

GEDALIAHU A. G. STROUMSA

ANOTHER SEED:
STUDIES IN GNOSTIC MYTHOLOGY



NAG HAMMADI STUDIES
VOLUME XXIV

NAG HAMMADI STUDIES

EDITED BY

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A MES PARENTS

“ . . . et il les amènera dans leur propre pays
et leur construira une demeure sainte . . .
hors du feu et de la colère . . . ”

Apocalypse d'Adam

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PREFACE

Research on this book, begun in Paris in 1976, was pursued in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In its original form, the work was submitted in 1978 as a Ph.D. dissertation at Harvard University. It has subsequently undergone many revisions, including some major structural changes, although the main lines of the argument have remained on the whole unaltered. I have also sought to take recent scholarly contributions into account. The manuscript was ready in 1982. The delay in its publication has been due to reasons quite beyond my control; it has not been possible to revise it further.

The present work bears much upon those trends of Gnosticism, clearly distinct from Valentinianism, which are often referred to as "Sethian" Gnosticism. I have tried, however, to avoid this term, which remains problematic. Much attention has been devoted to Manichaean traditions, which have tended to be somewhat neglected in recent Gnostic scholarship. The problems related to the origins and development of Gnosticism notoriously belong to the most difficult questions of the history of religions in the Roman Empire. I have sought here, at least, to avoid the twin pitfalls of scorn and infatuation, which have too often plagued Gnostic studies. For the student of religion, the analysis of Gnostic patterns of thought is by no means of an antiquarian character, and its "relevance" need not be artificially emphasized.

It is with great pleasure that I acknowledge the help, guidance, and encouragement provided throughout the various stages of this work. The Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard University and its Directors, Professors Wilfred Cantwell Smith and John B. Carman, have offered the kindest hospitality and financial support throughout our stay in the United States.

I also want to acknowledge grants from the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, as well as a Fellowship from the Warburg Fund. Finally, a major grant from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem has made this publication possible. Professors Bentley Layton (Yale University) and Michel Tardieu (E.P.H.E., Paris) have guided my first steps in Coptic, Gnostic and Manichaean studies; I owe both of them a great deal. For strong encouragement to publish this work and for many helpful comments, I am grateful to Professors Birger A. Pearson (University of California at Santa Barbara) and Frederik Wisse (Mac Gill University). Professor Wisse also graciously accepted the manuscript for *Nag Hammadi Studies*. At Harvard, both Professors George W. MacRae, S.J., my *Doktorvater*, and John Strugnell carefully read previous drafts and protected me from more than one Charybdis or Scylla. I should like to recall their vigilance then, which has been as precious to me as their friendship is

now. I greatly appreciate the extremely diligent typing of Mrs. Tilly Eshel, the editorial advice of Dr. Daniella Saltz, and the impressive work done by Mr. Gary Bisbee in producing the typeset copy.

Most of all, for her deep interest in arcane topics, her intense support and her intensive involvement in this work, and for everything else I owe her, I wish to thank my wife Sarah.

Jerusalem, Fall 1984

ABBREVIATIONS AND METHODS OF CITATION

For the reader's convenience, biblical texts are usually quoted according to the Revised Standard Version, and Gnostic texts according to the translations provided in James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977). In the case of Gnostic works extant in several recensions, I refer to the recension translated in *The Nag Hammadi Library*, unless otherwise stated. Thus, in quoting the Nag Hammadi writings, reference is made only to plate and line numbers, omitting the superfluous Codex number (e.g., *Eugnostus* 71:13–18 would refer to the recension of *Eugnostus the Blessed* found in CG III). In the case of the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, however, I do refer to the Codex number (CG III or CG IV). Some Gnostic works that have no title in the codices have been assigned a name by their modern editors (the *Untitled Treatise* which appears in CG II, 5 and XIII, 2 is now usually called *On the Origin of the World*). In the anonymous work of the *Bruce Codex*, which has neither *incipit* nor colophon, the figure of Setheus (Σηθεύς) is prominent. For the sake of brevity, I refer to this work simply as *Setheus*, thus following a suggestion made long ago by F. C. Burkitt ("Setheus," *JTS* 36 [1935], 75). In some cases I give my own translations, either because I disagree with those provided in *The Nag Hammadi Library*, or simply for the sake of establishing consistency in rendering Greek or Coptic terms. Other Gnostic texts, as well as Christian, Jewish, and Manichaean sources, are quoted according to the standard scholarly editions, which are listed in the Bibliography together with the editions of the Nag Hammadi texts.

Modern scholarly works are identified in full only the first time they are cited; short titles are used thereafter. The bibliography is limited to works referred to in the text. For full bibliographical information, see David M. Scholer, *Nag Hammadi Bibliography: 1948–1969* (NHS 1; Leiden: Brill, 1971), with annual supplements in *NovT*, which is an invaluable tool for students of Gnosticism. Abbreviations of Gnostic, biblical, rabbinic, Christian, and classical literatures, as well as those of series and periodicals, are usually those set by the *Journal of Biblical Literature*. See "Instructions for Contributors," *JBL* 95 (1976), 331–346. Some additional abbreviations are self evident.

INTRODUCTION

GNOSTIC MYTHOLOGY AND THE SETHIAN MYTH

Gnosticism was not only a dualistic, *sui generis* religion of salvation in which the soul—the divine part of man—sought to flee the material world, where it was a stranger and prisoner of the evil demiurge, and to return to its native Realm of Light. Gnosticism was also an essentially mythological phenomenon, indeed, the last significant outburst of mythical thought in Antiquity.¹ It is to this fact that Gnosis owes its major significance for the historian of religions,² for its acute syncretism and its negative attitude to the material world were typical of the entire late Hellenistic world, not only of the Gnostic movement. Here is one of the very few creations of new mythological patterns whose origins and early development do not vanish into the limbo of prehistory. Both Greek philosophers and Hebrew prophets attempted, in different ways, to demythologize thought. The emergence and flowering of Gnosticism, from the 1st to the 3rd centuries C.E., at the confluence of the Greek and the Hebrew cultural and religious worlds, can be seen as a bold attempt to reverse this trend. This peculiar character of Gnostic mythology—both post-philosophical and post-biblical—implies an essential, if subtle, difference between classical and Gnostic myths, which should be emphasized at the outset. Gnosticism failed in its attempt to develop an authentic new mythological thought and remained, in the words of Karl Kérényi, “nur halbwegs Mythologie.”³ Paul Ricoeur, who also noted the ambiguity of Gnosis, conceives it as an *Aufhebung* of myth, so to speak, which destroys it as myth *ipso facto*.⁴

A rejoinder to these views has been provided by Michel Tardieu's detailed structural analysis of some Gnostic myths. Tardieu points out that “the mythical thought at work in Gnosticism has rationalized and systematized myth.”⁵ In other words, one might say that the peculiarity of Gnostic mythology lies in its self-consciousness of being *both* a mythology

¹See, for instance, W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos* (Eng. trans.; Nashville—New York: Abingdon, 1970), 267; G. MacRae, “Nag Hammadi and the New Testament,” in B. Aland, ed., *Gnosis: Festschrift für Hans Jonas* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 146.

²H. J. W. Drijvers (“The Origins of Gnosticism as a Religious and Historical Problem,” *NedTTs* 22 [1968], 350–351) calls for a comprehensive study of the central Gnostic myths.

³*Mythologie und Gnosis* (Albae Vigiliae; Winterthur: Akadem. Verlaganstalt Pantheon, 1942 = *Eranos*, 1941), 41.

⁴Ricoeur thus tries to recover “the myth as myth, before it slipped into Gnosticism.” This attitude of the philosopher, however, should not be shared by the historian. See his *The Symbolism of Evil* (Eng. trans.; New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 164–165.

⁵*Trois Mythes Gnostiques: Adam, Eros et les animaux d’Égypte dans un écrit de Nag Hammadi* (II, 5) (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1974), 48.

and a theology. In opposition to primitive, or even to early Greek mythology, the Gnostic myths arose in a mental world where metaphysical problems had already been addressed in non-mythological ways, and it arose precisely as a rejection of these ways. Thence stems the ambiguity of Gnostic thought, the artificiality of its mythology, whose figures are often hardly more than hypostasized abstract entities.⁶ A similar ambiguity is detected in Indian myths by Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, who notes that "the pseudo-historical framework is merely a manner of speaking, a metaphor for theoretical ideas about the relation of good to evil, gods to men, the individual to society."⁷ As a result of the peculiar self-consciousness of the Gnostic author, one cannot simply apply to the study of Gnostic mythology the methods used to analyze primitive myths. Rather, one should try to delineate the background against which Gnostic mythology emerged and grew: biblical exegesis as well as Greek philosophy. Late myths, such as the Gnostic ones, can and therefore must be studied genetically as well as structurally; that is, the origin of the various elements and their relationships to one another must receive complementary attention. This will be no mere *Quellenforschung*, as long as the ultimate goal remains to unveil the rules and logic proper to the mythology in the making, and to this hybrid system of thought.

The ambiguity of Gnostic thought is therefore directly reflected in the method of the inquiry: at once diachronic and synchronic. "There are no 'good' or 'bad' versions of a myth," says Claude Lévi-Strauss,⁸ who insists that the search for the "authentic" version of myths has long been an impediment to the development of a real science of mythology. Lévi-Strauss, therefore, proposes "to define each myth by the set (*ensemble*) of all its versions."⁹ This concept of the versions of a myth is central to the present study. We shall see how some Gnostic myths can be understood and reconstructed only through the careful interplay of all their versions. This does not mean, however, that one should not distinguish between earlier and later versions of these myths; indeed, we shall seek to discern their evolution and progressive transformation.

The hybrid nature of Gnostic thought is also reflected in its language. Therefore, Gnostic writings should not be approached as if they were philosophical theology, despite the appearance of reason in Gnostic, and in particular in Manichaean, etiological mythology, which claimed to be a totally rational science based on "reason pure and simple," and even able to account for all physical phenomena.¹⁰ The implicit theology found in

⁶C. G. Stead, "The Valentinian Myth of Sophia," *JTS* 20 (1969), 75–104, esp. 103–104.

⁷*The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology* (Hermeneutics, Studies in the History of Religion 6; Berkeley–Los Angeles–London: Univ. of California, 1976), 9.

⁸*Mythologiques* 4, *L'Homme Nu* (Paris: Plon, 1971), 565.

⁹*Anthropologie Structurale* (Paris: Plon, 1958), 240.

¹⁰Augustine admitted how seductive this claim of rationality was: *De Utilitate Credendi* 2, also 21, and, for instance, *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae* 3 (*PL* 32, 122). Texts cited by H.-C. Puech, "The Concept of Redemption in Manichaeism," in J. Campbell, ed., *The Mystic Vision* (Bollingen Series XXX, 6; New York: Pantheon, 1968), 265.

most Gnostic texts is thus not quite comparable to the thought of the Alexandrian Fathers or of the Middle Platonists—notwithstanding the obvious similarities and closeness between them. When Gnostic texts make use of the conceptual language inherited from the various schools of philosophy—as they often do—the words acquire new, incantatory overtones. Terms drawn from abstract philosophical discourse result in a pompous and emotional “densité du langage, plutôt que de la pensée.” Father Festugière’s saying holds true not only for the Hermetic tractates, but for all Gnostic texts.

Gnostic language is soteriological, not dialectic, and is thus a language of imagery and/or paradox.¹¹ It has been said that it should be studied as “mystical poetry.”¹² Incantations and images indeed indicate a poetic form, while the puzzling juxtaposition of paradoxes in some of the texts points to “mysticism.” Even if it uses poetic forms of expression, however, Gnostic language is as essentially different from poetry as it is from philosophy. As Lévi-Strauss observes, myths, as opposed to poems, can always be translated without any inherent change: their *traduttore* is no *traditore*.¹³

The notion that Gnosticism is a kind of mysticism, moreover, can lead to serious misunderstanding. While the mystic strives to internalize experience within his own consciousness, the Gnostic achieved the opposite: an externalization of consciousness through myth. For the Gnostic, myth was the only possible way to relate to a world too dreadful to be confronted with the limited intellectual powers of the individual. In the historical development of religious thought, mythology and mysticism belong to two different stages, although, to be sure, one may lead to the other. It is the mythological structure of the world which the mystic seeks to internalize. This intuition forms the basis of the second volume of Hans Jonas’s *magnum opus*, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*.¹⁴ The very nature of mysticism compels the scholar to focus upon the inner world and the personal experience of the individual mystic. Central to the *unio mystica* is an integrative concept of the personality, of the subject, which does not and could not exist in Gnostic anthropology. Even when salvation was presented as the soul’s return to the divine realm, the Gnostic vision denied the relevance of a concept such as “personal experience.” The

¹¹On the use of paradox in Gnostic writings, see G. W. MacRae, “Discourses of the Gnostic Revealer,” *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Gnosticism, Stockholm, August 20–25, 1973* (Filologisk-filosofiska serien 17; Stockholm: Royal Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, 1977), 112–122.

¹²F. Wisse, “The Nag Hammadi Library and the Heresiologists,” *VC* 25 (1971), 205–223; B. Pearson, “Anti-Heretical Warnings in Codex IX from Nag Hammadi,” in Martin Krause, ed., *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts* (NHS 6; Leiden: Brill, 1973), 154.

¹³“La structure des mythes,” in *Anthropologie Structurale*, 232.

¹⁴*Von der Mythologie zur mystischen Philosophie* (FRLANT 63; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1954). See also “Myth and Mysticism, A Study of Objectification and Interiorization in Religious Thought,” *JR* 49 (1969), 315–329. On the conditions for the appearance and blooming of mysticism in any religious system, see also the first chapter of G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1946).

Gnostics presented their soteriological knowledge as objective; it is more theosophy or anthroposophy than mysticism.

The study of Gnosticism, therefore, should focus on the discovery and analysis of the organizing and governing principles concealed in its mythology. In studying them, the present work will seek to overcome the hiatus, all too frequent in Gnostic scholarship, between phenomenological descriptions and the research into Gnostic origins.

Gnostic studies are still marred by the problem of the definition and scope of their subject. Scholars have known for a long time that their use of "Gnosticism" as a generic term for the various dualist heresies of the first Christian centuries covers a spectrum much broader than the specific doctrines of the *gnostikoi* of heresiological literature.¹⁵ Indeed, the main problem in the scholarly use of the patristic accounts is their highly developed taxonomy of heretical sects. It is often very doubtful whether many of the labels given to the heretics by the Church Fathers ever corresponded to a concrete and precisely defined reality.¹⁶

The discovery, shortly after the end of the Second World War, of thirteen Coptic codices near Nag Hammadi, in Upper Egypt, brought to light about 40 new Gnostic texts. This discovery has radically transformed the study of a phenomenon known until then almost exclusively through the polemical writings of its bitter opponents. The new texts have drastically reduced the previously monopolistic importance of patristic accounts and have permitted a more balanced appreciation of their value; yet, it has not destroyed their significance altogether. The accounts of the Church Fathers still remain extremely precious, despite the role played by hearsay and slander and despite the categorization of the various heresies, whose function was ideological, to show that whereas the truth itself was unique, heresy was by nature as polymorphic as a hydra.¹⁷ One of the main debates in Gnostic scholarship in the last generation has been about the nature and significance of the phenomenon currently called "Sethian Gnosticism." The Nag Hammadi codices were even originally described by Jean Doresse as a Sethian library.¹⁸ This almost unqualified assessment was based upon both the recurrence of the name "Seth" in some of the tractates and the many similarities, first studied by Henri-Charles Puech,

¹⁵R. P. Casey, "The Study of Gnosticism," *JTS* 36 (1935), 45–60; M. Smith, "The History of the Term *gnostikos*," in B. Layton, ed., *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, II (Suppl. to *Numen* 41; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 796–807.

