I who am the sign of the writing and the manifestation of the division.
And I … (*Thund.* 20.28–35)

There is much to be said about this short passage, but I shall focus on the last proclamation in which the revealer of *Thunder* claims to be the "manifestation of the <u>division</u>" (ⲡⲟⲩⲱⲛϩ̄ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ⲧⲇⲓϩⲉⲣⲉⲥⲓⲥ). The term division or *diairesis* is, in my view, best understood against the background of Platonic dialectics in which it designates a method of definition by division. The method is described

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Knowledge in Early Christianity (ed. Ulla Tervahauta et al.; VCSup 144; Leiden: Brill, 2017), 237–52.

[29] *Thund.* 14.32; 14.26–27; 13.19–20.

[30] This analysis is based upon my agreement with and development of previous scholarship that has emphasised the specific language-related contents of *Thund.*, esp. McGuire, "Thunder, Perfect Mind," 37–54; Patricia Cox Miller, "In Praise of Nonsense," in *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality. Egyptian, Greek, Roman* (ed. A. H. Armstrong; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 481–505; Poirier, *Le Tonnerre, intellect parfait*, 147–49.

[31] Patricia Cox Miller, "In Praise of Nonsense," 482–83.

[32] See for instance *Trim. Prot.* XIII 38*.29 or the *Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit* (a.k.a. *Gos. Eg.*) IV 54.1-13.

primarily in the *Sophist* and the *Phaedrus* where it appears as a method employed by the dialectician in order to obtain a precise definition and to grasp the true essence of a given concept through an investigation of its name. The *diairesis* was carried out through a systematic division of the genus (the concept in question) into subgenera, each of which was again divided into other subgenera until no further division could be made. Then the undividable concept, the *infima species*, was reached.[33] Of special importance are the following four points:[34]

1) The divisions were made between dichotomies/opposites.

2) A *diairesis* uncovers the complexity of a single concept, since it comprises all the different aspects that are encountered during the process of division. As such we may say that it is a *unity of the many*.

3) A *diairesis* is a process of remembrance: The opposites are recollected as *forms* and recognised as being part of the concept which is submitted to the process of division.

4) In the *diairesis*, the differences between the forms are recognised and defined only in relation to one another. In this way, we may say, for instance, that "non-being" actually exists *in relation* to "being." The inter-dependency of opposites is thus apparent.

If these features are taken into consideration in the attempt to understand the paradoxical identification with opposite concepts by the revealer in *Thunder*, we may cease to understand them as *paradoxes*. They are revealed, not as paradoxes, but rather as opposite concepts through the *diairetic* manifestation of Epinoia. She is the "manifestation of the division" between opposites, and thus between the way human beings conceptualize their world in good and evil – and as we saw above, the ability to conceptualize as such is given by the language-provider, Epinoia.

Following from all this, I suggest that one of the key concerns of the author of the *Thunder: Perfect Mind* was to make the hearers reflect upon language: Which building blocks language is made of, what it can be used for, and, per-

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[33] For the presentation of the term *diairesis*, I rely primarily on J. M. E. Moravcsik, "Plato's Method of Division," in *Patterns in Plato's Thought. Papers arising out of the 1971 West Coast Greek Philosophy Conference* (ed. J. M. E. Moravcsik, Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1973), 158–80; J. M. E. Moravcsik, "The Anatomy of Plato's Divisions," in *Exegesis and Argument. Studies in Greek Philosophy Presented to Gregory Vlastos* (ed. E. N. Lee et. al.; PhronSup 1; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1973), 324–48; James A. Philip, "Platonic Diairesis," in *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 97 (1966): 335–58; Ian M. Crombie, *An Examination of Plato's Doctrines, vol. II: Plato on Knowledge and Reality* (3rd impr.; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971); Stefano Minardi, "On Some Aspects of Platonic Division," *Mind* 92:367 (1983): 417–23.

[34] These points are described more elaborately in Halvgaard, *Linguistic Manifestations*, 17–25 and 158–62. The same goes for the Platonic notion of *diairesis* as such, and its utility for understanding the same term in *Thund*.

haps most importantly, where its limits are. The personified Epinoia thus represents the faculty for reflection and conceptualization, which implies language, and which the first human beings receive from the tree of knowledge in related Nag Hammadi literature.

However, the ultimate goal of the hearers is the incomprehensible Silence. That is the state beyond thinking, perhaps within the Perfect Mind. When reading *Thunder* from a language-philosophical point of view, this text, which has been called bizarre, baffling, enigmatic etc., makes very good sense. It reveals the dichotomizing structures of human language in order for human beings to see through language and abandon it or even transcend it to be able to rest and find the revealer (21.27–32).

This analysis places *Thunder* in strong relation to the so-called "Classic Gnostic"[35] texts and explains in more detail its presence within the Nag Hammadi collection. The question is now: How could it have been read in a monastic context? The focus on language, reflection and conceptualization is related to the broader epistemological interest, which circles around the human ability of knowing God and reality. Evidently, this interest was widespread in Late Antiquity, but the focus on language – and the use of a specific linguistic vocabulary to articulate this interest – is limited to a smaller group of texts, especially when we focus on the particular use of the term *epinoia*.

4. The Notion of Epinoia in Early Christianity

When investigating the term *epinoia* from the second to the fifth century CE, especially three thinkers stand out: Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and his brother, Basil of Caesarea. They are all main figures of Early Christianity and made a considerable impact – especially Origen – on early Egyptian monasticism,[36] which makes them interesting also for our purpose.

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[35] Following the definition by Tuomas Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered in Gnostic Mythmaking: Rethinking Sethianism in Light of the Ophite Evidence* (NHMS 68; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 54–62.

[36] Cf. Hugo Lundhaug, "Origenism in Fifth-Century Upper Egypt: Shenoute of Atripe and the Nag Hammadi Codices," in *Studia Patristica LXIV: Papers Presented at the Sixteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2011: Vol. 12: Ascetica; Liturgica; Orientalia; Critica et Philologica* (ed. Markus Vinzent; StPatr 64; Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 217–28; Graham Gould, "The Influence of Origen on Fourth-Century Monasticism. Some Further Remarks," in *Origeniana Sexta: Origen and the Bible. Actes du Colloquium Origenianum Sextum Chantilly, 30 août – 3 septembre 1993* (ed. Gilles Dorival and Alain le Boulluec; BETL 118; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1995), 591–98. Samuel Rubenson, "Origen in the Egyptian Monastic Tradition of the Fourth Century," in *Origeniana Septima: Origenes in den Auseinandersetzungen des 4. Jahrhunderts* (ed. Wolfgang

4.1 Origen

In Origen, the term *epinoia* appears especially in the unfolding of his Christology in the *Commentary on John*. In book one, Origen reflects upon the various epithets and functions attributed to Christ throughout *John*. Christ is presented as Truth, Way, Light, Door, Bread of Life, Resurrection etc. and these aspects are, according to Origen, to be understood as different *epinoiai*.[37] They are the good things to which the Son corresponds; as Origen writes: "Jesus is, in a way, many good things" (πολλὰ ἀγαθά ἐστιν ὁ Ἰησοῦς).[38] However, he does not only possess these *epinoiai* himself, but also on behalf of lower beings such as angels, powers, and especially human beings, in order that through his diversity of abilities they may be able to understand him, to be saved by him and led to perfection.[39] In this way, the many *epinoiai* representing and contained in the Son reflect his plurality, which to Origen means that Christ is everything that human beings need.[40] He is all the different aspects/*epinoiai* "because of us" (δι' ἡμᾶς) as Origen states.[41] According to Joseph Wolinski, this understanding relates to the ascension of the human soul into a spiritual state, which is brought about by the incarnation of the Logos (Jn 1:14). Through the different *epinoiai*, which the Logos carries, the human soul is capable of relating to him and understanding him and thus be led to perfection through him. Essentially this reflects the notion of the two natures of Christ. Human beings are not capable of grasping the divine nature of Christ, which necessitates the incarnation in flesh and other aspects (*epinoiai*) comprehensible to the human mind.[42]

Origen describes the different *epinoiai* of Christ as "the good things." They represent the different aspects through which human beings may know Christ and approach God. In fact, this understanding does not correspond altogether to the notion of Epinoia in *Thunder*, since in that text the revealer describes herself as opposites, that is, both good and not-so-good things, both "good and evil." Thereby we find ourselves in the same situation as when we compare *Thunder* to the Isis aretalogies, in which the "I am"-proclamations of Isis only

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A. Bienert and Uwe Kühneweg; BETL 137; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999) 319–37.

[37] Michael Ghattas, "Die *epinoia*-Lehre bei Origenes und Didymos dem Blinden von Alexandria," *Origeniana Septima* (ed. Wolfgang A. Bienert and Uwe Kühneweg; BETL 137; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999), 525; Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 1.52.

[38] Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 1.52 (Cécile Blanc, *Origène. Commentaire sur saint Jean* [SC 1; Paris: Cerf]).

[39] Ghattas, "Die *epinoia*-Lehre bei Origenes," 525, 529.

[40] Ghattas, "Die *epinoia*-Lehre bei Origenes," 525, 529.

[41] Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 1.119. See also Joseph Wolinsky, "Le recours aux epinoiai du Christ dans le commentaire sur Jean d'Origène," *Origeniana Sexta* (ed. Gilles Dorival and Alain le Boulluec; BETL 118; Leuven : Leuven University Press, 1995), 472–74.

[42] Wolinski, "Le recours aux *epinoiai* du Christ dans le *Commentaire sur Jean* d'Origène," 447.

present her in positive terms.[43] On the other hand, Origen treats carefully the saying from Rev 22:13, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end," which finds its parallel in *Thund.* 13.16, ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲧⲉ ⲧϣⲟⲣⲡ̅ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲑⲁⲏ ("for I am the first and the last"). He understands the saying as signifying the totality of Christ, i.e., he is everything: Πρῶτος οὖν καὶ ἔσχατος ὁ σωτήρ, οὐχ ὅτι οὐ τὰ μεταξύ, ἀλλὰ τῶν ἄκρων, ἵνα δηλωθῇ, ὅτι τὰ πάντα γέγονεν αὐτός ("the Saviour is therefore 'first and last,' not because he is not what is in the middle, but so that by the extremes he might show that he has become all things").[44] "The first and the last" becomes an idiom for "everything" (τὰ πάντα), and Christ is thus to be understood as containing extremes. Displayed as extremes, the concepts appear as opposites represented in and by Christ as he is first and last, high and low, heavenly and earthly, divine and human. As such the opposite extremes reflect the two natures of Christ – human and divine – by which he encompasses all aspects. In this way, we may assume that the "human" side of Christ is reflected in the inferior *epinoiai*.

It is especially interesting that Origen argues that the multiplicity of aspects, by which the Logos makes himself known to human beings, does not mean that he is a plurality. He manifests himself in a plurality of *epinoiai* in order for human beings to comprehend him in the specific way needed (as door, shepherd, vine or way); he remains nevertheless a unity, since he is the Logos and the "image" of God.[45] By partaking in the *epinoiai* of Christ, human beings are led to the divine unity.[46] This understanding corresponds to what we saw in *Thunder*, in which the personified Epinoia represented the dichotomising structure of human language by identifying herself with opposite concepts. These concepts cover all aspects of human life from the lowest identity and situation to the highest. They are parallel to Origen's understanding of the two natures of Christ and thus his conception of the plural diversity contained in the Logos and reflected in the *epinoiai*.[47]

To Origen the two natures of Christ and the diverse *epinoiai* are imperative for the salvation of human beings, because they open a passage through Christ

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[43] Already in 1970, George W. MacRae observed this important difference in his article "The ego-proclamations in Gnostic Sources," 133.

[44] Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 1.219. Modified translation from Joseph Trigg, *Origen* (London: Routledge, 1998), 137–38.

[45] Wolinski, "Le recours aux *epinoiai* du Christ," 482–86 ; cf. Col 1:15.

[46] Wolinski, "Le recours aux *epinoiai* du Christ," 490.

[47] In an interesting analysis, Theo Kobusch argues that Origen's understanding of *epinoiai* as aspects of Christ is a continuation of the Stoic differentiation between *epinoia* (ἐπίνοια) and *hypostasis* (ὑπόστασις). While I shall not investigate this issue here, it seems like a promising next step ("Die Epinoia – Das menschliche Bewusstsein in der antiken Philosophie," in *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium II* [ed. L. Karfíková et al.; Leiden: Brill, 2007], 8–10).

to God. Naturally, this is only possible as long as the Son and the Father are considered to be a unity, which was not the case for Arius.

Arius was influenced by Origen; nevertheless, his understanding of the Son as separate from and of a different nature than the Father also made his conception of the *epinoiai* differ from that of Origen. To Arius the *epinoiai* of Christ are *names* and nothing more.[48] Thus, they are not means by which human beings can approach God, since they are not aspects which in one way or the other capture the essence of God. They receive their contents from the Logos and the Wisdom and are only associated with the activities of Christ in relation to human beings.[49]

Arius' comprehension of the *epinoiai* of Christ as mere names signifies the epistemological nature of this discussion. It concerns the human ability of knowing God through Christ, which implies 1) an analysis of the interrelationship between the Father and the Son, and 2) an analysis of the utility of the different aspects/names of the Son. The latter relates to the language-philosophical debate concerning names and their referents, of which one of the earliest witnesses is attested in the *Cratylus*. As mentioned above, Plato's Socrates advocates a naturalistic approach to the relation between a name and its referent, but with such strong reservations that the conclusion implies a skepticism towards language, which is echoed in later apophatic theology. Even though names are naturally attached to the thing they name, they do not capture the essence of that thing/reality. Accordingly, Plato recommends looking at the thing/reality itself in order to grasp its true essence.

If the Son's names are reflecting, at least in part, his essence or nature, then they must be considered useful in the process of gaining knowledge of him and the Father. If, on the other hand, the Son is separated from the Father, the names cannot be of use in the process of approaching the Father. They remain names of the Son, and they only signify his human-related activities. This discussion continues into the following centuries, and it becomes particularly interesting in the debate between the Cappadocians and Eunomius, in which the notion of *epinoia* is developed in detail.

4.2 The Cappadocians

Origen's understanding of *epinoia* is partly continued by the Cappadocian fathers, especially Gregory of Nyssa and Basil of Caesarea. Like Origen, they

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[48] Rudolf Lorenz, *Arius judaizans? Untersuchungen zur dogmengeschichtlichen Einordnung des Arius* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 84–85.

[49] Lorenz, *Arius judaizans?*, 84–85. See also Ghattas, "Die *epinoia*-Lehre bei Origenes," 525–26.

use *epinoia* in the sense *conception*, *idea*, *notion*, *aspect* etc. regarding the various descriptions of Christ.[50] However, they also use it in the sense of "the *faculty* by which we form and deal with our conceptions of God."[51] *Epinoia* is thus not only a name or an aspect but also the noetic faculty through which human beings form those names i.e. the language-forming faculty. This meaning of the term signifies how the debate between the Cappadocians and the Arian bishop of Cyzicus Eunomius developed into a technical language-philosophical and epistemological one. The fundamental question at issue was how the limited human mind was related to and dealt with concepts, also (and perhaps especially) concepts of God.[52]

In my opinion, *Thunder* reflects similar considerations, but whether it correlates to the Cappadocian or the Neo-Arian interpretation of *epinoia* remains to be examined.

Against Eunomius, Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa defended the *epinoia* as the faculty to which the invention of names and concepts – that is: language – is ascribed. These names and concepts, they argued, reflected, were in accordance with, and revealed useful knowledge of the reality they named, even though they did not disclose the full essence of those things signified.[53] Because of this, Gregory praised the *epinoia* as the noetic location for cultural foundation.[54] He asked, if not from the *epinoia*, "where do we get higher studies from?" (πόθεν οὖν τῶν μαθημάτων τὰ ὑψηλότερα),[55] and with this question he lists a wide variety of sciences which depend on human mental conception: from geometry, arithmetic, and natural philosophy, to agriculture, navigation, and metaphysical speculation. He concludes:

ἔστι γὰρ κατά γε τὸν ἐμὸν λόγον ἡ ἐπίνοια ἔφοδος εὑρετικὴ τῶν ἀγνοουμένων, διὰ τῶν προσεχῶν τε καὶ ἀκολούθων τῇ πρώτῃ περὶ τὸ σπουδαζόμενον νοήσει τὸ ἐφεξῆς ἐξευρίσκουσα. νοήσαντες γάρ τι περὶ τοῦ ζητουμένου τῇ ἀρχῇ τοῦ ληφθέντος διὰ τῶν ἐφευρισκομένων νοημάτων συναρμόζοντες τὸ ἀκόλουθον εἰς τὸ πέρας τῶν σπουδαζομένων τὴν ἐγχείρησιν ἄγομεν.

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[50] Edward C. E. Owen, "ἐπινοέω, ἐπίνοια, and allied words," *JTS* 35 (1934): 374. See also the recent study by Anna Usacheva, *Knowledge, Language and Intellection from Origen to Gregory Nazianzen: A Selective Survey* (ECCA 18; Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2017), 99–101.

[51] Owen, "ἐπινοέω, ἐπίνοια, and allied words," 374.

[52] Kobusch, "Die Epinoia," 11.

[53] Mark DelCogliano, *Basil of Caesarea's Anti-Eunomian Theory of Names: Christian Theology and Late-Antique Philosophy in the Fourth Century Trinitarian Controversy* (VCSup 103; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 1.

[54] Kobusch, "Die Epinoia," 15.

[55] Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* 2.181 (Greek text from Werner Jaeger, *Gregorii Nysseni opera, vols. 1.1 & 2.2* [Leiden: Brill, 1960]; trans. Lenka Karfíková et al., eds., *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium II* [Leiden: Brill, 2007], 97).

As I see it, mental conception (*epinoia*) is the way we find out things we do not know, using what is connected and consequent upon our first idea of a subject to discover what lies beyond. Having formed an idea about a matter in hand, we attach the next thing to our initial apprehension by adding new ideas, until we bring our research into the subject to its conclusion. (Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* II.182)[56]

In this regard, the *epinoia* becomes not only the concept-forming faculty, but also the activity, which develops those concepts into complex knowledge. Therefore, the translation of *epinoia* into "mental conception" could perhaps be replaced by "idea" or "afterthought" as we see it in the translations of the Nag Hammadi texts.[57]

Following from this, I wish to point to another interesting detail of the Cappadocian conception of *epinoia*, which brings it even closer to the one we find in *Thunder*: the *dividing* function of the *epinoia*. The complex knowledge is prompted by logical *division* of a simple unity into a plurality. As in *Thunder*, the term used to describe this process is *diairesis* (διαίρεσις), thus it appears in Basil of Caesarea's *Contra Eunomium*:

Ὁρῶμεν τοίνυν, ὅτι ἐν μὲν τῇ κοινῇ χρήσει τὰ ταῖς ἀθρόαις ἐπιβολαῖς τοῦ νοῦ ἁπλᾶ δοκοῦντα εἶναι καὶ μοναχὰ, ταῖς δὲ κατὰ λεπτὸν ἐξετάσεσι ποικίλα φαινόμενα, καὶ πολλὰ ταῦτα τῷ νῷ διαιρούμενα, ἐπινοίᾳ μόνῃ διαιρετὰ λέγεται. Οἷον, τὸ σῶμα ἁπλοῦν μὲν εἶναί φησιν ἡ πρώτη ἔντευξις, ποικίλον δὲ ὁ λόγος ἐπιὼν δείκνυσι, τῇ ἐπινοίᾳ αὐτὸ εἰς τὰ ἐξ ὧν σύγκειται διαλύων, καὶ χρῶμα, καὶ σχῆμα, καὶ ἀντιτυπίαν, καὶ μέγεθος, καὶ τὰ λοιπά.

Therefore, let us first look at common usage: whatever seems simple and singular upon a general survey by the mind, but which appears complex and plural upon detailed scrutiny and thereby is divided by the mind – this sort of thing is said to be divided through conceptualization (*epinoia*) alone. For example, at first glance the body may seem to be simple, but when reasoning is used, it reveals that the body is complex, dissolving it through conceptualization (*epinoia*) into the things out of which it is constituted: color, shape, solidity, size, and so forth. (Basil of Caesarea, *Contra Eunomium* V.29.521–24)[58]

That which in reality is a unity the *epinoia* analyses and conceives as a plurality. It is the faculty which makes us capable of distinguishing between concepts and perceiving the plurality of a unity.

In this way, Gregory and his brother Basil ascribed much value to the *epinoia*, and thereby to the human intellect as such. They found the names and

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[56] Greek text from Jaeger, *Gregorii Nysseni opera*; trans. Karfíková et al., eds., *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium II*, 97.

[57] See for instance: Hal Taussig et.al., *The Thunder: Perfect Mind. A New Translation and Introduction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 2, who render it "idea"; Ingvild S. Gilhus and Einar Thomassen, *Gnostiske Skrifter. Utvalgt, oversatt og med et innledende essay av Ingvild Sælid Gilhus og Einar Thomassen* (Oslo: De Norske Bokklubbene, 2002), 84, who translate it as "ettertanken."

[58] PG 29; trans. Mark DelCogliano and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *St. Basil of Caesarea: Against Eunomius* (FC 122; Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 97–98.

concepts conceived there reliable in discerning what was perceived, since they could in fact provide complex knowledge of that thing. However, when it came to the names of God, the Cappadocians were of the opinion that none of these could capture his essence. The human mind is simply not capable of grasping God's substance. Anyone who claims to do so is arrogant.[59] The names by which human beings describe God may be useful and provide knowledge of him and his activities. This is in line with Origen's understanding of the *epinoiai* of Christ, as we discussed above. On the other hand, however valuable these names may be in approaching the Father and gaining knowledge of him, these names do not correspond to his substance or essence. In fact, "God's name is too great for human ears," Basil declared.[60]

4.3 Eunomius

Their opponent, Eunomius, did not have a very optimistic understanding of the *epinoia*. He claimed that it only provided us with useless understanding of fictitious and unreal things.[61] He drove the scepticism of human intelligence to the extreme by ascribing nothing more than empty imagination to the *epinoia*. As Theo Kobush observes, the *epinoia* "ist nicht konstitutiv für den Wesensbegriff einer Sache."[62] That is, the *epinoia* does not provide human beings with concepts or names that have anything to do with the reality they name. If we see this in relation to the discussion on names in the *Cratylus*, it would seem that Eunomius could be understood as advocating a *conventionalist* approach to naming, i.e. names are given by convention (νόμος) – they are human inventions – and not given by nature (φυσική). However, that is not the case, since Eunomius did not formulate a "theory of names" *per se*, but rather a "theory of divine names," which changes the picture altogether.[63]

Ἀγέννητον δὲ λέγοντες, οὐκ ὀνόματι μόνον, κατ᾽ ἐπίνοιαν ἀνθρωπίνην, σεμνύνειν οἰόμεθα δεῖν,ἐκτιννύναι δὲ αὐτῷ τὸ πάντων ἀναγκαιότατον ὄφλημα τῷ Θεῷ τὴν τοῦ εἶναι ὅ ἐστιν ὁμολογίαν. τὰ γάρ τοι κατ᾽ ἐπίνοιαν λεγόμενα ἐν ὀνόμασι μόνοις καὶ προφορᾷ τὸ εἶναι ἔχοντα ταῖς φωναῖς συνδιαλύεσθαι πέφυκεν, ὁ δὲ θεός, καὶ σιωπώντων καὶ φθεγγομένων καὶ γεγενημένων καὶ πρὸ τοῦ γενέσθαι τὰ ὄντα, ἥν τε καὶ ἔστιν ἀγέννητος.

When we say "Unbegotten," then, we do not imagine that we ought to honour God only in name, in conformity with human invention; rather, in conformity with reality, we ought to repay him the debt which above all others is most due God: the acknowledgement that he is what he is. Expressions based on invention (*epinoia*) have their existence in name and utterance only, and by their nature are dissolved along with the sounds [which make them up];

[59] DelCogliano, *Basil of Caesarea's Anti-Eunomian Theory of Names*, 136–38.
[60] DelCogliano, *Basil of Caesarea's Anti-Eunomian Theory of Names*, 139.
[61] Alcuin A. Weiswurm, *The Nature of Human Knowledge According to Saint Gregory of Nyssa* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1952), 131.
[62] Kobusch, "Die Epinoia," 11.
[63] DelCogliano, *Basil of Caesarea's Anti-Eunomian Theory of Names*, 26–27.

but God, whether these sounds are silent, sounding, or have even come into existence, and before everything was created, both was and is unbegotten. (Eunomius, *Liber Apologeticus*, 8.1–7)[64]

From this passage it appears that to Eunomius what was at issue was the term "unbegotten" (ἀγέννητος). According to Eunomius, that name reveals the very substance of God – he is unbegotten – and therefore it cannot be a product of human invention according to the *epinoia* (κατ᾽ ἐπίνοιαν).

He understands the *epinoia* as the faculty in which expressions take form, and whether they are uttered or not they dissolve together with, and like the sounds. By contrast, the name "unbegotten" captures the true essence of God, which is "unbegottenness" (οὐσία ἀγέννητος).[65] Therefore Eunomius must be analyzed as a naturalist with regard to the relation between a name and its referent, i.e. a name corresponds naturally to the thing/substance that it names.[66] However, that applies to divine names and names given by God only, because human language is insufficient and imprecise.[67]

Like Arius, Eunomius did not believe the Son to share the essence of the Father, since that would divide the unbegotten essence of the Father, and he would no longer be one. The Son, holding a secondary and "begotten" position in relation to the Father, can share neither his name nor his essence.

5. Conclusion

Returning to the opening question in the article, we should ask: Is it at all possible that *Thunder* would have resonated in a monastic context? If we read the *Thunder* against the background of a fourth century Christological, language-philosophical debate, I believe the answer to be positive. Comparable to these later debates, the *Thunder* revolves around the knowability of the divine, the role of language in this process and the specific understanding of *epinoia*. Especially the notion of *epinoia* in *Thunder*, which developed strongly from Origen and onwards, may have triggered a curiosity in fourth century theologians. With Origen, the term develops from meaning simply a "thought" into signifying the diverse concepts and aspects by which the Son manifested himself to human beings. The different *epinoiai* are names of the Son: He *is* the vine, the

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[64] Greek text from Richard Paul Vaggione, ed., *Eunomius: The Extant Works* (OECT; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); trans. ibid., 41–43. Word in parentheses is my insertion.

[65] Eunomius, *Liber Apologeticus* 7,13–15 (Vaggione, *Eunomius*, 40). DelCogliano, *Basil of Caesarea's Anti-Eunomian Theory of Names*, 33. Cf. also Weiswurm, *The Nature of Human Knowledge*, 129.

[66] DelCogliano, *Basil of Caesarea's Anti-Eunomian Theory of Names*, 44.

[67] Cf. Usacheva, *Knowledge, Language and Intellection*, 71, where she emphasises the absence of claims of full comprehension of the divine essence by Eunomius and Aëtius.

way, and the bread, and these names and functions are if not admission tickets, then ways in which human beings may gain access to the Father. Arius disagreed, to him the *epinoiai* were mere names, which could not signify the essence of the Son let alone of the Father, with whom the Son did not even share essence.

The debate continued into the fourth century, and the term *epinoia* developed into the noetic faculty in which names, words, and concepts were formed. It became the language forming faculty. But the issue at stake in the debate between the Cappadocians and Eunomius was whether one could trust that faculty to form names which corresponded to the essence of the things they named. They agreed that the names formed by the *epinoia* did not capture the essence of the thing in question. But whereas the Cappadocians believed the names to be of great value and to provide complex knowledge of the thing in question, Eunomius argued that everything which came out of the *epinoia* was useless, irrelevant and incorrect. To him the only true names were those given by God, and they were naturally attached to the things they named. The same applied to the name of God. According to Eunomius, the name "unbegotten" also signified God's essence. Against this, the Cappadocians argued that God's name "was too great for human ears," but the names formed by the *epinoia* could be helpful in approaching God.

Perhaps *Thunder* could have been read as a defense for a "Neo-Arian" understanding of Christ's names as *mere* names which tell us nothing about the essence of the Father? Or perhaps, on the other hand, some would consider *Thunder* to be closer to an "orthodox" understanding of *epinoia*, which understands human language as providing useful knowledge of things (and God), but which nevertheless is incapable of capturing the full and true essence of reality?

In my analysis of *Thunder*, I argued that the term *epinoia* was of paramount importance to the overall understanding of the text due to its language forming role in the mythological accounts in the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Hypostasis of the Archons*. If readers in the fourth century have read it in light of the debate about theological epistemology of that time, I believe this aspect would have been emphasized even stronger. Not only does it show that the *epinoia* was considered to be the language-forming faculty, but it also shows that *Thunder* is deeply concerned with language-philosophical and epistemological issues which are comparable to the fourth century debates.

The role of the *epinoia* in *Thunder* and the attitude to language as such is in my opinion consistent with the Origenistic and Cappadocian position, which considers the *epinoia* a positive faculty. In *Thunder* that faculty is personified, but it is nevertheless still associated with the linguistic manifestation of the divine. It provides names and concepts upon which the readers of the text may contemplate, and by means of which they may approach the divine. However,

like the Cappadocians, *Thunder* expresses a negative understanding of the ability of human language to capture the essence of the divine. This may be seen from the linguistic descent in *Thunder*, which invites the reader to begin his or her ascent in the Logos, but nevertheless to end in Silence. It invites its reader to go through language and to proceed beyond, where language is no longer sufficient.

The discussions accounted for here formed a large part in the Christological debates of the time of Origen and the Cappadocians, so it seems only likely that these thoughts reached the Egyptian monasteries providing yet another key for understanding the Nag Hammadi texts with fourth century minds.

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The Nag Hammadi Codices and Graeco-Egyptian Magical and Occult Literature[*]

Dylan M. Burns

Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott's 2015 monograph, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices*, does much to help us situate the production of the Nag Hammadi Codices in the context of Coptic Monastic literature from the fourth century and beyond. Significantly, Lundhaug and Jenott begin their monograph by dispatching with alternative theories regarding the provenance of the codices: groups of "Gnostics," as suggested by Doresse and, more recently, Alastair Logan. The suggestion that we are dealing with an Egyptian "Gnostic" library is, I agree, untenable, for the reasons that Lundhaug and Jenott outline.[1]

Meanwhile, inspired in part by the work of Aleksandr Khosroyev, Stephen Emmel has suggested that at Nag Hammadi, we have:

The products of a kind of Egypt-wide network (more or less informal) of educated, primarily Greek-speaking (that is, having Greek as their mother tongue), philosophically and esoteric-mystically like-minded people, for whom Egypt represented (even if only somewhat vaguely) a tradition of wisdom and knowledge to be revered and perpetuated. Perhaps they stood in the same tradition as that group of people who were responsible for producing texts (in Greek) ... that claimed to be translations of the old Egyptian priestly literature ... Once the idea of written Egyptian, in the form of standardized Coptic, became current (in the third century, let us say), it is easy to imagine a kind of rush to create a new "esoteric-mystical Egyptian wisdom literature" – being "Egyptian" above all by the virtue of being in Coptic rather than in Greek.[2]

[1] Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (STAC 97; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 56–73.