¹⁶See for instance the demonstration of K. Koschorke, *Hippolyt's Ketzerbekämpfung und die Polemik gegen die Gnostiker* (Göttingen Orientforschungen VI, 4; Wiesbaden, 1975).

¹⁷E.g., Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* VII. 17.107.4 (III, 76 Stählin), or Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I. 31.4, where the Gnostic heresies are compared to a wild beast which must be attacked from all sides.

¹⁸"Nouveaux aperçus historiques sur les gnostiques coptes: Ophites et Séthiens," *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte*, 31 (1948–49), 409–419. The original announcement of the find was made by J. Doresse and H.-C. Puech together: "Nouveaux écrits gnostiques découverts en Égypte," *CRAIBL, Séance du 20 Février 1948*. See also G. Quispel, *Gnosis als Weltreligion* (Zürich: Origo, 1951), 3.

between other tractates and the doctrines of those Gnostics called *Σηθιανοί*, Sethians, in heresiological literature.¹⁹ Doresse's description of the library was soon subjected to serious criticism,²⁰ but the importance of "Sethianism" as one of the main Gnostic trends has become widely recognized by scholars. In contemporary usage, in fact, "Sethianism" has replaced "Ophitism" as a provisional generic term for some of the central, and perhaps also earliest, trends of Gnostic mythology.²¹

Since the 19th century, scholars have attempted to organize the knowledge about early Gnostic sects. While no real consensus has been reached, the themes that appear under various headings in the patristic reports have been regrouped into "clusters" within broader groups. These groups were thought to have split off only in those later stages of Gnosticism described by the Church Fathers.²² Thus, for instance, R. A. Lipsius, in his impressive attempt to reconstruct the historical evolution of Gnosticism, considered what he called "Ophitism" (using the term in a broader sense than the patristic heresiologists) to have been the first stage of the Gnostic movement.²³ For him, the theology of the early Ophites was still very much in dialectical interaction with Judaism, and the Sethians described by Hippolytus were a later offspring of the movement.²⁴ In one way or another, scholars of earlier generations agreed to use "Ophitism" as the main designation for the central mythological teachings of the early Gnostics.²⁵ In most cases, the Sethians were seen as one of the main subdivisions of this postulated Ophitism, along with the Barbeloites (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I, 29), the *gnostikoi* (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 26), the Archontics (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 40), the Cainites (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I, 31), the Noachites (Hippolytus, *Elenchos* VIII. 20), or the Naassenes, Peratae, and Justin's *Baruch* described in book V of Hippolytus's *Elenchos* under the general heading "the Ophite heresies."

¹⁹"Les nouveaux écrits gnostiques découverts en Haute-Egypte (premier inventaire et essai d'identification)," *Coptic Studies in Honor of W. E. Crum* (Boston: Byzantine Institute, 1950), 91–134, esp. 123ff.

²⁰E.g., F. Wisse, "The Sethians and the Nag Hammadi Library," in L. C. McGaughey, ed., *SBL, 1972 Seminar Papers* (Missoula: Scholars, 1972), 601–607.

²¹*Ibid.*, and M. Tardieu, "Les livres mis sous le nom de Seth et les Séthiens de l'hérésiologie," in M. Krause, ed., *Gnosis and Gnosticism* (NHS 8; Leiden: Brill, 1977), 204–210. Tardieu's article is a useful treatment of the *status quaestionis*, esp. p. 204, n. 1. His implicit claim that the "Jewish-Christian" elements in Sethianism are later additions to a pagan core (pp. 209–210), however, is unconvincing.

²²But see the remark of F. Wisse, "The Nag Hammadi Library and the Heresiologists," 221: "The approach of the heresiologists to the Gnostic heretics still dominates Gnostic studies today. . . ." A good study of early heresiological literature may still be found in the introduction of A. Hilgenfeld, *Die Ketzergeschichte des Urchristentums* (Leipzig: Fues, 1884).

²³*Der Gnosticismus, sein Wesen, Ursprung und Entwicklungsgang*, Separatabdruck aus Ersch und Gruber's *Allgemeiner Encyclopädie*, I. Sektion, 71. Band (Leipzig, 1860), 140–143.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 153.

²⁵See already J. Matter, *Histoire critique du gnosticisme et de son influence sur les sectes religieuses et philosophiques des six premiers siècles de l'ère chrétienne* (Strasbourg-Paris: Levrault-Bertrand, 1843–44), II, 165; W. Bousset, *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1907), 25, cf. 291–320; G. Bornkamm, "Ophiten," *PW*, XVIII, 1, 654–658.

Among all these sects, the Sethians were generally seen as belonging to the "Jewish" (or ascetic) branch of Ophitism.²⁶ Following Theodoret (*Haeret. Fab. Compend.* I, 14), the anonymous "others" (*alii*) whose theology Irenaeus described in *Adv. Haer.* I. 30, were identified with the Sethians. Carl Schmidt identified the Gnostics known by Plotinus (*Enn.* II. 9, cf. Porphyry, *Vita Plotini*, 16) with the group to which the author of the *Anonymous Work* of the *Bruce Codex* (= the *Setheus*) belonged; according to him, they were Archontics and Sethians.²⁷

A close analysis of the various patristic reports on the Sethians has been published recently, and there is no need to repeat here the results of modern research.²⁸ It should be stressed, however, that at the root of all later patristic accounts there appear to lie Hippolytus's two accounts, in *Elenchos* VI and in his lost *Syntagma*. The contents of the latter work are preserved in outline in Pseudo-Tertullian's *Adv. Omn. Haer.* and form the basis of the reports of Epiphanius and Filaster. Hippolytus's *Syntagma*, moreover, is closely related to Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I, 29–31.

The contemporary usage of the term "Sethianism," therefore, is based upon the assumption that some of the various trends described by the Church Fathers, as well as many of the Nag Hammadi texts, share enough in common to make their study under a single rubric fruitful. It is around this assumption that the International Conference on Gnosticism, held at Yale University in March, 1978, was organized.²⁹ The core of the Conference was two seminars, devoted to Valentinianism and Sethianism, in which some of the leading scholars in the field participated. The parallelism between these two Gnostic trends is justified by the growing recognition of the primary importance—and probably the chronological priority—of those trends which are not Valentinian, but which might have provided the principal mythological foundation of Valentinianism.³⁰ There is, however, some danger that this parallelism might blur the profound dissimilarity between the two terms. About Valentinianism, we have some reliable and firm data: the founder of the movement is identified, and the teachings of some of his epigones are known in detail. Sethianism, on the

²⁶Filaster had catalogued the Sethians as a Jewish sect (although they mentioned the coming of Jesus), *Divers. Haeres. Liber*, III (2–3 Marx). See E. Preuschen, "Die apokryphen gnostischen Adamschriften aus dem Armenischen übersetzt und untersucht," *Festgrüss Bernhard Stade* (Giessen: Ricker, 1900), 240; E. deFaye, "Introduction à l'étude du gnosticisme au II et au III siècle," *RHR* 45 (1902–1903), 46, quotes an opinion similar to that expressed by C. Schmidt, *ibid.*, 47. For G. Quispel (*Gnosis als Weltreligion*, 4), E. Peterson ("Sethiani," *Enciclopedia Canonica*, XI, 433–434), and Dorese ("Nouveaux aperçus," 417–418), the Sethians are closely related to the 4th century Audians.

²⁷*Gnostische Schriften in koptischen Sprache aus dem Codex Brucianus* (TU 8; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1892), 598–665, esp. 646–648.

²⁸Tardieu, "Les livres mis sous le nom de Seth"; Pearson, "The Figure of Seth in Gnostic Literature," in Layton, ed., *Rediscovery*, II, 472–504.

²⁹M. Tardieu, "Le Congrès de Yale sur le Gnosticisme," *REAug.* 24 (1978), 188–209.

³⁰Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I. 11.1 (I, 98–99 Harvey), where Valentinus is said to have adapted to the peculiar character of his own school the principles (*ἀρχαί*) of the heresy called "Gnostic."

other hand, remains a category postulated for the sake of convenience. The obvious danger, in other words, lies in hypostasizing Sethianism, taking, in the heresiologists' fashion, various mythical elements as evidence of a single and rigid system of thought, indicating a precise sociological reality—a sect.³¹

In recent years, scholarly debate has been focused upon Hans-Martin Schenke's bold attempt to deduce from the fragmentary evidence, the original Sethian system.³² Schenke compares his attitude to that of the archaeologist, "who is able to reconstruct the original form of a vessel without difficulty from a surviving handle or fragment of a rim."³³ The corpus of the Nag Hammadi texts which, according to him, present Sethian characteristics to a greater or lesser extent, comprises the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, the *Apocalypse of Adam*, the *Three Steles of Seth*, *Zostrianos*, *Melchizedek*, *Norea* and the *Trimorphic Protennoia*. To this list, which includes the greater part of the non-Valentinian Gnostic texts of Nag Hammadi, he adds the *Anonymous Work of the Bruce Codex* (= the *Setheus*), Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I. 29, and Epiphanius, *Pan.* 26 and 39–40, which deal, respectively, with the doctrines of the so-called Gnostics, Sethians, and Archontics.³⁴ The main characteristic of what Schenke considers to be the Sethian-Gnostic system is the self-understanding of the Gnostics that they were the pneumatic seed of Seth. Seth, both a heavenly and an earthly figure, appeared three times during the course of history in order to save his seed from the repeated attempts of Yaldabaoth, the evil demiurge, to destroy them. Schenke, moreover, identifies as typically Sethian teachings about the heavenly trinity of the Father, the Mother and the Son, as well as about the four Illuminators (φωστήρες).

Schenke's reconstruction of the Sethian system has been strongly criticized. Frederik Wisse, in particular, has developed a series of impressive arguments against the obsessive search for the Sethians, which he considers to be logically as faulty as the search for the unicorn in zoology.³⁵ Wisse warns of taking too seriously the heresiologists' categories, noting that "names such as Valentinians or Sethians were necessary not only for easy reference, but also to distinguish between truth and falsehood." Unlike the heresiologist, the scholar should not mistake the Gnostic

³¹About the sociological context of Gnosticism we still know very little, despite the recommendations of the Messina symposium in 1966. See U. Bianchi, ed., *Le origini dello gnosticismo. Colloquio di Messina, 13–18 Aprile 1966; Testi e discussioni* (suppl. to *Numen* 12; Leiden: Brill, 1967). See K. Rudolph, "Das Problem einer Soziologie und 'sozialen Verortung' der Gnosis," *Kairos* 19 (1977), 35–44; and H. A. Green, "Gnosis and Gnosticism: a Study in Methodology," *Numen* 24 (1977), 95–134.

³²See "Das sethianische System nach Nag-Hammadi-Handschriften," in P. Nagel, ed., *Studia Coptica* (Berliner byzantinische Arbeiten 45; Berlin: Akademie, 1974), 165–173; *idem*, "The Phenomenon and Significance of Gnostic Sethianism," in Layton, ed., *Rediscovery*, II, 588–616.

³³*Ibid.*, 594.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 588–589.

³⁵"Stalking those Elusive Sethians," in Layton, ed., *Rediscovery*, II, 563–576.

authors for sect theologians. Moreover, he adds, if the themes isolated by Schenke "all go back to one system, it needs to be explained what caused the present diversity among the tractates."³⁶ In other words, Schenke's method is vitiated by the unconvincing proposition that the various writings all represent more or less complete and developed forms of one single myth; and his systematic reconstruction appears to be very much an artificial construct. The Sethians of Schenke seem no more real than those of Hippolytus.

Although Wisse's arguments carry conviction, his own solution appears to be less satisfying than his critique. To be sure, many of the recurring themes noted by Schenke do adhere to a precise pattern of systematic thinking and argumentation. But this does not necessarily mean that they are only "free-floating" theologoumena and mythologoumena, and that no significance should be attached to the correlation between them, or that the original purpose of these texts was "private meditation"³⁷ (apparently, such a conception would deny altogether the existence of any rationality or integration of the various themes). Here again, the problem stems, it seems to me, from the lack of recognition of the specificity of mythical language. Wisse's overly skeptical reaction and his unwillingness to overcome the discreteness of the various themes implicitly deny the possibility of finding any governing pattern in Gnostic mythology and condemn us, like A. D. Nock, to see in Gnosticism no more than "an aggregate of a series of individualistic responses to the religious situation."³⁸

One of the main problems raised by the list of "Sethian" texts is the great difference between two different stages in Gnostic thought: while some of the texts are quite thoroughly mythological, others show pervasive Neoplatonic influences. There is indeed a strong possibility that texts such as *Zostrianos*, *Marsanes*, or *Allogenes* were read by the Gnostics opposed to by Plotinus and do not belong to the earlier strata of Gnostic thought. Surprisingly enough, little attention was devoted at the Yale Seminar on Sethianism to the evolution of Gnostic thought. Nor does Schenke's approach offer a convincing explanation of the discrepancy between the two kinds of texts, for he speaks only of the "encounter between Sethianism and Philosophy."

If we are to retrieve the dynamics of the development and evolution of Gnostic thought, a middle way must be found between Schenke's and Wisse's approaches, both overly static. The belief that such a middle way exists underlies the present work. While no attempt to draw the lines of a precisely defined but hypostatic "Sethian system" will be made here—indeed, I shall try to avoid referring to "Sethianism" at all—explanations will be offered of the recurrence of various mythologoumena in many of the Gnostic texts. For the most part, the analysis will deal with non-Valentinian texts; yet, it should be noted at the outset that some of the

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 574.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 575–576.

³⁸ "Gnosticism," *HTR* 57 (1964), 273.

themes considered to be typically "Sethian" also occur in Valentinian texts.³⁹ When the Valentinians speak of themselves as the elect, spiritual seed,⁴⁰ coming from the Mother on high,⁴¹ or else as the "fourth race,"⁴² or when they relate Seth to the "spiritual" ones and Cain to the "material" ones⁴³ who "have the devil for father,"⁴⁴ we recognize in all these expressions transformations into Valentinian metaphors of originally "Sethian" themes.

On another point, however, there was agreement among the members of the Yale "Sethian" Seminar, reflecting the growing consensus among scholars. It is indeed a sign of progress that Gnostic scholarship has abandoned its epic journey to Persia in the quest for the roots of Gnosticism. Research concentrates more and more upon the "proximate channels," to use a phrase coined by Robert McL. Wilson,⁴⁵ through which various motifs reached the point of crystallization into the revolutionary Gnostic vision, during the 1st or the 2nd century C.E.