[2] Stephen Emmel, "The Coptic Gnostic Texts as Witnesses to the Production and Transmission of Gnostic (and Other) Traditions," in *Das Thomasevangelium: Entstehung-Rezeption-Theologie* (ed. Jörg Frey et al.; BZNW 157; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 48, re: Aleksandr Khosroyev, *Die Bibliothek von Nag Hammadi: Einige Probleme des Christentums in Ägypten während der ersten Jahrhunderte* (ASKÄ 7; Altenberge: Oros, 1995), 62, 98–102. Khosroyev's nod to Zosimus of Panopolis is also favored by Przemysław Piwowarczyk and

Lundhaug and Jenott reply that Emmel's hypothesis is unlikely. Rather, they argue,

The Nag Hammadi texts were most likely translated into Coptic so that they could be read and understood by Coptic speakers who had inadequate knowledge of Greek…It is unlikely that people who belonged to the urban elite would have translated literary texts like these from Greek into Coptic, or that they would have chosen to read such texts in Coptic rather than in Greek if both were available. There is simply no indication that urban intellectuals would have read literary texts in Coptic.[3]

"There is simply no indication that urban intellectuals would have read literary texts in Coptic." I cannot contest this statement. The mysterious character of the origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices owes, as Khosroyev, Emmel, Lundhaug, and Jenott all recognize, to the fact that the books contain texts in Coptic. Moreover, even if we acknowledge the possibility of their manufacture in the fifth or even sixth centuries CE,[4] the Nag Hammadi Codices retain their position as some of the earliest Coptic literary manuscripts we possess. If we prefer the traditional, earlier dating of roughly mid-fourth century CE, the translation of their contents into Coptic and the subsequent production of the books stand next to the beginnings of Coptic literature itself. This is why Lundhaug and Jenott's move to contextualize the codices in fourth and fifth-

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Ewa Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin of the Nag Hammadi Codices?" *Adamantius* 23 (2017): 446, 452. On Zosimus, see further below. The present approach to the question, however, is chiefly inspired by the phrasing of Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 170–71: "Both collections illustrate that interlocking of the technical and philosophical approaches ... The overall emphasis of the Thebes cache is technical, that of the Nag Hammadi codices philosophical and theological. But there is enough common ground to confirm that the view of Hermetism we find in Zosimus and Iamblichus reflected a broader consensus" (ibid., 172). The "Thebes cache" (or "Theban Magical Library") is an archive of third–fourth-century CE Greek and Demotic scrolls containing formularies of magical texts; it constitutes a vitally important part of the PGM (Greek Magical Papyri) discussed below, n. 5, but is not coterminous with it. On the discovery of the Theban Magical Library, see Korshi Dosoo, "A History of the Theban Magical Library," *BASP* 53 (2016): 251–74, followed by Jacco Dieleman, "The Greco-Egyptian Magical Papyri," in *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic* (ed. David Frankfurter; RGRW 189; Leiden: Brill, 2019), 292–93. "These two papyrus collections are tangible products of Upper Egyptian milieux related to, though linguistically at least more native than, that of the Hermetica. The only other comparable source we have is the alchemist Zosimus" (Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*, 173; followed by Michèle Mertens, "Introduction historique," in Zosimus of Panopolis, *Mémoires Authentiques* [ed. and trans. by Michèle Mertens; Les Alchemistes Grecs 4; Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1995], xi–cxii, xvii; Emilio Suárez de la Torre, "The Library of the Magician," in *Contesti magici = Contextos mágicos: atti del convegno internazionale, Roma, Palazzo Massimo, 4-6 novembre 2009* [ed. M. Piranomonte and F.M. Simón; Roma: De Luca editori d'arte, 2012], 302). Fowden rejects the hypothesis of the monastic origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices, with caution (*Egyptian Hermes*, 172–73, n. 69).

[3] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 101.

[4] On this window of dating, see Emmel, "The Coptic Gnostic Texts," 38.

century Egyptian monasticism is so important and compelling: monasticism furnished one of the very few literary cultures we know to have existed for the Coptic language during the period in which the Nag Hammadi manuscripts were made, and it is certainly the context where we have the most plentiful evidence. While some scholars have looked towards the scribes behind the grand Coptic editions of Manichaean texts discovered at Medinet Madi, the trajectory of investigation into Manichaean evidence to understand the Nag Hammadi Codices remains tertiary at best.[5] So although we know Egyptian Hellenophones like Zosimus to have been very interested indeed in the sort of literature we have preserved at Nag Hammadi, Lundhaug and Jenott remind us that we do not know of any specifically Coptic literary culture of the fourth–sixth centuries in which individuals like Zosimus featured. Khosroyev and Emmel, in taking the Nag Hammadi Codices as our sole evidence of such a group of bilingual, esoterically-minded, "conversation partners" for Zosimus, can offer us only speculations as to whether such individuals even existed, much less how they could be related to the manufacture and production of the Nag Hammadi Codices.

However, we do know of a bilingual, scribal culture that existed in fourth–sixth century Egypt, produced and traded materials which share content with the Nag Hammadi texts and likely appealed on some level to Zosimus's esoteric interests, and which was at times also networked with scribes of literary texts: the world of private incantations and rites that scholars sometimes, for heuristic reasons, refer to as the world of late antique Egyptian "magic."[6] While

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[5] The question of Manichaean origins for the NHC has been discussed in Khosroyev, *Bibliothek*, 104–31 and is suggested in Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin," 457. This is hardly to preclude the possibility of Manichaean intertexts with some Nag Hammadi texts; see recently Dylan M. Burns, "Gnosis Undomesticated: Archon-Seduction, Demon Sex, and Sodomites in the *Paraphrase of Shem* (NHC VII,1)," *Gnosis* 1–2 (2016): 140–44; René Falkenberg, "What Has Nag Hammadi to Do with Medinet Madi? The Case of *Eugnostos* and Manichaeism," in *The Nag Hammadi Codices in the Context of Fourth- and Fifth-century Christianity in Egypt* (ed. Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott; STAC 110; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 261–86.

[6] The present study is less interested in "magic" *per se* – a contested term, to say the least – than various ancient texts and devices used to pursue private, practical goals via ritualized interactions with superhuman forces (see Dieleman, "Greco-Egyptian Magical Papyri," 283). These texts and devices are best known today from the PGM (see above, n. 2) and concomitant Demotic, Coptic, and Jewish evidence. For heuristic reasons, the adjective "magical" is here used loosely to discuss these sources. Numeration and text of the PGM follows the standard edition of Karl Preisendanz and Albert Henrichs, eds., *Papyri Graecae Magicae* I–II (2 vols.; Stuttgart: Teubner, 1973–1974), and the translation in Hans-Dieter Betz, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986). The secondary literature on "magic in the ancient Mediterranean world" is vast; for bibliography and summary of the attendant debate(s), see William Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey; Annotated Bibliography (1928–1994)" in

Lundhaug, Jenott, and others have provided us with many suggestive parallels between Nag Hammadi and Egyptian monastic texts, we also know that a number of Nag Hammadi texts make use of *voces magicae*, *nomina barbara*, and prayers we also find in magical recipes and formularies. Conversely, some scribes of magical texts made use of Gnostic terminology or literary traditions that are found in the Nag Hammadi literature, suggesting their operations in milieux where such Gnostic terminology had currency.

The various work on "magic and Nag Hammadi" has been spread across many disparate publications, and so it is worthwhile, in any case, to bring all these materials together in a single article, if nothing else to facilitate further research into Graeco-Egyptian magic and Nag Hammadi alike. The difficulty posed by the material – and, this author hopes, the concomitant need for a survey of it – may perhaps be brought into relief by observing that in David Frankfurter's mammoth *Guide to Ancient Magic* (2019), there is no chapter on the interface of Gnostic and Egyptian magical literature.[7] Therefore, the present contribution shall gather the various intertexts between Nag Hammadi and magical literature, and evaluate their import for the "monastic hypothesis." In short, the many *voces magicae* and invocations shared between some Nag Hammadi texts and contemporary Graeco-Egyptian magical literature reminds us that an important aspect of the Nag Hammadi texts answers directly to the

ANRW II.18.5 (ed. Wolfgang Haase; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1995), 3391 n. 4; Marco Frenschkowski, "Magie," *RAC* 23 (2009): 857–957, esp. 858–76; Michela Zago, "Le nom physique du Dieu," in *Noms Barbares I: Formes et contexts d'une pratique magique* (ed. Michel Tardieu, Anna van den Kerchove, and Michela Zago; Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études 162; Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 207 n. 4; more recently, Bernd-Christian Otto, "Towards Historicizing 'Magic' in Antiquity," *Numen* 60 (2013): 308–47; David Frankfurter, "Ancient Magic in a New Key: Refining an Exotic Discipline in the History of Religions," in *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic* (ed. David Frankfurter; RGRW 189; Leiden: Brill, 2019), 3–20. Stimulating is Bernd-Christian Otto, "Historicizing 'Western Learned Magic'," *Aries* 16 (2016): 162–82. Even thorough treatments often neglect the subject of "Jewish magic," for which see Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), esp. 34–69. A crucial critique of "magic" is Jonathan Z. Smith, "Trading Places," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* (ed. Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki; RGRW 129; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 13–28; for a response to Smith that emphasizes the virtues of the pragmatic (without actually settling on defending the term "magic"), see Frankfurter, "Ancient Magic in a New Key," 11–12, 20. Cf. the approaches of Kocku von Stuckrad, "Astral Magic in Ancient Jewish Discourse: Adoption, Transformation, Differentiation," in *Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition* (ed. Gideon Bohak, Yuval Harari, and Shaul Shaked; JSRC 15; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 250–51 (suggesting focus on works presupposing a "doctrine of correspondences"), or Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith, eds. and trans., *Early Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 1–7 (suggesting focus on "ritual power").

[7] Despite mention of the issue (as bound up with "mysticism") by Frankfurter himself ("Ancient Magic in a New Key," 18–19) and a brief engagement by van der Vliet (discussed below).

world of ancient magic. Comparison to other Egyptian literature of late antiquity should continue apace, but we must regard it as a given that the Nag Hammadi texts are deeply connected to the greater "*koinē*" of late ancient Egyptian magic.

This fact brings up some interesting questions regarding the origins of the Nag Hammadi *manuscripts* (as opposed to the Nag Hammadi *texts*, which evince remarkable "textual fluidity"),[8] for the context of Graeco-Egyptian and Coptic magical literature of late ancient Egypt furnishes us with a bilingual, scribal milieu that was active at the same time that the Nag Hammadi Codices were produced, and that was distinct from the monastic phenomenon – but which also has significant overlaps with it. In other words, looking towards other scribal milieus relevant to the NHC may not bring us to urban, Hellenophone intellectuals, but it may bring us to those trading in and producing magical texts – and these individuals included monks. On the other hand, some of the Nag Hammadi evidence – above all NHC X, containing the work *Marsanes* – should lead us to ask if there existed, at least for a very short time, individuals interested in alchemy, Gnostic and Hermetic literature, and what we might – given their reception-history in the modern world – loosely term "occult sciences," who did want to read about these "esoteric" topics in Coptic after all.[9]

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[8] For a useful, recent discussion of the importance of distinguishing between texts and manuscripts in the study of ancient and medieval literature in general, and on the key notion of "textual fluidity" – "the fact that in a manuscript culture, texts are inevitably changed, both intentionally and unintentionally, when they are copied, and so they develop, sometimes in major and significant ways, along their histories of transmission" – see Hugo Lundhaug and Liv Ingeborg Lied, "Studying Snapshots: On Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology," in *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology* (ed. Liv Ingeborg Lied and Hugo Lundhaug; TUGAL 175; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 1–19 (quote immediately preceding at 9). Lundhaug and Lied are inspired in part by the emphasis laid on *mouvance* (fluidity) in medieval literature and manuscripts by the medievalist Paul Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, translated by Philip Bennet (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992). On textual fluidity in the Nag Hammadi Codices, see Hugo Lundhaug, "An Illusion of Textual Stability: Textual Fluidity, New Philology, and the Nag Hammadi Codices," in *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology* (ed. Liv Ingeborg Lied and Hugo Lundhaug; TUGAL 175; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 20–54, and now idem, "Textual Fluidity and Post-Nicence Rewriting in the Nag Hammadi Codices," in *Nag Hammadi à 70 ans. Qu'avons-nous appris? (Colloque international, Québec, Université Laval, 29-31 mai 2015)* (ed. Eric Crégheur, Louis Painchaud, and Tuomas Rasimus; BCNH.É 10; Leuven: Peeters, 2019), 47–67.

[9] I use the term "occult" in this essay to denote the elements of the ancient materials at hand that have enjoyed such a vibrant reception-history in religious currents, from the sixteenth century to today, that are commonly known as "occult sciences": astrology, alchemy, and magic (see Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "Occult/Occultism," *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* [ed. Wouter J. Hanegraaff, Antoine Faivre and Roelof van den Broek; Leiden: Brill, 2004], 887; see also Christopher Partridge, "Introduction," in *The Occult World*

And even if we regard the world of Egyptian monasticism as the sole Copto-phone scribal milieu we know of that could have produced the NHC, then we must highlight that some of these Coptophone monks were very interested in-deed in the sort of literature that preoccupied intellectuals like Zosimus.

[ed. Christopher Partridge; Routledge Worlds; London: Routledge, 2015], 3–6). These ele-ments in ancient materials include use of *voces magicae* and *nomina barbara* in the invoca-tion and praise of certain superhuman beings, cryptography, alchemy, and references to the efficacious properties of syllables and words for interacting with angels. Discourse about "occult" practices is inextricable from, but not identical to, that regarding what scholarship sometimes refers to as "(Western) esotericism" (Hanegraaff, "Occult/Occultism," 888). For recent survey of methodological considerations regarding both "occult(ism)" and "eso-teric(ism)," see Julian Strube, *Sozialismus, Katholizismus und Okkultismus im Frankreich des 19. Jahrhunderts. Die Genealogie der Schriften von Eliphas Lévi* (RVV 69; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 12–23. On the heuristic use of the terms "esoteric" and "occult" in an ancient context given the importance of ancient and medieval sources for the development of "eso-teric" and "occult" currents of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Dylan M. Burns, "μίξεώς τινι τέχνῃ κρείττονι – Alchemical Metaphor in the *Paraphrase of Shem* (NHC VII,1)," *Aries* 15 (2015): 103; idem, "Ancient Esoteric Traditions: Mystery, Revelation, Gnosis," in *The Occult World* (ed. Christopher Partridge; Routledge Worlds; London: Routledge, 2015), 17, 26–29; cf. also Partridge, "Introduction," 2–3. On the intertwined his-tories of the earliest modern publication and reception of the PGM and the *voces magicae* found in the Askew and Bruce Codices, see Dylan M. Burns, "Gnosticism, Gnostics, and Gnosis," in *The Gnostic World* (ed. Garry Trompf, Jay Johnston, and Gunnar Mikkelsen; Routledge Worlds; Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), 16–17, with reference to the key discussion of Brashear, "Greek Magical Papyri," 3406, 3422. For the pivotal role played by the Theo-sophical Society in popularizing early research about the Askew and Bruce Codices in rela-tion to ancient magic and the modern "occult revival," see Antoine Faivre, "Le terme et la notion de 'Gnose' dans les courants ésotériques occidentaux modernes (essai de périodisa-tion)," in *Les textes de Nag Hammadi: Histoire des religions et approches contemporaines* (ed. Jean-Pierre Mahé, Paul-Hubert Poirier, and Madeleine Scopello; Paris: AIBL – Diffu-sion De Boccard, 2010), 94–95; Dylan M. Burns, "Weren't the Christians Up Against a Gnostic Religion? G.R.S. Mead at the Dawn of the Modern Study of Gnosticism," in *Hermes Explains: Thirty-One Questions about Western Esotericism* (ed. Wouter J. Hanegraaff, Peter Forshaw, and Marco Pasi; Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press), 60–69; further work on this question is apace in Sweden, undertaken independently by Petter Spjut and Paul Lin-jamaa. On the reception of Coptic Gnostic materials in contemporary magick, see recently Jay Johnston, "Binding Images: The Contemporary Use and Efficacy of Late Antique Ritual Sigils, Spirit-Beings, and Design Elements," in *New Antiquities: Transformations of Ancient Religion in the New Age and Beyond* (ed. Dylan M. Burns and Almut-Barbara Renger; Lon-don: Equinox, 2019), 254–74; however see also Otto, "Historicizing," 187–88, on the limited impact of the PGM on ritual magick in the early twentieth century.

1. *Voces Magicae* and Superhuman Beings

The interface of the content of the Nag Hammadi texts with our Graeco-Egyptian magical evidence is largely focused on the names of angels, demons, and deities shared between the two sets of corpora. Howard Jackson's classic study of "The Origin in Ancient Incantatory *Voces Magicae* of Some Names in the Sethian Gnostic System," for instance, not only reviewed the evidence regarding the names Sabaōth, Yaladabaoth, Barbelo, Yao, and Abraxas – all commonplace names in magical texts – but showed how less well-known names, such as Abrana, Archentechtha, Banenephroum, Barbar, Bissoum, and more – appear both in the PGM and in the list of angelic creators of Adam's psychic body in the long recension of the *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II,1 15.29–19.10 and par.). Taking up the example of Abraxas, Jackson observes that our earliest certain attestation of the name is to be found in Irenaeus of Lyons' report on the thought of Basilides, and therefore of early second-century coinage;[10] yet, given Abrasax's ubiquity in magical papyri and gems, Jackson presumes that Basilides "borrowed the name from the magic tradition." Basilides's pilfering of the figure of Abraxas from magical texts, on Jackson's reading, is the best way to explain how Abrasax became a Gnostic deity *par excellence*.[11] In the same fashion, he avers, did the Gnostics "pillage the 'glossolalia' of the sorcerers."[12] More recently, Einar Thomassen has shown that the name "Meirotheos" – hitherto only known from the Sethian texts *Zostrianos*, *First Thought in Three Forms*, *Gospel of the Egyptians*, and the *Three Steles of*

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[10] Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.24.7.

[11] Howard M. Jackson, "The Origin in Ancient Incantatory 'Voces Magicae' of Some Names in the Sethian Gnostic System," *VC* 43 (1989): 75. Useful, more recent treatments of many of the same names include Attilio Mastrocinque, *From Jewish Magic to Gnosticism* (STAC 24; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005); Brashear, "Greek Magical Papyri," 3422–23; Zago, "Le nom physique du Dieu"; Anna van den Kerchove, "Les noms barbares dans le traité gnostique Melchisédek (NH IX, 1)," in *Noms Barbares I: Formes et contexts d'une pratique magique* (ed. Michel Tardieu, Anna van den Kerchove, and Michela Zago), 265–85; Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin," 446, 452. It is to my regret that the present article was already in press at the time of the publication of Przemysław Piwowarczyk, *Lexicon of Spiritual Powers in the Nag Hammadi "Library" in the Light of the Texts of Ritual Power* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2021), which should be the starting-point for subsequent research on this set of data.

[12] Jackson, "Origin," 71. Similarly, Brashear, "Greek Magical Papyri," 3423: "on the whole, the papyri were not so much influenced by Gnosticism as Gnosticism was by magic"; Suárez de la Torre, "The Library of the Magician," 302. Mastrocinque draws the opposite conclusion: "what we have referred to as Gnostic magic was in fact the Gnostic religion. The prayers inspired by Gnosticism in magical papyri were part of this religion ..." (*From Jewish Magic*, 204).

Seth – appears in a famous Aramaic inscription alongside the name Sēsēngēn Barpharangēs (an Aramaic name, as demonstrated by Gershom Scholem).[13]

Indeed, it is well-known that other beings from the "Sethian" corpus at Nag Hammadi populate Greek and Coptic magical texts, chief among them being the Barbeloite-Sethian "Four Luminaries," particularly Ēlēlēth.[14] The name Ēlēlēth – usually together with Davithe, who also is found independently of Ēlēlēth in some magical texts – appears in many extant texts, ranging in date from the third or fourth century CE to the end of the first millennium. I have surveyed this material recently elsewhere, and so will discuss it here only in brief.[15] A cogent (if late) example is the recently-published Macquarie magical codex, where, for instance, the magician invokes Sabaōth "in the name of Mōsēl, Piēl, the great Hermōsēl, Hermōpiēl, Elēthe, Davithe, Ēlēlēth, Souriaēl – these who are within the four great luminaries, luminous, ineffable. Davithe, prepare for me your 240,000 angels ..."[16] This passage is part of a longer invocation with which the codex begins, an invocation that incorporates material also known from BL Or. 5987 and P. Berol. 5527.[17] The editors of the codex – Malcolm Choat and Iain Gardner – thus envision here a lost source shared between these disparate MSS, which they hypothesize to have been a "Sethian

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[13] Einar Thomassen, "Sethian Names in Magical Texts: Protophanes and Meirotheos," in *Gnosticism, Platonism, and the Late Ancient World: Essays in Honor of John D. Turner* (ed. Kevin Corrigan et al.; NHMS 82; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 71–75; Gershom Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1960), 84–100; see also Brashear, "Greek Magical Papyri," 3440.

[14] Noted by Marvin Meyer, ed. and trans., *The Magical Book of Mary and the Angels (P.Heid.Inv.Kopt. 685). Text, Translation, Commentary* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1996), 79; Christoph Markschies, *Gnosis: An Introduction* (trans. John Bowden; London: T&T Clark, 2003), 96; Dylan M. Burns, *Apocalypse of the Alien God: Platonism and the Exile of Sethian Gnosticism* (Divinations; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 196 n. 16; van den Kerchove, "Les noms barbares," 279.

[15] Dylan M. Burns, "Magical, Coptic, Christian: The Great Angel Eleleth and the 'Four Luminaries' in Egyptian Literature of the First Millennium C.E.," in *The Nag Hammadi Codices in the Context of Fourth- and Fifth-century Christianity in Egypt* (ed. Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott; STAC 110; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 141–62.

[16] *P.Macq. 1*, 2.21–27; for the text, see Malcolm Choat and Iain Gardner, eds. and trans., *A Coptic Handbook of Ritual Power (P.Macq. I 1)* (Macquarie Papyri 1; Turnhout: Brepols, 2014). See also ibid., 2.6–12, 4.11–19, 5.13, 7.26–8.1, 10.18–19 (re: Davithe, as well as other well-known figures from magical and Gnostic literature: Seth, Bainchooch, and Sēsēngēnbarpharankēs). See also Jacques van der Vliet, "Christian Spells and Manuals from Egypt," in *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic* (ed. David Frankfurter; RGRW 189; Leiden: Brill, 2019), 342.

[17] Walter E. Crum, *Catalogue of the Coptic Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1905), 418 (no. 1008), re-edited in Choat and Gardner, *Coptic Handbook*, 107–10; Walter Beltz, "Die koptischen Zauberpapyri der Papyrus-Sammlung der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin," *APF* 29 (1983): 61.

Gnostic" text.[18] Similar appearances of Ēlēlēth and/or Davithe may be adduced, from BL Or. 6794, as well as the famous "Magical Book of Mary" (*P.Heid.Inv.Kopt. 685*) and parallel versions of the "prayer of Mary."[19]

Nor does all of the evidence regarding Ēlēlēth's appearances in magical spells postdate the Nag Hammadi corpus. Roy Kotansky has published a Greek spell written on gold-foil (probably an amulet) that beseeches Ēlēlēth et al. to heal an epileptic named Aurelia.[20] Amongst those invoked are the "God of Abraham," "Lord Iaō, Sabaōth," "Raphaēl, Gabriēl ... Abrasax," and "Sesengenbarpharangēs Iaō aieiuaei Iēou Iaō Sabaōth, Adōnaie, Ēlēlēth, [I]akō." Kotansky dated the amulet on palaeographical grounds to the third century CE, while Kearsley demurred, arguing the amulet's use of the Chi-Rho sign and a "Gnostic" deity are signs of its production in the fourth century.[21] Regardless, the amulet's implication for the development of Sethian Gnostic mythologoumena is the same: by the fourth century CE (i.e., contemporary with the earliest possible date for the production of the Nag Hammadi Codices), we see at least one of the Barbeloite-Sethian "Four Luminaries" at work in a Greek magical text from Egypt.

It is here worth recalling the final treatises of NHC VI, the Hermetic works *Asclepius*, a *Prayer of Thanksgiving*, and the *Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth*. Here too, we find textual units and *nomina barbara* shared with the Graeco-Egyptian magical papyri. A version of the Hermetic *Prayer of Thanksgiving* (in both its Coptic and Latin versions) is to be found in the Mimaut Papyrus (Paris Louvre N 2391).[22] Michela Zago has observed further that the

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[18] Choat and Gardner, *Coptic Handbook*, 34–35.

[19] *P. Lond. Or.* 6794 1.6–17, in Angelicus Kropp, ed. and trans., *Ausgewählte koptische Zaubertexte* (3 vols.; Brussels: Édition de la fondation égyptologique, 1930–1931), 1:29–30, 2:104–5; Meyer, *Magical Book*, 5, 58.

[20] Roy Kotansky, "Two Amulets in the Getty Museum: A Gold Amulet for Aurelia's Epilepsy: An Inscribed Magical Stone for Fever, 'Chills', and Headache," *J. Paul Getty Museum Journal* 8 (1980): 181–84.

[21] Kotansky, "Two Amulets," 181; cf. R. A. Kearsley, in *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity, Volume 6: A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri published in 1980–81* (ed. S. R. Llewelyn, with R. A. Kearsley; Macquarie University: Ancient History Documentary Research Centre, 1992), 195.

[22] *Pr. Thanks.* 63.33–65.7 = *Asclepius* 41 (Arthur Darby Nock and André-Jean Festugière, eds. and trans., *Corpus Hermeticum. Tome II: Traites XIII –XVIII: Asclepius* [Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1945], 353–55) = PGM III.591–609; see Jean-Pierre Mahé, *Hermès en Haute-Égypte: Les textes hermétiques de nag hammadi et leurs parallèles grecs et latins, Tome I* (BCNH.T 3; Québec: Les Presses de l'université Laval, 1978), 15–16; Dieleman, "Greco-Egyptian Magical Papyri," 299–300. Hypotheses regarding the stemma of the source are summarized by Michela Zago, "Le pneuma éloquent: Un parallèle entre le *Papyrus Mimaut* et NHC VI,6," in *Pensée grecque et sagesse d'orient: Hommage à Michel Tardieu* (ed. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi et al.; Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études Sciences Reli-

noun phrase "spirit of speaking" (ⲡⲓⲡ̅ⲛ̅ⲁ̅ ⲛ̅ϯ ϣⲁϫⲉ) in the *Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth* (53.31) echoes the phrase "eloquent spirit" (πνεῦμα λεκτικόν) in the Mimaut Papyrus (PGM III.588) as well.[23] The same Hermetic treatise employs strings of vowels which are cut with rows of omegas – amounting to 36 omegas in all – and the *nomina barbara* ⲍⲱⲝⲁⲑⲁⲍⲱ and ⲍⲱⲍⲁⲍⲱⲉ.[24] The latter recall the name of the fourth hypothesis generated by the laughing creator-god in the Leiden *Kosmopoïa* (also known as the *Eighth Book of Moses*): Ζωθαξαθωζ (PGM XIII.177).[25] Meanwhile, Christian Bull has recently suggested that the 36 omegas recall the 36 decans of Egyptian (and Hermetic) astrological lore; "the vowels and magical names clearly point in the direction of ritual performance, namely the singing of hymns, and were probably meant to convey the visionary through the fixed stars separating the material world from the Ogdoad."[26]

Our evidence regarding names for deities and angels, and *nomina barbara* more widely, that are shared between Gnostic, Hermetic, and magical texts and manuscripts has yielded surprisingly few answers to questions focused on priority and dating. What the example of the "Sethian Gnostic" Four Luminaries in late Egyptian magical literature shows is that it is impossible to establish whether a being like Ēlēlēth was "originally" "Gnostic" (much less "Sethian") and then became "magical," or vice-versa; the same is true with the example of Abrasax, or the Hermetic "Prayer of Thanksgiving" and the Mimaut Papyrus, or the name ⲍⲱⲝⲁⲑⲁⲍⲱ, etc. Rather than engage in this kind of chickenor-egg reasoning, we can simply observe that the Nag Hammadi texts and Egyptian magical texts belong to a common, Graeco-Egyptian religious *koinē*

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gieuses 142; Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 716–17 n. 9. See also Alberto Camplani, "Procedimenti Magico-Alchemici e Discorso Filosofico Ermetico," in *Il Tardoantio Alle Soglie del Duemila: Diritto Religione Società: Atti del Quinto Convegno Nazionale dell'Associazione di Studi Tardoantichi* (ed. Giuliana Lanata; Associazione di studi Tardoantichi, Atti dei Convegni 5; Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2000), 86.

[23] "Le pneuma éloquent"; followed by Christian H. Bull, *The Tradition of Hermes Trismegistus: The Egyptian Priestly Figure as a Teacher of Hellenized Wisdom* (RGRW 186; Leiden: Brill, 2018), 347.

[24] See recently Camplani, "Procedimenti," 91; Zago, "Le pneuma éloquent," 722 n. 37.

[25] An etymology of the name Ζωθαξαθωζ has been proposed by Mahé, *Hermès*, 106–7, but Bull's ingenious analysis with reference to magical gems featuring Horus (*Tradition of Hermes*, 339–42; Christian H. Bull, "Monkey Business: Magical Vowels and Cosmic Levels in the *Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth* (NHC VI,*6*)." *SMSR* 83 [2017]: 82–84) confirms the rival thesis of Michela Zago that the name phrase derives from a spell to make a leontocephalic Horus one's assistant or familiar spirit ("L'emploi des noms divins dans la *Kosmopoiia* (*PGM* XIII)," *Mediterranea* 4 [2007]: 208–9). On the *Eighth Book of Moses*, see further below.

[26] Bull, "Monkey Business," 75–94.

that goes back to the first century CE,[27] in which angels and *voces magicae* we know from Gnostic and Hermetic literature were also adapted by a variety of writers, scribes, and practitioners for their own purposes in "magical" texts. "The papyri show the spectacular role played by these magicians in a kind of underground labour of intercultural communication. Within those texts all frontiers (regional, cultural, religious, linguistic) disappeared. They succeeded in expanding a striking cultural *koinē* and, at the same time, they subtly showed that the Egyptian cultural canvas could harmonise universal wisdom ... for very practical aims."[28] As the references I have given in this section to post-Conquest material make clear, this Egyptian "magical *koinē*" survived late antiquity, extending into the world of the late first millennium CE. It also extended across defined religious boundaries: continuity in use of *voces magicae* and *charaktēres* is observable in the transition of the polytheistic worldview of so much of the PGM to the Christian cosmos that underlies virtually all Coptic magical texts, and in the apparent influence of Coptic Christian magic in Jewish spells found at the Cairo Genizah.[29] This is true for our Gnostic mythologoumena as well, as the cameo of Norea and six archontic angels from the *Apocryphon of John* in an eleventh-century CE incantation against male impotence discovered at the Cairo Genizah shows.[30]

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[27] On this *koinē*, see, e.g., Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*, 171–72; Suárez de la Torre, "'Library' of the Magician," 305 (quoted below); von Stuckrad, "Astral Magic," 251; Dieleman, "Greco-Egyptian Magical Papyri," 312–15. The characteristic "*voces magicae*, name formulae, vowel permutations, and *charaktēres* start to appear on first-century CE manuscripts … by the second c. CE, Greco-Egyptian idiom and more traditional Egyptian texts were no longer two exclusive categories" (Dieleman, "Greco-Egyptian Magical Papyri," 319–20).

[28] Suárez de la Torre, "'Library' of the Magician," 305, emphasis author's.

[29] See Otto, "Historicizing," 186–87; van der Vliet, "Christian Spells," 329–30. Conversely, magical texts also served as vehicles to draw and codify religious boundaries, as between late ancient "Jews" and "Christians"; see Ra'anan Boustan and Joseph Sanzo, "Christian Magicians, Jewish Magical Idioms, and the Shared Magical Culture of Late Antiquity," *HTR* 110 (2017): 217–40, esp. 233–40.

[30] The incantation forms part of a trio of spells, preserved on Genizah fragment T.-S. K. 1.162. See Reimund Leicht, "Gnostic Myth in Jewish Garb: Niriyah (Norea), Noah's Bride," *JJS* 51 (2000): 133–40. For text and translation, see Peter Schäfer and Shaul Shaked, eds. and trans., *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza. Band 3* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), § 61 1c 1.34–49, pp. 70, 76. For the dating of the fragment to the eleventh century on palaeographical grounds, see Schäfer and Shaked, *Magische Texte*, 65.

2. Three scribes of magical texts: Dioscurus and the Ophite Titles in PGM 13a, Besa and Valentinian features in PGM P21, and the Manichaean Vales

"These techniques are obviously inventions of a scribal mindset ... Greco-Egyptian private ritual was clearly the product of a scribal class."[31] What do we know about the scribes behind this "magical *koinē*" in which Gnostic mythologoumena and *nomina barbara* featured so prominently? The cases of two scribes – Besa, the scribe of a Greek Christian *charitēsion* of the fourth to sixth-centuries CE, and the sixth-century scribe made famous by Leslie Mac-Coull, Dioscorus of Aphrodito[32] – tell us that some of the scribes dealing with names and literary traditions central to the Nag Hammadi texts were bilingual.[33] Meanwhile, the case of the Manichaean scribe Vales, whose scribal network extended to the Manichaean community at Kellis, shows that there was some overlap between bilingual scribes of magical texts and networks of scribes producing literary texts.