Today, it appears more and more probable that Gnosticism must have first appeared and developed—at least in its earlier phase—on the outskirts or fringes of Judaism. Some of the links, to be sure, are strictly literary, and exegetical traditions about the first chapters of Genesis do not, by themselves, imply *direct* Jewish influence—since these traditions could well have been mediated by Christianity. Similarly, one should pay attention to van Unnik's *caveat* that a Semitic milieu does not necessarily mean Judaism. Moreover, it goes without saying that Jewish influences by themselves in no way provide a complete explanation for the emergence of such a syncretistic phenomenon as Gnosticism. Nevertheless, the case for the Jewish origins of Gnosis appears to be very strong. Actually, the hypothesis of Jewish roots was advanced as early as the 19th century; the pioneering studies of Heinrich Grätz⁴⁶ and of Moritz Friedländer⁴⁷ are the classic expositions, to which should be added the little known work of Alexander Hönig.⁴⁸ Hönig argued that the earliest Gnostics were Egyptian Jews who had turned to heresy through a constant meditation upon the problem of evil. According to him, these Jews founded the communities which then became known as the Ophites. Despite some remarkable

³⁹Supra, n. 30.

⁴⁰Exc. Theod. 1.1; 1.3.

⁴¹Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* III. 15.2 (II, 80 Harvey).

⁴²τετάρτην δὲ γενεὰν τὰ σπέρματα αὐτῶν, Exc. Theod. 28 (118–120 Sagnard). Note Sagnard's hesitations on the meaning of this fourth race, p. 121, n. 1.

⁴³Exc. Theod. 54.1 (170 Sagnard); Tertullian, *Adversus Valentinianos*, 29.2–3, A. Maras-toni, ed. and trans. (Pensatori religiosi 10; Padua: Gregoriana, 1971), 88.

⁴⁴Exc. Theod. 44. See also Origen, *Com. in Johan.* 20.20 (IV, 352 Preuschen), 20.24, pp. 359–360.

⁴⁵"Jewish-Christianity and Gnosticism," *Judéo-Christianisme, Recherches historiques et théologiques* . . . Jean Daniélou (Extr. from RSR 60 [1972], 1–320; Paris, 1972), 265.

⁴⁶*Gnosticismus und Judentum* (Krotoschin: Monasch, 1846).

⁴⁷*Der vorchristliche jüdische Gnosticismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1898).

⁴⁸*Die Ophiten, Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des jüdischen Gnosticismus* (Berlin: Manner-Müller, 1889).

intuitions, however, the authors of these early studies were guilty of making farfetched claims based upon inadequate evidence.

The interest and complexity—as well as the pitfalls—of the problem have grown in the past generation. The discovery of the Qumrān library, the renewed interest in Jewish Christianity (and in particular the newly established direct bonds between a Jewish Christian [Elchasaite] community and the origin of Manichaeism), and the recognition of the early dating of at least some themes and strata of Merkavah literature (and hence its close links with esoteric trends in rabbinic speculation), all these bear directly upon research on the relationship between Judaism and Gnosticism.⁴⁹

Among the current scholars, Gilles Quispel has strongly and consistently maintained that the principal components of Gnosis must come from “heterodox Judaism,” and that Gnosticism itself is best understood as an iconic revolt, an “Aufstand der Bilder” inside Judaism.⁵⁰ The precise sociological context in which the Gnostic revolt occurred, however, remains unidentified. For some time, Robert M. Grant claimed that

⁴⁹The literature on the topic, already vast, is steadily growing. For a bibliographical survey, see K. Rudolph, “Gnosis und Gnostizismus, ein Forschungsbericht,” *TRu* 36 (1971), 89–119. See also B. Pearson, “Jewish Elements in Gnosticism and the Development of Gnostic Self-Definition,” in E. P. Sanders, ed., *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, I (London: SCM Press, 1980), 151–160, and 240–245 (notes); I. Gruenwald, “Jewish Sources for the Gnostic Texts from Nag Hammadi?,” *Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, III (Jerusalem, 1977), 45–56; *idem*, “The Problem of the Anti-Gnostic Polemic in Rabbinic Literature,” in R. van den Broek and M. J. Vermaseren, eds., *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions presented to Gilles Quispel* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 171–189. Cf. a different argument in my “Aḥer: a Gnostic,” in Layton, ed., *Rediscovery*, II, 808–818. See also G. MacRae, *Some Elements of Jewish Apocalyptic and Mystical Tradition and their Relation to Gnostic Literature*, 2 vols. (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Cambridge Univ., 1966). The question of the existence of a Jewish Gnosticism is, of course, a different issue. Such an existence has been postulated by G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkavah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: Jewish Theol. Semin., 1965²). On Scholem’s problematic use of “Gnosticism,” however, see the useful warning of D. Flusser in his review of the book, *JJS* 11 (1960), 59–68, esp. 65. In this context, Flusser mentions some aspects of the theology of the Qumrān convenanters unduly set aside by Scholem. Both A. Altmann (“Gnostische Motive im rabbinischen Schrifttum,” *MGWJ* 83 [1939], 369–389) and S. Lieberman (“How Much Greek in Jewish Palestine?” Appendix, in A. Altmann, ed., *Biblical and Other Studies* [Cambridge: Harvard, 1963], 135–141) seek to unveil traces of Gnostic influence in rabbinic literature. In “Polymorphie divine et transformations d’un mythologème: l’*Apocryphon de Jean* et ses sources,” *VC* 35 (1981), 412–434, I have followed the opposite path, arguing that Jewish esoteric traditions form the background of some Gnostic themes. In any case, one should not speak of the “Jewish Gnostic Nag Hammadi Texts,” as does J. Robinson, *Protocol of the Third Colloquy of the Center for Hermeneutical Studies* (W. Wuellner, ed.; Berkeley, 1975); note also the responses of Albert Henrichs, p. 4, and of David Winston, p. 16.

⁵⁰For a recent recapitulation of his basic views on the subject, see his “Gnosis,” in M. J. Vermaseren, ed., *Die orientalischen Religionen im Römerreich* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 413–435. Quispel argues that on such basic themes as the Gott-Mensch, Wisdom, the unknown God and the demiurge, or the divine spirit in men, Gnosis is mainly dependent upon Jewish traditions directly received—probably from some Hellenistic milieus—and reinterpreted. See also his “Exechiel 1:26 in Jewish Mysticism and Gnosis,” *VC* 34 (1980), 1–13, and *idem*, “Der gnostische Anthropos und die jüdische Tradition,” *ErJb* 23 (1953), esp. 196.

disillusions and despair among Palestinian Jews after the two blows of 70 and 135 C.E. provided the background for the Gnostic movement, but no evidence could be brought to support this suggestion.⁵¹ For his part, Carsten Colpe has recently suggested—in Weberian fashion—that proto Sethian (i.e., pre-Gnostic and non-dualistic) groups originated among the frustrated intellectuals in Mesopotamian sapiential schools.⁵² The various efforts to elucidate the precise sectarian milieu out of which Gnosticism could have first emerged have not been crowned with compelling success.

One of these is an attempt to see in Samaritan circles the cradle of Gnosticism, and in particular of “Sethian” Gnosticism. Since it bears directly upon our topic, I would like to discuss this at the outset of the work. This thesis was, in fact, already propounded by the Church Fathers, who were unanimous in seeing in Simon—the “magician” of Gitta who called himself “the Great Power of God” (*Acts* 8:10), the heresiarch *par excellence*—the first false teacher who corrupted the message of Jesus. Hippolytus, indeed, attributed to Simon the *Apophysis Megalē*, the peculiar Gnostic work which he quotes at length.⁵³ The appearance of the name “Dositheos” in the *incipit* of CG VII, 5 (“The revelation of Dositheos about the three steles of Seth”) has encouraged some scholars to launch anew the thesis about the Samaritan origins of Gnosticism, or, more precisely, of “Sethian” Gnosticism. Dositheos was, to be sure, the founder of one of the major Samaritan sects in Antiquity.⁵⁴ The fact that the name “Dositheos” was fairly common in Antiquity,⁵⁵ however, should caution against a hasty identification of the “Dositheos” in *Steles Seth* with the Samaritan teacher.

Walter Beltz, in particular, has specifically argued for Dosithean origins of “Sethianism.”⁵⁶ Beltz sets out to show that it was the early Dositheans (whom he calls the Samaritan “Hauptsekte”) who first developed traditions about the special status of Seth. According to him, the Samaritans considered themselves to be sons of Seth already in pre-Christian times and were so regarded by the Jews. Beltz establishes this claim by linking

⁵¹ *Gnosticism and Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia, 1959), esp. 27–38. For a discussion of the relationships between apocalypticism (in particular Qumrān apocalypticism) and Gnosticism, see K. Rudolph, “Forschungsbericht,” *TRu* 36 (1972), 95–103, where he points out that what became later known as “the Grant hypothesis” had been already postulated by the German philosopher H. Blumenberg.

⁵² “Sethian and Zoroastrian Ages of the World,” in Layton, ed., *Rediscovery*, II, 540–552.

⁵³ *Elenchos* 6.9,3–18,7 (136–145 Wendland). According to J. M. A. Salles-Dabadie, the attribution of the *Apophysis Megalē* to Simon is plausible; see his *Recherches sur Simon le Mage*, I (Cahiers RB 10; Paris: Gabalda, 1969), 141–143.

⁵⁴ See S. J. Isser, *The Dositheans: A Samaritan Sect in Late Antiquity* (Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity 17; Leiden: Brill, 1976).

⁵⁵ See PW, V, 1605–1609, s.v. “Dositheos,” where eleven different occurrences are mentioned.

⁵⁶ “Samaritanertum und Gnosis,” in K.-W. Tröger, ed., *Gnosis und Neues Testament: Studien aus Religionswissenschaft und Theologie* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlaganstalt, 1973), 89–95. Schenke expressed the same views in “Das sethianische System,” but later retracted them. For a recent *Forschungsbericht* on the problem of Samaritanism and Gnosticism, see R. Pummer, “The Present State of Samaritan Studies, II,” *JSS* 22 (1977), 27–33.

the Samaritan tradition according to which Damascus was built by Seth (*Asatir* II.3) to the mention in the Essene *Damascus Document* (VIII, 18b–21) of the sons of Seth who would be smashed by the scepter of Israel.⁵⁷ John Bowman considers the Samaritan biblical paraphrasis called the *Asatir* to be “without any doubt an old Dosithean work.”⁵⁸ Beltz accepts this identification and makes use of the *Asatir*’s concept of the “pure chain” of the “children of light” extending from Seth to Moses. From this Beltz argues that the early Samaritans (for him, mainly Dositheans) saw Seth, created in God’s image, as their father. In later texts dependent upon the *Asatir*, this “pure chain” relates the *Taheb* of the Last Days (“he who comes back”) and Moses to Adam and Seth. This *Taheb* is called “the crown of the sons of Seth,” as opposed to “the children of darkness,” i.e., the sons of Cain.⁵⁹ Although Beltz notes that Seth does not play an important role in other Samaritan works such as the *Memar Marqah*, he contends that this indicates a reaction by Samaritan orthodoxy against the views of the Dositheans, for whom Seth was “the hero of a cultic legend.”⁶⁰ He claims that to the Sethian four-part division of history (which he rightly identifies as such) may be related the coming of the *Taheb* in the third world-period, and that the great catastrophes of biblical history, the flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, were exegeted by the Samaritans—who considered themselves the true Israel—as punishments visited upon unbelievers, first and foremost the Jews. Beltz concludes that the Dositheans carried on into Gnosticism the traditions they had developed about the special role of Seth. As a hypothesis, he adds that Gnosticism could have emerged, among the Dositheans, from a clear distinction between the creative and the legal functions of God.⁶¹

Beltz’s argument, however, is marred by several flaws: (1) He dismisses all the non-Samaritan sources in which Seth plays a significant role and makes the unwarranted assumption that Seth in such a role implies almost necessarily a passage to Sethian Gnosticism. We will see in the following chapters that Seth was important already in very early (indeed pre-Dosithean) Jewish traditions. (2) He does not identify the passage in the *Damascus Document* upon which he builds his argument as a quotation from Num 24:17 and therefore fails to refer to the Essene *Sitz im Leben*. (3) He implausibly speaks of pre-Christian Dositheans. (4) He advocates a very early date for the *Asatir* (250 C.E., in Egypt!). In this he follows Moses Gaster, the first editor of the work.⁶²

⁵⁷“Samaritanertum und Gnosis,” 91.

⁵⁸*Samaritanische Probleme: Studien zum Verhältnis von Samaritanertum, Judentum und Urchristentum* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1967), 51.

⁵⁹These texts (*Maulid al-Nashi*, *Malef*, *Molad Moshe*) are cited by A. F. J. Klijn, *Seth in Jewish, Christian and Gnostic Literature* (NovTSuppl 46; Leiden: Brill, 1977), 30–31.

⁶⁰“Samaritanertum und Gnosis,” 90 and n. 6.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 95.

⁶²*The Asatir: The Samaritan Book of the “Secrets of Moses”* (London, 1927), see 160. The same opinion is expressed in J. MacDonald, ed., *Memar Marqah; the teachings of Marqah*, I (BZAW 84; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1963), XXI.

Yet Zeev Ben-Hayyim, who has produced a new edition of the *Asatir*,⁶³ while admitting that some of its traditions may be much earlier, thinks that both language and contents point to the 10th century or thereabouts, a time when Aramaic had been superseded by Arabic.⁶⁴ Since the *Memar Marqah*, considered by Beltz to have been redacted later than the *Asatir*, was in fact written at an earlier date and does not preserve traditions about a special role of Seth, Beltz's main argument does not stand. Indeed Klijn, who devotes a few paragraphs to the scant evidence on Seth in Samaritan literature,⁶⁵ is unable to reach any positive conclusions about the significance of this material for the Gnostic Seth. Last but not least, Isser's study uncovered no traces, in any of the sources, of a special role for Seth or for any idea that could have been directly used and transformed by the Sethian Gnostics. These negative conclusions corroborate Edwin Yamauchi's summary of earlier research: "There is no indication that Dositheus himself was a Gnostic."⁶⁶ They do not, of course, preclude finding any connections between Gnostic and Samaritan traditions—but this remains a task for the future.

This inquiry will first provide an analysis of some Gnostic solutions to the crucial question *unde malum?* in the myths of the *Urzeit*. We shall recognize the major role played by the Gnostic interpretation of the Fallen Angels (Gen 6:1–4). Various aspects of Gnostic *Heilsgeschichte* will then be studied. The periodization of history and meta-history will be analyzed mainly through the *Apocalypse of Adam* and in particular its hymnic section, which I venture to call the *Hymn of the Child*. Through this analysis, new conclusions about the relationship between *Apoc. Adam* and Christianity will be reached. The figure of "the mysterious Seth," as Nock calls him, has been thoroughly investigated in recent years, especially by Klijn.⁶⁷ There will be no attempt to present, even in summary form, what

⁶³ *Tarbiz* 14 (1943), 104–125, 147–190; *ibid.*, 45 (1944), 71–87.

⁶⁴ See also Pummer, "The Present State of Samaritan Studies," 30. Since the *Asatir* belongs to the Moslem period, it should be noted that the concept of the "pure chain" also appears in Islamic context. According to Muslim writers the "light of Muhammad" was transmitted from Adam to the Prophet in the seed of pure men and carried in wombs of pure women. Mas'ūdī (*Les Prairies d'Or*, I, 67–70) describes the transmission of the light to the pure Eve when she conceives Seth, and then from Eve to him. On the Shi'ite concept of the *Nūr Muḥammad*, which may have Gnostic origins, see I. Goldziher, "Neuplatonische und gnostische Elemente in Hadit," *ZA* 22 (1909), 329ff., and U. Rubin, "Pre-existence and Light: Aspects of the Concept of Nur Muhammad," *Israel Oriental Studies* 5 (1975), 62–119. The relationship between these two "chains," however, remains unclear; it may have been indirect.

⁶⁵ *Seth*, 29–32.

⁶⁶ *Pre-Christian Gnosticism: A Survey of the Proposed Evidence* (London: Tyndale, 1973), 57.

⁶⁷ *Seth*. For the Latin medieval legends, see E. C. Quinn, *The Quest of Seth for the Oil of Life* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1962). In the past, there have been attempts to relate the Gnostic Seth to the Egyptian God Typhon-Seth, but see B. A. Pearson, "The Egyptian Seth and the Gnostic Seth," in P. J. Achtemeier, ed., *SBL, 1977 Seminar Papers* (Missoula: Scholars, 1977), 25–44, which deals a blow to this speculation. To Pearson's bibliography, add A. Procopé-Walter, "IAO und SET (Zu den Figurae Magicae in den Zauberpapyri)," *ARW*

has been said elsewhere. Only those few aspects where I feel I can contribute some precision will be dealt with here. Certain trends in Jewish and Christian exegesis considered the "Sons of God" of Genesis 6 to be the "Sons of Seth." The investigation of this puzzling interpretation can shed new light on the origins of Gnostic mythology. Finally, the repercussions of the Gnostic sexual myths analyzed in the first part of this work will be examined.

The study of Gnostic myths needs to be both genetic and structural. As a radical reinterpretation of Jewish conceptions, Gnosis might indeed be compared to Christianity; both may be called Jewish heresies. In Christianity, the transformation of religious experience developed from the singling out of some Jewish values and elements. In Gnosticism, the same values and elements are not simply singled out, but inverted. Yet this inversion, it would appear, did not occur at once; rather, it was the result of a gradual process, a process which may sometimes be unveiled.

PART I

**FROM ORIGIN OF EVIL
TO ORIGIN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**

CHAPTER ONE

UNDE MALUM: FROM APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE TO Gnostic MYTH

At the root of the Gnostic rejection of the material world and its creator lies an obsessive preoccupation with the problem of evil. On this issue, the Gnostic texts fully confirm the testimony of the Church Fathers. According to Eusebius, for instance, the problem of evil was "so much traversed by the heretics,"¹ while Tertullian recorded that heretics, just like the philosophers, constantly asked the same questions: *unde malum et quare?* and *unde homo et quomodo?*² The same point was also made by Epiphanius, among others.³ To be sure, preoccupation with the problem of evil did not originate with Gnosticism. The Greek philosophers had long devoted considerable attention to the nature and source of evil. In the Academy, in particular, the close links between evil and matter were emphasized. In that sense, indeed, one can agree with A. D. Nock's dictum that Gnosticism is a "Platonism run wild." The Gnostic investigation of the problem of evil clearly reflects a Platonic heritage. Yet, as important as this heritage may be, it apparently did not give rise to Gnostic mythology, but rather influenced its literary expression or provided philosophical and conceptual background.⁴

It is notoriously difficult to determine the origins of a phenomenon as syncretistic as Gnosticism; nonetheless, one must attempt to single out and analyze the individual elements which lie at the root of Gnostic mythology. Thus Hans Jonas tried to identify two kinds of Gnostic dualism. For the first, which he calls "Iranian" and which is represented chiefly by the Mandaean and Manichaean writings, the opposition of the realms of evil and good is eternal; the cosmic process was set into motion by the fortuitous encounter of these two realms. In the other type of Gnosticism, which he calls "Syro-Egyptian" and to which most of the Nag Hammadi texts and the systems described by the Church Fathers belong,

¹*Hist. Eccl.* 5.27.

²*De Praescr. Haer.* 7.5; see also *Adv. Marc.* 1.2 (on Marcion and many other heretics).

³*Pan.* 24.6.1 (on Basilides). H.-C. Puech has written a fine phenomenological treatment of the theme, *En quête de la gnose* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), I, 201ff. and p. 197 for further references.

⁴The scope and the precise nature of the Platonic influence on Gnostic thought is bound to become clearer after the publication of all Nag Hammadi codices. See, for instance, C. Elsas, *Neuplatonische und gnostische Weltablehnung in der Schule Plotins* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1975) and B. Pearson, "The Tractate Marsanes (NHC X) and the Platonic Tradition," in B. Aland, ed., *Gnosis*, 373-384.

the forces of evil and darkness as well as cosmogony both stem from a fall which happened in the divine realm, a "tragic split" in the Deity.⁵ This is not the place to offer a detailed criticism of Jonas's taxonomy. Let us only remark that rather than speaking of two types of Gnosticism, it might be possible to discern some patterns of evolution or even transformation. Such patterns would adequately account for the different emphases placed on the emergence of evil or its established existence. Moreover, the basic polarity in Gnostic texts is not between two hypostasized good and evil principles (as the "Iranist" school contended), but between the world and the spiritual realm of the higher God.⁶

More than Platonic tradition, Jewish apocalyptic and pseudepigraphic literature seems to provide a rather precisely defined literary milieu against which the emergence of the Gnostic mythological confrontation of evil may be better understood. Some rather striking similarities between Jewish apocalyptic thought and Gnostic thought have already been noted. In particular, C. A. Keller, pointing to several close literary parallels, has drawn conclusions about the similar sectarian milieus in which these two bodies of literature find their *Sitz im Leben*.⁷ According to Keller, the deep seated frustrations in these milieus engendered radical "responses to the world" and this explains the emphasis put upon the problem of evil.

The following pages, however, will not attempt to investigate the sociological background of Gnostic mythology. Rather, my analysis will focus on some of the literary expressions of the myths of evil. It is a well-known fact that intertestamental literature already represents a rather far-reaching process of remythologization. It is even possible that this trend lies behind the ambivalent rabbinic attitude towards many apocryphal and pseudepigraphic writings. Apocalyptic literature based its reflections on the origin of evil upon two biblical myths of the *Urzeit*: the sin of Adam and Eve, and the descent of the "Sons of God" from their heavenly abode and their copulation with the daughters of men (Gen 6:1-4). It is the latter myth which especially attracted the apocalyptic writers, and through which they confronted the problem of evil. Whether the myth was originally Persian, as Bousset argues, or a Middle Eastern (Ugaritic?) version of the Greek myth of the Titans, its elusive ultimate origin is

⁵H. Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, I (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1939), 256-257, and esp. 328-331.

⁶For a succinct discussion of this problem see K. Rudolph, *Die Gnosis, Wesen und Geschichte einer spätantiken Religion* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 73. However, I cannot agree with Rudolph when he says that the new evidence from Nag Hammadi dispels the theory of the Iranian origins on this basis. Indeed, it has now been shown that even the dualism of Sassanian and of Gathic Zoroastrianism is qualified. In the Iranian sources, the "Wise Lord" remains ontologically superior and chronologically prior to the evil principle. See S. Shaked, "Some Notes on Ahreman, the Evil Spirit, and his Creation," in *Studies in Mysticism and Religion presented to Gershom G. Scholem* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967), 227-234, esp. 232. See also D. Winston's "Response," in W. Wuellner, ed., *Jewish Gnostic Nag Hammadi Texts*, 17.

⁷"Das Problem des Bösen in Apokalyptik und Gnostik," in M. Krause, ed., *Gnosis and Gnosticism* (NHS 8; Leiden: Brill, 1977), 70-90.

beyond the scope of this work.⁸ What I shall try to show is that a radical transformation of this myth forms the basis of the Gnostic mythological consciousness of evil. In the course of the argument, it will become clear that the two major elements described by Jonas as belonging to the two “types” of Gnosticism—the encounter between the two realms and the fall from the divine realm—are both present in the Gnostic transformation of the myth of the Fallen Angels.

At this point, it might be useful to present a brief review of some Jewish and Christian sources. These various versions of the myth provide the background for the Gnostic reinterpretation and permit an appreciation of its specificity. Moreover, a preliminary examination of apocryphal, rabbinic and patristic treatments of the myth of the Fallen Angels will highlight the various ways in which this myth was linked to that of Adam’s sin and fall; this link occurs in the Gnostic traditions as well. Already in its brief and cryptic biblical version, the myth is essentially etiological: it purports to account for the moral depravity of mankind. From the union of the Sons of God and the daughters of men were born the “giants,” the “mighty men” (*gibborīm*), who brought evil upon the whole earth. Indeed the biblical text proceeds to describe the corruption of human ways and God’s decision to send the flood. The same myth is elaborated upon in various ways in apocryphal literature. Nowhere is the slightest doubt cast upon the identity of the Sons of God, the *neḫilīm*: they are angels of the Lord.⁹

Apocryphal Literature

In the Ethiopic *Book of Enoch*, chapters 6–10 are devoted to the story of the sin committed by the Sons of God (or angels) and their subsequent punishment. These chapters are part of the so-called *Book of Watchers* [i.e. angels], which includes chapters 1–36 of *1 Enoch*, and seems to have been written in Palestine towards the middle of the 3rd century B.C.E.¹⁰ In

⁸See W. Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums in neutestamentlichen Zeitalter* (Berlin: Reuther & Richard, 1903), 382, 560. For a discussion of various versions of the myth of the Titans in Greek mythology and at Ugarit, see F. Dexinger, *Sturz der Göttersöhne oder Engel vor der Sintflut?* (Wiener Beiträge zur Theologie 13; Vienna: Herder, 1966), 25–87, and P. Grelot, “La légende d’Hénoch dans les apocryphes et dans la Bible: origine et signification,” *RSR* 46 (1958), 1–26, 181–210.

⁹This identification, which implies a very complex exegetical tradition, must be older than its first datable appearances. See P. Alexander, “The *Targumim* and Early Exegesis of ‘Sons of God’ in Genesis 6,” *JJS* 23 (1972), 60–61.

¹⁰J. T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch, Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4*, with the collaboration of Matthew Black (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 28. This title, given to the first 36 chapters of *1 Enoch*, is derived from the form of the quotation in Syncellus’s *Chronography*: ἐκ τοῦ πρώτου βιβλίου (or: λόγου) Ἐνώχ περὶ τῶν ἐγγρηγόρων (Syncellus, *Chronographia* ed. W. Dindorf; CSHB; Bonn: Weber, 1829), 20ff.; also Milik, *Enoch*, 22–23. On the use of ἐγγρηγορος in Greek translations of the Bible, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave I; A Commentary* (BibOr 18A; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1971), 80. For a detailed survey of the theme in apocryphal literature, see also Deborah Dimant, “The Fallen Angels” in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphic

the days of Jared (Mahalalel's son and Enoch's father in the Sethite genealogy of Genesis 5), 200 angels descended from their heavenly abode to Mount Hermon, so named "because they had sworn and bound themselves by mutual imprecations upon it."¹¹ Their leader is said to have been Šemiḥazah,¹² but in the description of his evil deeds, he is in fact associated with 'Asa'el.¹³

The purpose of the angels' errand seems to have been twofold. On the one hand it is clearly stated that they came down upon earth to copulate with the daughters of men:

And the angels, the children of heaven, saw and lusted after them [i.e., the daughters of men] and said to one another: "Come, let us choose wives among the children of men and beget us children. . . ." (*1 Enoch* 6:1–2)

Yet this already seems to be a variant of an earlier form of the myth, which interpreted the sexual intercourse as secondary to the original civilizing mission of the angels. It seems, indeed, that in the original myth, the heavenly figures bringing knowledge and culture to humans were seen as "héros civilisateurs" rather than as negative figures. But we do not know how this early version evolved into a "negative" myth identifying the origin of civilization with that of evil.¹⁴ Chapter 8 consists entirely of a list of the crafts and sciences the angels taught the race of men:

And 'Asa'el taught men to make swords, and knives, and shields,

Books Related to them (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Hebrew University, 1974 [Hebrew]).

¹¹*1 Enoch* 6:6. Unless otherwise stated, apocryphal literature is quoted according to the translations provided in R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913). When the author takes Jared to come from *yrd*, to go down, and Hermon to come from *hym*, to swear, he is in fact playing upon the Hebrew roots of the proper names. The story of the angels coming to the earth, however, was itself traditional (Genesis 6).

¹²In Charles's translation from the Ethiopic, the names of the angels' leaders are given as Semjaza and Azazel. Yet the Qumrān fragments reveal that their original names were Šemiḥazah and 'Asa'el. The identification of 'Asa'el with the biblical Azazel is not original. How 'Asa'el first became associated with Šemiḥazah remains unclear: "And Šemiḥazah, who was their leader . . ." (*1 Enoch* 6:3); "And Šemiḥazah, to whom Thou hast given authority to bear rule over his associates" (*1 Enoch* 9:7).

¹³*1 Enoch* 8:1: "And 'Asa'el taught men to make swords . . ."; 9:6: "Thou seest what 'Asa'el hath done, who hath taught all unrighteousness on earth . . ."; 10:8: "And the whole earth has been corrupted through the works that were taught by 'Asa'el: to him ascribe all sin."

¹⁴This "negative" version is very widespread and appears in completely unrelated cultures. See Milik, *Enoch*, 28–29. On the problems of the mythical background of the *Book of Giants* and of the contamination of traditions, see now P. D. Hanson, "Rebellion in Heaven, Azazel and Euhemeristic Heroes in *1 Enoch* 6–11," *JBL* 96 (1977), 195–233, and G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "Apocalypse and Myth in *1 Enoch* 6–11," *JBL* 96 (1977), 383–405. These two detailed studies attempt to determine different stages in the accretion of the various elements in the Šemiḥazah story. Nickelsburg's article includes a brief survey of the possible influences from Greek mythology (p. 395–397).

and breastplates, and made known to them the metals (of the earth) and the art of working them, and bracelets, and ornaments, and the use of antimony, and the beautifying of the eyelids, and all kinds of costly stones, and all colouring tinctures. And there arose much godlessness, and they committed fornication, and they were led astray, and became corrupt in all their ways. . . .