A straightforward case of the sort of dynamics at work between Egyptian magical and Gnostic corpora has been discussed in recent articles by Theodore De Bruyn examining Papyrus Wessely Pragensis Graecus 1 (aka PGM P21), a Greek Christian *charitēsion* ("good luck charm") against demons. Palaeographic analysis of the charm have tended towards the fifth and even sixth centuries CE, although De Bruyn argues that the fourth century cannot be excluded.[34] De Bruyn contends that several features in the spell, particularly the description of the Son as the "name" and "form" of the father, may be usefully designated "Valentinian," since they recall the language distinctive language used for the Son in the *Gospel of Truth* from Nag Hammadi.[35] "It is not inconceivable," he states, that Besa, "the writer of the papyrus, who gives his name

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[31] Dieleman, "Greco-Egyptian Magical Papyri," 286.

[32] Leslie MacCoull, *Dioscorus of Aphrodito: His Work and His World* (Transformations of the Classical Heritage; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

[33] On Copto-Greek bilingualism in Coptic magical texts more generally, see van der Vliet, "Christian Spells," 328–29.

[34] Theodore De Bruyn, "A Late Witness to Valentinian Devotion in Egypt?" *ZAC* 18 (2013): 131–32.

[35] De Bruyn, "A Late Witness," 127–30; idem, "An Anatomy of Tradition: The Case of the *Charitēsion*," *ARG* 16 (2015): 41–42. On the Son as the "Name" of the Father in *Gos. Truth*, see Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the 'Valentinians'* (NHMS 60; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 162–63, and esp. Matthew Twigg, "Becoming Paul, Becoming Christ: The Nag Hammadi Apocalypse of Paul (NHC V,2) in Its Valentinian Context" (D.Phil. diss.; Regent's Park College, 2015), 48–64. I set aside here De Bruyn's less convincing argument that the spell's use of the *nomen sacrum* χρή(στο)ς with the very rare orthography including ēta, rather than the more common χρί(στο)ς, recalls the epithet for Jesus of Nazareth x̅p̅h̅(сто)с̅ that appears at *Tri. Trac.* NHC I 136.1.

in a postscript written in Coptic" – note the scribe's bilingualism – "was affili-
ated with them [i.e., Valentinians]." The spell then "is an example of how a
set formula ... was adapted by incorporating the language and conventions of a
particular cultic idiom," namely Valentinianism.[36] For De Bruyn, this spell is
a good example of how *charitēsia* in general show how ancient scribes of mag-
ical texts would "convey tradition ... by making one's own what is or has been
someone else's (or what is everyone else's), however proximate or remote the
cultic orientation of the material being appropriated. This activity of adaptation
is both the product and the producer of 'authoritative tradition'."[37]

Meanwhile, some names for the first principle we know from the Ophite
Gnostic works *Eugnostos the Blessed* and the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* also ap-
pear in an incantation that is preserved in multiple texts.[38] These epithets are
ⲡⲁⲛⲧⲟⲕⲣⲁⲧⲱⲣ, ⲡⲣⲱⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ, ⲁⲩⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ: "almighty, first begetter, self-
begetter." While ⲡⲁⲛⲧⲟⲕⲣⲁⲧⲱⲣ is a common epithet for God the Father, Christ,
or the Holy Spirit in early Christian literature, in the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* it
is used to denote Yaldabaoth, the malevolent world-ruler.[39] Meanwhile, both
Eugnostos the Blessed in NHC III and the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* in BG em-
ploy the rarer word ⲁⲩⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ to describe the self-generating character of
the Father.[40] Finally, both *Eugnostos* in NHC III and the *Wisdom of Jesus
Christ* in NHC III and BG use the term ⲡⲣⲱⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ for a variety of heav-
enly beings.[41] The three epithets appear in a row in a sixth century Greek pa-
pyrus, P. Cair. Masp. II 67188 verso – also known as PGM 13a – an apotropaic

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[36] De Bruyn, "Anatomy of Tradition," 42; with more reserve, cf. De Bruyn, "A Late Wit-
ness," 130–31.

[37] De Bruyn, "Anatomy of Tradition," 45.

[38] On the "Ophite" Gnostic literary tradition, see Tuomas Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsid-
ered in Gnostic Mythmaking: Rethinking Sethianism in Light of the Ophite Evidence* (NHMS
68; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 9–62.

[39] On usage of the term παντοκράτωρ for the Father, Christ, or the Holy Spirit in early
Christian literature, see PGL 1005. For use of the term for the evil world-creator in *Wis. Jes.
Chr.*, see NHC III 107.3–4; BG 103.15, 119.9. Both usages are well-attested in Coptic.

[40] NHC III 75.7; BG 107.4. The term αὐτογενέτωρ was allegedly used by Marcus Magus
for the Logos (Ir. *Haer.* 1.14.3, cit. PGL 268b); ⲁⲩⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ is also used with reference to
the Christ-aeon in *Ap. John* BG 34.9, 35.8.

[41] For ⲡⲣⲱⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ as the heavenly Adam, see *Eugnostos* NHC III 81.10, paralleled
in *Wis. Jes. Chr.* NHC III 105.11 and BG [100].12. For ⲡⲣⲱⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ as the male name
of one of the six androgynous beings begotten by the Savior with Pistis Sophia, see *Eugnos-
tos* NHC III 82.16. For ⲡⲣⲱⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ as the Son of Man and Savior, see *Eugnostos* NHC
III 85.13; further, *Wis. Jes. Chr.* BG 108.4. For ⲡⲣⲱⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ as Christ, the Son, see *Wis.
Jes. Chr.* NHC III 104.15 and BG [99].7, [99].14. It has been suggested to emend the refer-
ences at BG [99].7, [99].14 to ⲡⲣⲟⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲛⲏⲧⲟⲥ, but I follow Barry in leaving the text as it
stands; see *La Sagesse de Jésus-Christ (BG,3; NHC III,4): Texte établi, traduit et commenté*
(ed. and trans. Catherine Barry; BCNH.T 20; Québec: Les Presses de l'université Laval,
1993), 76. The term ⲡⲣⲱⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ is also used for the benevolent demiurge ("Son") in the
so-called *Untitled Treatise* in Codex Bruce; see *The Books of Jeu and the Untitled Treatise*

invocation copied by Dioscurus of Aphrodito. Recognizing these names, Mac-
Coull hypothesized that the "pairing of the" terms "leads us straight into the
world of Nag Hammadi Gnosticism."[42] Observing the proximity of Nag Ham-
madi and the White Monastery, MacCoull speculated further about "a trans-
mission of Gnostic writings from Sohag downriver to Antinoe, and/or all the
way to Alexandria where Dioscorus had studied philosophy as well as rhetoric
... In these five lines we see him in typical Egyptian fashion, making his own
deal with the unseen."[43]

The path from Dioscurus "into the world of Nag Hammadi Gnosticism" is
not as "straight" as MacCoull makes out. All three epithets – ⲡⲁⲛⲧⲟⲕⲣⲁⲧⲱⲣ,
ⲡⲣⲱⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ, and ⲁⲩⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ – only appear in the *Wisdom of Jesus
Christ* (ⲡⲁⲛⲧⲟⲕⲣⲁⲧⲱⲣ is not extant in *Eugnostos*), and only in the version in
BG. Nor does BG feature the epithets in a row, as we find in P. Cair. Masp. II
67188 verso/PGM 13a; it uses the epithets for a variety of beings who appear
at different stages of its theogonies. In any case, David Jordan has pointed out
that the apotropaic invocation copied by Dioscurus is centuries older; a version
of it is found on a terracotta bowl from Antinoopolis dated to the third cen-
tury.[44] According to Jordan, "the papyrus text we have today is unlikely to be
anything other than a traditional incantation, superficially Judaeo-Christian-
ized and used now for protection rather than divination; Dioskoros would no
doubt have jotted it down as a model for whenever he or his clients might re-
quire a papyrus amulet."[45]

So much for MacCoull's hypothesis of Dioscurus's knowledge of Gnostic
writings. Rather, Dioscurus knew an older invocation, as evidenced by the ter-
racotta bowl identified by Jordan; the epithets used to invoke the deity in the
spell, ⲡⲁⲛⲧⲟⲕⲣⲁⲧⲱⲣ, ⲡⲣⲱⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ, and ⲁⲩⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ, were also used in
very different contexts in the version of the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* in BG, and
the terminology extends further, with still different usages, in *Eugnostos* and
the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* in NHC III. Nonetheless, the evidence nonetheless
serves as a stark reminder of the mutual penetration of the worlds of magical
and Gnostic texts, here through their shared use of distinctive combinations of

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in the Bruce Codex (ed. Carl Schmidt; trans. Violet MacDermot; NHS 13; Leiden: Brill,
1978), 249.9–10, 250.3–4, 257.7–12.

[42] Leslie MacCoull, "P. Cair. Masp. II. 67188 Verso 1–5: The Gnostica of Dioscurus of
Aphrodito," *Tyche* 2 (1987): 95.

[43] MacCoull, "Gnostica," 97.

[44] *Suppl. Mag.* II 65 (Robert W. Daniel and Franko Maltonmini, eds. and trans., *Supple-
mentum Magicum Vol. II* [PapyCol 16.2; Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1992], 71–75).

[45] David R. Jordan, "A Prayer Copied by Dioskoros of Kome Aphrodites (PGM 13a),"
Tyche 16 (2001): 88. We need not follow the implication of Jordan's remarks – that the
prayer is "non-Christian" and only "superficially Judaeo-Christianized" by Dioscurus – to
acknowledge that Dioscurus was working with older material which shares a combination
of epithets also found in *Eugnostos* and *Wis. Jes. Chr.*

epithets for superhuman beings. Altogether, then, we can say that in roughly the third century CE – i.e., prior to the manufacture and burial of the Nag Hammadi Codices, including *Eugnostos* and the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* – the epithets ⲡⲁⲛⲧⲟⲕⲣⲁⲧⲱⲣ, ⲡⲣⲱⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ, ⲁⲩⲧⲟⲅⲉⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣ already were being used together for the supreme God in at least one Greek incantation. The epithets wound up in these Coptic "Ophite" texts as well, referring to a variety of beings, but the earlier, Greek incantation continued to be used until at least the sixth century, when the bilingual scribe Dioscurus took a fancy to it.

Finally, we also know of Manichaean scribes trading in magical incantations, as shown by Paul Mirecki, Iain Gardner, and Anthony Alcock, in their seminal article about the scribe Vales, a Manichaean copying a magical text and sending it to Pshai, a Manichaean scribe at Kellis.[46] Indeed, given that "the features of Vales' writing style ... evidence a scribal convention concerning 'text layout' (line and column design), similar to that found, for example, in the seven Medinet Madi codices,"[47] we can state in all certainty that non-monastic producers of fourth–fifth-century CE Coptic literary manuscripts could – and did – produce and exchange magical spells. Just as Lundhaug and Jenott remind us that the scribal colophons in the Nag Hammadi manuscripts indicate a network of bilingual, Coptophone scribes exchanging these works,[48] the case of Vales reminds us that bilingual, Coptophone scribal networks could involve the production and trading of both literary and magical texts.

3. *Zostrianos* (NHC VIII,1) – the Colophon, the *Charaktēres*, the Bodmer Amulet (P. Bod. XLIII), and the "Prayer of Seth" (P. Berol. 17207)

We see all this come together in the case of *Zostrianos* (NHC VIII,1) which shows us how some features of texts we usually associate with magical literature can be blended even into a highly literary Nag Hammadi text, and one at that which also shares an important intertext with other Nag Hammadi documents as well as a Greek incantation. Most famous is its colophon written in code; as Dieleman (followed by Lundhaug and Jenott) observes, the key to this same code has been found in a writing exercise unearthed at a monastery.[49]

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[46] Paul A., Mirecki, Iain Gardner, and Anthony Alcock, "Magical Spell, Manichaean Letter," in *Emerging from Darkness: Studies in the Recovery of Manichaean Sources* (ed. Paul A. Mirecki and Jason D. BeDuhn; NHMS 43; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 1–32, re: P. Kell. Copt. 35.

[47] Mirecki, Gardner, and Alcock "Magical Spell," 4.

[48] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 205–6, 213–14.

[49] Jacco Dieleman, "Cryptography at the Monastery of Deir El-Bachit," in *Honi soit qui mal y pense: Studien zum pharaonischen, griechisch-römischen und spätantiken Ägypten zu*

Also well-known is Papyrus Bodmer 43, which preserves the text of pages 119–21 of *Zostrianos* in Nag Hammadi Codex VIII. The texts seem to be copied from the same Coptic exemplar, as there are very few discrepancies between them, even in the realm of orthography. Kasser and Luisier, observing folds in the Bodmer Papyrus, hypothesize that the page was torn out of a codex and folded up and used as an amulet, probably towards the turn of the fifth century.[50] Meanwhile, to the best of my knowledge there is almost no commentary on the *charaktēres* we find at the bottom of page 52 of the manuscript. The first letter of line 25, a tau crossed with what may be an upsilon, appears in PGM VII; it is of the very common type identified by Richard Gordon as constituted by "pseudo-letters," some of which are constituted by simply superimposing one basal *charaktēr* on top of another.[51] However briefly, NHC VIII,1 uses *charaktēres*, and so appears to seek to communicate the sense of numinous, paratextual power so characteristic of Greco-Egyptian and Coptic magical texts.

It is worth taking a moment to focus on William Brashear's publication of the "Prayer of Seth" (P. Berol. 17207), a leaf from a papyrus codex. The "prayer" is written as space filler prior to a colophon. Brashear finds the script to recall second or third-century hands, but, given the parallels with the Nag

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Ehren von Heinz-Josef Thissen (ed. Hermann Knuf, Christian Leitz, and Daniel von Recklinghausen; OLA 194; Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 515; Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 194, with full bibliography on the colophon. On Coptic Cryptography in general, see recently Tonio Sebastian Richter, "Markedness and Unmarkedness in Coptic Magical Writing," in *Ecrire la magie dans l'Antiquité - Scrivere la magia nell'Antichità. Proceedings of the International Workshop (Liège, October 13-15, 2011)* (ed. Magali de Haro Sanchez; Papyrologica Leodiensia 5; Presses universitaires de Liège, 2015), 93; on cryptography in monasticism, see Frederik Wisse, "Language Mysticism in the Nag Hammadi Texts and in Early Coptic Monasticism I: Cryptography," *Enchoria* 9 (1979): 101–20.

[50] Rodolphe Kasser and Philippe Luisier, "P. Bodmer XLIII: Une Feuillet de Zostrien," *Mus* 120 (2007): 251, 257. As Hugo Lundhaug reminds me, it is impossible to know when the page was folded; the estimate given by Kasser and Luisier rests on the page's similarity to its counterpart in NHC VIII.

[51] On "pseudo-letters," see Richard Gordon, "Charaktēres between Antiquity and Renaissance: Transmission and Re-Invention," in *Les savoirs magiques et leur transmission de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance: Colloque Fribourg 17-19 mars 2011* (ed. Véronique Dasen and Jean-Michel Spieser; Micrologus' Library 60; Florence: SISMEL, Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2014), 266–67. The upsilon-tau *charaktēr* in P. Lond. 121 = PGM VII.403, a Greek papyrus of the third–fourth century CE, adduced in the *apparatus criticus* of the Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi edition of *Zost.* (Barry, et al., *Zostrien*, 336) as a *comparandum* for the crossed *charaktēr*, on lines 24 and 25. However, identification of this cryptic character as upsilon is not assured: the scribe of NHC VIII writes upsilon in the style of the two-stroke, bimodular, curved upsilon of the "Alexandrian uncial" common in the NHC, while the cryptic character uses the bold, straight strokes one would expect from a "Biblical uncial." I hope to return to this *datum* in a future publication.

Hammadi material, dates the papyrus to the fourth or fifth century CE.[52] Further work on the artifact has been reported by Uwe-Karsten Plisch: Myriam Krutzsch, conservator of papyrus at the Berliner Papyrussammlung, has opined that the style of the construction of the papyrus page itself cannot be said to antedate the mid-third century CE, and it has been maintained that the greetings formula and decorative cross on the reverse of the papyrus that conclude the "prayer" cannot antedate the fourth century.[53] Just as MacCoull recognized some of the epithets of PGM 13a from the Nag Hammadi hoard, Brashear saw epithets from the "Prayer of Seth" – namely, ⲙⲉⲗⲗⲫⲁⲛⲉⲩⲥ, ⲉⲗⲉⲙⲁⲱⲛ, ⲓⲥⲙⲟⲩⲛ, and ⲉⲡⲧⲁⲱⲛ – to be used in similar clusters in *Allogenes* (NHC XI [54].28–37) and the *Three Steles of Seth* (NHC VII [126].5–13).[54] Why should one mention this prayer in the context of NHC VIII? Another name from the "Prayer of Seth" may appear in *Zostrianos* NHC VIII [52].2: ⲓ̅ⲁ̅ⲧⲟ[ⲙⲉⲛⲉ̅]. More importantly, John D. Turner has noted that, immediately preceding the "Prayer of Seth" shared with NHC VII and P. Berol. 17207, *Allogenes* (NHC XI [54].9–25) shares further text with *Zostrianos* (NHC VIII 86.16–20, 88.10–19) that evidences a separate, common doxological source than the "Prayer of Seth." Since in *Zostrianos* the prayer is uttered by a female speaker who is probably Barbelo,[55] for the sake of clarity I refer to this separate textual unit identified by Turner as the "Prayer of Barbelo."[56] In his commentary on *Zostrianos*, Turner provides a synopsis of this "Prayer of Barbelo" shared by NHC XI and NHC VIII, which, he maintained, is "obviously a part of the Sethian liturgical tradition."[57] Somewhat inexplicably, Turner does not offer a synopsis that represents both the source he identified (NHC XI [54].9–25; NHC VIII 86.16–20, 88.10–19) as well as the "Prayer of Seth" (NHC XI [54].28–37; NHC VII

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[52] William Brashear, "Seth-Gebet," *APF* 42 (1996): 26–27. See now also Uwe-Karsten Plisch, "Zostrianus, der philosophisch orientierte Sethianismus und das Gebet des Seth," in *Die Nag-Hammadi-Schriften in der Literatur- und Theologiegeschichte des frühen Christentums* (ed. Jens Schröter and Konrad Schwarz; STAC 106; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 280–93.

[53] Plisch, "Zostrianus," 289.

[54] Some of these names are also used in *Trim. Prot.* (NHC XIII 39*.1–3), but sparingly; see Paul-Hubert Poirier, ed. and trans., *La pensée première à la triple forme* (BCNH.T 32; Québec: Les Presses de l'université Laval, 2006), 250.

[55] John D. Turner, "Commentary: *Zostrianos*," in *Zostrien* (ed. Catherine Barry et al.; BCNH.T 24; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2000), 622.

[56] The speaker of the prayer in *Allogenes* is also a female speaker, but probably the angel Youēl – see the gloss ad loc. in Wolf-Peter Funk and Madeleine Scopello, "Texte et traduction," in *L'Allogène (NH XI,3)* (ed. and trans. Wolf-Peter Funk, Madeleine Scopello, and John D. Turner; BCNH.T 30; Québec: Les Presses de l'université Laval, 2004), 207. Since the female speaker (probably Youēl) first utters both the "Prayer of Barbelo" as well as the "Prayer of Seth" immediately following, the phrase "Prayer of Youēl" would be unhelpful for denoting the former unit alone.

[57] Turner, "Commentary: *Zostrianos*," 566.

[126].5–13; P. Berol. 17207) that immediately follows upon it in NHC XI, nor any comment of how all this evidence fits together.

Zostrianos NHC VIII 86.13–24, 88.9–25, 51.24–52.8 (BCNH)	*Allogenes* NHC XI [54].8–37 (BCNH)	*Steles Seth* NHC VII [126].5–13 (CGL)	P. Berol. 17207, 1–6
86.13 ⲛ̄ⲧⲕ̄ ⲟⲩⲛⲟϭ ⲁϥⲣ[ⲁⲇⲱⲛ] ⲛ̄ⲧⲕ̄ ⲟⲩⲧⲉⲗⲓⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲉϥ[±4] ⲉⲥⲭⲱ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ ⲉⲧⲉϥ- ϩⲩⲡ[ⲁ]ⲣⲝⲓⲥ ϫⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲕ̄ ⲟⲩⲛⲟϭ ⲇⲏⲓⲫⲁ[ⲛⲉⲩ] **†ⲉⲛⲉⲣⲅⲓⲁ** ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϥ ⲙ̄ⲛ ⲟⲩⲱⲛ̄[ϩ] ⲁⲩⲱ ⲟⲩ- **ⲙ̄ⲛⲧ`ⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ** ⲧ[ⲉ] ⲛ̄ⲧⲕ̄ ⲟⲩⲛⲟϭ ϩⲁⲣⲙⲏ- ⲇⲱ[ⲛ̄] ⲡⲁⲛⲓⲉⲟⲟⲩ [ⲧ]ⲏ[ⲣ]ⲟⲩ ⲉⲡⲓⲫ- [ⲁⲛⲉⲩ] ⲧⲉϥⲙ̄ⲛⲧ`- ⲙ[ⲁ]ⲕⲁⲣⲓ[ⲟⲥ] ⲇⲉ ⲙ̄ⲛ †ⲙ̄ⲛⲧ`ⲧⲉⲗ[ⲓⲟ]ⲥ ⲛ[ⲧⲉ] †ⲙ̄ⲛⲧ`ⲟⲩⲱⲧ` **88.9** ⲥⲙⲟⲩ ⲉ[±11] ϫⲉ ⲏ̄ⲣⲃⲏ[ⲣ]ⲓ[ⲑⲉⲩ ⲏ̄ⲣⲓⲅⲉⲛⲁⲱⲣ] ⲱⲣ[ⲓ]ⲙⲉⲛⲓ[ⲉ ⲁⲣ[ⲁ- ⲙⲉⲛ] ⲁⲗⲫⲁ[ⲅⲉ]ⲥ̄· ⲏ̄ⲗⲓⲗⲓⲟ[ⲩⲫⲉⲩ] ⲗⲁⲗⲁ- ⲙⲉⲩ· ⲛⲟⲏⲑⲉⲩ [·ϫⲉ] ⲟⲩⲛⲟϭ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲉⲕⲣⲁⲛ ⲁ[ⲩⲱ] ϥϫⲟⲟⲣ· **ⲡⲏ ⲉⲧ`[ⲉ]ⲓⲙⲉ [ⲉⲣⲟⲕ]** ϥⲓⲙⲉ ⲉⲛⲁⲓ . . ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ· ⲛ̄ⲧ[ⲕ] ⲟⲩⲁ ⲛ̄ⲧⲕ̄ ⲟⲩⲁ ⲥⲓⲟⲩ ⲉ̄·[.] ⲁϥⲣⲏ- ⲇⲱ̄ⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲡ[ⲓⲉ]- ⲱⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲛⲓⲉⲱⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲡ[ⲓ]ⲛⲟϭ ⲛⲧⲉⲗ[ⲓⲟ]ⲥ ⲡⲓϣ[ⲟⲣ]ⲡ̄· ⲛ̄ⲕⲗ̄ⲥ ⲛ̄- ⲧⲉ †[ⲙ]ⲉϩϣ[ⲟⲙⲛⲧⲉ] ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲛⲉⲣⲅⲓⲁ	**[54].8** [8±ⲕ]ⲁⲧⲁ †ⲙ̄ⲛⲧ`ⲱⲛϩ [ⲉⲧ]ⲛ̄ⲧ- [ⲁⲕ ⲙ̄ⲛ] †ϣⲟⲣⲡ̄ ⲛ̄- **ⲉⲛⲉⲣ[ⲅ]ⲓ̈[ⲁ]** ⲧⲏ ⲉⲧ[ⲉ]- ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ ⲧⲉ **†ⲙ̄ⲛⲧ`ⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ·** ⲛ̄ⲧⲕ̄ ⲟⲩⲛⲟϭ ⲁⲣⲙⲏⲇⲱⲛ [·] ⲛ̄ⲧⲕ̄ ⲟⲩⲧⲉⲗⲓⲟ[ⲥ] ⲉⲡⲓⲫⲁⲛⲉⲩ· ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲇⲉ †ⲉⲛ[ⲉ]ⲣⲅⲓⲁ [[ⲇⲉ]] ⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲕ· †ϭⲟⲙ ⲙ̄ⲙⲉϩⲥ̄ⲛⲧⲉ ⲙ̄ⲛ †ⲙ̄ⲛⲧ`- ⲉⲓⲙⲉ· ⲧⲏ ⲉⲧⲉⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟ<ⲥ> ⲧⲉ †ⲙ̄ⲛⲧ`- ⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲟⲥ· ⲁⲩⲧⲟⲏⲣ- ⲃⲏⲣⲓⲑⲉⲩ· ⲏ̄ⲣⲓⲅⲉⲛⲁⲱⲣ· ⲱⲣⲓⲙⲉⲛⲓⲉ· ⲁⲣⲁⲙⲉⲛ· ⲁⲗⲫⲗⲉⲅⲉⲥ ·ⲏ̄ⲗⲏⲗⲓⲟⲩ- ⲫⲉⲩ· [ⲗ]ⲁⲗⲁⲙⲉⲩ· ⲓⲉⲑⲉⲩ · ⲛⲟⲏⲑⲉⲩ[·] ⲛ̄ⲧⲕ̄ ⲟⲩⲛⲟϭ ⲡⲏ ⲉⲧ`ⲉⲓⲙⲉ ⲉⲣⲟ[ⲕ] ϥⲓⲙⲉ ⲉⲡⲧⲏⲣϥ̄· ⲛ̄ⲧⲕ̄ ⲟⲩⲁ ⲛ̄ⲧⲕ̄ ⲟⲩⲁ ⲡⲏ ⲉⲧⲁⲛⲟⲩϥ **ⲁϥⲣⲏ- ⲇⲱⲛ·** ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲉⲱⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲛⲉⲱⲛ ⲡⲏ ⲉⲧ`- ϣⲟⲟⲡ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓϣ ⲛⲓⲙ· ⲧⲟⲧⲉ ⲁⲥⲥⲙⲟⲩ ⲉⲡⲓⲟⲩⲁ ⲧⲏⲣϥ̄ ⲉⲥⲭⲱ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ ϫⲉ ⲗⲁⲗⲁⲙⲉⲩ· ⲛⲟ̄[ⲏⲑ]ⲉⲩ̄· **ⲥⲏⲛⲁⲱⲛ·** ⲁⲥⲓⲛⲉ[ⲩ· ϣ]ⲣⲓⲫⲁⲛⲓⲉ **ⲙⲉⲗⲗⲉ- ⲫⲁⲛⲉⲩ[·]** ⲉⲗⲉⲙⲁⲱⲛ	**126.5** [ⲡⲓⲕ]ⲗ̄ⲥ ⲡⲓ- ⲙ[ⲁ]ⲕⲁⲣⲓⲟⲥ **ⲥⲏⲛⲁⲱⲛ** [ⲡⲉⲧ]ϫⲡⲟ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ ⲟⲩⲁⲁ[ϥ ⲁⲥⲓ]ⲛⲉⲩ· ⲙ̄ⲉⲑⲛⲉⲩ ·ⲟⲡⲧⲁⲱⲛ· ⲉⲗⲉⲙⲁⲱ̄ⲛ ⲡⲓⲛⲟϭ ⲛ̄- ϭⲟⲙ·ⲉⲙⲟⲩ̄ⲛⲓⲁⲣ ⲛ̄ⲓ̈-	]ⲩ̄ ⲁⲱ[[ⲙ]]ⲛ ⲉ- [±10 ⲙ̄]ⲉⲗⲗ .- ⲫⲁⲟⲩ ⲉⲗ[ⲗ]- ⲉⲙⲙ[.].ⲓ̈ⲥⲥⲙⲟⲩⲛ ⲉⲡⲧⲁⲱⲛ ⲅ[. . .

51.24 ⲧ̄ⲕ ⲟⲩⲁ ⲛ̄ⲧ̄ⲕ [ⲟⲩⲁ ⲛ̄]ⲧ̄ⲕ ⲟⲩⲁ ⲡⲓ-ⲁⲗⲟⲩ ⲛ̄ⲧ[ⲉ ⲡⲓⲁⲗⲟⲩ ±9] ⲓ̈ⲁⲧⲟ[ⲙⲉⲛⲉ ±10]	ⲓ̈ⲥⲙⲟⲩⲛ̄· ⲟⲡⲧⲁⲱⲛ ⲡⲏ ⲉⲧ`ϣⲟⲟⲡ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲉⲧ`ϣⲟⲟⲡ ⲡⲓⲉⲱⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲛⲉⲱⲛ· ⲡⲓⲁⲧ`ϫⲡⲟ ⲉⲧ`ϫⲟⲥⲉ ⲉⲛⲓⲁⲧ`ϫⲡⲟ ⲓ̈ⲁⲧⲟⲙⲉⲛⲉ· ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲕ ⲟⲩⲁⲁⲕ	ⲃ̄ⲁⲣⲉⲩ· ⲕⲁⲛⲇⲏⲫⲟⲣⲉ· ⲁⲫⲣⲏⲇ̄ⲱⲛ·ⲇ̄ⲏⲓⲫⲁⲛ-ⲉⲩⲥ· ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲕ ⲉⲧⲉⲛ̄-ⲁⲣⲙⲏⲇⲱⲛ ⲛⲁⲓ̈ ⲡⲓⲣⲉϥ-ϫⲡⲉ ϭⲟⲙ·ⲑ̄ⲁⲗⲁⲛⲁ-ⲑ̄ⲉⲩ·ⲁⲛⲧⲓⲑⲉⲩⲥ	]σε και δοξα-ζω σε εξ εκ . [. τ]ης νεωτερας της σης ε . . [. . .]ης της υψι-φρωνης της[. .]

At first sight, the evidence does not appear to be in a good enough state to tell us much; the end of page 51 and that of the beginning of 52 in NHC VIII are destroyed, as are the first ten lines of NHC XI, which prevents us from seeing where the doxologies go with respect to the rest of the (already fragmentary) lines of P. Berol. 17207. Nonetheless, a few provisional statements can be made. Brashear was unsure about his own paleographical analysis of P. Berol. 17207, but it is likely that this Greek prayer is contemporaneous to the Nag Hammadi manuscripts.[58] *Zostrianos*, which we already know to be a compilation or anthology of pre-existing texts, including philosophical sources (such as the Middle Platonic *Parmenides* Commentary, also known to Marius Victorinus),[59] appears to have cut up and redistributed for its own purposes the "Prayer of Barbelo," a source also known to *Allogenes*, which further draws upon the "Prayer of Seth" or something akin to it, as does the *Three Steles of Seth*.[60] Notably, neither the "Prayer of Barbelo" or the "Prayer of Seth" serve any immediate, worldly aim other than to praise a very abstract deity, in contrast to the more common use of *nomina barbara* in rituals to enlist help from superhuman beings for more prosaic purposes.[61] Most importantly for our purposes, the "Prayer of Seth" shows that doxological traditions (or doxological

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[58] Thus Plisch, "Zostrianus," 288–89. Brashear's remarks on dating the papyrus are replete with hesitation ("Seth-Gebet," 26–27; noted by Plisch, "Zostrianus," 288). Turner, meanwhile, simply prefers Brashear's dating of the handwriting to the second or third century CE ("Commentary: *Zostrianos*," 567).

[59] On this evidence, see recently John D. Turner, "The Anonymous *Parmenides* Commentary, Marius Victorinus, and the Sethian Platonizing Apocalypses: State of the Question," in *Gnose et Manichéisme. Entre les oasis d'Égypte et la route de la soie: Hommage à Jean-Daniel Dubois* (ed. Anna van den Kerchove and Luciana Gabriela Soares Santoprete; BEHE.R 176; Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 93–126.

[60] Nor can one exclude the possibility that the "Prayer of Barbelo" and "Prayer of Seth" could have also comprised a single textual unit (along the lines of its presentation in NHC XI), one part of which was cut up and redistributed in NHC VIII, other parts of which appear in NHC VII.