Other angels taught enchantments, "root-cutting," astrology, knowledge of the clouds, the signs of the sun, and the course of the moon. As a result of the copulation between the angels and the women were born the giants,

who brought catastrophe upon the whole earth. They consumed all the acquisitions of men. And when men could no longer sustain them, the giants turned against them and devoured mankind. And they began to sin against birds, and beasts and reptiles, and fish, and to devour one another's flesh, and drink the blood. Then the earth laid accusation against the lawless ones. (*1 Enoch* 7:3–6)

Thus, various sins of the angels may be distinguished (*1 Enoch* 9:8–10):

- (1) They "defiled themselves" by sleeping with the women.
- (2) "They revealed to them all kinds of sins."
- (3) And finally, they begat the giants, through whom "the whole earth has . . . been filled with blood and unrighteousness."

Chapter 10 relates their punishment. God sent his four archangels, Michael, Uriel, Raphael and Gabriel,¹⁵ who had appealed to him on behalf of the souls of men (9:1), and ordered them to bind the sinful angels "hand and foot" and to cast them "into the darkness" or "in the valley of the earth" (= the underworld?) until the day of the great judgment, when "they shall be led off to the abyss of fire." Raphael was sent to bind 'Asa'el, while Michael was ordered to bind Šemiḥazah and his associates (*1 Enoch* 10:4, 11). Later in the text, Enoch saw in a dream, "a place chaotic and horrible. And there . . . seven stars of the heaven bound together in it" (21:3–4). Uriel revealed to him that those stars were in fact the angels "who have transgressed the commandment of the Lord." He then showed Enoch a place more horrible still, "the prison of the angels," where "they will be imprisoned for ever" (21:10).¹⁶

The same themes are reflected in other parts of the Enochic corpus, as well as in other apocryphal texts. The identification of the stars with the Fallen Angels, for instance, is stated explicitly in *1 Enoch* 88:1–3, when one of the four archangels

¹⁵These archangels also appear in other strata of apocalyptic literature, e.g. *1 Enoch* 40:1–41:2, where the four (with Uriel replaced by Phanuel) are said to be "different from those who sleep not" (i.e., the Watchers). Cf. *Apoc. Mos.* 40:1–2.

¹⁶According to Charles (note *ad loc.*), this apparently refers to the final prison of the angels.

seized that first star which had fallen from the heaven, and bound it hand and foot and cast it into an abyss . . . and gathered and took all the great stars whose privy members were like those of horses, and bound them all hand and foot, and cast them in an abyss of the earth.¹⁷

Thus the star which “fell from heaven, and . . . arose and ate and pastured amongst those oxen” is clearly the leader of the angels (*1 Enoch* 86:1). The portrayal of the sinful angels as stars has some bearing upon our investigation. We shall see in the course of this work how the “star” metaphor will be used subsequently in a seemingly very different context.

The *Book of Watchers* was already known to the author of *Jubilees*¹⁸ (written around 130 B.C.E.). There, we find an interesting development of the theme of the angels’ descent. The original goal of their errand is described in terms indicating a version of the myth typologically earlier than that preserved in the *Book of Watchers*.¹⁹

For in [Jared’s] days the angels of the Lord descended on the earth, those who are named the watchers, that they should instruct the children of men, and that they should do judgment and uprightness on the earth. (*Jub.* 4:15)

The story of the angels, of their copulation with the daughters of men, of the evil doings of their progeny, and of their punishment is told in chapters 4–7. Some of the details differ from the Ethiopic version of *Enoch*, but the story remains basically the same.²⁰ In addition to the *neṣilīm* and *gibborīm* as sons of *benei ’elohīm* in Genesis 6, there is a third class of quasi-celestial beings: “The Giants, the Nāpîl and the Eljô” (*Jub.* 7:22), or rather the *neṣilīm* and the *eliud*, as preserved in Syncellus’ Greek version of *1 Enoch*.²¹

¹⁷For the judgment of the Fallen Angels, see *1 Enoch* 55:3–56:4, 90:20–27. In 103:7, this abyss, the place of their punishment, is identified as She’ol. Cf. *Jub.* 7:29, and *1 Enoch* 18:14, where the prison of the stars (= angels) is located at “the end of heaven and earth.”

¹⁸Charles, *Pseudepigrapha*, 170, referring to his own edition of the *Book of Jubilees* (p. LXIX).

¹⁹Milik, *Enoch*, 29.

²⁰Charles has clearly shown the parallelism of the two versions in his *Pseudepigrapha*, 176–177, where he cites relevant passages from the two texts in parallel columns. A very similar account of the story appears in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* 8:11–15; see below, p. 66.

²¹*Chronographia*, 21. Eljô might be a truncated form of *’elyōn* (cf. Dan 7:17). For the puzzling etymology of *neṣilīm*, see Fitzmyer, *Genesis Apocryphon*, 81: “Since *npl* is found in Ps 58:9 in the sense of ‘miscarriage,’ the word *Nephilim* has been explained as ‘superhuman beings emerging from miscarriages’ (*Gen. R.* 26.7). In the Targum of Isaiah on 13.10 (ed. J. F. Stenning, 45) we find the word used to designate constellations or some sort of heavenly bodies, perhaps meteors.” As to the meaning of the word in *Tg. Isa.*, it might explain the identification of the Fallen Angels with stars in *1 Enoch* 21, as well as in the dream book. See also *Isa* 14:12: “How you fell (*naṣalta*) from heaven . . .” Regarding “miscarriage,” one might remark that Kâsdejâ, one of the fallen angels, teaches ways of practicing abortions: “this is how he showed the children of men all the wicked smittings of spirits and

A new version of the myth appears in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, a text written around the beginning of the Christian era. *The Testament of Reuben* raised a theological problem: how could spiritual beings, such as angels of God, have sexual relations with women? This problem was resolved by placing the primary guilt (lust) upon the women:

For thus they allured the watchers who were before the Flood; for as these continually beheld them, they lusted after them; and they conceived the act in their mind; for they changed themselves into the shape of men, and appeared to them when they were with their husbands. And the women, lusting in their minds after their forms, gave birth to giants, for the Watchers appeared to them as reaching even unto heaven. (*T. Reub.* 5:6–7)²²

An important, albeit indirect, reference to the myth occurs in the *Genesis Apocryphon* found at Qumrān. In this text, Lamech was so impressed by the lofty appearance of his newborn son, Noah, that he approached Batenosh, his wife, with the suspicion that the child was not his but rather begotten by the Fallen Angels.

So when I thought in my mind that the conception was due to the Watchers or that it was due to the Holy Ones, or to the Nephilim . . . and my mind wavered because of the child. Then I, Lamech, became frightened, and I went to Bitenosh, my wife, and said . . . (1 QapGen II, 1–3)

It is interesting to note that both the Watchers and their sons, the *neḫilīm* (as well as the “Holy Ones”), beget children from women. We shall see in Part III how the functions and ultimately the figures of the Watchers and their offspring merged in the Manichaean texts.

Batenosh answered Lamech’s doubts:

I swear to you by the great Holy One, by the king of the heavens, that this seed is from you; from you is this conception, and from you the planting of (this fruit . . .) and not from any stranger, nor from any of the Watchers, nor from any of the sons of heaven . . . (1 QapGen II, 14–16)²³

This passage develops a theme already present in the “Noachite fragment” of *1 Enoch*. In chapter 106, the anxious Lamech begged his father Methuselah to ask his own father, Enoch, about the origin of the newborn

demons, and the smitings of the embryo in the womb, that it may pass away . . .” (*1 Enoch* 69:12).

²²Same interpretation in *T. Naph.* 3:5.

²³Quotations are according to Fitzmyer’s translation (*Genesis Apocryphon*, 51–55). Fitzmyer does not say on what grounds he vocalizes the name of Lamech’s wife Bitenosh (rather than Batenosh). He dates the work as “probably from the first century B.C.” See also another mention of the Watchers’ fall in Ch. Rabin, ed., *The Zadokite Documents*, I (Oxford: Clarendon, 1954), 8–9: וְנִסְּלוּ עִירֵי שָׁמַיִם.

Noah. The appearance of the child was so exceptional that Lamech feared lest he was a child of one of the Fallen Angels, who produced "on the earth giants not according to the spirit, but according to the flesh."²⁴

In some later texts, traditions about the angels who descended from heaven and about the fall of Satan and of his host became mixed and were integrated into a new synthesis. It might be due to a later confusion between these two myths that the descent of the angels was presented in later literature as a fall, and that Satan was even connected to the angels of Genesis 6. In the later recension of the Slavonic *Secrets of Enoch* (18:3–4), the leader of the Fallen Angels became *Satanail*.

These are the Grigori, who with their prince Satanail rejected the Lord of Light, and after them are those who are held in great darkness on the second heaven, and three of them went down on to the earth from the Lord's throne, to the place Ermon.²⁵

As Mathias Delcor has aptly remarked in his thorough study of the etiological function of the myth in apocalyptic literature,²⁶ the *Books of Adam and Eve* provide an ingenious combination (unique in apocryphal literature) of the themes of the fall of Satan and the fall of the angels, and of both with the fall of Adam. Satan was banished—and fell from heaven, with his host of angels—because he did not want to worship Adam; and he himself then made Adam sin.²⁷ Note that here the two biblical myths about the origin of evil are linked, one becoming the consequence of the other.

In the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, the sin of the angels is mentioned only indirectly. The text presents a structural inversion of the positions of Abraham, whose place is in heaven, and Azazel, who now belongs to earth, since "he has made it the dwelling-place of his impurity," probably an allusion to the descent of the angels (chap. 13). In chapter 23, the

²⁴ *I Enoch* 106:1. In his commentary to 1QapGen, Fitzmyer writes (p. 81): "In the text which has been preserved we are not told why Lamech was so disturbed, but the reason . . . was probably something like the extraordinary things which the infant does in *Enoch* 106." This is not a completely satisfactory explanation, however. In *I Enoch* (e.g., chap. 65) Noah is saved from the flood because he is the only one on earth who did not learn "all the secrets of the angels" (v 6), i.e., sorcery, witchcraft, and similar arts. For the tradition adopted by the author of 1QapGen, Noah was unlike other men in his generation in that he was the son of his mother's husband—and not of one of the angels. F. Rosenthal's interpretation (*JNES* 18 [1959], 83), as quoted by Fitzmyer (pp. 81–82), is probably closer to the truth: ". . . the frightening possibility that Noah might not be his child. This, of course, would have tainted all Israel with the intolerable blemish of illegitimacy." We shall come back to Batenosh, Noah's mother, later.

²⁵ The Grigori obviously are the *egrēgoroi* ('*irīn*): Watchers. This source, called A by Charles, is presented by A. Vaillant as "additions du réviseur"; see his edition and translation, *Le livre des secrets d'Hénoch* (Textes publiés par l'Institut d'Etudes Slaves 4; Paris, 1952), 94–95.

²⁶ "Le mythe de la chute des anges et de l'origine des géants comme explication du mal dans le monde dans l'apocalyptique juive; Histoire des Traditions," *RHR* 190 (1976), 48.

²⁷ *Adam and Eve*, 12–17, esp. 14:3, 16:1.

same Azazel is said to stand between Adam and Eve in Paradise. He is described as a beast with a snake's body, human members, and wings, standing behind the tree. That is to say, he plays the role attributed in rabbinic literature to Sammael (*Pirke R. El.* 13). Here too, therefore, there seems to be a connection between Satan and the leader of the sinful angels.²⁸

In a different way, the Syriac *Apocalypse of Baruch* also insists upon the link between the sin of the angels and the first generation: "For he [man] became a danger to his own soul: even to the angels he became a danger." It is the women who seduced the angels (and not vice versa, as in the original tradition attested by the *Book of Watchers*). Succumbing to temptation, the angels lost the freedom with which they had been created (2 *Apoc. Bar.* 56.10–14). It must be pointed out that in this context, the sin of the angels is paralleled to the transgression of Adam (2 *Apoc. Bar.* 56.5).²⁹ It is not conceived of as an accident happening early in the history of mankind, rather it is projected back to the anthropogenic process.

Finally, the punishment of the sinful angels is mentioned twice—although not elaborated upon—in the New Testament. One of the references is Jude 6:

And the angels that did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling have been kept by him in eternal chains in the nether gloom until the judgment of the great day.

A similar idea is expressed in 2 Pet 2:4 (the whole document is dependent upon Jude).³⁰

Rabbinic Texts

Despite the development of angelology in apocalyptic literature—or rather, as a reaction to this trend—one can detect in rabbinic texts, side by side with many an affirmation of the importance of angels, a systematic fight against angelology.³¹ The downgrading of the angels' role is particularly apparent in the exegesis of Gen 6:1–4. As will be seen in another

²⁸See G. N. Bonwetsch, trans., *Die Apokalypse Abrahams* (Studien zur Geschichte der Theologie und der Kirche I; Leipzig: Deichert [Böhme], 1897), 24, 33. In this text Azazel plays the role of Eve's seducer in paradise, a role which is attributed to Sammael in other Jewish texts. In *Pirke R. El.*, for instance, he is described as "riding the serpent"; see E. Urbach, *The Sages, Their Concepts and Beliefs* (Eng. trans.; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1975), I, 167–170, and corresponding notes in vol. II.

²⁹For a short discussion of the problem of the Fallen Angels in 2 *Apoc. Bar.*, see P. Bogaert, ed. and trans., *Apocalypse de Baruch*, II (SC 145; Paris: Cerf, 1969), 109.

³⁰As Fitzmyer convincingly argues, 1 Cor 11:9–10 does not seem to refer to the Fallen Angels of Genesis 6; see his "A Feature of Qumran Angelology and the Angels of 1 Cor 11:10," *NTS* 4 (1957–58), 48–58, repr. in his *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (Missoula: Scholars, 1974), 187–204.

³¹E.g., A. Marmorstein, "Angeles et hommes dans l'Aggada," *REJ* 84 (1927), 37–50; Urbach, *The Sages*, chap. 8: "The Celestial Retinue" (text in vol. I, notes in vol. II).

chapter, the Rabbis made special efforts to challenge the identification of the *benei 'elohim* as angels; yet some texts do consider them as Fallen Angels.³²

The *Targum Yerušalmi* (*Pseudo-Jonathan*) on Gen 6:4 already reads, "Shemhazai and Azael, those who fell (נפלו) from heaven" (instead of linking their descent to Jared's name, as does the *Book of Watchers*).

A remarkable exegesis of Gen 6:1–4 occurs in *Pirque Rabbi Eliezer*, a midrashic work probably redacted in the early days of the Ummayyad dynasty, but which often records much earlier traditions. In chapter 22, it is said in the name of Rabbi (2nd century, Palestinian), that

the angels who fell from their place of holiness in heaven saw the [feminine] offspring of Cain, with their genitals exposed and their eyes painted like prostitutes; they were led astray by them, and took wives from among them.³³

R. Joshua added that angels have bodies of fire,³⁴ but that in order to sin with the Cainite women, they had to put on bodies of flesh. The children of these unions were the giants (הענקים),³⁵ who were prone to various crimes, including bloody ones (146 Higger). According to R. Levi, these giants were born "like reptiles, six by six." Like their fathers, they too committed sexual sins; in order to prevent mankind from growing, they adopted onanistic practices, as they themselves told Noah (146 Higger).³⁶

³²On the problem of the Fallen Angels in rabbinic literature, see M. Grünbaum, "Beiträge zur vergleichenden Mythologie aus der Agada," *ZDMG* 3 (1877), 224–235, 243–244; *idem*, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Sprach- und Sagenkunde* (ed. F. Perles; Berlin: Calvary, 1901), 59–61, 63–66, 70–75, 442–448; B. Heller, "La chute des anges," *REJ* 60 (1910), 202–212; L. Jung, "Fallen Angels in Jewish, Christian and Mohammedan Literature, A Study in Comparative Folklore," *JQR* 15 (1924–25), 467–502; 16 (1925–26), 45–88, 171–205, 287–336; B. J. Bamberger, *Fallen Angels* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1952); and especially Alexander, "Early Exegesis of 'Sons of God.'" Ginzberg states that traces of the myth occur "in the non-authoritative writings of the synagogue" (*The Legends of the Jews*, V [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1925], 156, n. 57). This language, however, is somewhat misleading, since it would suggest a clear-cut distinction, alien to rabbinic Judaism, between orthodox and heterodox views, expressed respectively in authoritative and non-authoritative writings. Moreover, Ginzberg himself remarks that the dependence of some of those "non-authoritative" texts upon the Talmud is "obvious" (*ibid.*, 170). Ginzberg refers here to a short text known, in a few slightly different medieval recensions, as the *Midrash of Shemhazai and Azael*. We shall deal with this work in a later section, since the myth does not appear there as a direct exegesis of Gen 6:1–4.

³³This appalling description of the deeds of the Cainites is also given by R. Meir (*Horeb* 9, 145–148 Higger). See G. Friedlander's translation (repr. ed., New York: Hermon, 1965), 158–163.

³⁴Cf. Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* VIII.12–13, paraphrased below.

³⁵The new name given to the giants of Gen 6:1–4 shows a contamination of other (biblical) legends about giants, for instance the *benei 'anaqim* of Deut 1:28. *γίγας* is the only term used by the LXX to translate *gibbōr*, *neṣilim*, and *'anaq*.

³⁶The accusation of sexual sins made against the giants also appears in *Gen. Rab.* 27.4, J. Theodor, ed. (Berlin: Itzkowsky, 1903), 253–254, where the name *neṣilim* is exegeted as a reminder of the numerous aborted fetuses issued from their dissolute sexual practices:

אמר ר' לאור בשם ר' שמעון . . . נפילים שהפילו את העולם ונפלו מן העולם ושפלאו

The *Testament of Reuben*, like *Pirke Rabbi Eliezer*, offers a version of the myth which accuses both the angels and the women of being sinners. However, this is apparently the only text to specifically identify the women who attracted the angels as Cainites. Since the beginning of chapter 22 insists upon this crucial distinction, in all generations, between Sethites and Cainites, and since R. Joshua also mentioned the fact that the children of Israel were called Sons of God (147 Higger), this may well be a later attempt to harmonize two exegetical traditions, the one identifying the "Sons of God" with angels and the "daughters of men" with women, and the other identifying the former with a category of "good" men (Sethites) and the latter with "evil" women, i.e., Cainites.

The passage in Genesis 6 remained puzzling for later Jewish exegesis as well. An Oxford MS. of *Agadat Berešit* mentions that the Sons of God were 'Uzza and 'Uz'el (both clearly derived from Azazel), who came down to earth from their place in the firmament. However, the same text subsequently identifies them as "sons of Cain," whereas earlier in the text, they were said to be not angels, but "the generation which sank low."³⁷

Apocalyptic literature manifested a particular attraction for a myth related but once in the biblical text. Its clear "remythologization," including acceptance of foreign myths (or mythologoumena), might have been one of the reasons for the rabbinic rejection of apocalyptic literature.³⁸

Philo and the Church Fathers

The Father's attitude towards the myth of Gen 6:1–4, like that of the Rabbis, was generally reserved. Indeed, we shall see in another chapter how rabbinic and Christian exegetes, in the light of their opposition to mythology, later interpreted the "Sons of God" and their fall in such a fashion as to destroy very clearly and consciously the myth itself. Suffice it here to note that Philo was the first witness of this demythologizing exegesis. In his work *De Gigantibus*, he developed an allegorizing interpretation of Genesis 6:

It is Moses' custom to give the name of angels to those whom other philosophers call demons [or spirits], souls, that is, which fly and hover in the air. And let no one suppose that what is here said is a myth.³⁹

את העולם נפלים מן הזנות שלהם.

³⁷Sh. Buber, ed., *Agadat Bereshit* (repr. ed., New York: Menorah, 1959), introduction, 37–39. Ginzberg, *Legends*, V, 170 also mentions occurrences of the same theme in kabbalistic literature: *Zohar* I, 96, 126a; *Zohar* III, 208a; *Zohar Ruth*, 99a.

³⁸See for instance Delcor, "La chute des anges," 53. The extent to which apocalyptic literature expresses new patterns of thought, or rather publicizes older patterns which were not represented in the highly selective canon, remains a matter for personal judgment.

³⁹καὶ μηδεὶς ὑπολάβῃ μῦθον εἶναι εἰρημένον, *De Gig.* II, 7. Again in II, 58: "Some may think that the Lawgiver is alluding to the myths of the poets about the giants, but indeed

In *Quaestiones in Genesin* 92, he added:

And he relates that their [the giants'] creation was a mixture of two things, of angels and mortal women. But the substance of angels is spiritual; however, it often happens that they imitate the forms of men and for immediate purposes, as in respect of knowing women for the sake of begetting Haiks.⁴⁰

According to these two different—but not incompatible—interpretations, Gen 6:2 in some way refers to the descent of souls into certain human bodies.

The Philonic exegesis was known to Origen, among others. In his *Contra Celsum*, he explicitly adopted Philo's exegesis in *De Gig.* II, 6:18:

We shall convince those who are able to understand the meaning of the prophet that one of our predecessors referred these words to the doctrine about souls who were afflicted with a desire for life in a human body, which, he said, is figuratively called "daughters of men."⁴¹

Elsewhere, however, he was less affirmative and simply stated Philo's view, without explicitly accepting or denying it:

Some have supposed that this descent would indicate in a covered way that of the souls into the bodies—the earthly vase being metaphorically referred to by "the daughters of men."⁴²

A similar demythologizing attitude is also found in a text of the Middle Platonist Alexander of Lycopolis. The passage is of particular significance,

myth-making (*μυθοπλαστῆιν*) is a thing most alien to him, and his mind is set on following in the steps of truth and nothing but truth." On this text, see Valentin Nikiprowetzky, "Sur une lecture démonologique de Philon d'Alexandrie, *de gigantibus*, 6–18," in G. Nahon and Ch. Touati, eds., *Hommages à Georges Vajda* (Louvain: Peeters, 1980), 43–71, esp. 71.

⁴⁰The beginning of the text reads: "The poets relate that the giants were earthborn, children of the earth. But he [Moses] uses this name analogically and frequently when he wishes to indicate excessive size of the body, after the likeness of Haik." (Haik is "the name of the Armenian eponymous hero for Greek Herakles" and thus refers to "giant"; see R. Marcus's note in his translation for the Loeb edition, 61). Prof. John Strugnell suggests that Philo might play here on *γηγένεις* and *γίγαντες*. Philo admits afterwards, however, that "Sons of God" is a name which can be given to good and excellent men too. We shall come back to this interpretation in Part II. The Giants of Greek mythology are sometimes called *Gegeneis*—so for instance in Apollonios Rhodios; H. J. Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Mythology* (London: Methuen, 1958⁶), 57.

⁴¹I quote the translation of H. Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum* (Cambridge: University, 1965), 307. Text in M. Boret's edition, *Origène, Contre Celse* (SC 147; Paris: Cerf, 1969), 152.

⁴²*Com. in Ioh.* VI.42.217–218 (C. Blanc ed., SC 157; 294–296); also XIII. On this ambiguity in Origen's teaching, see L. R. Wickham, "The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men: Genesis VI 2 in Early Christian Exegesis"; *Language and Meaning. Studies in Hebrew Language and Biblical Exegesis, papers read at the Joint British-Dutch Old Testament Conference held at London, 1973* (OTS 19; Leiden: Brill, 1974), 142–143.

since its context is his controversy against Manichaeism, written towards the end of the 3rd century. Alexander wrote:

For example, when the history of the Jews speaks of the angels who consorted with the daughters of men in order to have sexual intercourse, this way of telling the story hints at the nurturing faculties of the soul which comes down hither from above.⁴³

Despite the importance of this allegorizing tendency, the myth of the Fallen Angels and their sin of lust did not completely disappear from early Christian literature. As late as the 4th century, clear echoes of the myth were heard. For Justin and for Athenagoras, for instance, the progeny of the angels and the women were demons.⁴⁴ Irenaeus, for his part, interpreted the angels' fall from heaven as a consequence of their disobedience. From his wording, it appears that overtones from the story of Satan's fall had permeated the theme of the angels' descent.⁴⁵ This amalgamation of myths is explicit in the *Acta Archelai*, the archetype of most Christian refutations of Manichaeism, which was written by Hegemonius in the 4th century:

Hence also some of the angels, refusing to obey God's command, resisted His will; and one of them fell like a flash of lightning upon the earth [he is then identified as the devil], while others, "harrassed by the dragon" (*a dracone afflicti*) united (*admixti*) with the daughters of men.⁴⁶

Tertullian, for his part, condemned in strong language the sin of the angels, to which he referred on several occasions.⁴⁷ Clement of Alexandria referred to another detail stemming from apocalyptic literature (*I Enoch* 7:1), when he said that the angels taught the women secrets.⁴⁸ Like Alexander of Lycopolis, both Lactantius and Eusebius expressly referred to Greek mythology. Lactantius quoted Hesiod,⁴⁹ while Eusebius claimed to follow Plutarch's interpretation and identified the giants of Genesis with

⁴³*Contra Manichaeos*, XXV, quoted according to P. W. van der Horst and J. Mansfeld, *An Alexandrian Platonist Against Dualism: Alexander of Lycopolis' Treatise "Critique of the Doctrines of Manicheus"* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 95. Text in A. Brinkmann's edition (Leipzig: Teubner, 1895), 37.

⁴⁴Justin, *Apologia* II 5 (PG 6, 451). Athenagoras, *Legatio* 24,5 (PG 6, 947).

⁴⁵*Adv. Haer.* IV, 16.2 (II, 190 Harvey), where the angels (qualified as *transgressori*) are put in opposition to Enoch, the righteous (see also IV, 36.4; II, 279 Harvey).

⁴⁶Hegemonius, *Acta Archelai* 36.3 (ed. C. H. Beeson; GCS; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1906), 51.

⁴⁷See for instance *De idolatria* 9 and *De Oratione* 22.5, *Opera* I (ed. A. Reifferscheid; CSEL 20; Vienna: Tempsky, 1890), 194, 365; *De Virginibus Velantis*, *Opera* IV (ed. Bulhart; CSEL 76; Vienna: Tempsky, 1957), 89. Cf. Pseudo-Cyprian, *De singulitate clericorum*, *Opera Omnia* (ed. G. Hartel; CSEL 3; Vienna: Geroldi, 1871), 204.

⁴⁸*Strom.* V,1, Clemens Alexandrinus, *Werke* II (ed. O. Stählin; GCS; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1906), 332. Cf. *Paedag.* III, 2.14 (*ibid.*, I; Berlin: Akademie, 1972³), 244.

⁴⁹*Divinae Institutiones* II, *Opera* (ed. S. Brand, G. Laubmann; CSEL 19; Vienna: Geroldi, 1887), 162–163.

“the gods about whom the Greeks tell tales of fights,” just as Plutarch had identified these gods with Egyptian deities.⁵⁰

By far the most detailed treatment of the myth of the Fallen Angels in early Christian literature, however, is found in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*. The close relationship of Pseudo-Clementine literature to Jewish Christianity (its substratum is the Ebionite *Kerygmata Petrou*) and its gnosticizing tendencies are significant in this respect.⁵¹ Purporting to argue against Simon Magus's dualism, the *Homilies* actually developed a veiled attack against Paul's theology. Indeed, for the *Homilies*, the myth of the Fallen Angels answered the problem of the origin of evil, whereas Paul referred to Adam's sin (Rom 5:12).⁵² In the *Homilies*, Peter presented the angels' descent as a punishment visited upon men for having deserted the Law of God (*Hom.* VIII.11). The angels, taking human (and animal) forms, first went down to earth with the intention of preaching to men and asking them to repent and obey God. But they soon fell prey “to the power of the flesh and of lust”; they united with the women, and, thus soiled, lost their proper and pure fiery nature, so that they were unable to return to heaven (*Hom.* VIII.12–13). It is significant that at the origin of this fall stands not a revolt in heaven, but rather *lust*, as the real source of evil.

In its attempt to harmonize the traditions reflected in *1 Enoch* 6ff. (and in *Jub.*), the text added that the angels first attracted the women by changing themselves (through their divine power), into various things such as pearls, precious stones, and gold (*Hom.* VIII.12). But after their sin, having lost this power, they were unable to give these gifts to their lovers, and so they themselves discovered precious stones, gold, and other metals in the earth and taught men techniques of magic, astronomy, etc.—all things which the human mind would never have discovered. In a word, all ornaments or pleasures of women are inventions of the demons fettered in the flesh (*Hom.* VIII.14,2–3; 127 Rehm). The offspring of their illegitimate *mixis* were bastards (*νόθοι*) later called giants on account of their height. They did not revolt against God, as related in the blasphemous tales of the Greeks, but did have an irresistible impulse to taste blood; thus, they were the first anthropophagites (*Hom.* VIII.15–16).

⁵⁰*Prep. Evang.* 5.4 (ed. and trans. E. H. Gifford; Oxford, 1903), I, 186d, p. 244. Cf. *De Isis et Osiride* 25, 360c (ed. J. G. Griffith; Cardiff: Univ. of Wales, 1970), 154. See also Commodianus, who in the 5th century retold the myth in verse form: *Instructiones I, adversus Gentium Deos* III, *Carmina* (ed. B. Dombart; CSEL 15; Vienna: Geroldi, 1887), 7.

⁵¹On the Jewish-Christian theology as it appears in the Pseudo-Clementine writings, see mainly H. J. Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1964²), and G. Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum in den Pseudoklementinen* (TU 70; Berlin: Akademie, 1958). For the Gnostic affinities, see O. Cullmann, *Le problème littéraire et historique du roman pseudo-clémentin* (Paris: Alcan, 1930).

⁵²On the Homilist's treatment of the problem of evil, see H. J. Schoeps, “Der Ursprung des Bösen und das Problem der Theodizee im pseudo-klementinischen Roman,” in *Judéo-Christianisme, Recherches . . . J. Daniélou*, 129–141. It should be noted that the theological conceptions embodied in the *Kerygmata Petrou* are very close to those of the Elchasaites among whom Mani grew up.