[61] As Dieleman states with reference to spells contained in, e.g., PGM IV (such as the so-called "*Mithras Liturgy*") and PGM XIII (such as the *Eighth Book of Moses*), "a few spells are not aimed at resolving a practical matter, but concerned with establishing intimate contact between the ritualist and the supreme deity ... These singular spells are clearly compo-

"macroforms," if one prefers)[62] used in the "Platonizing" Sethian literature circulated in Hellenophone Egyptian scribal circles, not just Coptophone ones.

To sum up, the case of *Zostrianos* serves as yet more evidence of the great porousness between even a Nag Hammadi text with literary features and contemporary magical texts. The cryptogram in its colophon recalls, broadly speaking, a rhetoric of esotericism *sensu stricto*,[63] and its particular cryptographical mechanism is known from a monastic context. Similarly, the *charaktēres* in NHC VIII remind us that even a literary, sophisticated Gnostic apocalypse could use a paratextual strategy almost exclusively found in practical, magical texts. If Kasser is correct, P. Bodmer 43 shows us that "Gnostic" doxologies literally ripped from literary manuscripts may have also been used for practical magic. Finally, the "Prayer of Seth" and "Prayer of Barbelo" are terrific examples of textual fluidity, and the former appears to have circulated in Greek contemporaneously (or even prior to) the production of the Nag Hammadi Codices, which contains three texts in which parts of it appear.

4. Alchemy, Zosimus of Panopolis …

Meanwhile, there is a paucity of scholarship that engages the Graeco-Egyptian alchemical literature alongside the Nag Hammadi corpus, despite the close association of "Gnosticism" and "alchemy" in twentieth-century historiography.[64] It is all the more a surprise given the proximity of alchemical and mag-

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sites and betray several layers of redaction. Whatever the intentions of the original composers of the various parts may have been, the motivation for including them in the extant formularies was no doubt different" (Dieleman, "Greco-Egyptian Magical Papyri," 299–300). Cf. also Otto, "Historicizing," 163–65.

[62] Recalling von Stuckrad's helpful invocation of Peter Schäfer's distinction of "microforms" and "macroforms" moving across the various, variegated MSS of the Hekhaloth corpus ("Astral Magic," 250).

[63] On esotericism (in a literal sense) or "mystification techniques" as common scribal practice in Pharaonic as well as Graeco-Egyptian formularies, see Dieleman, "Greco-Egyptian Magical Papyri," 315.

[64] Treatment of the problem *sensu lato* has not advanced far beyond H. J. Sheppard, "Gnosticism and Alchemy," *Ambix* 6 (1957–1958): 86–101; see more recently Régine Charron, "The *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II, 1) and the Graeco-Egyptian Alchemical Literature," *VC* 59 (2005): 438–56, esp. 439–40; Bernard D. Haage, "Alchemy II: Antiquity–12th Century," in *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* (eds. Wouter J. Hanegraaff et al.; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 23–24. For a recent discussion of early Greek alchemy that makes integrative use of Nag Hammadi sources, see Olivier Dufault, *Early Greek Alchemy: Patronage and Innovation in Late Antiquity* (California Classical Studies; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019).

ical literature in antiquity: alchemical manuscripts were found among the The-
ban Magical Library,[65] and alchemy belongs to the so-called "occult sciences"
(alongside "magic" and "astrology") that played a major role in the develop-
ment of early modern notions about "Gnosticism" as a kind of esoteric, supe-
rior teaching.[66] Several studies by Régine Charron have attempted to demon-
strate that tincturing metaphors are used in works such as the *Apocryphon of
John* (NHC II and par.) or the *Gospel of Philip*.[67] While Charron's arguments
are enticing, they are hampered by the fact that these texts are ultimately intel-
ligible without recourse to an alchemical lens. Conversely, Kyle Fraser has
contended that baptismal language in alchemical texts are best understood as
"Gnostic" influence from the *Apocryphon of John* and the like – again, a pos-
sibility worth entertaining, but no more.[68] Meanwhile, I have argued elsewhere
that the cosmogony of the *Paraphrase of Shem* – a long, confusing description
of hot and cold elements crashing together, releasing a divine byproduct as the
result of their mixing – explains its metaphysics in terms of tincturing.[69] A rep-
resentative example is as follows:

Now, the light which was emitted with it from the silence moved, inside of the midpoint,
returning to its place. And the vapor was luminous, and from it an unquenchable fire ap-
peared. Now, the part that is separate from the wondrous product put on forgetfulness. It was
deceived by the dark fire, and the shock of its disturbance cast off the weight of the vapor
(ⲁϥⲛⲟⲩϫⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ ⲙ̄ⲡⲃⲁⲣⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲧ`ⲕⲗⲟⲟⲗⲉ). It was evil, since it was impure. And the fire
mixed with the water, so that the waters might become dangerous.[70]

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[65] See recently Burns, "μίξεώς τινι τέχνῃ κρείττονι," 85–86; Dosoo, "History," 256–60;
Dieleman, "Greco-Egyptian Magical Papyri," 293.

[66] On the occult sciences and esotericism, see above. On the historiography of "Gnosti-
cism" as bound up with esotericism and the ancient teaching of "occult sciences" such as
alchemy, astrology, and magic, see Faivre, "Le terme et la notion de 'Gnose'," 87–101; Jul-
ian Strube, *Sozialismus, Katholizismus und Okkultismus*, 399–416, 524, 528, passim; idem,
"Revolution, Illuminismus und Theosophie: Eine Genealogie der 'häretischen' Histori-
ographie des frühen französischen Sozialismus und Kommunismus," *HZ* 304 (2017): 50–89,
esp. 54–56, 63, focusing on nineteenth-century political contexts. The topic merits much
further study.

[67] Charron, "*Apocryphon of John*"; more convincing is Régine Charron and Louis Pain-
chaud, "God is a Dyer: The Background and Significance of a Puzzling Motif in the Coptic
Gospel According to Philip (CG II,3)," *Mus* 114 (2001): 41–50. However, Hugo Lundhaug
plausibly argues that the passage is intelligible without recourse to an alchemical lens (*Im-
ages of Rebirth: Cognitive Poetics and Transformational Soteriology in the Gospel of Phiilip
and the Exegesis of the Soul* [NHMS 73; Leiden: Brill, 2010], 254–57, esp. n. 388).

[68] Kyle Fraser, "Baptised in *Gnōsis*: The Spiritual Alchemy of Zosimus of Panopolis,"
Dionysius 25 (2007): 33–54.

[69] Burns, "μίξεώς τινι τέχνῃ κρείττονι."

[70] *Paraph. Shem* 14.25–15.4.

These metaphors of tincturing would have been familiar to any ancient Graeco-Egyptian reader interested in "occult" lore, such as the alchemist Zosimus of Panopolis.

Indeed, if Zosimus had not existed, we would have to invent him: an Egyptian Hellenophone of the early fourth century CE pursuing what we might term "esoteric" or "occult" philosophy – not just in alchemy, but Platonism, Hermetism, and Gnosticism.[71] In a passage from his treatise *On the Letter Omega* – a brief exposition that ranges between alphanumeric and astrological lore, Stoic thought, Gnostic myth, and anti-Manichaean polemic – Zosimus paraphrases a lost source attributed to the prophet Nicotheus, which narrates some version of the myth of the archons' enslavement of the primordial Adam in the Garden of Eden by tricking him into donning a material body.[72] Here, our protagonist is a true Adam πνευματικός, for he has a body of air and light – hence his "true name," known only to Nicotheus, Φῶς ("light"):

> When Phōs was wafting about (διαπνεόμενος) in the Garden at the instigation of Fate (ὑπὸ τῆς εἱμαρμένης), they (i.e., the Archons) persuade him – since he was innocent and inactive (ἀνενέργητον) – to don the Adam they had created, the one which had come from Fate and from the four elements. And Phōs, on account of his innocence, did not refuse; and they swelled up with pride, thinking that he had become their slave.[73]

As Hans-Martin Schenke observed long ago in his *Habilitationsschrift*, the story has many parallels, not only in *Corpus Hermeticum* 1 (*Poimandrēs*), but several Nag Hammadi texts: the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, and *On the Origin of the World*.[74]

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[71] For discussion, see Fraser, "Baptised in *Gnōsis*"; Howard Jackson, "The Seer Nikotheos and His Lost Apocalypse in the Light of Sethian Apocalypses from Nag Hammadi and the Apocalypse of Elchasai," *NovT* 32 (1990): 269–75. For our evidence regarding Zosimus' biography, see Mertens, "Introduction historique," xii–xix; Howard Jackson, "Introduction," in Zosimus of Panopolis, *On the Letter Omega* (ed. and trans., Howard Jackson; SBLTT 14; Greco-Roman Religion 5. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1978), 3–5. Recent discussions of Zosimus's intellectual milieu include Christian H. Bull, "Hermes between Pagans and Christians: The Nag Hammadi Hermetica in Context," in *The Nag Hammadi Codices in the Context of Fourth- and Fifth-century Christianity in Egypt* (ed. Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott; STAC 110; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 218–25, esp. 225: "Zosimus is a highly interesting figure for the type of person who would read Hermetica as well as Christian and Jewish apocryphal literature around the turn of the fourth century, and he was in all likelihood familiar with the type of rituals we see in the Hermetica"; Dufault, *Early Greek Alchemy*, 93–144.

[72] This treatise is itself only the prelude to a larger work, the *Authentic Memoirs* (Γνήσια ὑπομνήματα), for text and translation of which see *Mémoires Authentiques* (ed. and trans. Michèle Mertens; Les Alchemistes Grecs 4; Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1995). Useful remains the edition and commentary of Howard Jackson (see previous note).

[73] *Mem. Auth.* 1.11 (tr. in agreement with Mertens).

[74] Hans-Martin Schenke, *Der Gott 'Mensch' in der Gnosis. Ein religionsgeschichtlicher Beitrag zur Diskussion über die paulinische Anschauung von der Kirche als Leib Christi*

5. …and Occult Literature in Coptic? *Marsanes* (NHC X)

To the best of my knowledge, there are no other passages in Zosimus' extant corpus which directly recall sources from Nag Hammadi, but the name "Nicotheus" – putative author of the source which the Panopolitan quotes, here – leads us directly to NHC X, a highly fragmentary manuscript which contains a single tractate, *Marsanes*. The *Untitled* treatise in the Bruce Codex refers to the character of Nicotheus (ⲛⲓⲕⲟⲑⲉⲟⲥ) alongside a certain Marsanius (ⲙⲁⲣⲥⲁⲛⲓⲟⲥ), as raptured seers party to knowledge of the transcendent.[75] This difficult and understudied work belongs to the "Platonizing" Sethian school of thought, blending Neoplatonism with the world of Jewish apocalypses, that also appears to have produced *Zostrianos*, *Allogenes*, and the *Three Steles of Seth*.[76] While doxologies using *voces magicae* are a marked feature of the other three "Platonizing" Sethian texts, as discussed above, *Marsanes* is a veritable compendium of lore about the "occult sciences": it theorizes the mechanics underlying the efficacy of *voces magicae*, states that its concern is with names and invoking angels, describes objects used in private ritual, and gives a lengthy discourse on astrology. These passages have enjoyed scarce treatment by scholars due to the fragmentary state of the manuscript, but the contents of the work are clear enough that the text's first editor, Birger Pearson, stated that its contents "include items properly classified as 'magic'."[77] It may, however,

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(Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1960), esp. 52–56, 64–68; see also Michèle Mertens, "Notes complémentaires," in Zosimus of Panopolis, *Mémoires Authentiques* (ed. and trans. Michèle Mertens; Les Alchemistes Grecs 4; Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1995), 96–99; Dufault, *Early Greek Alchemy*, 105.

[75] *Unt. Treatise* 255.5–23. On the complex of evidence regarding Nicotheus and Marsanes, see Jackson, "Seer Nikotheos," followed by Burns, *Apocalypse*, 29, 126–27; Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin," 446; cf. Bull, *Tradition of Hermes*, 335–36 (rejecting the Jewish pedigree of the seer, as suggested by Jackson); see now also Eric Crégheur, "Marsanès et Nicothée dans la Littérature Gnostique, Philosophique, Alchemique et Manichéenne," in *Colloque international. Nag Hammadi à 70 ans. Qu'avons-nous appris? (Québec, Université Laval, du 29- 31 mai 2015)* (BCNH.É 10; Leuven: Peeters, 2019), 297–320.

[76] On *Marsanes*, see esp. John D. Turner, "Introduction: *Marsanes*," in *Marsanès* (ed. and trans. Wolf-Peter Funk, Paul-Hubert Poirier, and John D. Turner; BCNH.T 27; Québec: Les Presses de l'université Laval, 2000), 1–248; Birger Pearson, "*Marsanes* Revisited," in *Coptica - Gnostica - Manichaica: Mélanges offerts à Wolf-Peter Funk* (ed. Louis Painchaud and Paul-Hubert Poirier; BCNH.É 7; Québec: Les Presses de l'université Laval, 2006), 685–96. On apocalyptic elements in the text, see Burns, *Apocalypse*, 53.

[77] "Introduction: *Marsanes*," in *Nag Hammadi Codices IX and X* (ed. Birger Pearson; NHS 15; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 249; further, Turner, "Introduction: *Marsanes*," 231–34 (re: "Sethian theurgy"). The characterization of Sethian ritual as "theurgic," at least in the sense of the term given by Iamblichus, is rejected by Burns, *Apocalypse*, 138–39, although the issue is peripheral to the present study.

be more helpful to rephrase Pearson's statement as follows: *Marsanes* includes items properly classified as "occult science," namely the techniques of magic (particularly with reference to the sympathetic relationships between material objects) and astrology.[78]

Most important for us among *Marsanes*'s discussion of "occult" topics is its theorization of the properties of various combinations of consonants and vowels with respect to invoking, and, it seems, binding angels. On the very fragmentary page 19* of the codex, we read "name (ⲉⲣⲓⲟⲛⲟⲙⲁⲍⲉ) [them according to] their [(appropriate) invocation (ⲟⲛⲟ̣ⲙ[ⲁⲥⲓⲁ]), so that] one [knows them.]."[79] The following pages are hardly extant, but appear to discuss the zodiac and its relationship to the soul (NHC X 22*), before settling on correspondences between the configurations of the soul and the letters of the alphabet (NHC X 25–27*). In a remark on consonants, the narrator (presumably "Marsanes" himself) states for what purpose this knowledge could be useful: "and <the> consonants exist with the vowels, and individually; they are prefixed by them, and are suffixed. They serve as invocation [of] the angels" (ⲟⲛⲟⲙⲁⲥⲓⲁ [ⲛ̄]ⲛ̄ⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ).[80] The discussion is opaque, but as Pearson, as well as more recent commentators such as Paul-Hubert Poirier and John D. Turner have surmised, it appears that the author offers a theorization of the mechanics undergirding the function of *voces magicae*.[81] The reading of Pearson et al. has never been challenged, so it is worth suggesting an alternative reading, for the sake of argument: Pachomius, inventor of coenobitic monasticism, was famed for his use of a kind of angelic language, and this language even appears in some of his letters.[82] *Marsanes* is here explicit that the ⲟⲛⲟⲙⲁⲥⲓⲁ is directed towards angels or belongs to angels;

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[78] On the "occult sciences" as astrology, alchemy, and magic, see above, n. 10.

[79] *Marsanes* NHC X 19*.18–21. I translate the text in Funk, Poirier, and Turner, *Marsanès*.

[80] *Marsanes* NHC X 30*.3–9. I translate the text in Funk, Poirier, and Turner, *Marsanès*. See also 27*.12–19, 32*.1–7 (discussed below).

[81] Thus Paul-Hubert Poirier, "Commentaire: *Marsanès*," in Funk, Poirier, and Turner, *Marsanès*, 437: "en faisant servir les lettres à l'appellation des êtres angéliques et divins, notre traité recourt aux mêmes procédés que les papyrus magiques." More generally, see Birger Pearson, "Notes: *Marsanes*," in *Nag Hammadi Codices IX and X*, 252–347 (ed. Birger Pearson; NHS 15; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 286, followed by Burns, *Apocalypse*, 113–14; Turner, "Introduction: *Marsanes*," 64–65. The following reference to PGM XIII is noted by Poirier, "Commentaire: *Marsanès*," 427, albeit without analysis.

[82] See, e.g., Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* 32.4–5; Jerome's preface to the rules of Pachomius (*Jer. Pref.*); G¹ 99; and Pachomius, *Letters* 1, 2, 3, 6, 9a, 9b, 11a, and 11b. I thank Prof. Lundhaug for these references, to the former of which I shall return below. For a helpful, recent discussion of Pachomius's angelic language in the context of late ancient Aegypto-Palestinian monastic treatments of alphabet mysticism, see Joel Kalvesmaki, "Pachomius and the Mystery of the Letters," in *Ascetic Culture: Essays in Honor of Philip Rousseau* (ed. Blake Leyerle and Robin Darling Young; South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 11–28.

and in fact, LSJ 1233a offers the rendering if ὀνομασία as simply "expression, language." Might one render ⲟⲛⲟⲙⲁⲥⲓⲁ [ⲛ̄]ⲛ̄ⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ as "language of the angels," and draw a comparison with Pachomius's angelic tongue, removing Marsanes's discussion of the efficacy of different combinations of syllables from an "occult" to a monastic context?

However, there are several reasons to suppose that ⲟⲛⲟⲙⲁⲥⲓⲁ [ⲛ̄]ⲛ̄ⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ has the sense of "name, invocation of the angels," as suggested by Pearson, Poirier, and Turner. Such usage of the term to refer to the name(s) of God or the angels is consonant with that found in other Coptic texts, such as *Eugnostos* (NHC III,3), the Hermetic *Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth* and *Prayer of Thanksgiving* (NHC VI,6; VI,7) and the *Investiture of the Archangel Michael* (PM M593, 614).[83] Nonetheless, I would venture further and propose that the purpose of the ⲟⲛⲟⲙⲁⲥⲓⲁ in *Marsanes* is to bind angelic beings. As much may be indicated by use of the term ὀνομασία to refer to the invocation, or binding name, employed in the *Eighth Book of Moses* recorded in Leiden Papyrus J 395 (PGM XIII).[84] Leiden Papyrus J 395 is a single-quire papyrus codex which has been dated by palaeographic analysis to the mid-fourth century; it "is thus close to the Nag Hammadi Codices both chronologically and geographically."[85] It contains multiple versions of a spell for obtaining knowledge from a deity, whose title in the manuscript is *Eighth Book of Moses*.[86] In the first version of

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[83] *Eugnostos* NHC III [77].9–13; *Disc. 8–9* NHC VI 62.22–28; *Pr. Thanks.* NHC VI 63.34–64.6; Pierpont Morgan M593 in *Die Bücher der Einsetzung der Erzengel Michael und Gabriel* (ed. C. Detlef Müller; CSCO 225, Scriptores Coptici 31; Leuven: Peeters, 1962), 40.29–30 (the Sahidic version of the text; usage in the Fayyumic parallel in PM M614 is identical, see ibid., 41.29–31). For ⲧ̄-ⲟⲛⲟⲙⲁⲥⲓⲁ as referring to the bestowal of a name, see *Ex. Soul* NHC II 127.19–21.

[84] PGM XIII is part of the ancient archive sometimes referred to as the "Theban Magical Library" (Dieleman, "Greco-Egyptian Magical Papyri," 293). For the most recent treatment of the text, with new translation: Todd E. Klutz, "The Eighth Book of Moses: A New Translation and Introduction," *in Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures. Volume One* (ed. Richard Bauckham, James R. Davila, and Alexander Panayotov; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 189–235.

[85] Bull, "Monkey Business," 82; also in idem, *Tradition of Hermes*, 339. On the codex's many Hermetic affinities, see ibid., 143, 206, 350–51, 425.

[86] The passage in question here (PGM XIII.210–12, paralleled at 565–56 and 704–6, the latter without reference to the "name" [ὀνομασία]) happens to be central to the question of how many versions of the *Eighth Book* are contained in the codex and what kind of redaction-history one may divine for the text. The fact that this redaction-critical issue has no bearing on the present discussion of the semantics of PGM XIII's use of ὀνομασία permits me the luxury of maintaining agnosticism in the present discussion on the question of whether PGM XIII contains three or two versions of the *Eighth Book*. Three is the conclusion of the classical treatment of Morton Smith, "The Eighth Book of Moses and How it Grew (PLeid. J 395)," in *Atti del XVII Congresso Internationale di Papirologia* (ed. M. Gigante et al.; Naples: Centro internazionale per lo studio dei papiri ercolanesi, 1984), 683–93, esp. 684–85; to the best of my knowledge, Smith's division of PGM XIII into three textual units remains

this extensive spell, the user is enjoined to ritual speech, sleep, and drink, undertakes invocations using praise and *nomina barbara*, is greeted from angelic beings speaking Egyptian, Hebrew, and animal languages,[87] and imitates the laughter of the demiurgic god by again pronouncing the seven vowels and *nomina barbara*.[88] Finally, the revelatory event arrives: "When the god enters, look down and write what is said and whatever name they might give you for him (γραφε τα λεγομενα κ ην διδωσιν σοι αυτου ονομασιαν); and do not go out of your tent until he has also told you accurately the things concerning you."[89] The ὀνομασία is the "magic name" that gives the user the right to demand information from the god,[90] and this is likely the "invocation" mentioned by Marsanes.

   Marsanes appears to also specify that the "invocation" gives the user power over the divine being, as in the *Eighth Book of Moses*. The text concludes the section on the power of the syllables involving the consonants of the *begad-kefat* by stating, "but the rest are different: αβεβηβιβοβ, in order that you might [gather] them, and be distinguished from the angels (ⲛ̄ⲕⲡⲱⲣ̄ⲝ̄ ⲁⲛ̄[ⲁ]ⲅⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ); and effects shall be produced."[91] Rather than inviting the reader to cohabitate with the angels, *Marsanes* appears to describe the human seer's elevation above the angels, in keeping with the supra-angelic status obtained by humans in a variety of ancient Jewish, Christian, and Sethian Gnostic texts.[92] Moreover, as Joel Kalvesmaki has argued, Pachomius's exploration of an "angelic alphabet" is probably best understood in light of his use of the Greek alphabet

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the majority view (see, e.g., Bull, "Monkey Business," 82; Dieleman, "Greco-Egyptian Magical Papyri," 299). However, for a strong argument that lines 343–734 of PGM XIII belong to a single version of the *Eighth Book* rather than two versions, see Klutz, "The Eighth Book of Moses," 192–93.

   [87] The language of animals (particularly the baboon) is important in a number of Graeco-Egyptian magical texts, particularly PGM XIII. For a thorough discussion, see Bull, "Monkey Business," 87–91.

   [88] PGM XIII.114–209.

   [89] PGM XIII.210–12, trans. Klutz, "The Eighth Book of Moses," 220, text in *Two Greek Magical Papyri in the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden: A Photographic Edition of J 384 and J 385 (= PGM XII and XIII)* (ed. Robert W. Daniel; PapyCol 19; Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1991), 40. The parallel passage at 565–66 is almost identical; absence of the term ὀνομασία is among the many differences in 704–6 that initially led Smith to his hypothesis that PGM XIII shows us three, not two, versions of the *Eighth Book*.

   [90] The term appears with a similar sense in the much more brief incantation, also following *nomina barbara*, at PGM LXXXI.10.

   [91] *Marsanes* NHC X 32*.1–7. See also ibid., 27*.12–19, where the reader is warned not to abuse the power of the invocation: "In accordance with (the) [template] of the naming (ⲟⲛⲟⲙⲁⲥⲓⲁ) of the [gods] and the angels, [it is not that] they (i.e., the consonants) are combined [with one another] in just any order, [but] only if they possess a good effect. It was not the case that their intention was clear. Do not persist in [sin], and do not engage in sinful practices!" Both translations are my own, of the text in Funk, Poirier, and Turner, *Marsanès*.

   [92] For more extensive discussion, see Burns, *Apocalypse*, 113–32.

to encourage literacy and organize his monastic confederation;[93] *Marsanes*'s discussion of the efficacy of syllables as directed towards angelic names, on the other hand, is cached in discussions of very different topics. Post-Plotinian Neoplatonic teaching on the soul has been mentioned above; another topic is some kind of "doctrine of correspondences" regarding the relationship between material objects and names used in ritual, mentioned a few pages following our discussion of invocations in NHC X, as we come out of a lacuna: "…[and the] waters, and the [images of the] wax shapes [and] emerald images. As for the rest, I will teach you about them – this (treatise) is (about) [the] production [of] names (ⲡⲉⲉⲓ ⲡⲉ [ⲡ]ⲭⲡⲟ [ⲛ̄ⲛ̄]ⲣⲉⲛ)."[94] Still other passages reflect on the astrological sympathies between stellar and terrestrial bodies.[95] confirming that the ⲟⲛⲟⲙⲁⲥⲓⲁ [ⲛ̄]ⲛ̄ⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ are discussed in the context of what came in modernity to be designated "occult sciences."

   To be sure, NHC X is not a formulary. Like all the other Nag Hammadi Codices, it contains none of what Tonio Sebastian Richter calls the "marked" features of Coptic magical manuscripts, particularly the sloping uncial hand, the common phraseology embedded in the "language of urgency" (i.e., phrases such as "I invoke (ϯⲟⲣⲕ̄, ϯⲕⲉⲗⲉⲩⲉ)," etc.), or recipe-lists of ingredients.[96] (Notably, we do find such features in a Coptic Gnostic work outside of the Nag Hammadi corpus: the instructions for baptisms in the *Second Book of Jeu*.)[97]

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[93] Kalvesmaki, "Pachomius," 23, with reference to G[1] 99; Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* 32.4–5: "Pachomius's secret language should be seen as an integral component of his emphasis on education and literacy ... It placed over the requirement for mastery of conventional literacy a new, divine level ... He wrote to the leaders of his monastery in the secret spiritual language so that they could govern and so that these leaders, being holy, could reply in the same language. When he organized his monasteries, Pachomius associated the letters of the alphabet with spiritual qualities, then assigned letters to companies of monks. He would ask about his monks' welfare through their assigned letter."

[94] *Marsanes* 35*.1-6. For the phrase "doctrine of correspondence" (von Stuckrad), see above, n. 7.

[95] *Marsanes* 42*.1–23: "[…] or rather he observes the two, or observes the seven planets, or the twelve signs of the zodiac, or the [thirty-six] decans […] which are [the twelve] parts, [those which] come to [three hundred and sixty [lots, …] in the places of the […] and [these] numbers, whether [those which are in heaven] or those which are upon earth, and those which are below the [earth], in accordance with the sympathies and the divisions (ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲛ̄ⲕⲟⲓⲛⲱⲛⲓⲁ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲙ̄ⲙⲉⲣⲓⲥⲙⲟ[ⲥ]), those which derive from these, and the rest." More fragmentary are the references to the zodiac at ibid., 21*.14 and 39*.28.

[96] Richter, "Markedness and Unmarkedness," 90–92, 93–98. Notably, the language of invocation appears (albeit in less "urgent" contexts) in *Marsanes* (see above, n. 48) as well as *Disc. 8–9* 55.24, 59.7 – see Michela Zago, "Le pneuma éloquent: Un parallèle entre le *Papyrus Mimaut* et NHC VI,6," in *Pensée grecque et sagesse d'orient. Hommage à Michel Tardieu* (ed. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi et al.; BEHE.R 142; Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 730.

[97] On indebtedness of some of the rituals described in *2 Jeu* to contemporary Egyptian magical practice, see Smith's discussion in Meyer and Smith, eds., *Ancient Christian Magic*,

Rather, the content and posturing of *Marsanes* recall fourth-century theorizations of private rituals as well as post-Plotinian Neoplatonism. Pearson's comparison to Iamblichus' *De mysteriis* is, from this perspective, certainly apposite, but given the focus of *Marsanes* on the mechanics of rituals, it seems to me that an even closer parallel could be drawn to Zosimus, particularly in his *Treatise on the Letter Omega*. Both *Marsanes* and *Omega* are, like *De mysteriis*, concerned with practical operations, but from a theoretical perspective at home in the scribal conventions of literary manuscripts; these operations are diverse, but the discovery and use of the occult properties of letters and sounds, efficacious names, and astrological correspondences are key; both works are couched in a distinctive combination of cultural touchstones, namely Platonism, apocalypse, and the figure of Nicotheus. The existence of such a text in Coptic – albeit in a lone manuscript that is very early in the greater history of Coptic literature – should give us pause. It shows us, at least in the fourth or fifth centuries CE, there was *some* audience for such literature in Coptic, and given the overlap between *Marsanes*'s content with esoteric program of Zosimus, we have to admit that some individuals with Zosimus's interests did want to read such works in Coptic after all.

6. Conclusions

Here we may return to Khosroyev's hypothesis (elaborated upon by Emmel) regarding the provenance of the Nag Hammadi Codices, and Lundhaug and Jenott's response to it. Khosroyev maintained that those responsible for the codices were Christians in a vague sense – "Halbintellektuellen, die ihre eigene Auffassung vom Christentum hatten (wobei sie sich nicht unbedingt zu einer konkreten christlichen Schule zählten)."[98] Lundhaug and Jenott lampoon this perspective, stating that we have a "dearth of evidence for ... city-dwelling, middle class, syncretistic, bilingual, untraditionally Christian, semi-intellectual Coptophones familiar with Greek philosophy."[99] Surely Lundhaug and Jenott are correct that we must regard the Nag Hammadi Codices as Christian artifacts, and that their contents could have enjoyed a substantial audience amongst some of the less orthodox monks who, we know, were discouraged from reading apocryphal and Origenist (i.e., Christian Platonist) works.[100]

At the same time, Khosroyev's unfortunate choice of terms (e.g., "semi-intellectual") notwithstanding, our Egyptian magical sources reveal to us that at

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63–68; Erin Evans, *The 'Books of Jeu' and the 'Pistis Sophia' as Handbooks to Eternity: Exploring the Gnostic Mysteries of the Ineffable* (NHMS 89; Leiden: Brill, 2015), 73–94.

[98] Khosroyev, *Bibliothek*, 101.

[99] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 95.

[100] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 263–68.

least somewhat educated, bilingual, Coptophone scribes existed and were interested in obtaining and appropriating incantations and *voces magicae*, angelological teaching, and, yes, mythologoumena known from Gnostic texts. The existence of Coptophone "independent literati" who also engaged in scribal activity and traded texts one could use for magical practices is not a hypothetical, as the case of the Manichaean scribes Vales and Pshai (whose scribal network dealt with literary as well as magical texts). Similarly, despite its literary artifice, *Zostrianos* absolutely shares with the authors of so many ancient Graeco-Egyptian magical texts the presumption of "the efficacy of a large body of theological knowledge reserved to a literate priestly group to cause specific changes in the world, the power of secret, unintelligible words and names to communicate directly with the divine world, knowledge of a range of divine iconographic forms, and mastery of numerous ritual practices" – what Richard Gordon calls "high" magical practice.[101] Nor is the notion of a Coptophone collector of occult knowledge purely hypothetical, for it is difficult to characterize the author-/readership of *Marsanes* otherwise. The same could perhaps be said for the scribe copying the Hermetic treatises which close NHC VI, even if we accept recent arguments that this scribe was a monk.[102]

Even more importantly, however, this survey of our magical intertexts with the Nag Hammadi evidence does not mitigate the monastic hypothesis, either, for we also know there to have been significant overlap between the worlds of magical and monastic literary and scribal production. David Frankfurter has highlighted the continuity between native Egyptian and early monastic ritual experts,[103] and indeed this is borne out in the evidence reviewed here, as in the

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[101] Richard Gordon "Religious Anthropology of High Magical Practice in the Empire," in *The Individual in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean* (ed. Jörg Rüpke; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 168. Cf. also Otto's phrase "Western learned magic" ("Historicizing," esp. 179–82). Cf. also see van der Vliet's suggestion that "the whole phenomenon of these performative liturgies that evoke complex celestial landscapes and hierarchies is best connected to a common ancestor, to a ritually-based cosmological system that underlies both Gnostic descriptions of the divine world, with their complicated unfolding of a celestial hierarchy, and the liturgies transmitted by the Coptic magical spells and handbooks. It may be speculated that such a system derives from ancient Jewish celestial topographies" ("Christian Spells," 342).

[102] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 90–92 passim; see now Bull, "Hermes," 243–52.

[103] "This literary or, more precisely, ritual continuity must reflect a demographic continuity as well: the entry of people into the monastic environment who were originally trained in priestly traditions, who would have carried the ritual idiom and traditions with them, perhaps even already in Coptic form. The only real evidence for this idea is first, the fact that Coptic itself had taken shape before Christianity as a medium for ritual texts, and second, a number of saint-narratives that actually speak of the conversion of Egyptian priests. But given the Egyptian legacy in the spells and the sparse literacy of Egyptian culture except among those professionally given to writing and collecting, a continuity between the very

case of the cryptographical system at work in *Zostrianos*, which we have also found at a monastery. In other words, we ought not consider these magical and monastic contexts as mutually exclusive or even competing. Even as we investigate the production of the Nag Hammadi Codices in monastic scribal environments, we also ought to explore the transmission of the Nag Hammadi texts via the late ancient Egyptian "occult" *milieux* of Zosimus or the Hermetica. All this speaks in support of Lundhaug and Jenott's observation that some monks were interested in, produced, and traded unorthodox and extracanonical materials.

In other words, even if we are dealing with monks rather than "urban" occultists, these must be some fairly occult-minded monks.[104] Recognizing this might help us out of the quandary of whether to regard the prospective readership of the Nag Hammadi texts to be "semi-intellectual" (Khosroyev), or simply not "elite" or "intellectual" (Lundhaug and Jenott). Again, Zosimus provides a useful reference point here, of a fourth-century Egyptian interested in philosophical matters and conversant in philosophical terminology, but oriented towards religious and magico-alchemical ends. For example, perhaps the "Platonizing" Sethian treatises were translated into Coptic and copied by Coptophone scribes not out of any great scholarly interest in Plotinian metaphysics and *Parmenides* commentaries, but because *Zostrianos*, *Allogenes*, and the

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scribal institutions of native and Christian Egypt is the best context" (David Frankfurter, "Dynamics of Ritual Expertise in Antiquity and Beyond: Towards a New Taxonomy of 'Magicians'," in *Magic and Ritual and the Ancient World* [ed. Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer; RGRW 141; Leiden: Brill, 2002], 129–30). See further Frankfurter, "Ritual Expertise," 159–78; Nicole B. Hansen, "Ancient Execration Magic in Coptic and Islamic Egypt," in *Magic and Ritual and the Ancient World* (ed. Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer; RGRW 141; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 427–45; David Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk: Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 227–39, followed by Boustan and Sanzo, "Christian Magicians," 220 n. 8; Jacques van der Vliet, "Literature, Liturgy, Magic: A Dynamic Continuum," in *Christianity in Egypt: Literary Production and Intellectual Trends: Studies in Honor of Tito Orlandi* (ed. Paola Buzi and Alberto Camplani; Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum 125; Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 2011), 555–74. I thank Hugo Lundhaug for many of these references.

[104] Cf. Rowan Greer's remark that "it does not seem impossible to me that at Nag Hammadi we are dealing with a community of theosophical monks influenced by Origen, concerned with the ascetical and celibate life, and interested in whatever theosophical literature could be found" (Rowan Greer, "The Dog and the Mushrooms: Irenaeus's View of the Valentinians Reassessed," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism* [ed. Bentley Layton; 2 vols; SHR 41; Leiden: Brill, 1980], 147). Lundhaug and Jenott embrace Greer's suggestion that the Nag Hammadi texts were produced by Origenist monks (*Monastic Origins*, 240–41). My point here is that Prof. Greer's casual designation of the producers of the Nag Hammadi Codices as well as the literature contained in these codices as "theosophical" is at least as helpful, if not more helpful, than the hypothesis of their relationship to the Origenist Controversy.

Three Steles of Seth came to incorporate powerful-sounding doxologies familiar from Graeco-Egyptian magical practice and early Christian liturgy into their angelological speculations, which *Marsanes* theorized in a compelling way.[105] Such speculations and concomitant doxologies would have been of great interest to monks pursuing the "angelic life."[106]

All this raises the question of how and why some of this esoteric literature could have entered monastic circles in the first place – of the stages of the transmission of the works preserved at Nag Hammadi *preceding* their collection and burial.[107] Bull has offered the attractive hypothesis that some Zosimus-like characters entered the monasteries and brought their books with them,[108] but one way to move beyond speculation may be to re-examine the "monastic hypothesis" on a piecemeal level, codex by codex. For instance, even if one regards, say, Codices II and III as the work of monastic scribes based upon their colophons,[109] Codex VI presents a more ambiguous case,[110] while Codex X has no particularly monastic features at all and does not belong to any identifiable scribal sub-group.[111] In any case, even if we accept that the Nag Hammadi manuscripts as a group were owned and buried by Pachomian monks, the stages of the production and trading of the texts they contain may take us – indeed, at some level must take us – into the worlds of bilingual scribes of magical texts, worlds like those of Besa, Vales, and Pshai, and, perhaps, that is not at all far from Zosimus.

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[105] On the doxologies of the "Platonizing" Sethian treatises as angelic language uttered by angelified seers – to be emulated, most likely, by the readers of the treatises – see Burns, *Apocalypse*, 127–30.

[106] For survey, see Karl Suso Frank, *ΑΓΓΕΛΙΚΟΣ ΒΙΟΣ: Begriffsanalytische und Begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum "engelgleichen Leben" im frühen Mönchtum* (BGAM 26; Münster: Aschendorff, 1964).

[107] For discussion of the distinct phases of the composition of the Nag Hammadi texts, their redaction, their translation into Coptic, and the subsequent creation of the exemplars from which the Nag Hammadi manuscripts were copied, see Emmel, "The Coptic Gnostic Texts," 34–41.

[108] Bull, "Hermes," 251.

[109] A fine case is made by Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 183–93.

[110] For arguments in favor of a monastic provenance for NHC VI, see the references given above.

[111] Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 211.

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Translation Technique in the Coptic Version of Plato's *Republic* (NHC VI,5)[*]

Christian Askeland

The present discussion will consider the significance of the Coptic version of Plato's *Republic* IX 588a–589b preserved in Nag Hammadi Codex VI. This tractate has enjoyed considerable attention, particularly with regard to the nature of the translation, a possible revision toward a "gnostic" worldview and intertextuality with other tractates. Several modern editors have published reliable transcriptions, comparing the extant Coptic with the known Greek tradition.[1]

1. The Republic, Justice, and the Human Soul

Plato's bohemian approach to philosophy described both the political state and the entire cosmos in parallel with the human soul. According to the Athenian philosopher, the search for justice, beauty and equality lay in eclectic discussions including art, astronomy, geometry, human anatomy, music, politics and philology. The present discussion considers a unique Coptic paraphrase of a

[1] Although the present analysis reflects a fresh transcription and comparison, the reader is encouraged to consult one of the recent editions to review the Coptic text. James Brashler, "Plato, Republic 588b–589b VI,5: 48,16–51,23," in *Nag Hammadi Codices V,2–5 and VI with Papyrus Berolinensis 8502,1 and 4* (ed. Douglas M. Parrott; NHS 11;Leiden: Brill, 1979), 325–39; Louis Painchaud, ed., "Fragment de la République de Platon (NH VI, 5)," in *Les Sentences de Sextus (NH XII, 1); Fragments (NH XII, 3), suivi du fragment de la République de Platon (NH VI, 5)* (ed. Paul-Hubert Poirer and Louis Painchaud; BCNH.T 11; Leuven: Peeters, 1983); Hans-Martin Schenke, "Platon, Politeia 588b–589b (NHC VI, 5)," in *NHC V, 2–XIII, 1, BG 1 und 4* (ed. Hans-Martin Schenke, Hans-Gebhard Bethge, and Ursula Ulrike; Nag Hammadi Deutsch 2; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003), 495–97; Irina Protopopova and Alexei Garadja, «Химера, Лев и «внутренний Человек»: коптский перевод Платона (NH VI,v – «Государство» 588b1–589b6)," *Вестник Русской Христианской Гуманитарной Академии* 14 (2013): 9–18.

passage in Plato's Republic, in which the discourse describes the human condition through mythological analogy.

According to this passage, three constituent parts constitute the human soul, each mythologized independently before being constructed into a composite whole. A multi-headed beast representing "appetite" exceeds its two counterparts in size. The second largest, "spirit," appears as a lion, while the smallest, "reason," is a human. To the observer, the composite whole mirrors the third and smallest of the constituent members – a human. Within the context of Plato's Republic, the interpreter must proceed with two contextual frameworks.[2] First, the discourse constructs an anthropology paralleled by political science,[3] in which the tripartite human parallels a tripartite city-state.[4] Second, the constitutional organization describes the intercourse necessary for "justice." In the case of the city, three distinct classes must collaborate to establish justice (*Rep*. IV). Justice, both in politics and personal ethics, results from wisdom, courage and moderation, with wisdom at the helm.

Table 1: Plato's tripartite soul

	Appetite	*Spirit*	*Reason*
Rep. IX *passim*	ἐπιθυμητικόν	θυμοειδές	λογιστικόν
Rep. 435e	Athens	Thrace, Scythia	Phoenicia, Egypt
Rep. 434b *passim*	producers	soldiers	guardians
Rep. 588a *ll.*	multi-headed beast	lion	human

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[2] In discourse with Glaucon and Adeimantus, Socrates defines the tripartite nature of the city throughout book four, especially 438d–440a.

[3] *Rep*. IX 441c "These things, therefore," I said, "we have with difficulty navigated and by us suitably it is agreed with respect to, on the one hand, those kinds in the city, and, on the other hand, those kinds in the soul of each one of us – indeed they are equal in number."

[4] For a description of the parallel and subsequent criticism of Plato's logic, cf.: Nicolas D. Smith, "Plato's Analogy of Soul and State," *J. Ethics* 3 (1999): 31–49. Smith references various modern critics of Plato's parallel. Bernard Williams' chapter "The Analogy of City and Soul in Plato's Republic" raised issues with Plato's city-soul parallel, which have shaped scholarly discussion for decades; Bernard Williams, "The Analogy of City and Soul in Plato's Republic," in *Exegesis and Argument: Studies in Greek Philosophy. Presented to Gregory Vlastos* (ed. Richard Rorty, Alexander P. D. Mourelatos, and Edward N. Lee; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1973), 196–206. For general discussion on Platonic anthropology, cf. C. D. C. Reeve, "Soul, Soul-Parts, and Persons in Plato," in *Reason and Analysis in Ancient Greek Philosophy: Essays in Honor of David Keyt* (ed. Georgios Anagnostopoulos and Fred D. Miller; Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), 147–70; Kathryn A. Morgan, "Theriomorphism and the Composite Soul in Plato," in *Plato and Myth: Studies on the Use and Status of Platonic Myths* (ed. Catherine Collobert, Pierre Destrée, and Francisco J. Gonzalez; Mnemosyne Supplements 337; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 323–42.

Through the mouth of Socrates, Plato describes a hypocritically-just person, whom people wrongly praise for his justice. Such a person would have a soul in discord, having fostered an imbalance among his three constituent members and disempowering the human-third of his soul:

… it profits [the composite human], who prepares a banquet to strengthen the manifold beast, the lion and the matters concerning the lion, but to starve and weaken the human, in order that [the human] would be dragged wherever either [the beast or the lion] would lead. Neither collaborates with or loves the other. Instead, [the composite human] allows [the beast, the lion and the human] to bite among themselves and, fighting, to consume one another.

… λυσιτελεῖν αὐτῷ τὸ παντοδαπὸν θηρίον εὐωχοῦντι ποιεῖν ἰσχυρὸν καὶ τὸν λέοντα καὶ τὰ περὶ τὸν λέοντα, τὸν ‖ δὲ ἄνθρωπον λιμοκτονεῖν καὶ ποιεῖν ἀσθενῆ, ὥστε ἕλκεσθαι ὅπῃ ἂν ἐκείνων πότερον ἄγῃ, καὶ μηδὲν ἕτερον ἑτέρῳ συνεθίζειν μηδὲ φίλον ποιεῖν, ἀλλ᾽ ἐᾶν αὐτὰ ἐν αὑτοῖς δάκνεσθαί τε καὶ μαχόμενα ἐσθίειν ἄλληλα. (*Rep*. IX 588e–589a)[5]

In contrast, the just soul operates in balance, with the human "reason" directing the two lower passions, *i.e.* the beast "appetite" and the lion "spirit." The Coptic Plato tractate dramatically condenses this final section, eliminating the following text entirely:

By allying with the lion's nature, caring for all [of the three natures] in common, and crafting friendships with one another and himself, [the composite human] in this way fosters growth.

σύμμαχον ποιησάμενος τὴν τοῦ λέοντος φύσιν, καὶ κοινῇ πάντων κηδόμενος, φίλα ποιησάμενος ἀλλήλοις τε καὶ αὑτῷ, οὕτω θρέψει. (*Rep*. IX 589b)

2. History of Scholarship

The present examination of the Coptic Plato version follows an extensive series of prior enquiries, and scholars have already discussed essentially all the data examined below. The present survey will argue that the most regular characteristic of the translator is the degree to which he has erratically rendered the known Greek text. The translator is consistently inconsistent. These erratic patterns do not demonstrate that the translator had poor Greek knowledge, a "Gnostic" bias or a deviant Greek source text, but rather that the translator's two main failures may have been haste and inexperience with the relevant Greek text.

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[5] The present author has produced English translations of Coptic and Greek throughout this chapter. The Greek texts have been drawn from the most recent critical edition; Simon R. Slings, ed., *Platonis Rempublicam*, Oxford Classical Texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). Cf., also, Gerard J. Boter, *The Textual Tradition of Plato's Republic*, (Mnemosyne, Supplements 107; Leiden: Brill, 2018).

In a 1974 review of the Robinson facsimile edition of Codex VI, Hans-Martin Schenke identified NHC VI,5 as an excerpt from *The Republic*.[6] Schenke, furthermore, proposed a variety of textual reconstructions and extensively commented on the relationship between the extant Greek and Coptic witnesses. According to Schenke, although the Coptic was worthless as a witness to Greek tradition, the version was priceless as a witness to a Hermetic anthology. Schenke forcefully rejected the idea that the translator had a "gnostic" agenda, demonstrating that this passage had been cited by Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* VII 16.3), Plotinus (*Enneades* I 1.7) and Proclus (*In Platonis Rem Publicam commentarii*. I 225.16–18, 226.8–11, 227.24–27, 229.23-26, 292.28–293.2) and argued that the text resulted from the unskilled translation of a Coptic theology student working with a non-continuous text.[7] Schenke's introduction to his German translation would repeat this methodological conservativism almost thirty years later, reiterating his suggestion that the textual variations resulted from a sloppy translation of an excerpt of *The Republic*.[8]

In the interim, however, several scholars have argued that the NHC VI,5 Plato excerpt represents a "gnostic" translational hermeneutic. Tito Orlandi published an extensive comparison of the Greek and Coptic texts in 1977,[9] contemporaneous with Elias Matsagouras's synopsis of his Dalhousie University master's thesis.[10] Thirty years later, Orlandi would renew his argument that the translator's theology influenced the translation, citing Howard Jackson:

From then it has been considered as the very bad translation of that passage, but the fact is, that it is not a translation at all, but the redactional (gnosticizing) transformation of the passage, where (in the words of Jackson; cf. Orlandi and Matsaguras) "what Socrates makes the activity of the unjust man has been transformed by the Gnostic redactor into a recommenda-

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[6] Hans-Martin Schenke, "Zur Faksimile-Ausgabe der Nag Hammadi-Schriften: Nag Hammadi-Codex VI," *OLZ* 69 (1974): 229–43.

[7] Schenke, "Faksimile-Ausgabe," 232. "Es dürfte in griechischer Urgestalt (und also um seines wirklichen Sinnes willen und wohl auch unter einer zutreffenden Bezeichnung) einmal Bestandteil einer griechischen Sammlung hermetischer Schriften gewesen sein. Insofern NHC VI, *5* dieses deutlich werden lässt, stellt er eine echte Sensation dar und ist er von unschätzbarem Wert. Nicht von Wert dagegen ist seine direct vorliegende koptische Übersetzung. Sie zu verstehen, heißt, mit dem Kummer gewohnten Routine eines Griechischlehrers für Anfänger der Logik des Irrtums auf die Spur zu kommen. Für sich betrachtet wirkt dieses Stück nämlich wie eine 'verhauene' Graecumsklausur eines koptischen Theologiestudenten, die durch einen witzigen Zufall und mit Hilfe argloser 'Textfinder' und Redaktoren, die das Schlimme verschlimmbesserten, in die Literatur greraten ist."

[8] Schenke, "Platon, Politeia," 356.

[9] Tito Orlandi, "La traduzione copta di Platone Resp. IX 588B–589B: problemi critici ed esegetici," *Atti Della Accad. Naz. Dei Lincei Rendiconti Morali* 8,32 (1977): 45–62.

[10] Elias G. Matsagouras, "Plato Copticus," *Platon* 29 (1977): 191–99.

tion to rid oneself of the lion and the beast [*i.e.* the irrational part of the soul], and the recommendation is couched in terms and circumstances suspiciously reminiscent of the Gnostic traditions encountered in the Pistis Sophia and the Coptic Manichaica."[11]

In his critical edition, James Brashler identified the Coptic Plato as a failed translation of a difficult Attic Greek text and no more.[12] Alternatively, Louis Painchaud developed Orlandi's suggestion of a redaction[13] and Michel Tardieu's "paraphrase" suggestion,[14] and argued that the Coptic version contrasted the moral alternatives of either embracing injustice or rejecting the rule of the archons.[15] Although both editions analyzed the Coptic translation, the principal arguments, including those in the following section, had already been identified by Schenke.

3. Coptic Plato versus Greek Plato

Marvin Meyer's English translation of the Coptic Plato tractate includes an English translation from Benjamin Jowett, and Tito Orlandi has created an Italian parallel translation of the Coptic and known Greek texts. Although these endeavors offer the reader a sense of the relevant divergences, the parallels obscure the potential causes of these divergences. The various comparisons have demonstrated that, "… the Coptic translation does not have any value for the history or the constitution of the text."[16] The present analysis will survey errors which may relate to (1) the lost context of the larger platonic text of *The Republic* and (2) word division especially as it relates to *scriptio continua*. For purposes of brevity, a review of the Greek-Coptic loanwords in the passage will demonstrate the paraphrastic nature of the Coptic version.

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[11] Tito Orlandi, "Nag Hammadi Texts and the Coptic Literature," in *Colloque International "L'évangile selon Thomas et les textes de Nag Hammadi" (Québec, 29–31 Mai 2003)* (ed. Louis Painchaud and Paul-Hubert Poirier; BCNH.É 8; Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 323–34; Howard M. Jackson, *The Lion Becomes Man. The Gnostic Leontomorphic Creator and the Platonic Tradition*, SBL Dissertation Series 81 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1985), 45–62.

[12] Brashler, "Plato, Republic," 325–26; Painchaud, "République de Platon," 117ff.

[13] Orlandi, "La traduzione copta di Platone," 54.

[14] Michel Tardieu, *Trois mythes gnostiques: Adam, Éros et les animaux d'Égypte dans un écrit de Nag Hammadi (II, 5)*, Études augustiniennes (Turnhout: Brepols, 1974), 350.

[15] "C'est un gnostique fortement imprégné par les thèmes et le vocabulaire des récits anthropogoniques qu'on retrouve dans les écrits mythologiques du Codex II et dans plusieurs autres écrits gnostiques de la Bibliothéque de Nag Hammadi, soit les textes dits 'séthiens' ou encore 'mythologiques.'" Painchaud, "République de Platon," 121–22.

[16] Boter, *The Textual Tradition of Plato's Republic*, 279–80.

The Coptic version lacks the discourse structure of the known Greek *Republic* text. For instance, while the translator rendered ἔφη, "he said," twice,[17] he has ignored the term elsewhere.[18] Furthermore, the opaque discourse formulae ἦ δ᾽ ὅς … ἦν δ᾽ ἐγώ and ὅμως δέ have also been omitted.[19] The translator interpreted the words ἥμερος, "tame, domesticated," according to the Koiné homophone, ἡμέρα "day" and δοξάζω, "to think, imagine," along the Imperial Greek meaning "to glorify."[20] The term ἔλυτρον "covering" is simply ignored.

Translations may be literal in either formal or functional fashions, respectively rendering their source texts word-for-word or phrase-for-phrase. The Coptic Plato translator operates word-for-word, sometimes to a fault, but then grammatically redeems the translationese sentence with a periphrastic ending. Consider the following example from 588c 6 / 49.14 with the paraphrastic, end-of-phrase recapitulations placed in boxes:

λέγονται		γάρ, ἔφη.	πλάττε	τοίνυν		
ⲉⲩ|ϫⲱ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ ϫⲉ			ⲁⲣⲓ ϩⲱⲃ	ⲧⲉ|ⲛⲟⲩ·		

μίαν	μὲν	ἰδέαν			θηρίου	
ⲟⲩⲉⲓⲛⲉ	ⲙⲉⲛⲧⲟⲓⲅⲉ |	ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲱⲧ᾽ ⲡⲉ·	ⲡⲁï ⲛ̄ⲧⲁ|ⳉ⳨ⲱ|ⲡⲉ	ⲙ̄ⲡⲓⲛⲉ	ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲑⲏⲣⲓⲟⲛ	

ποικίλου	καὶ πολυκεφάλου, ἡμέρων δὲ		θηρίων ἔχοντος κεφαλὰς κύκλῳ καὶ ἀγρίων			
ⲉϥ|ϣ̄ⲃⲃⲓⲟⲉⲓⲧ᾽	ϩ̄ⲛ ⲟⲩⲛⲟϭ ⲛ̄ⲁⲡⲉ· | ϩⲉⲛϩⲟⲟⲩ ⲙⲉⲛ		ⲉϥⲟ ⲛ̄ⲑⲉ ⲙ̄|ⲡⲓⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲑⲏⲣⲓⲟⲛ ⲛ̄ⲁⲅⲣⲓⲟⲛ·			

In the following two instances, the translator has likewise deviated from both word-for-word and phrase-for-phrase literalisms, rendering the same Greek phrase twice. This occurrence cannot be understood as an error or some sort of translational explicitation, but instead constitutes a paraphrase. Perhaps, the added emphasis results from the translator's anthropological interest in the composite nature of the soul.

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[17] One instance is debatable; 588b 9. πῶς; ἔφη, ⲛ̄ⲁϣ ⲥⲉ ⲛ̄ϩⲉ ⲡⲉ\|ϫⲁϥ. Also, 588b 6 νῦν δή, ἔφην, ⲡⲉϫⲁï ⲇⲉ.

[18] 588c 6, 588d 5, 588e 2, 588c 9, 588d 4, 588e 5 φησὶν.

[19] 588c 1 and 588c 9. "ἦ δ' ὅς, Plato, Rpb. 437B; Quoth he;" Basil L. Gildersleeve, *Syntax of Classical Greek from Homer to Demosthenes* (New York: American Book Company, 1900), 2:222, § 522.

[20] 588b 3 δοξαζομένῳ δὲ δικαίῳ, ϣⲁϥϫⲓ ⲉⲟⲟⲩ. 588c 8 ἡμέρων δὲ, ϩⲉⲛϩⲟⲟⲩ ⲙⲉⲛ.

588c 4 / 49:10

ⲁⲩⲣ̄ ⲕ̣ⲁ|ⲧⲁⲛⲧⲁ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ	ⲁⲩ† ⲟⲩⲱ̄	ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ϩⲉⲛⲙⲟⲣⲫⲏ ⲙⲛ̄ ϩⲉⲛ|ⲉⲓⲛⲉ·	ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲩϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲧⲏ|ⲣⲟⲩ
συμπεφυκυῖαι		ἰδέαι	ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ` πολλαὶ εἰς ἓν γενέσθαι.

588d 5 / 50:06

[ⲧ]ⲉⲛⲟⲩ ϭⲉ ⲧⲱϭⲉ	ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲟⲩ	ⲉⲛⲉⲩ|ⲉⲣⲏⲟⲩ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲁⲁⲩ	ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲁ ⲛ̄|ⲟⲩⲱⲧ·
σύναπτε τοίνυν	αὐτὰ		εἰς ἓν

588e 5 / 50:22

ⲥⲣ̄ ⲛⲟϥⲣⲉ ⲛⲁϥ ⲁⲛ·	ⲟⲩⲧⲉ	ⲙⲛ̄|ⲧⲁϥ ⲟⲫⲉⲗⲉⲓⲁ ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲩ·
οὐ συμφέρει		

In addition to the word-for-word literalism, occasional grammatical recapitu-
lation and repetition of phrases, the translator simply ignored some parts of the
extant Greek text. Possibly, the translator or the source text overlooked
Σκύλλης (588c 3) or ἔλυτρον (588e 2) because of a lack of familiarity with the
context of *The Republic* or Koiné vocabulary. Moreover, he may have inten-
tionally eliminated the Socratic discourse structure of the Greek narrative (e.g.
φημί). The partial translation (or active omission) of the final sentence of this
section of *The Republic* offers perhaps the most enigmatic feature discussed
here. The bottom quarter of this tractate's leaf is empty, theoretically contain-
ing enough space for the omitted Greek material, which appears in the box
below.

Translation of Greek	589b 2–6	51.19–23
… like the farmer nourishing and tending the tame beasts,	ὥσπερ γεωργός, τὰ μὲν ἥμερα τρέφων καὶ τιθασεύων,	ⲛ̄ⲑⲉ ϩⲱⲱϥ ⲙ̄ⲡⲅⲉⲱⲣⲅⲟⲥ ⲉϥⲁϥⲥⲁⲁⲛⲱ̄ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉϥⲅⲉⲛⲛⲏⲙⲁ ⲙ̄ⲙⲏⲛⲉ·
but hindering the wild beasts from growth,	τὰ δὲ ἄγρια ἀποκωλύων φύεσθαι,	ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲑⲏⲣⲓⲟⲛ ⲛ̄ⲁⲅⲣⲓⲟⲛ ⲣ̄ ⲕⲱⲗⲩⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ ⲉⲧⲣⲉϥⲣⲱⲧ`
By allying with the lion's nature, caring for all [three] in common,	σύμμαχον ποιησάμενος τὴν τοῦ λέοντος φύσιν, καὶ κοινῇ πάντων κηδόμενος,	
and crafting friendships with one another and him-self,	φίλα ποιησάμενος ἀλλήλοις τε καὶ αὐτῷ,	
[the composite human] in this way	οὕτω	
fosters growth.	θρέψει;	

The alternation between formal literalism, functional literalism and paraphrase
demonstrates the irregularity of this Coptic version. This inconsistent literalism

accompanies disparities with the currently known Greek which probably constitute errors of some sort. The list below, while not exhaustive, highlights peculiarities discussed already in the studies by Brashler, Matsagouras, Orlandi, Painchaud and Schenke. While these deviations may reflect failures in translation, they do not necessarily demonstrate that the translator's Greek proficiency was to blame.

Table 2: Reading errors by the translator

	Extant Greek	*Coptic*	*Theoretical Greek*
588b 2 / 48.19	δεῦρ᾽ ἥκομεν	ⲦⲚⲚⲀϬⲒⲚⲈ	δ᾽εὑρήκαμεν
588b 4 / 48.23	ἐλέχθη	ⲈⲚⲦⲀⲨϪⲠⲒⲞⲨ	ἐλέγχθη
588b 10 / 48.31	εἰκόνα πλάσαντες	ⲞⲨϨⲒⲔⲰⲚ ⲈⲘⲚ̄ⲦⲀ��	ⲈⲒⲚⲈ	εἰκὼν ἄπλαστος
588c 3 / 49.08	Χιμαίρας	ⲠϪⲒⲘⲀ<Ⲓ>Ⲣ{Ⲣ}Ⲁ{Ⲓ}Ⲥ	misspelling
	Σκύλλης	omitted	omission
	Κερβέρου	ⲠⲔⲈⲢⲂ<ⲈⲢ>ⲞⲨ	misspelling
588c 7 / 49.15	πλάττε	ⲀⲢⲒ ϨⲰⲂ	πράττε
588c 8 / 49.20	ἡμέρων	ϨⲈⲚϨⲞⲞⲨ	[ἡμέρα]
588e 4 / 50.19	λέγωμεν δὴ	ⲠⲈϪⲀⲈⲒ	ⲆⲈ	λέγω μὲν δή
588e 4 / 50.21	τούτῳ ἀδικεῖν τῷ | ἀνθρώπῳ	ⲘⲠⲬⲒⲚϬⲞⲚⲤ̄ ⲘⲠⲢⲰⲘⲈ·	τούτῳ ἀδικούντῳ ἀνθρώπῳ
589a 5 / 51.08	παντάπασι	ⲚⲀⲒ̈ ... ⲦⲎⲢⲞⲨ ... Ⲛ̄ⲞⲨⲞⲚ ⲚⲒⲘ	πάντα πάσι
589b 2 / 51.21	ἥμερα	Ⲙ̄ⲘⲎⲚⲈ	[ἡμέρα]

This erratic and lacunose text offers multiple problems. Modern interpreters have speculated on the contents of the lacuna and logic of various peculiar readings. One instance, perhaps an unsolvable riddle, lies with the text's metaphorical description of the versatility of speech for forming images through metaphors, as in 588c 11 / 49.27:

Since speech is a [substance] more malleable *than wax* and similar things, let it be crafted.

ἐπειδὴ εὐπλαστότερον *κηροῦ* καὶ τῶν τοιούτων λόγος, πεπλάσθω.

ⲈⲠⲒⲆⲎ ⲈⲦⲞⲨⲢ̄ ⲠⲖⲀⲤⲤⲈ Ⲙ̄ⲘⲞⲞⲨ ⲦⲚⲞⲨ ϨⲚ̄ ⲞⲨⲖⲀ᷍ⲖⲈϨ· ⲀⲨⲰ ⲘⲚ̄ ⲠⲔⲈⲤⲈⲈⲠⲈ ⲦⲎⲢϤ̄ ⲈⲦ᷍ⲦⲚⲦⲰⲚ ⲈⲢⲞⲞⲨ ⲈⲨⲢ̄ ⲠⲖⲀⲤⲤⲈ ⲦⲚⲞⲨ ϨⲚ̄ ⲠϢⲀϪⲈ·

Since now *in arrogance* they are crafted, and with all others like them in speech now they [are] craft[ed].

Numerous grammatical disparities plague the Coptic gloss. The translator has essentially ignored the Greek verbal syntax resulting in the loss of the comparative protasis and the jussive apodosis, yet every Greek word appears to have

a Coptic parallel. Modern translators have struggled to interpret ⲅ̄ⲛ ⲟⲩⲗⲁ²ⲗⲉⲅ, for which Crum offers a subentry "*height*, pride" under (ⲗⲁⲅⲗⲅ).[21]

Fig. 1: NHC VI 49.29

This word appears twice among the Nag Hammadi texts in NHC VI,3 *Authoritative Teaching* 23.31 ⲛⲓⲡⲁⲑⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲗⲁⲅⲗⲉⲅ "the arrogant passions" and 32.8 ⲅ̄ⲛ ⲟⲩⲗⲁⲅⲗⲉⲅ ⲁⲛ ⲛ̄ⲥⲁⲣⲁⲝ "not in fleshly arrogance." In the Plato translation, "arrogance" does not seem to derive from any obvious misreading of the Greek. Notably, one of the Horehs has been added as a correction. Perhaps, the problem could be solved by excising both the added Horeh as well as the final Horeh: ⲗⲁ{²}ⲗⲉ{ⲅ} = ⲗⲁⲗⲉ "to paint." Therefore, the sentence would read, "Therefore, now, in a painting they are crafted … in speech, they [are] craft[ed]." Perhaps, Schenke had a similar thought when he translated the phrase, "schön gebildet," or "beautifully formed."[22] Unfortunately, ⲗⲁⲗⲉ appears nowhere in Coptic literature as a grammatical noun.