This theme, already found in *I Enoch* 7:6, is an important element in subsequent developments. As a result of their behavior the earth became poisoned by so much bloodshed, men began to die early, and venomous beasts appeared. God decided to put an end to this deteriorating state of affairs, which threatened to corrupt all humanity to a point where no one would remain to be saved, and thus sent the flood in order to cleanse the world (*Hom.* VIII.17). The giants died in the flood, but their race did not disappear, for their souls led a separate existence, God having ordered them, through an angel, not to trouble men in any way. They were indeed demons, though not altogether evil ones, and their role remained, under God's command, to punish both unbelievers and sinners (*Hom.* VIII.18–19; 126–129 Rehm).

The treatment of the myth in the *Homilies* is particularly significant in our context, since it may indicate a transitional stage through which the myth reached the Gnostic circles. In the Jewish heterodox milieu, which is the *Sitz im Leben* of the *Kerygmata Petrou*, the angels' fall appears to have been of primary importance in explaining the origin of evil. This theme was thus developed in a particular way, which accounted not only for the angels' sin, but also for their initially good intentions (as in *Jubilees*), as well as for the existence of demons, identified with the offspring of the angels. The same identification may be found in many of the Gnostic texts. It is also interesting to note that the author of the *Homilies* was aware of the Greek myth of the Titans, the sons of Uranus and Gaia, and their revolt against the gods, but rejected any link between it and the biblical myth—although he identified Noah with Deucalion, as did the *Apocalypse of Adam*. For the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, therefore, evil stemmed from sexual *mixis*, from forbidden unions between two different categories of beings. The problem was set forth in very similar terms in Gnostic contexts.

Gnostic Reinterpretation

In a way, the origin of evil in Gnostic mythology should be understood in terms of *mixis*; the creation of the world by the agents of evil is but one aspect of this permanent attempt at mixing unclean elements of darkness, or matter, with pure elements of light, or spirit. While there was a possibility of salvation if the pure elements remained untainted (that is to say, remained free from any contact with the unclean ones or managed to become disengaged from them), the forces of darkness perpetually strove, in history as well as in cosmogony or anthropogony, to mingle with the elements (the "children") of light. For Gnostic thought, the most obvious way for the evil rulers to achieve this *mixis* was through sexual relations with human beings. Thus Nicolaus was presented as speaking about the "fetid and unclean" *permixio*, which originated in the lust of darkness for light.⁵³

⁵³Pseudo-Tertullian, *Adv. Omn. Haer.* I (215 Kroymann). See also Sethian theology as

In his seminal study, H.-C. Puech analyzes various occurrences of the same theme of the angels' fornication with women.⁵⁴ He shows its importance in different Gnostic contexts, where the sending of the flood by the heavenly Mother was always presented as a direct consequence of these *permixiones* of angels and humans.⁵⁵ The myth is known not only in texts and traditions usually considered to be "Sethian," but also in Valentinian context.⁵⁶

In a more recent study of the theme of the angels' fornication with women in Gnosticism, Yvonne Janssens states that the myth as it appears in Genesis 6 cannot be found "à l'état pur" in Gnostic texts.⁵⁷ Yet the thrust of her article is precisely to focus attention on the recurrence of this theme in various Gnostic contexts. Although she quotes some Jewish sources for the theme (*1* and *2 Enoch*) and cites various Gnostic texts and parallels (the theme of the bridal chamber in *Gos. Phil.*, the attitude of Elohim in Justin's *Baruch*, etc.), she stops short of integrating the various pieces of evidence into a global understanding of this myth in Gnostic thought.

In Gnostic literature, however, the theme of the Fallen Angels is much more than what Janssens calls "un centre d'attraction littéraire." Indeed, I shall demonstrate that it played a major function in the development of Gnostic mythology, and that it is at the very core of the mythological expression of Gnostic consciousness. During the discussion generated by Janssens's paper at the Messina Conference, Hans Jonas hinted at the importance of what I propose to call provisionally a "cluster of themes." He suggested that one should attempt to build a typology of related, albeit different, themes such as the fornication of the angels, the seduction of the archons, abortions, and the demiurge's rape of Eve.⁵⁸ The following chapters may be regarded as a contribution towards a typology such as that proposed by Jonas. Through an analysis of the evidence for these themes in Gnostic texts and traditions, I shall try to determine possible relationships.

recorded by Hippolytus, *Elenchos* 5. 19.11–12 (118 Wendland), 'where a series of "conjunctions" (*συνδρομαί*) are reported to have taken place between heaven and earth, which are described like a womb. The animals, in their multitude, are said to be created out of a succession of such "conjunctions." See also Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.30.5 (I, 230–233 Harvey), where the *mixis* is one between spirit and matter.

⁵⁴"Fragments retrouvés de l'Apocalypse d'Allogène," *Mélanges Franz Cumont*, II (Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves 4; Brussels, 1936); repr. in *En quête de la Gnose*, I, 271–300. Puech quotes the passage on Audi in Agapius's *Kitab al-Unwan*, PO 7, 564: "He also says that the angels committed adultery with the daughters of men, and gave birth to children out of them, and that evil is the natural constitution of men" (repr. ed. pp. 275–276).

⁵⁵*En quête*, I, 287, n. 1. Other major references to the theme are found in Epiphanius, *Pan.* 39.3.1 (II, 73, Holl) or Pseudo-Tertullian, *Adv. Omn. Haer.* 3 (218 Kroymann).

⁵⁶Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, I, 10.3 (I, 95 Harvey). The theme is again mentioned in the *Pistis Sophia*, I, 15 (25 Macdermot). See also Pseudo-Jerome, *Indic. de Haer.* 9 (290 Oehler).

⁵⁷"Le thème de la fornication des anges," in U. Bianchi, ed., *Le origini*, 488–495.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 495.

In the introduction I noted that there are no "pure" or "degenerate" forms of a myth. If the Gnostic and the Jewish versions of the myth differ as much as they do, it is because Gnostic etiological concerns were different from Jewish ones. In a way, it may be said that the theological problem of the existence of evil as posed by Judaism (or, for that matter, by Christianity) is almost inverted in Gnosticism. In monotheistic theology, it is essential to account for the existence of evil in a world created by God, who is good. Dualist Gnosticism, on the other hand, takes evil for granted. The main emphasis, therefore, is placed on the explanation of the possibility of salvation—for some—in a creation seen as utterly evil. This peculiar focus of the problem—not so much of evil as of good—for Gnostic mythology, has not been accorded due attention.

The two biblical myths that could account for the presence of evil were sometimes integrated in apocalyptic literature, and Satan was linked to the Fallen Angels of Genesis 6 in some of the versions. This combinatory process was given new and systematic dimensions in Gnostic mythology. The two original myths were integrated into a much broader mythical frame, intended to make manifest the basic pattern of both history and cosmogony: the evil deeds of the lustful demiurge and his associates, the archons. For Gnostic mythology, indeed, evil stemmed from a series of sexual sins. In its new frame, the myth focused upon the escape of pure women from the lust of the angels (i.e. the archons). These women, having remained unsoiled, were thus able to transmit the pure seed.

Evidence for the importance of the myth in Gnosticism will be cited as we proceed to analyze the various related themes. One passage, however, which shows quite clearly how the myth of the Fallen Angels was connected with the very beginnings of mankind, is worth quoting at the outset. In *Val. Exp.* 38:22–37, the Devil, "one of the divine beings" (38:13–14) is said to have begotten

sons who [angered one another. And] Cain [killed] Abel his brother, for [the demiurge] breathed into [them] his spirit. And there [took place] the struggle with the apostasy of the angels and mankind, those of the right with those of the left, and those of heaven with those on earth, the spirits with the carnal, and the Devil against God. Therefore the angels lusted after the daughters of men and came down to flesh so that God would cause a flood.

The lustful angels are also mentioned in other Gnostic texts. In *Apoc. Adam* 83:14–17, for instance, they are explicitly said to have been "corrupted by their desire."⁵⁹

⁵⁹See also *Tri. Trac.* 135:1–5 and *Testim. Truth* 40:30–41:4. According to *Paraph. Shem* 44:13–17, a flood will come at the end of time because envy "of winds [or: "spirits"; Crum's *Coptic Dictionary*, 439 B s.v. ΤΗΥ] and the demons." Cf. *Gos. Eg.* III 61:1–3: "and the flood came as an example for the consummation of the aeon." The sin of the Fallen Angels is probably alluded to in *Gos. Eg.*, as Dorese saw (see the commentary to his translation, 347, n. 133; 348, n. 137; see esp. *Gos. Eg.* III, 61:16–23; 62:21–24; 64:3–4). For a reference to the rebellion of the angels, see also *Treat. Seth* 33:20–33. See also *Fragments of*

At various stages of this inquiry, it will become clear that the Gnostics' myths did not emerge only from their meditation upon the Greek text of Genesis; the Gnostic texts, indeed, reflect knowledge of various detailed interpretations of these themes in Jewish exegesis, whether the apocryphal writings or some other early traditions that were later recorded in rabbinic literature.

Heracleon, 40, on John 4:46–53 (in Origen, *Com. in Ioh.* XIII.60; 82 Völker), where Heracleon deals with the problem of the future salvation of the Fallen Angels of Genesis 6.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ARCHONS AS SEDUCERS

The Gnostics inherited the theme of *mixis*—together with the myth of the Fallen Angels and their copulation with women—from Jewish literature, in all probability directly, rather than through the mediation of Christian texts, as we shall see. Yet the etiological function of the theme of *mixis* in Gnostic mythology was so different that in its new setting, the myth underwent not only far reaching developments, but also a radical transformation, some of whose steps we shall attempt to follow.

The Daughters of Men

Following the Bible, some Jewish texts (e.g., *I Enoch*, *Jubilees*) integrated this episode into human history, a fact of obvious theological significance, for it meant that the origin of evil was not concomitant with God's creation. Gnosticism, on the other hand, had a vested interest in showing that the pattern of *mixis* had already begun in the very first generation of mankind. In some Gnostic texts, therefore, the responsibility for Eve and Adam's sin of concupiscence was attributed to the demiurge himself. In *Apoc. Adam*, for instance, it is he who was responsible for the "sweet desire" in Adam's heart. At least two explanations of concupiscence are implicit in this text. First, sexual impulse is seen as stemming directly from the male/female duality, i.e., from the separation of the androgynal protoplast which "the Ruler of the aeons" had made in his wrath (64:20–23). Second, Eve became sexually attractive to Adam only after her seduction by the demiurge, who here plays the role of the serpent in Jewish theology.¹

To this text, in which the (reversed) biblical themes can be easily recognized, may be contrasted *Gos. Phil.* 70:20–22: "Thus Eve separated from Adam since she was never united with him in the bridal chamber."² In this eclectic work of Valentinian affinities, the reason for Eve's fall is the adultery that she committed in her mind, i.e., her illegitimate desire for the serpent, which led to Cain's birth. According to the popular wisdom accepted by *Gos. Phil.* 78:12–20:

The children a woman bears resemble the man who loves her. If her

¹*Apoc. Adam* 66:25–67:4. Cf. *Ap. John* CG II, 24:27–28; see S. Giversen, *Apocryphon Iohannis* (Acta Theologica Danica 5; Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1963), Commentary, 264.

²See also *Gos. Phil.* 68:22–24: "When Eve was still in Adam, death did not exist." The bridal chamber is here a symbol of the perfect marriage; cf. *Exeg. Soul* 133:31–134:6.

husband loves her, then they resemble her husband. If it is an adulterer, then they resemble the adulterer. Frequently, if a woman sleeps with her husband out of necessity, while her heart is with the adulterer with whom she usually has intercourse, the child she will bear is born resembling the adulterer.³

Such an attitude is similar to that expressed in *T. Reub.* 5:7, where the women who "united themselves with the angels" were, in fact, sleeping with their husbands, but committing adultery in thought.

An interesting treatment of the same theme occurs in the *Apocryphon of John*. In this text, one cannot properly speak of a *fall* of the angels, since they descended on purpose, sent by the evil demiurge in order to enslave humanity through concupiscence. In this text the sin of the angels is not regarded as the cause, but as the *consequence* of the flood.⁴ This latter motif, however, was strongly gnosticized: Noah—a positive figure here as in certain other Gnostic contexts⁵—and his kin from the unshakeable race (ΤΡΕΝΕΑ ΔΤΚΙΜ)⁶ did not enter the ark, but "went into a place and hid themselves in a luminous cloud,⁷ in order to escape the wrath of the demiurge. Angry at not being able to seize Noah, the demiurge decided ("with his powers") to send angels to the daughters of men "that they might take some of them for themselves and raise offspring for their enjoyment." They thus created a "despicable" or "opposing" spirit, as

³For *Gos. Phil.* "Indeed every act of sexual intercourse which has occurred between those unlike one another is adultery" (62:10–12; 65:1–26). See J. P. Mahé, "Le sens des symboles sexuels dans quelques textes hermétiques et gnostiques," in J.-E. Ménard, ed., *Les textes de Nag Hammadi, Colloque du Centre d'Histoire des Religions, Strasbourg 23–25 Octobre 1974* (NHS 7; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 123–145, esp. 138, as well as R. M. Grant, "The Mystery of Marriage in the Gospel of Philip," *VC* 15 (1961), 129–140, esp. 135 n. 22, where Grant points out that Empedocles (H. Diels, *Doxographi Graeci*, 423) had already come to the same solution of the problem of children who do not resemble their parents. The same idea is expressed in *Gen. Rab.* 27:4 (254 Theodor) in the very context of the women's sin with the Sons of God. R. Berachia described how women would give birth to sons who resembled lads they met in the market place and with whom they had fallen in love.

⁴Cf. M. Scopello, "Le mythe de la chute des anges dans l'*Apocryphon de Jean* (II.1) de Nag Hammadi," *RSR* 54 (1980), 220–230; she deals with only two of the contexts in which the pervasive myth is related, *I Enoch* and *Ap. John*.

⁵E.g., *Great Pow.* 38:22–39:2, where Noah preached piety for 120 years before escaping in the ark; 2 Pet 2:5, where Noah is called κήρυξ δικαιοσύνης. In *Apoc. Adam*, however, Noah is presented as the arch-servant of Sakla.

⁶For a thorough analysis of this concept in Gnostic thought and a demonstration of its Neoplatonic affinities, see M. Williams, *The Gnostic Concept of Stability* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1977), and his "Stability as a Soteriological Theme in Gnosticism," in Layton, ed., *Rediscovery*, II, 819–829.