While the scribe of this codex, labelled G, did not contribute to any of the other Nag Hammadi manuscripts, his product resembles that of scribes F and H, thus NHC V, VI and IX, forming a paleographic cluster.[23] Weighing known dialectal distinctives, Wolf-Peter Funk has identified Codex VI as "heterogeneous" with five distinct clusters of related translations.[24] Unfortunately, the Coptic Plato tractate was too short to evaluate the limited number of criteria tracked by Funk, but the confusion of ⲗⲁⲅⲗⲉⲅ reflects the complexity of dialect and orthography in this particular tractate and also across the Nag Hammadi corpus. Consider the following instances of inconsistent spelling in *The Republic* extract with Sahidic parallels:

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[21] Walter Ewing Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939), 149b.

[22] "Weil die, die jetzt schön gebildet werden, und alle übrigen, die ihnen gleichen, jetzt durch das Wort bilden." Schenke, "Platon, Politeia 588A–589B," 357.

[23] Michael Allen Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1996), 242–43.

[24] VI,1: *Acts Pet. 12 Apost.*, VI,2–3: *Thund. & Auth. Teach.*, VI,4: *Great Pow.*, VI,6–7: *Disc. 8–9 & Pr. Thanks.*, VI,8: *Asclepius*; Wolf-Peter Funk, "The Linguistic Aspect of Classifying the Nag Hammadi Codices," in *Les textes de Nag Hammadi et le problème de leur classification: actes du colloque tenu à Québec du 15 au 19 septembre 1993* (ed. Anne Pasquier and Louis Painchaud; BCNH.É 3; Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 122 & 128.

Table 3: Non-Sahidic orthography

	Variant	*Sahidic*	
48.24	тєї	таι	48.23
48.33	ⲙ̄ⲙⲉ	[ⲉⲓⲙⲉ]	
50.03	[ⲱ]ⲃⲃⲓⲉⲓⲧ	ⲱⲃⲃⲓⲟⲉⲓⲧ	49.19
50.04	ⲙⲁϩⲥⲛⲁⲩ	[ⲙⲉϩⲥⲛⲁⲩ]	
50.08	ϣⲟⲙⲉⲧ	ϣⲟⲣⲡ̄	49.23
49.32	†ⲛⲟⲩ	ⲧⲉⲛⲟⲩ	49.32
50.26	ⲉⲧⲣⲉϥ|ⲧⲉⲩⲟ	ⲉⲧⲣⲉϥⲛⲁⲩ	50.13

Including two instances of different lexemes with the equivalent expected vocalization (ϣⲟⲙⲉⲧ : ϣⲟⲣⲡ̄; ⲉⲧⲣⲉϥ|ⲧⲉⲩⲟ : ⲉⲧⲣⲉϥⲛⲁⲩ), five of the seven examples above deviate from not only standard Sahidic but from the translator's own spelling. In two instances, the inconsistency happens within a few words (тєї : таι; †ⲛⲟⲩ : ⲧⲉⲛⲟⲩ). In other words, the translator has not consistently followed any orthographical scheme, occasionally shifting between forms within the same sentence. Although this inconsistency does not relate directly to the translation of the Greek source, the deviations support the hypothesis that this Coptic translation of Plato preserves a different sort of translation from the known translations of the Sahidic Bible in particular and the various other translations of the Bible in general.

The present discussion has considered the translational patterns of the Coptic Plato text. The table below contrasts the Greek-Coptic loanwords with their counterparts in the extant Greek, illustrating how the translator has earnestly attempted to parallel his source text. The rendering of παλαιαί with ⲁⲣⲭⲱⲛ offers the most compelling basis for a "gnostic" paraphrase, perhaps a specifically Valentinian reworking of *The Republic* passage.[25] The term, however, appears over two hundred times in biblical texts, typically as a translation for the Greek equivalent.[26]

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[25] Matsagouras, "Plato Copticus," 196ff.; Painchaud, "République de Platon," 122.

[26] ἀρχαῖος and παλαιός have similar meanings; in Koiné, παλαιός has, at least in some instances, the connotation of "obsolescence." Matt. 9:16, Rom. 7:6, Eph. 4:22, Col. 3:9.

Table 4: Greek-Coptic loanwords

NHC VI reference	Coptic	Extant Greek
49.21, 51.22	ⲁⲅⲣⲓⲟⲛ	ἄγρια
49.04, 50.14, 50.24, 51.4	ⲁⲗⲗⲁ	ἀλλά, ὅτι, ἄλλο
49.06	ⲁⲣⲭⲱⲛ	παλαιαί
49.33	ⲧⲉⲛⲟⲩ ⲅⲁⲣ	δὴ τοίνυν
49.34, 51.08	ⲅⲁⲣ	ἄλλην?, γάρ
51.21	ⲅⲉⲛⲏⲙⲁ	τρέφων
51.19	ⲅⲉⲱⲣⲅⲟⲥ	γεωργός
48.25, 49.19, 50.29	ⲇⲉ	νῦν δή, δή, δέ
48.28, 51.12	ⲇⲓⲕⲁⲓⲟⲛ	δίκαια
48.22	ⲇⲓⲕⲁⲓⲱⲥ	δικαίῳ
51.10	ⲉⲡⲁⲓⲛⲟⲩ	ἐπαινῶν
48.26	ⲉⲡⲓⲇⲏ	ἐπειδή
49.27	ⲉⲣⲅⲟⲛ	ἔργον
50.17	ⲍⲱⲟⲛ	ζῷον
49.18, 49.21, 50.26, 51.22	ⲑⲏⲣⲓⲟⲛ	θηρίον
49.10	ⲕⲁⲧⲁⲛⲧⲁ	εἰς ἓν γενέσθαι?
51.23	ⲕⲱⲗⲩⲉ	ἀποκωλύων
48.32	ⲗⲟⲅⲟⲥ	λόγου
49.20	ⲙⲉⲛ	δὲ
48.24, 49.16	ⲙⲉⲛⲧⲟⲓⲅⲉ	μὲν οὖν, τοίνυν ... μέν
49.12	ⲙⲟⲣⲫⲏ	ἰδέαι ?
51.11	ⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲛ ⲥⲉ	οὐκοῦν
50.23	ⲟⲩⲧⲉ	none
50.24	ⲟⲫⲉⲗⲉⲓⲁ	λυσιτελεῖν
49.24	ⲡⲗⲁⲥⲙⲁ	πλάστου
49.28, 49.31, 50.05, 50.18	ⲡⲗⲁⲥⲥⲉ	πέπλασται
48.21	ⲧⲉⲗⲉⲱⲥ	τελέως
50.16	ⲫⲉⲛⲉⲥⲑⲁⲓ	φαίνεσθαι
49.07	ⲫⲩⲥⲓⲥ	φύσεις
48.32	ⲯⲩⲭⲏ	ψυχῆς
48.31, 50.11	ϩⲓⲕⲱⲛ	εἰκόνα
50.08, 50.32	ϩⲱⲥⲧⲉ	ὥστε

4. Conclusion

The fragmentary nature of this tractate prevents any decisive interpretation of the translation. Because the study of translation technique reflects a hermeneutical spiral, in which the scholar compares extensive amounts of target language translation with a hypothetical Greek source text, the present pericope offers a limited point of departure. Not only does the Nag Hammadi version preserve less than half of a percent of Plato's *Republic*, but also approximately

[16]/[108] of the extant Coptic lines have lacunae. Additionally, the Coptic translation concludes before the end of the Greek section.

Assuming the extant Greek tradition, the Coptic translator has expanded some elements of the Greek text, while condensing other passages – especially the final section. Consistently, the final product lacks consistency. Although the present examination affirms the philological conclusions of prior studies, which have demonstrated the irregular nature of the Coptic version, the present study avoids characterizations of the translation (and especially of the translator) as "gnostic." Instead, scholars should consider the degree to which the passage parallels biblical anthropology and distinctly Christian ascesis. Furthermore, along with contemporary fourth-century Christian philosophical systems, which had appropriated Greco-Roman philosophy, religion and literature, the Coptic version can itself attest the direct influence of Platonism in its purest form, namely Plato.

Functionally, this excision of *The Republic* constitutes not only a section of the total work, but a reduction of that passage. The Coptic version lacks the discourse elements present in the Greek; and the Socratic method of discourse appears in the form of a treatise, an adaption probably necessitated by the nature of the excerpt. Because of the Coptic lacunae, the modern reader struggles to confirm the tripartite anthropology presented in the Greek, yet the three chimeric natures clearly appear (θηρίον, λέων, ἄνθρωπος). With parallel citations of this passage and the widely-accepted concept of the tripartite soul, this Coptic tractate demonstrates the influence of Plato in fourth-century Egyptian thought and, according the larger context of this edited volume, the influence of Plato in Egyptian monasticism.[27]

This translation, along with other Nag Hammadi tractates with extant Greek parallels, suggests the sorts of translational processes at play for the larger corpus. Contra Brashler, who has maintained that this tractate "represents an exception to the rest of the tractates in the Nag Hammadi codices, which generally have been translated from the Greek with considerable skill and understanding,"[28] the Coptic Plato tractate demonstrates the diversity of the Nag Hammadi corpus. Preceded by a Christian-apocalyptic text and followed by a Hermetic dialog, the present tractate constitutes a Platonic interlude (or maybe bridge) between these other texts as well as a paraphrase of an extract, which perhaps only an ancient savant would have recognized. The Attic Greek of *The Republic* along with its complex themes must have complicated translation more than the imperial Greek of those other texts now extant as Coptic translations among the Nag Hammadi codices, and the lack of any superscription or

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[27] Lundhaug and Jenott consider the possible Origenist context of the Nag Hammadi codices, for instance: Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (STAC 97; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 238–46.

[28] Brashler, "Plato, Republic," 325.

subscription surely obscured the text's interpretation. While the troubled translation may or may not evidence a wider translational trend in the Nag Hammadi corpus, these textual peculiarities fit squarely in the context of an eclectic fourth-century monastic library, one whose texts represent varieties of Coptic dialects and texts.

The present study does not adequately address the intertextuality of the Coptic Plato tractate with other texts within the Nag Hammadi Corpus, especially *Gospel of Thomas*, Logion 7, as well as biblical and patristic sources.[29] Plato's anthropological metaphor should be studied both in terms of and in spite of the peculiarities of the Coptic version. The resultant text regardless of errors, motives or transmissional background, offers a window into monastic anthropology in the fourth century. Likewise, the philological questions raised here and in earlier studies warrant a wider and methodical study throughout the Nag Hammadi corpus, especially in those texts with extant source texts and Coptic parallels, which constitute approximately "about one-third of the Nag Hammadi collection."[30]

Although the present discussion explains the repeated discrepancies between the known Greek text and the Coptic translation of Plato by recourse to paraphrastic translation, several other factors could be at hand. In his edition of the text, Schenke has suggested that the translator may have used an excerpt of Plato with equivalent changes. Perhaps, then, the apparent incorporation of this pericope without any attribution to Plato's *Republic* results from a scribe encountering the text in such an orphaned state. Scholars often appeal to a process of dictation and copying to account for textual incongruities, assuming that peculiarities could have arisen as a direct result of a reader and a scribe. While ancient sources describe such a process, no extant manuscript from the first millennium demonstrates the practice within the Christian tradition.[31] The most difficult theory to either prove or disprove involves corruptions due to textual instability in either the Greek or Coptic traditions. Naturally, any one of these theories or all three could explain the idiosyncrasies of the Coptic Plato passage. None of them, however, would explain the dialectal inconsistency of the Coptic as well as an appeal to an *ad hoc* translation origin, in which the

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[29] Jackson, *The Lion Becomes Man*; Ivan Miroshnikov, *The Gospel of Thomas and Plato: A Study of the Impact of Platonism on the "Fifth Gospel."* (NHMS 9; Leiden: Brill, 2018), esp. 196; Andrew Crislip, "Lion and Human in 'Gospel of Thomas' Logion 7," *JBL* 126 (2007): 595–613.

[30] Lance Jenott, "Reading Variants in James and the Apocalypse of James: A Perspective from New Philology" in *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology* (ed. Liv Ingeborg Lied and Hugo Lundhaug; TUGAL 175; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 96.

[31] Tiziano Dorandi, "Zwischen Autographie und Diktat: Momente der Textualität in der antiken Welt." in *Vermittlung und Tradierung von Wissen in der griechischen Kultur* (ed. Wolfgang Kullmann and Jochen Althoff; Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto, 1993, 71–83.

passage results from an informal translation created for a single personal man-
uscript.

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Plato in Upper Egypt:
Greek Philosophy and Monastic Origenism in the Coptic Excerpt from Plato's *Republic* (NHC VI,5)[*]

Christian H. Bull

In memoriam John D. Turner

The Coptic translation of the excerpt from Plato's *Republic* is quite unique as the only preserved Coptic translation of a Greek philosophical treatise, albeit just an excerpt. This dearth of Coptic sources corresponds to a steep decline in fourth-century Greek manuscripts containing philosophy. Roughly the first half of the present contribution will deal with this demise, and the absorption of Greek philosophy into the brand of Christian Platonism known as Origenism. In addition, I will consider the only Coptic text comparable to the Plato-excerpt, namely a collection of sayings of the philosophers, preserved in a medieval White Monastery codex. The second half will be devoted to the excerpt from Plato's *Republic*. Since Christian Askeland in this volume has already introduced the Coptic text and the history of research, and outlined some of the most intriguing discrepancies between the Greek source text and the Coptic "translation," I will deal with some important questions he left unanswered, to wit:

– Was the excerpt originally part of a Greek anthology of Hermetica?

– Was the translator a Gnostic?

– Are the interpolations in the translation tendentious?

To anticipate my results, I agree with Askeland that the translator was not a "Gnostic," in the sense of an adherent of "Biblical demiurgy,"[1] but I see it as

[1] Cf. Michael Allen Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996). He probably would have seen himself as a Gnostic in the sense of Clement of Alexandria or Evagrius Ponticus.

unlikely that the Greek original of the excerpt was ever part of a Hermetic anthology, and I will suggest that an Origenist affiliation of the translator may account for some of the strange departures from the Greek source text.[2] These conclusions support the hypothesis of a monastic provenance of the Coptic translation of our excerpt, and for the Nag Hammadi Codices as such.

1. Plato and Greek Philosophy in Late Antique Egypt

1.1 Sources in Greek

In Late Antiquity, Alexandria was alongside Athens a main center for Platonic teaching, and both pagans and Christians had varying levels of commitment to Platonic doctrines.[3] Of course, Neoplatonism derives from Alexandria through Ammonius Saccas and his more famous pupil Plotinus, though in the course of the fourth century theurgic Neoplatonism in the tradition after the Syrian Iamblichus increasingly influenced Alexandrian Neoplatonists. Towards the end of the fourth century, theurgic Neoplatonists like Olympius and Antoninus came to blows with Christians as the temples of Serapis in Alexandria and Canopus were sacked, whereas non-theurgic Neoplatonists like Theon and his daughter Hypatia had a more appeasing approach, as witnessed by the latter's student Synesius who became a bishop while never renouncing his Neoplatonic adherence.[4]

On the Christian side, famous scholars like Clement and Origen of Alexandria had set the tone for a creative appropriation of Plato.[5] That fourth-century

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[2] A summary version of my findings on the question of Origenism has been published as Christian H. Bull, "An Origenistic Reading of Plato in Nag Hammadi Codex VI," in *Studia Patristica LXXV: Papers Presented at the Seventeenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2015. Volume 1: Platonism and the Fathers; Maximus the Confessor* (ed. Markus Vinzent; StPatr 75; Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 31–40.

[3] Edward Jay Watts, *City and School in Late Antique Athens and Alexandria* (TCH 41; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006). I am aware of the problems with the term "pagan," and the implied dichotomy between paganism and Christianity, but in Late Antiquity it would be fair to say that this discursive dichotomy is becoming reified. See Alan Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), esp. 14–32, for a nuanced approach.

[4] Watts, *City and School*, 187–203. On fourth-century cult in Canopus, see Christian H. Bull, "Prophesying the Demise of Egyptian Religion in Late Antiquity: The *Perfect Discourse* and Antoninus in Canopus," *Numen* 68 (2021): 180–203.

[5] See Ilaria Ramelli, "Plato in Origen's and Gregory of Nyssa's Conception of the Ἀρχή and the Τέλος," in *Plato in the Third Sophistic* (ed. Ryan C. Fowler; Millennium-Studien 50; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 211–35; David T. Runia, "Cosmos, Logos, and Nomos: the Alexandrian Jewish and Christian Appropriation of the Genesis Creation Account," in *Cosmologies et cosmogonies dans la littérature antique* (ed. Pascal Derron; EAC 61; Vandœuvres:

giant of the Alexandrian patriarchate, Athanasius, gives only grudging credit to Plato, rejecting his idolatry while utilizing Platonic cosmology and ontology.[6] It is doubtful if he read the works of the Athenian himself, or only second-hand, for in one of his few direct references to him he mistakenly states that it was Plato who went with Socrates to Piraeus to worship Artemis, a reference to the frame narrative of the *Republic* (1.327a).[7] In fact it was Glaucon who went with Socrates to partake in the festival of the goddess.[8] In his *De incarnatione*, the demise of Greek philosophy is celebrated on par with that of idolatry: "No longer does the wisdom of the Greeks prosper, but even that which does exist is now disappearing."[9]

Alexandria cannot of course be equated with Egypt. Though the seat of the patriarch was naturally in contact with the rest of the *chora*, in many ways Alexandria was culturally more a Mediterranean city than an Egyptian one.[10] While the reception of Plato and Greek philosophy in Alexandria is far too vast a subject to be dealt with in the present contribution, our sources dwindle when we move out into the Egyptian countryside and even the nome capitals. In the course of the fourth century, culture, literature, and education is much affected by the ongoing Christianization and the impetus of the monastic movement. One clear indication of this is the papyrological record.

We have a rich papyrological record for Plato in the second century, which starts to dwindle in the third, before grinding to near-halt in the fourth century.[11] In fact, besides our Coptic excerpt the only entries clearly dated to the

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Fondation Hardt pour l'étude de l'Antiquité classique, 2015), 179–209. *Pace* Niketas Siniossoglou, "Plato Christianus: The Colonization of Plato and Identity Formation in Late Antiquity," in *Pseudologie: Etudes sur la fausseté dans la langue et dans la pensée* (ed. Pascale C. Hummel; Paris: Philologicum, 2010), 147, I do not believe it is necessary to postulate an "'essence' or 'reality' of Hellenism and Christianity" to speak of appropriation.

[6] See Eginhard P. Meijering, *Orthodoxy and Platonism in Athanasius: Synthesis or Antithesis?* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 130–32; Robert W. Thomson, *Athanasius: Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971)*,* xxiv; Timothy D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1993)*,* 11.

[7] Athanasius, *C. Gent.* 10.

[8] A similar mistake is found in Bar Koni, who says that Plato proposed to sacrifice a red cock to Asclepius, whereas this is of course Socrates' last words (*Phaedo* 118a). See Yury Arzhanov, "Plato in Syriac Literature," *Mus* 132 (2019): 12, proposing that the confusion is due to a gnomic source.

[9] Athanasius, *Inc.* 55: καὶ οὐκ ἔτι μὲν ἡ Ἑλλήνων σοφία προκόπτει καὶ ἡ οὖσα δὲ λοιπὸν ἀφανίζεσται. Ed. & trans. Thomson, *Athanasius*, 270–71.

[10] Christopher Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Conflict* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 7.

[11] See the Trismegistos database: www.trismegistos.org/authors/detail.php?author_id= 694.

fourth century in the *Corpus dei papiri filosofici* are not fragments of the dialogues of Plato at all, only Pseudo-Plato: a parchment fragment containing the end of *Eryxias* and the beginning of *Demodocus*.[12] Another manuscript is dated to the 4th–5th century, consisting of two fragments from one page of a parchment codex containing the *Parmenides* (148c–149c) on both hair and skin sides.[13] If this was an anthology it must have also contained somewhat lengthy excerpts, like that of Stobaeus. Another *Parmenides* (152b-d) fragment is listed as 5th century in the Trismegistos database: It is a palimpsest washed clean to make room for a Coptic letter. Willis dated the Greek text to the second century, and the Coptic between the 4th to 6th century, "diffidently" proposing the 5th century as likely.[14] Cavallo, however, dated the Greek text itself to "no later than the end of the 5th century" and the Coptic to the 7th or 8th century or later[15] (see below for more on this text). This goes to show how uncertain palaeographical dating can be.[16] A fragment of the *Theaetetus* (143c8–e5 & 144d7–145a8) dates from the late 5th or early 6th century and is provenanced to Antinoopolis.[17]

A 3rd–4th century Oxyrhynchus fragment of a papyrus roll contains part of the *Republic* (406a5–b5), though we cannot know if it contained the whole text or if it was a florilegium.[18] Grenfell and Hunt date it to mid-late 3rd c., whereas Haslam dates it to the early 4th century.[19] Another Oxyrhyncus fragment, published after the CPF, is also dated to the 3rd or early 4th century, from a papyrus roll containing the *Cratylus* (423e).[20] Perhaps it is these two 3rd or 4th c. papyri that Blumell lists among the Plato fragments from Oxyrhynchus dating from

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[12] Francesco Adorno et al., eds., *Corpus dei papiri filosofici greci e latini (CPF): testi e lessico nei papiri di cultura greca e latina. Parte I: Autori noti, vol. 1**** (2 vols.; Firenze: Olschki, 1989), 1:54–57 (CPF Plato 8); Pieter J. Sijpesteijn, "Die Platon-Papyri," *Aegyptus* 44 (1964): 29 n. 2. Note that the order of the two pseudo-platonica is different from the *textus receptus*.

[13] PVindob. G 3088 (P. Rainer Cent 23) = CPF Plato 36 in Adorno, *Corpus,* 146–51. Though see below on the uncertainty of the dating of this fragment.

[14] P. Duke 5 (earlier G5) = CPF Plato 37 in Adorno, *Corpus*, 152–54. William H. Willis, "A New Fragment of Plato's Parmenides on Parchment," *GRBS* 12 (1971): 539–52; idem, "A Parchment Palimpsest of Plato at Duke University and the Ilias Ambrosiana," in *Akten des XIII. Internationalen Papyrologenkongresses* (ed. Emil Kießling and Hans-Albert Rupprecht; MBPAR 66; München: Beck, 1974), 461–67 (plate 6).

[15] Guglielmo Cavallo, "Considerazioni di un paleografo per la data e l'origine della 'Iliade Ambrosiana,'" *Dialoghi di archeologia* 7 (1973): 79 (n. 44 for Coptic).

[16] Brent Nongbri, *God's Library: The Archaeology of the Earliest Christian Manuscripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 68–70.

[17] P. Ant. II 78 = CPF Plato 77 in Adorno, *Corpus*, 466–69. See Cavallo, "Considerazioni," 81; Turner, *Typology,* 113 (who dates it to the 5th c.).

[18] POxy III 455 = CPF Plato 65 in Adorno, *Corpus,* 339.

[19] Adorno, *Corpus,* 339.

[20] POxy LXXVI 5083.

the fourth century, a number declining from 23 fragments in the third century and 39 fragments in the second century.[21] The steep decline, which is matched by most other pagan writers, is unsurprisingly attended by an increase in Christian Greek and Coptic texts. It is this development that is applauded by Theodoret of Cyrus, when he rhetorically asks "who are those who have adopted the way of life described in the *Republic*?" and contrasts that with the universal success of Christianity:

the Hebrew has been translated, not only into Greek, but also into Latin, Egyptian (=Coptic), Persian, Indian, Armenian, Scythian, Sarmatian, in a word into all the languages that all peoples have continued to use. The all-wise Plato went on at length on the immortality of the soul, but he did not persuade his successor, Aristotle, to adopt his definition. Our fishermen, however, our tax-gatherers, and the tent-maker have persuaded the Greeks, the Romans, the Egyptians, indeed, once and for all, every race on the earth that the soul is immortal, that it has been endowed with reason and is capable of controlling the passions ... This knowledge is possessed not just by city dwellers but also by country folk. And it is possible to find agricultural workers, drovers, and gardeners engaged in discussions on the blessed Trinity, and knowing much more than Aristotle or Plato about the Creator of the universe and the composition of human nature.[22]

Christian and Hebrew wisdom has made Aristotle and Plato redundant, and unlike the Greek wisdom it is available even to the *hoi polloi,* not only the educated few. The statement linking translation of Scriptures into Coptic with the conversion of the Egyptians goes against the radical thesis of Ewa Zakrzewska, that far from being a vehicle for transmitting the Bible to the Egyptian populace at large, Coptic was developed as an elite language for the use of the monastic few.[23] Of course, Theodoret is writing from a vantage point

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[21] Lincoln H. Blumell, *Lettered Christians: Christians, Letters, and Late Antique Oxyrhynchus* (NTTSD 39; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 328.

[22] Theodoret, *Cur.* 5.66–69: Καὶ ἡ Ἑβραίων φωνὴ οὐ μόνον εἰς τὴν Ἑλλήνων μετεβλήθη, ἀλλὰ καὶ εἰς τὴν Ῥωμαίων καὶ Αἰγυπτίων καὶ Περσῶν καὶ Ἰνδῶν καὶ Ἀρμενίων καὶ Σκυθῶν καὶ Σαυρομάτων καὶ ξυλλήβδην εἰπεῖν εἰς ἁπάσας τὰς γλώττας, αἷς ἅπαντα τὰ ἔθνη κεχρημένα διατελεῖ. Καὶ ὁ μὲν σοφώτατος Πλάτων, περὶ τῆς ἀθανασίας τῆς ψυχῆς παμπόλλους λόγους διεξελθών, οὐδ᾽ Ἀριστοτέλην τὸν φοιτητὴν ἔπεισε τόνδε στέρξαι τὸν ὅρον· οἱ δὲ ἡμέτεροι ἁλιεῖς καὶ τελῶναι καὶ ὁ σκυτοτόμος καὶ Ἕλληνας ἔπεισαν καὶ Ῥωμαίους καὶ Αἰγυπτίους καὶ ἀπαξαπλῶς ἅπαν ἔθνος ἀνθρώπων, ὅτι καὶ ἀθάνατος ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ λόγῳ τετιμημένη καὶ κρατεῖν τῶν παθῶν δυναμένη ... καὶ οὐ μόνον ἀστοί, ἀλλὰ καὶ χωριτικοὶ τήνδε τὴν γνῶσιν ἐσχήκασι· καὶ ἔστιν εὑρεῖν καὶ σκαπανέας καὶ βοηλάτας καὶ φυτουργοὺς καὶ περὶ τῆς θείας διαλεγομένους Τριάδος καὶ περὶ τῆς τῶν ὅλων δημιουργίας καὶ τὴν ἀνθρωπείαν φύσιν εἰδότας Ἀριστοτέλους πολλῷ μᾶλλον καὶ Πλάτωνος. Ed. Pierre Canivet, *Théodoret de Cyr: Thérapeutique des maladies helléniques, tome I (Livres I-VI)* (rev. ed.; SC 57.1; Paris: Cerf, 2000), 248. Trans. Thomas Halton, *Theodoret of Cyrus: A Cure for Pagan Maladies* (ACW 67; Mahwah: Newman, 2013), 129–30.

[23] Ewa D. Zakrzewska, "The Coptic Language," in *Coptic Civilization: Two Thousand Years of Christianity in Egypt* (ed. Gawdat Gabra; Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2014), 79–89.

in fifth-century Syria, yet Jean-Luc Fournet has recently argued that the papyrological record indicates that Coptic arose in 3rd c. bilingual milieus aiming to produce a vernacular version of the Scriptures.[24]

In a recent anthology, Samuel Rubenson and Lillian Larsen talk about a "transformation of classical paideia," in which the Bible largely substitutes for Greek classics as the contents, whereas the structure of education remains the same, or is at least recognizable.[25] In that volume, Anastasia Maravela shows that mainstays of Greek education like Homer and the *Menandri Sententia* were preserved and used in Egyptian monasteries,[26] Lilian Larsen argues that gnomic sources bridge monastic and pagan elementary education,[27] Henrik Rydell Johnsén shows how the ideal of being uneducated is rooted in Epicurean and Cynic philosophy,[28] Arthur Urbano shows how Theodoret and Marinus use biography "in a struggle over the reception and authority of Plato in the face of a rapidly Christianizing educational field,"[29] while Daniele Pevarello shows how early monasticism likely was inspired by Pythagorean gnomic material.[30] Despite all this, it is clear that for the classical texts of Greek philosophy the image is one of decay, if not outright demise. Even if there were structural and functional similarities between monastic and philosophical schools, the contents taught were quite different, and we can hardly be in any doubt that a student such as Proclus, after his initial studies in Alexandria, would have been shocked and dismayed had he gone to a monastic school in Upper Egypt instead of the revived Athenian academy.

Greek philosophy thus disappears from the historical record in Egypt outside Alexandria, to be replaced with "monastic philosophy." When Epiphanius of Salamis is extolled as the most famous man under heaven for the monastic philosophy he picked up in Egypt, it is not his ability as a deep and analytical thinker that is emphasized, nor his familiarity with the corpus of classical philosophers, instead it is his ascetic ability coupled with his moral and theological

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[24] Jean-Luc Fournet, *The Rise of Coptic: Egyptian versus Greek in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020), 15.

[25] Samuel Rubenson and Lillian I. Larsen, eds., *Monastic Education in Late Antiquity: The Transformation of Classical Paideia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

[26] Anastasia Maravela, "Homer and Menandri Sententiae in Upper Egyptian Monastic Settings," in Rubenson and Larsen, *Transformation,* 147: "the presence of Classical Greek paideia is meagre."

[27] Lillian I. Larsen "'Excavating the Excavations' of Early Monastic Education," in Rubenson and Larsen, *Transformation,* 101–24.

[28] Henrik Rydell Johnsén, "The Virtue of Being Uneducated: Attitudes towards Classical Paideia in Early Monasticism and Ancient Philosophy," in Rubenson and Larsen, *Transformation,* 219–35.

[29] Arthur Urbano, "Plato Between School and Cell: Biography and Competition in the Fifth-Century Philosophical Field," in Rubenson and Larsen, *Transformation,* 255.

[30] Daniele Pevarello, "Pythagorean Traditions in Early Christian Asceticism," in Rubenson and Larsen, *Transformation,* 256–77.

insight.[31] For contemporary Platonists, theology was an advanced course offered only to students who had mastered the branches of logic, physics and ethics, the first two of which have been disposed of and the third heavily modified in monastic philosophy.[32] Of course, as Rubenson points out, monasticism shares with philosophical schools an emphasis on a specific way of life, in which the main focus is spiritual exercises rather than theoretical systematization, as outlined by Pierre Hadot.[33] But the authorities to be emulated and read had changed; out with Plato and Aristotle, in with sacred scripture, apocrypha, and the desert fathers.

One Plato fragment dramatically demonstrates the development. The palimpsest parchment fragment of Plato's *Parmenides* mentioned above has been reused as a Coptic Sahidic letter, the latter of which has been dated on paleographic grounds alternately to the 5th, or 7th–8th century. Cavallo groups this fragment together with the *Theaetetus* fragment and the Ambrosiana Iliad, claiming they all derive from the milieu of the last generation of educated pagans in Alexandria, reflected in Zacharius Scholasticus' *Life of Severus*.[34] At any rate it is clear that the parchment codex containing the *Parmenides* was not highly valued by the later Copt who used it as letter material, and nothing indicates that it was copied anew when it became too old to use.

The lack of interest in Plato displayed in Coptic and Late Egyptian-Greek sources was not universal however.[35] An interesting question is why Plato and Greek philosophers have next to no representation in Coptic sources, while there is a rich dossier in Syriac.[36] Here too Plato's original dialogues were not translated, while sayings often derived second hand from Patristic quotations

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[31] Sozomen, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6.32.4; see also Jerome, *De viris illustribus* 114.

[32] Sozomen, *Historia ecclesiastica* 1.12.1–2 on monks: "They neglect many branches of mathematics and the technicalities of dialectics because they regard such studies as useless ... They apply themselves exclusively to the cultivation of natural and useful wisdom." See Johnsén, "Virtue," 224. It is hardly the case, *pace* Johnsén, that mathematics and dialectics were *only* part of the preparatory stage of philosophical education in Platonic schools.

[33] See Samuel Rubenson, "Early Monasticism and the Concept of a 'School,'" in Rubenson and Larsen, *Transformation,* 15.

[34] Cavallo, "Considerazioni," 81–85. For the *Life of Severus*, see Edward Watts, "Winning the Intracommunal Dialogues: Zacharias Scholasticus' Life of Severus," *JECS* 13 (2005): 437–64.

[35] Basil of Caesarea, in his *Address to young men,* exhorted young men to take what is of value in Greek literature, including philosophy, leaving what is harmful aside. Taken to heart by Theodoret, who discusses Plato at length in his *A Cure for Pagan Maladies*: "I will approve some of Plato's ideas, while others of them I will refute as being not well founded." (4.32). See also Niketas Siniossoglou, *Plato and Theodoret: The Christian Appropriation of Platonic Philosophy and the Hellenic Intellectual Resistance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); idem, "Plato Christianus"; Urbano, "Plato," 244.

[36] Arzhanov, "Plato in Syriac."

were, and Plato's status as a sage secured him Christian pseudepigrapha.[37] It is likely that the Schools of Nisibis and Edessa, where Evagrian Origenism mediated Greek philosophical thought,[38] had something to do with the survival of the Syriac Plato-dossier, while intellectual Origenists were purged from Egyptian monasteries in 400 and subsequently departed for Palestine.[39] What passed for high philosophy in Egyptian monasteries before this time were gnomologies such as the *Sentences of Sextus* and the sentences of Evagrius Ponticus, both affiliated with Origenism, and even these disappear from the record in Egypt after 400, though preserved in other languages including Armenian and Syriac.[40] Naturally there remained Origenists in 5th century Egypt, as witnessed by the attacks against them by Dioscorus and Shenoute, as well as the 5th century Greek papyri of Origen and Didymus found in Tura, but apparently the vitality had gone out of the movement after 400. It seems that what remains of what we can vaguely call "Platonism" in Christian Egypt outside of Alexandria, in the fourth century, is mainly transmitted in the works of Origen and his followers.

1.2 Greek philosophy in Coptic

Our excerpt from the *Republic* is the only Coptic translation – or rather adaptation – of Plato, and in Coptic literature it is nearly alone in translating any Greek philosopher. With the sharp decline of even Greek manuscripts, the

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[37] Yury Arzhanov, *Syriac Sayings of Greek Philosophers: A Study in Syriac Gnomologia with Edition and Translation* (Leuven: In Aedibus Peeters, 2019).

[38] Han J. W. Drijvers, "The School of Edessa: Greek Learning and Local Culture," in *Centres of Learning: Learning and Location in Pre-Modern Europe and the Near East* (ed. Jan Willem Drijvers and Alasdair A. MacDonald; BSIH 61; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 49–59; Gerrit Jan Reinink, "'Edessa Grew Dim and Nisibis Shone Forth': The School of Nisibis at the Transition of the Sixth-Seventh Century," in *Centres of Learning: Learning and Location in Pre-Modern Europe and the Near East,* (ed. Jan Willem Drijvers and Alasdair A. MacDonald; BSIH 61; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 77–89; Erica C. D. Hunter, "The Transmission of Greek Philosophy via the School of Edessa," in *Literacy, Education and Manuscript Transmission in Byzantium and Beyond* (ed. Catherine Holmes and Judith Waring; TMM 42; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 225–39; Adam H. Becker, *Sources for the Study of the School of Nisibis* (TTH 50; Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 91–92; idem, *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and the Development of Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 4, 126ff., 208 (but see p. 92 on lack of evidence for formal study of Greek philosophy).

[39] There were also later purges of Origenists in Egypt, but none seem to be of the magnitude of that of 400. Glen W. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1990), 32, 36–37, connects the strong presence of Plato in Syria with Bardaisan and later Iamblichus.

[40] Only one Coptic fragment of Evagrius is extant, and its attribution to Evagrius is spurious: cpg2481.3. See Joseph Muyldermans, "Euagriana coptica," *Mus* 76 (1963): 271–76. The Origenist Didymus the Blind is preserved in Greek, in the 5th century Tura papyri.

dearth of Coptic translations should hardly be surprising. The only other known instance of Greek philosophers in Coptic is a collection of sayings, preserved in a ca. 10th century parchment codex of miscellanies from the White Monastery (MONB.BE).[41] Yet the only Greek philosophers mentioned by name here is the Cynic Diogenes of Sinope, a certain Dios, said to be pupil of the legendary Linos, and the equally legendary Anacharsis of Scythia (hardly a Greek!).[42] Sayings of Diogenes were highly popular as school-exercises in Graeco-Roman Egypt,[43] and the Greek originals to some of the Coptic sayings attributed to him been found in sources such as Diogenes Laertius and Stobaeus.[44] Most of the other sayings are credited to anonymous philosophers, introduced by phrases like "a philosopher said," "a sage (*sophos*) said," and "another philosopher said." Of this codex, the leaves from Vienna edited by Walter Till and those from London edited by Walter Crum are already known, yet more leaves from the National Library in Paris have recently been identified as part of the same collection of sayings.[45] I here provide a sample for the purposes of illustration:

ⲁϥϫⲟⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ϭⲓ ⲟⲩⲫⲓⲗⲟⲥⲟⲫⲟⲥ ϫⲉ ⲁⲩⲉⲛⲥⲛⲁⲩ ⲛ̄ⲕⲁⲧⲁⲇⲓⲕⲟⲥ ⲙ̄ⲡ̄ⲣ̄ⲣⲟ· ⲉⲁⲩⲉⲣ ⲛⲟⲃⲉ ϩⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲛⲟⲃⲉ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲱⲧ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲥⲛⲁⲩ· ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲣⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲟ ⲡⲉ· ⲁⲩⲱ	A philosopher said: "Two were brought to the king's judge who both had committed the same crime. One was a rich

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[41] See Enzo Lucchesi, "Les recensions sahidique et bohaïriques d'une prière attribuée à Sévère d'Antioche," *Aegyptus* 90 (2010): 119–42; Paola Buzi, "Miscellanee e florilegi. Osservazioni preliminari per uno studio dei codici copti pluritestuali: il caso delle raccolte di *excerpta*," in *Christianity in Egypt: Literary Production and Intellectual Trends. Studies in Honor of Tito Orlandi* (ed. Paola Buzi and Alberto Camplani; SEA 125; Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 2011), 195ff.; idem, "Remains of gnomic anthologies and pagan wisdom literature in the Coptic tradition," in *Beyond Conflicts. Cultural and Religious Cohabitations in Alexandria and in Egypt, between the 1st and 6th cent. CE* (ed. Luca Arcari; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 140–44; Tito Orlandi and Alin Suciu, "On the Codex[es] MONB.BE" (unpublished).

[42] Trevor Curnow, *The Philosophers of the Ancient World: An A-Z Guide* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2006), 109, identifies Dios as a 7th c. Pythagorean.

[43] Raffaela Cribiore, *Writing, Teachers, and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (ASP 36; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 46–47.

[44] Maria Serena Funghi, "Su alcuni testimoni di 'chreiai' di Diogene e di 'detti dei Sette Sapienti,'" in *Aspetti di letteratura gnomica nel mondo antico* II (ed. Maria Serena Funghi; ATSLLC.S 225; Firenze: Olschki, 2004), 375–80, who also discusses Arabic sayings of Diogenes.

[45] I thank Alin Suciu for sharing images of the mss. with me. The other fragments edited by Walter E. Crum, *Catalogue of the Coptic Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1905), 97–99 (no. 217.1) = BL Or. 3581A ff. 105–11; Walter Till, "Griechische Philosophen bei den Kopten," in *Mélanges Maspero II: Orient grec, romain et byzantin* (MIFAO 67; Cairo: IFAO, 1934), 165–75 = Vienna, ff. K 944–46. Anthony Alcock, "Greek Philosophy in Coptic," (unpublished, available on academia.edu [cited 20. January 2022]. https://www.academia.edu/36764358/Greek_philosophy_in_Coptic) contains translations of many of the Vienna and London sayings.

ⲡⲕⲉⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩϩⲏⲕⲉ ⲡⲉ· ⲁⲡⲣⲙⲙⲁⲟ (ⲕ̄ⲃ̄) † ⲭⲣⲏⲙⲁ
ⲁⲩⲕⲁⲁⲩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ· ⲡⲏⲕⲉ ⲇⲉ ⲉⲧⲉⲙⲡⲉϥϭⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲧ†
ⲁⲩⲉϩⲟⲣⲓ̈ⲍⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ ⲗⲟⲓⲡⲟⲛ· ⲁϥⲱϣ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉϥϫⲱ
ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ ϫⲉ ⲟⲛ ⲃⲓ̈ⲁ· ϫⲉ ϣⲁⲣⲉⲧⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲣⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲟ ⲧⲱⲧ
ⲙ̄ⲡϩⲏⲧ ⲙ̄ⲡⲣⲉϥ†ϩⲁⲡ ⲛⲁϣ ⲛ̄ϩⲉ· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲧⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧϩⲏⲕⲉ
ϩⲱⲱⲥ ϣⲁⲥϣⲱⲡⲉ ϩⲁ ⲡϩⲁⲡ:–

man, and the other was a poor man. The
rich man gave payment, and was acquit-
ted, but the poor man who did not find
anything to give was banished in the end.
He cried out, saying: Further violence!
For how does wealth persuade the judge,
while poverty is submitted to judgment?"

ⲉⲣⲙⲏⲛⲓ̈ⲁ:–

Interpretation:

Ⲕⲁⲗⲱⲥ ⲟⲩⲛ ⲁϥϫⲟⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ϭⲓ ⲡⲉⲓⲫⲓⲗⲟⲥⲟⲫⲟⲥ ϫⲉ ⲧⲁⲓ̈
ⲅⲁⲣ ⲧⲉ ⲑⲉ ⲉⲧⲛⲁϣⲱⲡⲉ· ϩⲓ̈ⲑⲛ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲕⲣⲓ̄ⲧⲏⲥ ⲙ̄ⲙⲉ·
ϫⲉ ⲛ̄ⲣⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲟ ϩⲛ̄ ⲛⲁⲣⲉⲧⲏ· ⲛⲁⲧⲱⲧ ⲙ̄ⲡϩⲏⲧ
ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲕⲣⲓ̄ⲧⲏⲥ ⲙ̄ⲙⲉ· ⲡⲉⲓϩⲏⲕⲉ ⲇⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟϥ ϩⲛ̄
ⲧⲇⲓ̈ⲕⲁⲓⲟⲥⲩⲛⲏ· ϥⲛⲁϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲛⲁⲥ ϩⲁⲡϩⲁⲡ:–

This philosopher spoke well, for this is
indeed how it happens before the true
judge, namely that those wealthy in vir-
tues will persuade the true judge. But the
one poor in justice will be submitted to
judgment.[46]

Clearly we are not dealing with a high level of philosophical abstraction, but
rather apophthegmata akin to those of the desert fathers, pithy moralizing say-
ings sometimes accompanied by a brief narrative.[47] In this sense it is similar to
the gnomologies attributed to Menander and Sextus, both of which are found
in partial Coptic translations.[48] Interestingly, as in the case quoted above, many
of the sayings are also equipped with an explanation, clearly marked ⲉⲣⲙⲏⲛⲓ̈ⲁ
in a reclined script, which has been added by a Christian compiler, in some
cases applying a Christian allegorical interpretation.

What is likely a later redactor has also added Christian philosophers to the
collection, such as the saying attributed to "a sage among those who belong to
God":

ⲁϥϫⲟⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ϭⲓ ⲟⲩⲥⲟⲫⲟⲥ ϩⲛ̄ ⲛⲁⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ϫⲉ
ⲙⲁⲣⲉⲛϣⲓ̈ⲛⲉ ϩⲛ̄ ⲟⲩϣⲉⲡϩⲓ̈ⲥⲉ ⲛⲥⲁ ⲛⲉⲡⲛ̄ⲛⲓⲕⲟⲛ
ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲛ ⲡⲉϫⲁϥ·[49] ⲟⲩⲉⲛ ϩⲁ̄ⲙⲏⲏϣⲉ ⲉⲩ† ⲙ̄ⲡⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ
ⲛⲁⲛ ⲉⲛⲉⲛⲥⲁⲣⲕⲓⲕⲟⲛ:–

A sage among those who belong to God
said: "Let us laboriously seek after the
spiritual things." Indeed, he said: "There
are multitudes who cause us to think
about our fleshly things."

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[46] The Coptic text can be found in Crum, *Catalogue*, 97. The translation is mine, as is the
transcription from photos of BL Or. 3581A f. 105r–v.

[47] Buzi, "Miscellanee e florilegi," 197.

[48] I have not included the sayings of Menander and of Sextus as Coptic translations of
philosophers, since the prior was a comic writer and the latter a Christian (even though
certain Christians believed he had been a pagan philosopher). See Buzi, "Remains of gnomic
anthologies"; idem, "Egypt, crossroad of translations and literary interweavings (3rd-6th
centuries). A reconsideration of earlier Coptic literature," in *Egitto crocevia di traduzioni*
(ed. Franco Crevatin; Trieste: EUT Edizioni Università di Trieste, 2018), 15–67.

[49] Note the lacking ϫⲉ: In one other saying too we find a loose ⲡⲉϫⲁϥ that indicates a
direct translation of a Greek ἔφη or something similar embedded in the direct speech.

ермнnια:–	Interpretation:
†мⲉⲉⲩⲉ ϫⲉ ⲉϥϣⲁϫⲉ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲛ̅ⲗⲟⲅⲓⲥⲙⲟⲥ ⲉⲧϩⲟⲟⲩ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲛⲟⲩϫ ⲙ̅ⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲉⲧⲙ̅ⲛ̅ⲧⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲧⲏⲣⲥ· ⲉⲓⲧⲉ ⲛⲉⲧϩⲓⲃⲟⲗ· ⲉⲓⲧⲉ ⲛⲉⲧϩⲓϩⲟⲩⲛ.	I think he speaks about the wicked thoughts that are thrown into all of humanity, either those on the outside or those on the inside.[50]

The anonymous Christian sage exhorted his listeners to seek what is spiritual and not be distracted by the multitudes who direct the thoughts to fleshly things. The commentator interprets the multitudes to refer to wicked thoughts that are thrown into humans. They either assault the outer humans through the senses, or they assault the inner senses, through cognitive vices such as pride. Clearly the interpretation is akin to the monastic psychology of Evagrius Ponticus, whose most well-known works concern precisely distinguishing and avoiding unwelcome thoughts, *logismoi,* as also our commentator calls them. The concern with the outer and inner human is also, as we shall see, key to the rewritten Coptic Plato fragment.

Another very fragmentary apophthegm concerns apa Antony in discussion with some philosophers, a motif also known from his *Life*. Unfortunately, it is hard to make sense of what is going on, but the presence of Antony in this collection means that whoever compiled it regarded him to be a prime representative of a Christian philosopher.[51] This is in line with Samuel Rubenson's portrayal of Antony as an Origenist with philosophical learning, based on his letters.[52]

Pending a better understanding of the codex as a whole, all statements about the collection (or collections) of sayings contained in MONB.BE must remain conjectural. At the present stage of research, I can only suggest that it seems at first to have been a perhaps Cynic collection of deeds and sayings of philosophers, of whom the few named ones were Diogenes of Sinope, Anacharsis, and Dion.[53] One (or several) Christian redactor(s) added a saying of Antony and an anonymous Christian philosopher, and a series of interpretations appended to many of the sayings. As Samuel Rubenson has shown, sayings-collections are especially prone to textual fluidity,[54] and it is impossible to pinpoint when the

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[50] BL Or. 3581A f. 106r. See Crum, *Catalogue,* 98.

[51] See also the mention of Ben Sirach on BnF Copte 131[5], f. 92 (page 57, line 12).

[52] See Samuel Rubenson, *The Letters of St. Antony: Monasticism and the Making of a Saint* (SAC; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).

[53] See Funghi, "Su alcuni testimoni," 377–78: "La scelta di Anacarsi, la cui figura si distingueva per la critica ai costumi greci, e in particolare a quello del simposio, può essere già di per sé rivelatrice di ambito cristiano. A leggerla in chiave di cinismo cristianizzato ... induce anche la presenza immediatamente successiva di Diogene."

[54] Samuel Rubenson, "Textual Fluidity in Early Monasticism: Sayings, Sermons and Stories," in *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology* (ed. Liv Ingeborg Lied and Hugo Lundhaug; TUGAL 175; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 178–200.

Cynic gnomology was first redacted by Christians, but it might be a witness to the influence several scholars have proposed Cynicism had on Egyptian monasticism.[55] The redactor seems to have been vaguely Origenist in orientation, at least he evinces concern with unwelcome thoughts assailing the inner and outer human in a manner akin to Evagrius Ponticus and indeed our Plato-excerpt. Interestingly, certain sentences from the collection were reused in the Coptic Pseudo-Evodius, *Homily on the Passion and Resurrection*, likely around the 6th–7th century.[56]

1.3 Origenism as Christian Platonism

Of course, the foregoing is in no sense a complete dossier of Coptic involvement with Greek philosophical *concepts* and *ideas*, just the Coptic translations of texts explicitly attributed to Greek philosophers, which are as noted extremely sparse. The Nag Hammadi Codices contain several texts that engage with the Platonic tradition, especially the Platonizing Sethian treatises, so magisterially dealt with by John D. Turner.[57] Plato hovers more or less imposingly in the background of these treatises, but is not invoked by name or quotation. Another text, the *Sentences of Sextus* (NHC XII,1), known and admired by Origen, is a Christian gnomology based on Pythagorean precursors, but is again

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[55] See Derek Krueger, "Diogenes the Cynic among the Fourth Century Fathers," *VC* 47 (1993): 29–49; Johnsén, "Virtue," 233; Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, *Cynicism and Christianity in Antiquity* (trans. Christopher R. Smith; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019), 238–43 esp. 241.

[56] Buzi, "Remains of gnomic anthologies," 142; Dylan M. Burns, "More Greek Philosophers Among the Copts: The Notes on Some Philosophers (MONB.BE) and the 'Wisdom that is Outside' in Pseudo-Evodius of Rome's *Homily on the Passion and Resurrection*," in *Parabiblica Coptica* (ed. Ivan Miroshnikov; Parabiblica; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming). I take the latter reference from the author's presentation at the 12th International Congress of Coptic Studies, Brussels, July 11, 2022.

[57] John D. Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition* (BCNH.É 6; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2001)*,* idem, "Coptic Renditions of Greek Metaphysics: The Platonizing Sethian Treatises *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes*," in *Christianity in Egypt: Literary Production and Intellectual Trends in Late Antiquity: Studies in Honor of Tito Orlandi* (eds. Paola Buzi and Alberto Camplani; SEA 125; Rome: Istituto Patristico Augustinianum, 2012), 523–54; idem, "Plato in the Sethian Platonizing Treatises," in *Nag Hammadi à 70 ans. Qu'avons-nous appris?* (eds. Eric Crégheur, Louis Painchaud, and Tuomas Rasimus; BCNH.É 10; Leuven: Éditions Peeters, 2019), 251–74; and esp. idem "The Reception and Transformation of Philosophical Literary Genres in the Nag Hammadi Writings," in *Die Nag-Hammadi-schriften in der Literatur und Theologiegeschichte des frühen Christentums* (eds. Jens Schröter and Konrad Schwarz; STAC 106; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 37–66. See also Alexander Böhlig and Frederik Wisse, *Zum Hellenismus in den Schriften von Nag Hammadi* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1975), 34–53.

not attributed to any non-Christian philosopher, though some later Christians refused to believe Sextus was a Christian and labelled him a Pythagorean.[58]

These texts illustrate that in fourth-century Egypt the Platonic tradition – here understood in a wide sense – was now transmitted within Christian texts and teachings, and such texts were also translated into Coptic, whereas people largely no longer read Plato or his successors outside Alexandria. We have seen what little remains of Plato on fourth-century papyri, and later on he in fact most prominently appears in quotations in the works of Didymus the Blind, found in the sixth(-seventh?) century Tura papyri, which also contained works of Origen. Didymus followed Origen in considering Greek philosophy as auxiliary to theology,[59] and as such used Plato – at least in excerpts – in his teaching at Alexandria.[60] Ludwig Koenen and Wolfgang Müller-Wiener plausibly suggest that the books of Origen and Didymus might have been brought from Scetis by Arsenius when he fled to Tura following a Berber attack in 434, where they were preserved in the monastery raised in his honor some time after his death in 449.[61] As for the Origenists of Nitria and Scetis there is no evidence that they read Plato, even in anthologies, and the Platonism evidenced by Evagrius Ponticus is likely second hand, through Origen, though he might of course have read Plato before he relocated to the Egyptian desert.

Epiphanius of Salamis testifies that there were monks in Upper Egypt too with heterodox ideas and reading habits, labelled 'Origenists' by the tireless heresy-hunter, who catalogued them together with 'Gnostics' and other sects affiliated with many of the Nag Hammadi treatises. What Origen had in common with other sectarians condemned by Epiphanius was allegorical reading of the scriptures in light of Platonic philosophy, leading them to propose – or

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[58] On *Sent. Sextus* see Daniele Pevarello, *The Sentences of Sextus and the Origins of Christian Ascetiscism* (STAC 78; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013); idem, "Pythagorean."

[59] Henri Crouzel, *Origène et la philosophie* (Paris: Aubier, 1962)*.*

[60] Blossom Stefaniw, "The School of Didymus the Blind in Light of the Tura Find," in Rubenson and Larsen, *Transformation,* 153–81

[61] Ludwig Koenen and Wolfgang Müller-Wiener, "Zu den Papyri aus dem Arsenioskloster bei Ṭurā," *ZPE* 2 (1968): 49–50, though claiming that the destruction took place 410, not 434, possibly misreading Hugh G. Evelyn White, *The Monasteries of the Wâdi 'n Natrûn Part II: The History of the Monasteries of Nitria and of Scetis* (ed. Walter Hauser; New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1932), 162, who only mentions 410 as the sack of Rome. Arsenius avoided the purge following the first Origenist controversy in 400, and if it was indeed he who brought the books to Tura, then they must have been preserved after his death by his disciples before the monastery was founded in the late fifth or early sixth century, after which they were copied into the codices we have today, probably discarded after the anathematization of Origen and Didymus in the second council of Constantinople, 553 (White, *Monasteries*, 52). Cf. also Stefaniw, "School," 155, who follows the Arsenius hypothesis, insisting he must have purchased the books in Alexandria. But they might have been in Scetis before Arsenius got there, and must anyway have been ancestors of the later Tura papyri.

to be accused of proposing – such things as that human souls existed before they came into the body, that the current fleshly body would not be resurrected after death, and that there would be a universal restoration of all souls at the eschaton.[62] It is in this environment I shall argue the rewriting and translation of the Plato-excerpt took place.

2. Did the Plato-Excerpt circulate in a Hermetic Anthology?

Louis Painchaud has proposed that the Greek *Vorlage* of our translation had already been excerpted from the *Republic* and included anonymously in a Hermetic anthology, together with the *Vorlagen* of the three final texts of Codex VI, before it was translated into Coptic.[63] This would entail that the excerpt was passed off as a teaching of Hermes, implying that the Egyptian sage was the ultimate source of Plato. It was indeed a familiar *topos* in antiquity that Plato had supposedly spent time in Egypt, where he had learnt the teachings of Hermes Trismegistus from the priests.[64] Cyril of Alexandria made much of this in his polemics against Greek philosophy in *Against Julian*, but also committed Platonists like Iamblichus accepted the view.[65] If the excerpt from the *Republic* circulated in a Greek Hermetic anthology, then the reader was presumably expected to believe that Hermes originally authored the simile of the three parts of the soul as a many-headed beast, a lion and a human, and that his later successor, Plato, then appropriated it.

However, the excerpt does not really resemble a Hermetic treatise. Yes, Platonic concepts are appropriated and adapted in the Hermetic corpus, but there

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[62] Cf. especially Jon F. Dechow, *Dogma and Mysticism in Early Christianity: Epiphanius of Cyprus and the Legacy of Origen* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1988)*.* On Epiphanius and Egypt, see Christian H. Bull, "The Coptic Translation of Epiphanius of Salamis's *Ancoratus* and the Origenist Controversy in Upper Egypt," *ZAC* 26 (2022): 230–63.

[63] Louis Painchaud "Fragment de la Republique de Platon," in *Les sentences de Sextus (NH XII, 1), Fragments (NH XII, 3), Fragment de la République de Platon (NH VI, 5)* (ed. Paul-Hubert Poirier and Louis Painchaud; BCNH.T 11; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1983), 109–61. This was already suggested by Hans-Martin Schenke, "Zur Faksimile-Ausgabe der Nag Hammadi-Schriften: Nag Hammadi-Codex VI," *OLZ* 69 (1974): 229–43, repr. in *Der Same Seths: Hans-Martin Schenkes* Kleine Schriften *zu Gnosis, Koptologie und Neuem Testament* (ed. Gesine Schenke Robinson, Gesa Schenke, and Uwe-Karsten Plisch; NHMS 78; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 316; Böhlig and Wisse, *Zum Hellenismus*, 36–37.

[64] See Christian H. Bull, *The Tradition of Hermes: The Egyptian Priestly Figure as a Teacher of Hellenized Wisdom* (RGRW 186; Leiden: Brill, 2018), 38–44.

[65] Cyril of Alexandria, *Against Julian* 1.18–19; Iamblichus, *Response of Abammon* 1.1–2. See Christian H. Bull, "Hermes between Pagans and Christians in Fourth Century Egypt: The Nag Hammadi Hermetica in Context," in *The Nag Hammadi Codices and Late Antique Egypt* (ed. Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott; STAC 110; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 239–43 for Cyril.

is no wholesale quotation from Plato, and certainly not such a lengthy passage.[66] Also, the style of the dialogue is not like that found in the Hermetica, which are generally not narrated in the first-person past tense like the *Republic* passage, narrated by Socrates in the Greek original. The *Poimandres* is an exception to this, where Hermes narrates his revelatory dialogue with the titular Poimandres.[67] Otherwise, the Hermetica largely consist of question-and-answer between a teacher, Trismegistus, addressed as "father," and a disciple, most often Asclepius or Tat, addressed as "my son" by Hermes. There is generally no narrative framework, except for the *Asclepius*, though of course our Plato-excerpt has also lost its narrative framework.

These stylistic issues aside, the differences in the Coptic translations of the last four treatises of Codex VI also speak against the idea of one Greek Hermetic anthology as *Vorlage*. Wolf-Peter Funk did not include the Plato-excerpt in his consideration of dialectal clusters in Codex VI, since it is too short, but his analysis indicates that the *Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth* and the *Prayer of Thanksgiving* were translated by someone else than the translator of *Asclepius*.[68] Even though our excerpt is too brief to compare its dialect statistically with the Coptic Hermetica, it is obvious from the passages to which we have Greek parallels – the *Prayer of Thanksgiving* and parts of the *Perfect Discourse* – that the Coptic Hermetica are far more faithful to their Greek originals than the Plato fragment, and their Coptic is far better. This could in part be due to the higher difficulty of Plato's Greek, but the general impression is that there is a real concern with getting it right in the Hermetic translations which is just not the case with the Plato-excerpt. Simply put, there is no way that the skilled translators of the Hermetic texts could be behind the shoddy translation of Plato, nor that they would have altered the text so much from the Greek original.[69] It is admittedly possible that three different translators, with different dialects and varying skill-levels, translated separate parts of the same anthology.

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[66] The closest would be Stob. Herm. I, which bears a strong resemblance to Plato's *Timaeus* 28c; see Walter Scott, *Hermetica: the ancient Greek and Latin writings which contain religious or philosophic teachings ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus* (4 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1924–1936), 3:301–2; Arthur D. Nock and André-Jean Festugière, *Hermès Trismégiste: Corpus Hermeticum* (4 vols.; Paris: Belles Lettres, 1942–1953), 3:xiv, 2.

[67] Hermes is identified as the narrator in the title and a passage in CH XIII, 15.

[68] Wolf-Peter Funk, "The Linguistic Aspect of Classifying the Nag Hammadi Codices," in *Les textes de Nag Hammadi et le problème de leur classification* (ed. Louis Painchaud and Anne Pasquier; BCNH.É 3; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1995), 112, 117.

[69] See Alberto Camplani, "Sulla multifunzionalità del tradurre in copto: note sparse su frammenti copti tardoantichi, Cicerone e moderne ipotesi di ricerca," in *Egitto crocevia di traduzioni* (ed. Franco Crevatin; EUT Edizioni Università di Trieste, 2018), 127; James Brashler, "NHC VI,5: Plato, Republic 588b–589b," in *Nag Hammadi Codices V,2–5 and VI* (ed. Douglas M. Parrott; NHS 11; Leiden: Brill, 1979), 325.

Yet it seems more likely that our copyist found the *Republic*-excerpt, the *Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth* + the *Prayer of Thanksgiving,* and *Asclepius* as three separate text-units.

Codicologically too, the Plato fragment fits better with the foregoing texts, the *Authentikos Logos* and the *Concept of Our Great Power*, than with the Hermetica.[70] In the manuscript, the text is only separated from the subscript title of the *Concept of Our Great Power* with a paragraphus cum corona, making it seem somewhat like an appendix because of its lack of title.[71] By contrast, a third of a page separates the ending of our excerpt from the beginning of *Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth*, which begins on a new page. The *Authoritative Treatise* is in fact a treatise on the soul, fully at home in the Alexandrian theological tradition,[72] to which our excerpt would have made a perfect appendix. As it is, *The Concept of Our Great Power* lies in between. Yet this enigmatic text too contains passages which our excerpt might have been thought to elucidate: "The powers (i.e., of the soul) desired (ἐπιθυμεῖν) to see my image (εἰκών), and the soul became the imprint (τύπος) of it."[73] As in our excerpt, we are explained how the soul is an image of a higher power, the one speaking in first person, and later we are told how the souls are begotten into bodies: "Now the soul-endowed aeon is a small one, which has congress with bodies but begets in souls and defiles (them), for the original defilement of the creation has gained strength."[74] We then learn how this soul-endowed aeon begot many influences (ἐνέργεια) related to vices of the soul. The text features antagonistic

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[70] *Pace* Jean-Pierre Mahé, *Hermès en Haute-Égypte* (2 vols.; BCNH.T 3 & 7; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1978–1982), 1:14, 25, 2:6 n. 15, 54, 216, 460. Mahé claims the excerpt of Plato is put in relation to the Hermetica either by the Nag Hammadi scribe or a pre-existent anthology.

[71] Martin Krause, "Die Veröffentlichung der Nag Hammadi-Texte," in *Le origine dello gnosticismo (Colloquio di Messina, 13-19 aprile 1966)* (ed. Ugo Bianchi; SHR 12; Leiden: Brill, 1967), 86; Jean Doresse, *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics* (trans. Philip Mairet; New York: Viking, 1960), 242–43. Doresse thinks the Plato-excerpt continues *Great Pow.* (NHC VI,4), but does not know the excerpt is by Plato and thinks both texts are Hermetic. See also Michael A. Williams and Lance Jenott, "Inside the Covers of Codex VI," in *Coptica – Gnostica – Manichaica: mélanges offerts à Wolf-Peter Funk* (ed. Louis Painchaud and Paul-Hubert Poirier; BCNH.É 7; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2006), 1030–31.

[72] See Ulla Tervahauta, *A Story of the Soul's Journey in the Nag Hammadi Library: A Study of Authentikos Logos (NHC VI,3)* (NTOA 107; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015).

[73] NHC VI,4 38.6–9: ⲁⲛϭⲟⲙ ⲣ̄ⲉⲡⲓⲑⲩⲙⲉⲓ ⲉⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲧⲁϩⲓⲕⲱⲛ· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲧⲯⲩⲭⲏ ϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲥⲧⲩⲡⲟⲥ· Trans. Francis E. Williams, *Mental Perception: A Commentary on NHC VI,4 The Concept of Our Great Power* (NHMS 51; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 5.

[74] NHC VI,4 39.16–21: ϯⲛⲟⲩ ⲡⲯⲩⲭⲓⲕⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲁⲓⲱⲛ ϩⲱⲱϥ· ⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲉⲓ ⲡⲉ ⲉϥⲧⲏϩ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲛ̄ⲥⲱⲙⲁ· ⲉϥϫⲡⲟ ϩⲛ̄ ⲛ̄ⲯⲩⲭⲏ ⲉϥϫⲱϩⲙ̄· ϫⲉ ⲡϫⲱϩⲙ̄ ⲛ̄ϣⲟⲣⲡ̄ ⲛ̄ⲧⲕⲧⲓⲥⲓⲥ ⲁϥϭⲙ̄ ϫⲓⲛ· Trans. Ibid., 7.

creative archons (*passim*), and an eschatology in which the souls become images in the light of the great power (NHC VI,4 47.23–25), unless they are too beholden to the fleshly creation of the archons (NHC VI,4 48.4–18). All of these elements resonate with our excerpt. However, although we do not have any Greek witnesses of the *Concept of Our Great Power*, it is like the Hermetica clearly competently translated (at least it reads well in Coptic), and it is therefore unlikely that it had the same translator as our excerpt.

In conclusion, then, it is more likely that our Coptic excerpt was taken from a florilegium of Greek philosophers, not too unlike the *Syntagma philosophorum* we just considered, although not as aphoristic but with larger excerpts.[75] It is possible that this entire florilegium was imperfectly translated into Coptic, or perhaps only our excerpt was translated; in fact, its poor quality raises the suspicion that it was translated from a Greek florilegium ad hoc by our scribe, who also wrote the clumsy scribal note (NHC VI 65.8–14). This must however remain hypothetical.

3. Was the Coptic Translator a Gnostic?

Whether our translator was the scribe of Codex VI or someone else, a common supposition has been that he was a Gnostic.[76] The hypothesis rests on the presence of certain key terms that are also found in cosmogonies such as that of the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (NHC II,4). Chief among these terms are the Greek terms *eikōn* ("image") and *archōn* ("ruler")*,* and the Coptic *eine* ("likeness"). But is overlapping vocabulary enough to identify the Coptic fragment as a Gnostic cosmogony?[77] Let us revisit the basic outline of the jumbled narrative of the Coptic, disregarding Plato's Greek original. Initially we are told that "the

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[75] Howard M. Jackson, *The Lion Becomes Man: The Gnostic Leontomorphic Creator and the Platonic Tradition* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 205 n. 35, is skeptical since no doxography containing the passage is known to him. But it is contained in the early fifth-century anthology of Stobaeus, *Anthology* 3.9.62, in the section on justice.

[76] Notably Elias G. Matsagouras, "Plato Copticus: *Republic* 588B–589B Translation and Commentary" (M.A. diss.; Dalhousie University, 1976); Tito Orlandi, "La traduzione copta di Platone," *Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche* 32 (1977): 45–62; Painchaud "Fragment"; and Jackson, *Lion*, who interprets the excerpt in light of *Gos. Thom.* logion 7. Schenke stated that the text is nothing but an impossible translation of Plato, not a gnostic redaction ("Zur Faksimile-Ausgabe," 316).

[77] Of course, ειϲωΝ and ειΝε can both be found in the Coptic translation of Gen 1:26; see Rodolphe Kasser, *Papyrus Bodmer III: Évangile de Jean et Genèse I-IV, 2 en bohairique*, (CSCO 177, Scriptores coptici 25; Leuven: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1958), 48; Édouard Massaux, "Quelques variantes importantes de P. Bodmer III et leur accointance avec la gnose," *NTS* 5 (1959): 210–12. Massaux's argument that the reading variants in this manuscript demonstrate that the translator or scribe was a gnostic is not very convincing.

one who is treated completely unjust[ly], is justly glorified,"[78] a cryptic state-
ment that we will revisit, and that both the unjust and the just has a certain
power. This is followed by the statement "The logos of the soul is an image
that has no likeness,"[79] which introduces the subsequent passage on the archons
and likenesses: After some missing lines we have the likely reading "but all the
[myths] that they told, [namely the] rulers, these are the ones that now became
natural beings."[80] Painchaud points out that ⲉⲧⲃⲉ is a viable alternative for ⲛϭⲓ
in line 5, which would mean that the myths were told *about* the rulers. How-
ever, the first option is the best one, since we are subsequently told that those
who have created the images have done so by means of the word (NHC VI,5
49.32: ϩⲙ ⲡϣⲁⲝⲉ), echoing Johannine logocentric cosmogony (John 1:1–3). In
other words, the archons by speaking produced several forms and likenesses,
which combined into singular likenesses; one such singular likeness is the
many-headed beast, another is the lion, and a third is the human. These three
likenesses are combined inside the outward appearance of the human.

   Is this really a Gnostic account of creation? Notwithstanding the similarities
in language with the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, the emphasis here is not on the
creation of the world, but rather on the inner human.[81] The rulers have created
likenesses of a many-headed beast and a lion that dwells within the human,
very much in line with what is actually argued by Plato, only there these shapes
are mere metaphors and there are no (presumably hostile) rulers involved.

   In the subsequent passage the anonymous narrator tells us about the conse-
quences for human conduct that derive from this anthropology:

I spoke to the one who said that it is useful for the human to act unjustly; rather, as for the
one who acts unjustly (even) *moderately* (ⲛ̄ⲧⲙⲏⲧⲉ), it is not useful for him nor is it of any
help. But what is useful for him is this: to cast down every likeness of the wicked beast and
to trample them along with the likenesses of the lion.[82]

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[78] NHC VI,5 48.21–22: ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁⲩϫⲓⲧϥ̄ ⲛ̄ϭⲟⲛⲥ̄ ⲧⲉⲗⲉⲱⲥ· ϣⲁϥϫⲓ ⲉⲟⲟⲩ ⲇⲓⲕⲁⲓⲱⲥ·

[79] NHC VI,5 48.31–32: ⲟⲩϩⲓⲕⲱⲛ ⲉⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲁϥ ⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲗⲟⲅⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲧⲯ̄ⲩⲭⲏ·

[80] NHC VI,5 49.4–7: ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲛ̄[ⲙⲩⲑⲟⲟⲥ] ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ ⲉⲛⲧⲁⲩϫⲟⲟⲩ [ⲛ̄ϭ ⲛ̄]ⲁⲣⲭⲱⲛ· ⲛⲁⲓ̈ ϯⲛⲟⲩ
ⲛⲉⲛⲧⲁⲩϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲛ̄ⲫⲩⲥⲓⲥ·

[81] See Christoph Markschies, "Die Platonische Metapher vom 'Inneren Menschen': Eine
Brücke Zwischen Antiker Philosophie und Altchristlicher Theologie," *IJCT* 1 (1995): 3–18;
"Innerer Mensch," *Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum* 18 (1997): 266–312. The litera-
ture on the subject of the inner human is copious.

[82] NHC VI,5 50.19–28: ⲡⲉϫⲁⲉⲓ ⲇⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁϥϫⲟⲟⲥ ϫⲉ ⲥⲣ̄ ⲛⲟϥⲣⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡϫⲓ ⲛϭⲟⲛⲥ̄ ⲙ̄ⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ·
ⲡⲉⲧϫⲓ ⲛ̄ϭⲟⲛⲥ̄ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟϥ ⲛ̄ⲧⲙⲏⲧⲉ ⲥⲣ̄ ⲛⲟϥⲣⲉ ⲛⲁϥ ⲁⲛ· ⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϥ ⲟⲫⲉⲗⲉⲓⲁ ⲙ̄ⲙⲁϥ· ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲡⲉⲧⲣ̄ ⲛⲟϥⲣⲉ
ⲛⲁϥ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲁⲓ̈ ⲉⲧⲣⲉϥⲧⲉⲩⲟ ⲉϩⲣⲁⲓ̈ ⲙ̄ⲡⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲛ̄ⲑⲏⲣⲓⲟⲛ ⲉⲧϩⲟⲟⲩ· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛϥϩⲟⲙⲟⲩ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲛ̄ⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲙⲟⲩⲉⲓ·

This reading is different from those of earlier translators. One crux is what to do with "in the middle," ⲛ̄ⲧⲙⲏⲧⲉ. Orlandi does not translate it, citing an unknown use of ⲙⲏⲧⲉ in the Manichaean *Kephalaia*,[83] whereas Brashler reads it as ⲙⲏⲉ and translates "truly."[84] Painchaud, on the other hand, sees ⲧⲙⲏⲧⲉ as the Valentinian technical term for the "psychics," the soulful people who are between the spiritual and material people, and gives the translation "The one who commits injustice, (being) in the middle, it is not useful to him, nor is advantageous to him."[85] My tentative solution, following a suggestion by John D. Turner, is to read ⲛ̄ⲧⲙⲏⲧⲉ adverbially as "moderately." This meaning is not attested in Crum's dictionary for the Coptic word, but it is for its Greek counterpart μέσως. Neither this word nor any other word corresponding to ⲛ̄ⲧⲙⲏⲧⲉ is however present in the *textus receptus* of Plato's original.

There is nothing here that is specifically Gnostic. The rulers could easily correspond to Pauline "powers and principalities," (Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Rom. 8:38) and if one wants to argue that they are related to the Sethian *Hypostasis of the Archons,* it is definitely a stretch to also identify "the middle" as the Valentinian designation for psychics. On the other hand, we shall see that the excerpt resonates well with Origenist views on the tripartite soul, and the daily battle with likenesses produced by demons therein.

4. An Origenist Reading of the Platonic Excerpt

4.1 The Origenist Leitmotif of the Rational Soul and the Image & Likeness of God

Plato explicitly employs the many-headed beast, the lion, and the human as symbols for respectively the appetitive, spirited and rational parts of his tripartite soul.[86] However, this is not spelled out in the excerpt, and it is therefore left to the reader to make this association. The key passage, in my view, for understanding the Coptic excerpt is the statement that "the logos of the soul is an image that has no likeness."[87] The Origenist connotations of this phrase has

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[83] Orlandi, "Traduzione," 54, with reference to Rodolphe Kasser, *Compléments au dictionnaire copte de Crum* (Cairo: IFAO, 1964), 31, who cites *Kephalaia* 76.9; 91.14; 93.5; to which Orlandi adds 79.5.

[84] Brashler, "NHC VI,*5*," 337.

[85] Painchaud "Fragment," 131: "Celui qui commet l'injustice, (étant) dans le milieu, cela ne lui sert à rien ni ne lui est d'aucun profit."

[86] On the tripartite soul in Neoplatonism, see John F. Finamore, "Proclus and the Tripartite Soul in Plato's *Republic*," in *The Byzantine Platonists, 284-1453* (ed. Frederick Lauritzen and Sarah Klitenic Wear; Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2021), 63–74.

[87] NHC VI,5 48.31: ⲟⲩϩⲓⲕⲱⲛ ⲉⲙ̄ⲛⲧⲁϥ ⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲗⲟⲅⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲧⲯⲩⲭⲏ.

so far, to my knowledge, not been pointed out. The words 'image' and 'like-ness' allude to Gen 1:26, and one branch of Christian exegesis, reported by Clement of Alexandria, interpreted the Genesis passage so that the image of God corresponds to the inner, immaterial man, while the likeness of God can only be attained at the perfection of man.[88] Origen follows suit, and states that the "inner, invisible, incorporeal, incorruptible, and immortal man" was made according to the likeness of the image of God, which he identifies as Logos, the son of God,[89] but in his fallen state man has lost this image, and have "put on the image of the evil one" (*maligni imaginem induxisse*).[90] It is by "behold-ing the image of the devil" that man was made like him, that is, by sinning. When the Savior saw this state of affairs he put on the image of the human (*imagine hominis assumpta*), which is the form of a servant in the appearance of a human (*formam servi accipiens in similitudinem hominum factus*). Because the savior thus humbled himself (see Phil 2:6–8), humans can become "partic-ipants in the spiritual image," and through daily progress they can regain the image of God so as to be eventually transformed to his likeness.

What this means can be seen in Origen's allegorical reading of the verse "as male and female he made them" (Gen 1:27), relying heavily on 1 Cor 15:42–49: The inner man consists of a male spirit and a female soul, and when the two are united they preserve the image. However, when the soul follows pas-sions instead, it turns away from the spirit and loses the image.[91] The image is never entirely lost however, for in homily thirteen on Genesis we hear that the image of God is like "a well of living water," which the Philistines, represent-ing demonic powers, have filled with filth. It has thus become the "image of the earthly" instead of the "image of the heavenly," but the earthly can be cleansed with the Word of God, once again making the heavenly image shine.[92]

Origen is more specific on the likeness of God, which he distinguishes from the image, in *On First Principles*: Since God first said "Let us make man in our own image and likeness," but is then described as actually making him in the image alone, Origen supposed that "man received the honor of God's image in his first creation, whereas the perfection of God's likeness was reserved for

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[88] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 2.22, 38; *Protr* 12.122. See Henri Crouzel, *Theologie de l'image de Dieu chez Origène* (Paris: Aubier, 1956).

[89] Origen, *Princ.* 1.2.5 & 2.6.1, referring to Col 1:15 & Heb 1:3.

[90] Origen, *Hom. in Gen.* 1.12–13. See Crouzel, *Theologie*, 147–79, and 217–45 for his distinction between the image and the likeness. John 14:9-10 is adduced for identifying the Word with the Image.

[91] Origen, *Hom. in Gen.* 1.15. Cf. *Princ.* 3.5. This corresponds precisely to *Exeg. Soul* (NHC II,6); see Hugo Lundhaug, "Monastic Exegesis and the Female Soul in the Exegesis on the Soul," in *Women and Knowledge in Early Christianity* (ed. Ulla Tervahauta, Ivan Miroshnikov, Outi Lehtipuu, and Ismo Dunderberg; VCSup 144; Leiden: Brill, 2017), 221–33.

[92] Origen, *Hom. in Gen.* 13.3-4. Cf. 1 Cor 15:49.

him at the consummation."[93] Thus the image of God lies latent in all people, but it is only through conscious effort that the image can be made into a perfect likeness with God, and this can moreover only be fully achieved at the consummation.

Origen's allegorical interpretations were widely popular in Egypt in the fourth century, before the controversy erupted in the last years of the century. Both a city-dwelling ascetic and intellectual such as Didymus the Blind, and a desert monastic such as Evagrius testify to the influence of Origen's exegeses, but likewise the writings of Athanasius and the letters of Antony bear the imprint of Origenism.[94] It is therefore likely that both the translator as well as any reader of our Coptic text in the fourth century would be familiar with Origenism, which was often associated with the reading of apocrypha by its detractors.[95] It is therefore worthwhile to investigate if an Origenist reading of the excerpt would make more sense of it than a Gnostic one.

4.2 The Compound Soul

After the first few lines, which underline that it is better to suffer injustice than to act unjustly, quoted above, we get the key sentence that introduces the leitmotif of image and likeness, as already discussed: "the logos of the soul is an image that has no likeness."[96] Now, this is a far shot from Plato's Greek original, where the sentence explains that what follows is only a mental image, a

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[93] Origen, *Princ.* 3.6.1: *imaginis quidem dignitatem in prima conditione percepit, similitudinis uero ei perfectio in consummation seruata est.* Ed. Henri Crouzel and Manlio Simonetti, *Origène: Traité des Principes, tome III (Livres III et IV)* (SC 268; Paris: Cerf, 1980), 236 & n. 4. Trans. George W. Butterworth, *Origen On First Principles* (London: S.P.C.K.. 1936), 245 n. 6, pointing out further sources for the distinction between image and likeness: Origen, *c. Cels.* 4.30; *in Ep. ad Rom.* 4.5; Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 5.6; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 2.38.5. For the first and last Adam, cf. 1 Cor 15:45.

[94] See Richard Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004); Julia Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius Ponticus: The Making of a Gnostic* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009); Dechow, *Dogma and Mysticism*; Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); Samuel Rubenson, *Letters of St. Antony*; idem. "Origen in the Egyptian Monastic Tradition of the Fourth Century," in *Origeniana Septima: Origenes in den Auseinandersetzungen des 4. Jahrhunderts* (ed. Wolfgang A. Bienert and Uwe Kühneweg; BETL 137; Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 319–37; Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (STAC 97; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 238–56.

[95] See Hugo Lundhaug, "Shenoute's Heresiological Polemics and its Context(s)," in *Invention, Rewriting, Usurpation: Discursive Fights over Religious Traditions in Antiquity* (ed. Jörg Ulrich, Anders-Christian Jacobsen, and David Brakke; ECCA 11; Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2012), 239–61.

[96] NHC VI,5 48.31–32: ⲟⲩϩⲓⲕⲱⲛ ⲉⲙⲛ̅ⲧⲁϥ ⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲗⲟⲅⲟⲥ ⲛ̅ⲧⲯⲩⲭⲏ·

metaphor: "By forming in speech an image of the soul."[97] This is not difficult Greek and it is unlikely that the translator has made a mistake. There is nothing corresponding to "likeness" in the Greek text, and we must be dealing with a conscious interpolation. An Origenist interpretation would make sense here: the Logos, or rational part of the soul, is an image of God, but does not possess his likeness in the present fallen condition, as we have seen. In addition, the statement that the image has no likeness could be understood to refer to the invisibility of the original, incorporeal image. Next, we should consider if there are other passages in the text that might bear the mark of Origenism. Lacunae make the following few lines difficult to make sense of, before we come to the passage where the utterances of the ruling powers (ⲁⲣⲭⲱⲛ) become nature or living beings (ⲫⲩⲥⲓⲥ), such as the Chimaera and Cerberus. They all descend, and produce forms and likenesses, and become one single likeness (NHC VI,5 49.4–17). It is not clear if *physis* here refers to the nature of humans or of the world. If the descent of the utterances of the archons is in fact cosmogonic, this is not without parallel in Origen. In *On First Principles*, we are told that the diversity of the world is due to the diversity of rational beings that fell, some of which are identified as the ruling powers of the world, and that "the universe is as it were an immense, monstrous animal, held together by the power and reason of God as by one soul."[98] The reader could easily have identified the Chimaera, Cerberus, and the rest, who descend, produce forms and likenesses, and become one single likeness, as such an Origenist "monstrous animal."[99] Consequently, if the passage is in fact cosmogonic it does not necessarily reflect a "Gnostic" myth of creation by wicked archons, but may reflect the Origenist proposition that the world is manifold because of the diversity of the fallen souls, some of which became antagonistic "rulers."

Further on in the Coptic excerpt, it seems that the many-headed beast produces rough, moulded forms ($\pi\lambda\acute{\alpha}\sigma\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$) with effort from itself, while other likenesses are formed ($\pi\lambda\acute{\alpha}\sigma\sigma\epsilon\iota\nu$) with words, and that the likenesses of the lion and the humans belong to the latter category (NHC VI,5 49.16–35). It is unclear if the ruling powers also spoke the latter likenesses into being, as the next few lines on top of page 50 are highly lacunose. When we once more get continuous text there is an imperative and a conjunctive in the second person plural, ordering to unite the three into a single likeness, no doubt referring back to the likenesses of the many-headed beast, the lion and the human. These three are however grown together as a single likeness *outside* the image of the human (50.11–12: ⲟⲩⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ ⲥⲁⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ⲑⲓⲕⲱⲛ ⲙ̄ⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ), which must mean that the

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[97] Plato, *Tim.* 588b: Εἰκόνα πλάσαντες τῆς ψυχῆς λόγῳ.

[98] Origen, *Princ.* 2.1.3: *uiuersum mundum uelut animal quoddam inmensum atque inmane opinandum puto, quod quasi ab una anima uirtute dei ac ratione teneatur.*

[99] In fact, the adjective used in Rufinus's Latin translation of *Princ.* for "monstrous," *inmanis*, is used to describe Cerberus in Horace, *Car.* 3.11.15.

likeness of the human is not identical with the image of the human. Again, utilizing Origenist hermeneutics, we can identify the likeness of the human as the fallen rational soul that has taken on the likeness of a man, whereas the image of the human inside is the spiritual latent image of God, which may attain the likeness of God and thus reach perfection. Thus the prelapsarian soul becomes split during the fall; the rational part assumes the likeness of a human grown together with the irrational lion and beast, whereas the spiritual part is described as the image of the human, which can be cultivated into the image of God. Again it is said that "his likeness" is inside a living creature formed (πλάσσειν) in a human likeness, meaning that the threefold single likeness is inside a human body. That the outer human has been shaped (πλασσεῖν), not made, both in Plato and the Coptic excerpt, would be central for an Origenist understanding, since Origen in his *Homilies on Genesis* underlines that the outer body in Genesis 2:8 has been shaped, not made, and is therefore a *figmentum*, i.e. πλάσμα, not an image of God as the human in Genesis 1:26.[100] It seems then that the anthropology of our adaptation of Plato is doubly threefold: there is an interior image, a tripartite soul, and finally the fleshly body. This does correspond to what Origen maps out in *On First Principles*, where the will of the soul is said to be caught in the middle between the flesh and the spirit,[101] a tripartite Pauline anthropology that was of course common enough among early Christian theologians.[102] As we have seen, the image of God is realized when the soul is perfectly united with the spirit, forsaking the body.

As for the soul itself, Origen broaches the possibility that it is tripartite, as Plato held, in *On First Principles*. He finds that this has scant scriptural support, but does not actually pronounce against it.[103] Elsewhere he does talk about three parts of the soul, and in the *Homily on Ezekiel* he actually identifies the rational part with the human of the vision of Ezekiel, the irascible part with the lion, and the appetitive part with the bull. The eagle in the vision is said to correspond to the helping power (τὴν βοηθοῦσαν δύναμιν).[104] Later the Origenist Eusebius of Caesarea would claim that the vision of Ezekiel was in fact Plato's source for his tripartite image of the soul.[105] It is consequently likely

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[100]Origen, *Hom. Gen.* 1.13: *Non enim corporis figmentum Dei imaginem continent, neque factus esse corporalis homo dicitur, sed plasmatus*.

[101]Origen, *Princ.* 3.4.3.

[102] See George H. van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology in Context: The Image of God, Assimilation to God, and Tripartite Man in Ancient Judaism, Ancient Philosophy and Early Christianity* (WUNT 232; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), chap. 5; idem. "St Paul on Soul, Spirit and the Inner Man," in *The Afterlife of the Platonic Soul: Reflections of Platonic Psychology in the Monotheistic Religions* (ed. Maha Elkaisy-Friemuth and John M. Dillon; SPNPT 9; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 25–44.

[103]Origen, *Princ.* 3.4.1.

[104]Origen, *Hom. Ezech.* (PG 12) 340.20–22. See also *Sel. Gen.* (PG 12) 125.2–5.

[105] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praep. ev.* 12.46 on Ez 1:40.

that a reader steeped in either Platonism or Origenism would have recognized a reference to the tripartite soul in the three likenesses.

4.3 Trample the Likenesses!

The Coptic excerpt departs from Plato in recommending that one should trample the likenesses of the beast[106] as well as that of the lion, whereas Plato's recommendation was to make an ally of the lion, and to check the growth of the heads of wild beasts on the many-headed beast, while the heads of tame animals might be cultivated. The injunction in the Coptic version, to trample the likenesses, lends itself to three interpretations, which may all be valid at the same time. First, the reader who has identified the many-headed beast and the lion with respectively the desires and irascibility of the irrational soul would be likely to understand the trampling to refer to ascetic discipline. Unlike Plato's recommendation that the tame beasts should be cultivated, and the lion should be made an ally to keep the beast in check, all irrational passions are commonly decried in monastic asceticism. The passions are thus demonized and both the beast and the lion would be apt images of the devil. 'Beast' is of course a well-known designation for the adversary, and the roaring lion appears as the adversary in 1 Pet 5:8, a passage that Origen also refers to twice in *On First Principles*. Likewise, the *First Greek Life of Pachomius* (135) interprets Paul's statement "I was rescued from the lion's mouth" (2 Tim 4:17) with the devil as a roaring lion who devours souls in 1 Pet 5:8, a passage also evoked by Horsiesios (*Test.* 6). Elsewhere in the same text, Pachomius is lauding the ascetic discipline of the young Silvanos in front of the other monks, saying that while they have bound "the beast that wars against you" under their feet, Silvanos has wholly destroyed it.[107] In the same vein, the learned anchorite Diocles of the Thebaid is said to have identified irascibility as demonic and desire as bestial.[108] Evagrius Ponticus also identifies the passions with animals quite often, and in the *Kephalaia Gnostica* he states that the *nous* is most characteristic of angels, irascibility of the devil, and desires of humans.[109]

Evagrius is quite striking in this regard, for he states in the *Letter to Melania* that when the soul fell and ceased being an image of god, it acquired "the image of animals," alluding to Romans 1:23: "Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal

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[106] A possible subtext here is 1 Cor 15:24–25, when Paul states that Christ will destroy every ruler, authority and power and put all his enemies under his feet, and chap. 32, when he himself fought wild beasts at Ephesus.

[107] G¹ 105; cf. 1 Cor 15:25; Luke 10:19. See also Paral. 4 & 24; Pachomius, *First Instruction* 47. Translations of the Pachomian texts can be found in Armand Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia* (3 vols.; Kalamazoo, Mi: Cistercian Publications, 1980–1982).

[108] Palladius, *Laus. Hist.* 58.3: ἐπιθυμία as κτῆνος, not θήριον.

[109] Evagrius, *Keph. Gnost.* 1.68, 3.34–35. See Clark, *Origenist Controversy*, 77.

man and birds and animals and reptiles."[110] Although clearly speaking about idols here, Paul immediately goes on to speak about lust, and Evagrius thus links the soul's acquisition of the irrational parts during its descent with idolatry. The link is not merely symbolic. The irrational faculties of the soul are particularly susceptible to the influence of demons, if not somehow demonic themselves, and it is demons that create disturbing fantasies in the mind of the monk, just as it is demons that are worshipped as gods in the idolatrous cult of the pagans.[111] That is the lesson Athanasius wants to impart in his life of Antony, in the very final passage:

> the Christians who are sincerely devoted to him and truly believe in him not only prove that the demons, whom the Greeks consider gods, are not gods, but also *trample* (Cf. Luke 10:19; Ps 90:13 LXX) and chase them away as deceivers and corrupters of mankind.[112]

The injunction in our excerpt to trample the likenesses might thus naturally be interpreted as a call to destroy pagan idols, which would indeed have been a pressing concern for many Egyptian monks in fourth century Egypt.

Third and finally, the injunction to trample the likenesses could have been read as an exhortation to imageless prayer, so important for the practice of Evagrius and for the Origenist controversy in the late fourth century.[113] During prayer, the monk would sometimes be distracted by thoughts that present images, and these distractions were often the result of demonic machinations. Pure prayer should avoid these images and instead the mind should be filled by light. Evagrius seems to have been influenced here by John of Lycopolis, "the Seer of Thebes," whom he travelled to consult together with Ammonius of the Tall Brothers from Nitria.[114] In the *Historia Monachorum* John of Lycopolis is made to warn against indecent images during prayer (1.22), and he instead recommends a contemplative prayer with pure mind (1.62). It is consequently

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[110] Evagrius, *Ep. ad Melaniam* 9. Clark, *Origenist Controversy*, 73.

[111] See David Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk: Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

[112] Athanasius, *Vit. Ant.* 94.2: οἱ τούτῳ γνησίως λατρεύοντες καὶ πιστεύοντες εὐσεβῶς εἰς αὐτόν, τοὺς δαίμονας, οὓς αὐτοὶ οἱ Ἕλληνες νομίζουσιν εἶναι θεούς, τούτους οἱ χριστιανοὶ ἐλέγχουσιν, οὐ μόνον μὴ εἶναι θεούς, ἀλλὰ καὶ πατοῦσι καὶ διώκουσιν, ὡς πλάνους καὶ φθορέας τῶν ἀνθρώπων τυγχάνοντας.

[113] See Columba Stewart, "Imageless Prayer and the Theological Vision of Evagrius Ponticus," *JECS* 9 (2001): 173–204. See also John Cassian, *Conf.* 10.3–6; Mark DelCogliano, "Situating Sarapion's Sorrow: The Anthropomorphite Controversy and the Historical and Theological Context of Cassian's Tenth Conference on Pure Prayer," *CSQ* 38 (2003): 377–421; Hugo Lundhaug, "The Body of God and the Corpus of Historiography: The *Life of Aphou of Pemdje* and the Anthropomorphite Controversy," in *Bodies, Borders, Believers: Ancient Texts and Present Conversations: Essays in Honor of Turid Karlsen Seim on Her 70th Birthday* (ed. Anne Hege Grung, Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, and Anna Rebecca Solevåg; Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015), 40–56.

[114] Evagrius Ponticus, *Antir.* 6.16. Cf. Stewart, "Imageless Prayer," 194.

likely that some kind of imageless prayer was practiced in Upper Egypt before the time of Evagrius, and thus close in both time and space to the manuscript of our Coptic Plato. An objection to this interpretation is that only the likenesses of the lion and the beast should be destroyed, whereas one would expect true imageless prayer also to get rid of the likeness of the human. A possibility would be that the lion and the beast are considered "second-order images," belonging to the lower realm of creation, whereas the human likeness is considered to belong to the "first-order" images which may fruitfully be employed in contemplation in order to reach the pure imageless prayer.[115] The beast and probably the lion were spawned by the ruling powers, in our excerpt, whereas the likeness of the human would probably have been interpreted as the rational soul, thus belonging to the noetic order. At any rate, the injunction to trample the likenesses might have been understood by a fourth- or fifth-century monastic reader as an exhortation to imageless prayer, even if this was not the original intent of the interpolation of the Coptic translator.

4.4 Daily Ascetic Discipline

The remainder of the excerpt does not contain significant departures from the text of Plato, but it should be pointed out that the text would be highly conducive to monastic discipline, stating that the one who speaks and acts justly will cultivate the inner human (ὁ ἐντὸς ἄνθρωπος / ⲙ̄ⲫⲟⲩⲛ ⲙ̄ⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ). A straightforward mistranslation will have increased the focus on discipline: with regards to the many-headed beast, Plato claims that one should act like a good husbandman and rear the heads of tame animals (τὰ ἥμερα) while hindering the wild ones (τὰ ἄγρια). The Coptic translator here reads instead ἥμερα as days, and the resulting sentence reads that like a good husbandman one should *daily* (ⲙ̄ⲙⲏⲛⲉ) nourish one's produce (ⲡⲉϥⲅⲉⲛⲏⲙⲁ, not found in the Greek). Also, in the Coptic excerpt it is the wild animals who hinder the good husbandman, in contrast to Plato's Greek. This brings to mind the ideal of the fastidious monk who daily follows his spiritual discipline while tormented by the attacks of wicked demons, where Plato had the husbandman checking the heads of wild animals with the lion as his ally. What started with a simple mistranslation of a single Greek word makes the translator subtly change the meaning of the whole sentence, the last one of the excerpt.

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[115] Blossom Stefaniw, "Evagrius Ponticus on Image and Material," *CSQ* 42 (2007): 126–31.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, there are many indications that the departures from Plato in our Coptic 'translation,' or rather 'version,' are not only caused by the lacking familiarity of the translator with Classical Greek and Plato's philosophical idiom, but also by the kind of teachings that by this time were considered to belong to Origenism, and which would shortly be denounced as such, in the first Origenist controversy. This does not mean that the translator necessarily had *On First Principles* or the homilies of Origen lying in front of him as he completed his task, nor even that he was necessarily personally familiar with the works of Origen. But it is likely that he worked in an environment where such teachings were prevalent, as we know to be the case in monasteries of both Upper and Lower Egypt. This strengthens the case that the Nag Hammadi Codices were likely owned by monks that were branded as Origenists, and lumped together with all kinds of heterodox Christians by such tireless heresiologists as Epiphanius of Salamis.[116]

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[116] See Dechow, *Dogma and Mysticism*, 206–18; Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 263–68. Jackson, *The Lion Becomes Man,* 206–7, suggests the Origenist Hierakas of Leontopolis or his disciples could have translated and interpolated the excerpt and sent it to their Pachomian brethren down south. This is a compelling scenario, and totally in harmony with the Origenist interpolations proposed here, but the Origenists of the Thebaïd mentioned by Epiphanius, supposedly inspired by Hierakas, could equally well be behind it. See Christian H. Bull, "The Panopolis Connection: The Pachomian Federation as Context for the Nag Hammadi Codices," in *Coptic Literature in Context (4th-13th cent.): Cultural Landscape, Literary Production, and Manuscript Archaeology* (ed. Paola Buzi; PAST 5; Roma: Edizioni Quasar, 2020), 133–47.

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