⁷*Ap. John* 29:10–12. Clouds of light appear elsewhere as the proper and secret place of Gnostics and revealing angels; see *Gos. Eg.* III 49:1; *Apoc. Adam* 75:17–18; 69:20–21; 71:9–10. Cf. Matt 24:30, Mark 13:26, and Luke 21:27, where the Son of Man appears in the clouds. A cloud of light also appears in Matt 17:5, Luke 9:34, and already in Dan 7:13. But clouds may also be connected with darkness, i.e., with flesh and lust; *Gos. Eg.* III 56:25; *Apoc. Adam* 80:22; 81:16–17; 83:7–8; *Paraph. Shem* 5:12; 47:21; *Treat. Seth* 70:2. See the discussion of νεφέλη by Eduard Norden, *Die Geburt des Kindes; Geschichte einer religiösen Idee* (Studien der Bibliothek Warburg 3; Leipzig–Berlin: Teubner, 1924), 92–99.

the Coptic renders the important Gnostic notion of *ὁ ἀντίμιμον πνεῦμα*.⁸ The text then describes, in a way strongly reminiscent of Jewish apocryphal writings, how

the angels changed themselves in their likeness into the likeness of their [i.e. the women's] husbands, filling them with the spirit of darkness, which they had mixed for them, and with evil. They brought gold and silver and a gift and copper and iron and metal and all kinds of things. (*Ap. John* 29:26–33)

Finally,

They begot children out of the darkness according to the likeness of their spirit. And they closed their hearts, and they hardened themselves through the hardness of the despicable spirit until now. (30:8–11)

In another context, these angels (or demons—both words are used with the same meaning) are said to have

taught men many errors with magic and potions and idolatry, and shedding of blood, and altars, and temples and sacrifices, and libations. . . . (*Orig. World* 123:4–13)⁹

Now the story as told in *Ap. John* clearly reveals an unintentional contamination between two traditions attested in Jewish literature. The demythologizing exegesis of *T. Reub.* noted above had its own logic: since spiritual beings like angels could not sin, it was the women who, in their lust, had to bear the burden of responsibility for the illegitimate union, which was, in fact, no more than an illicit thought. In the case of *Ap. John*, however, the reason why the angels took the shape of the husbands is less clear. The Gnostic author did not refrain from describing the strange, beastly physical form of the demiurge and the archons. So the angels' taking the shape of the husbands here appears to be slavishly

⁸*Ap. John* 29:16–24: *οὐππᾶ ἐψῳς* (cf. Crum, 375–376); cf. 26:20: *πεπᾶ ἐτῳβιάειτ*, “the opposing spirit.” Both expressions render the Greek *ὁ ἀντίμιμον πνεῦμα*, retained in the version of *Ap. John* in BG. *οὐπᾶ ἐψῳς* (“the despicable spirit”) might be a translation of *τὸ ἄτιμον* (instead of *ἀντίμιμον*) as Prof. J. Strugnell has suggested to me. On the *antimimon pneuma*, see Giversen, “The Apocryphon of John and Genesis,” *ST* 17 (1963), 73, and esp. A. Böhlig, “Zum Antimimon Pneuma in den koptischen-gnostischen Texten,” *Mysterion und Wahrheit* (AGJU 6; Leiden: Brill, 1968), 162–175. To this evil spirit is opposed the *parthenikon pneuma* (*Eugnostos* 89:2–3). See W. Bousset, “Gnosis,” *PW*, VII. 2, 1514, and Tardieu, *Trois Mythes*, 65 n. 91, who refers to the “spiritual virgins” of *Orig. World* 102:18. The *antimimon pneuma*, a purely Gnostic concept, is not found in philosophical texts.

⁹The theme of the wicked angels who taught men “things contrary to nature” and thus “led them into evil things” also appears in the fragment of *Asclepius* found at Nag Hammadi (73:5–12). The same text mentions the punishment of the demon who has done evil deeds—“He is suspended between heaven and earth” (77:8). This might refer to the binding of the Fallen Angels in *I Enoch*.

copied from its source, but out of its original context; the redactor did not notice that the detail was not only absolutely meaningless in his own, new version of the myth, but that it even contradicted it. This source, which remains unidentified, followed the tradition attested to by *T. Reub.*

The second element coming from Jewish texts is the mention of the gold and silver, gifts and metals, etc., which the angels of the demiurge brought to the women. This can be easily recognized as derived directly from the description of the angels' fall in *1 Enoch* 8:1, for although it was significant in the early version of the myth (where the origins of evil and of moral depravation were linked to the origins of civilization), this element appeared as a mere literary vestige in the Gnostic story, without any specific function. It can therefore be safely assumed that the author—or the redactor—of *Ap. John* knew and used the Jewish traditions embodied in various pseudepigraphic works and integrated them into his own version of the myth, albeit not always wisely. This analysis, however, falls short of proving that the author was in close contact with Judaism. In the 2nd century, when *Ap. John* was probably written, these texts already circulated far beyond the Jewish communities, indeed they were current primarily in Christian circles if our evidence is to be trusted. But the lack of Christian elements in *Ap. John* greatly weakens the hypothesis of a Christian intermediary. Roel van den Broek therefore argues quite plausibly that the author of *Ap. John* knew, accepted, and reinterpreted some Jewish Alexandrian traditions.¹⁰

The Seduction of Eve

A glance at the other "seduction story" related in *Ap. John*, namely, the case of Eve, may provide a further clue towards a solution of the problem of the traditions worked over by the Gnostics in their myth-making. The text reports that when Yaldabaoth, the first archon, saw "the virgin who stood by Adam," with the luminous Epinoia of life shining in her, he decided to seduce her. While Pronoia "snatched life out of Eve" (cf. *Hyp. Arch.* 89:17–29), he begot from her two sons, Elohim and Jahwe—"And these he called with the names Cain and Abel, with a view to deceive" (*Ap. John* 24:8–25). In other words, he gave them these names in order to conceal their archontic nature. Yaldabaoth's sons had beastly appearances: Elohim had a bear face, and Jahwe, a cat face. Both shared their father's ugliness; they were *amorphoi*, just as he was *amorphos*.¹¹ Yaldabaoth, the first archon, then "planted in Adam a desire for generation," with the result that Adam generated from Eve his first-born, Seth, who

¹⁰"The Creation of Adam's Psychic Body in the *Apocryphon of John*," in van den Broek and Vermaseren, eds., *Studies in Gnosticism*, 38–57.

¹¹Cf. *Marsanes* 25:1–4. *Ap. John* 10:26–35 also tells of Yaldabaoth's offspring: "And he joined with his madness (*ἀπρόνοια*) which is in him and begot authorities for himself." Of his twelve sons, the sixth was called Cain—"he whom the generations of men call the sun"—and the seventh Abel. Cf. *CG IV* 26:19–20. See also *Apoc. Adam* 66:26–28 (corrupt text) and *Trim. Prot.* 40:4–7.

was like himself.

The description of Eve's marital relationships in this text is unlike the one given in *Gos. Phil.* 70:22, since in *Ap. John* Eve is not accused of adulterous thoughts during her second union, the one with Adam. On the contrary, this union seems to have been a pure one, for it produced Seth, the father of the "unshakeable race," to which the *pneuma* was sent by the Mother and which was thus in perpetual opposition to the bearers of the *antimimon pneuma*. What remains puzzling is the fact that it is the evil Yaldabaoth who planted sexual desire in Adam,¹² desire through which the pure seed was transmitted. In order to have Seth belong to the spiritual race, the intervention of the Mother was required. So, in a sense Seth was not simply Adam's son, but also linked to the heavenly world. It seems that the Gnostic author, confronted with the problem that the fathers of both the pure and the evil race were born from Eve, offered a radical solution by asserting that Eve's first two sons were actually the product of a rape. Nevertheless, this author could not free himself completely from the more traditional attitude, according to which even the sexual relations between Adam and Eve stemmed from an unclean desire. A more logical or consistent stand based on the same premises was presented in *Gos. Phil.* 68:22–24, where the original androgyny of Adam and Eve actually became a symbol of the mystery of spiritual, or perfect, marriage, which itself was an archetype of salvation: "When Eve was in Adam, death did not exist." In the Valentinian context of *Gos. Phil.*, the theme of androgyny, which, as noted, also occurred in *Apoc. Adam*, was interpreted as the union in the bridal chamber, symbolizing metaphysical realities and eschatological salvation: at the end of time Achamoth, the mother of the spiritual seed, would enter the Pleroma and receive the savior as her bridegroom.¹³

Eve's seduction is mentioned or developed elsewhere both in the patristic testimonies and in the various Gnostic texts. In the heresiologists' reports, one finds several references to Eve's relations with the demiurge or the archons, and to the "non-Adamic" birth of Cain and Abel. In his discussion of these Gnostics—whom he laconically calls *alii*, "others,"—Irenaeus claimed that according to them, Eve gave birth to sons "who are called angels" as a result of her sexual relations with Yaldabaoth and the lustful archons.¹⁴

¹²This desire is part of the dominion of death and ignorance (*Ap. John* 64:20–67:13). On the original androgyny of human beings, a theme which can be traced back to Plato's *Symposium*, see C. A. E. Jessen, "Hermaphroditos," *PW*, VIII. 1, 714–721.

¹³Cf. Grant, "The Mystery of Marriage in the Gospel of Philip," *VC* 15 (1961), 129–140, esp. 131. See also J.-E. Ménard's commentary on *Gos. Thom.*, logion 15, in his *L'Evangile selon Thomas* (NHS 5; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 101–103. Some of the texts referred to by Ménard in his discussion of Valentinianism (p. 102), such as *Gos. Eg.* or the fragment of the *Gospel of Eve* preserved by Epiphanius in his chapter on the "Gnostics" (*Pan.* 26,3.1; I, 278 Holl), show that later on the theme was not limited to Valentinian theology.

¹⁴*Adv. Haer.* I, 30.78 (I, 233–234 Harvey).

This is repeated by Pseudo-Tertullian, who stated that according to the Cainites, Abel was created by an inferior being, while according to the Sethians, both Cain and Abel were the sons of angels.¹⁵ He added that great discord arose among the angels on their account, and that the supreme power (*virtus*), whom the Sethians called the Mother, willed Seth to be born instead of Abel. The Mother thus intended to fight the angels who had created Cain and Abel, "since this pure seed (*hoc semen mundum*) rises and is born" from Seth. "For (*enim*) they speak about iniquitous *permixtiones* of angels and men, which prompted the Power to send the flood, in order that "that seed of permixture" be swept away and only the pure seed be kept intact (*integrum*) (218 Kroymann). From this testimony, and especially from the use of *enim*, the Gnostics whom Pseudo-Tertullian called Sethians clearly connected their teachings about the birth of Cain and Abel to the general pattern of the *permixtiones* between angels and humans. The same conceptions were known to Epiphanius, who mentioned in his description of the Sethians' theology their belief that Cain and Abel were the sons of two angels who fought one another through them "and so caused Abel to be killed by Cain."¹⁶

There is at least one direct Christian refutation of this Gnostic doctrine; based on quotations from Genesis and Ecclesiasticus, it argued that Cain's evil character was due not to his birth but to his subsequent evil acts. This refutation is found in a Pachomian fragment, which quotes "one of the books written by the heretics" as saying: "When Eve had been misled and she had eaten of the fruit of the tree, it was with the devil that she conceived Cain."¹⁷ Similarly, Epiphanius, in his report on the Archontics, wrote:

Another myth is related by these folk: The devil (ὁ διάβολος) it says, came to Eve and had intercourse with her (συνήφθη) as a man does with a woman, and begot with her Cain and Abel.¹⁸

Or again:

His [i.e. Cain's] father was the devil, and the devil's father is the archon who is a liar, whom the foolish ones, bringing blasphemies upon their own heads, identify with Sabaoth.¹⁹

Finally, in the system that the Gnostic Justin set forth in his book *Baruch*,

¹⁵ *Contr. Omn. Haer.* 2 (217–218 Kroymann).

¹⁶ *Pan.* 39, 2.1–2 (II, 72 Holl). See Tardieu's annotated translation of the whole chapter, in *Tel Quel* 88 (1981), 64–91.

¹⁷ Fragment 53, edited by L. Th. Lefort, *Les vies coptes de Saint Pachôme* (Louvain, 1943), 370–371. Discussed by T. Säve-Söderbergh, "Holy Scriptures or Apologetic Documentations," in J.-E. Ménard, ed., *Les Textes de Nag-Hammadi*, 9.

¹⁸ *Pan.* 40, 5.3 (II, 85 Holl).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 40, 5.7 (II, 86 Holl); also 40, 6.9 (II, 87, Holl). The archontics here denounce Sabaoth in terms usually reserved for his father Yaldabaoth. Sammael is probably meant by "the devil."

a highly syncretistic work which retains clear traces of deeply rooted Jewish influences, the serpent is said to have had sexual relations with both Eve and Adam:

For going to Eve he deceived her and committed adultery with her, which is contrary to the law; and he went also to Adam and used him as a boy, which is also against the law. Hence arose adultery and pederasty.²⁰

Yet the clearest evidence before the Nag Hammadi texts came to light was embodied in a few quotations from the *Apocalypse of the Strangers* and the *Book of Demands*, which the schismatic Audians were said to have read from the 4th century until at least the 8th, when Theodore bar Khonai met them.²¹ H.-C. Puech identified, organized, and translated these quotations from the works of oriental Church Fathers.²² I shall give an English translation of these passages.²³ According to him four distinct references to Eve's seduction can be distinguished from our sources.

(1) God [i.e., the demiurge] said to Eve: "Be pregnant of me, lest Adam's creators [i.e., the archons] approach you" (Bar Khonai; *Apoc. Strangers*). Or: "Be pregnant of me, before Adam's creators come to you" (Bar Hebraeus).

(2) God said to Eve: "Be pregnant of me before the archons²⁴ come and have relations with you" (Bar Hebraeus). Or: "The Father of Life created Eve and then said to her: 'be pregnant of me lest the gods who are below me impregnate you.' She conceived from him, gave birth, and the race issued of her multiplied" (Agapius).

(3) "The authorities²⁵ say: 'Come, let us throw our semen upon her

²⁰Hippolytus, *Elenchos* 5, 26.23 (130 Wendland). On the Jewish influences on *Baruch*, see K. Dvideland, "Elohims Himmelfahrt," *Temenos* 10 (1974), 68–78; R. van den Broek, "The Shape of Eden according to Justin the Gnostic," *VC* 27 (1973), 35–45.

²¹On the Audians, see H.-C. Puech, "Audianer," *RAC*, I, 910–915.

²²Puech, "Fragments retrouvés."

²³My translation differs in a few places from Puech's and/or from the editors' renderings. The texts are (1) Agapius, *Kitab al 'Unwān* (10th century), PO 7, 562–564, ed. and trans. A. Vasiliev; also ed. P. L. Cheikho (CSCO, *Scriptores Arabici* series tertia, 5; Beirut: Typog. Cathol., 1912), 289–290; (2) Bar Hebraeus, *Mnarat Qudshe* (late 12th century), PO 13, 259–260, ed. and trans. F. Nau; and (3) Theodore bar Khonai, *Liber Scholiorum*, XI, ed. A. Scher (CSCO, *Scriptores Syri*, series secunda, 66; Paris, 1910), 319–320.

²⁴*benei šallitā*. Puech and Nau translate: "Les Dominateurs." Actually the Syriac is the precise translation of the Greek *ἀρχων* (which also exists as a loan word in Syriac: *arḫunā*). To prevent confusion, I prefer to keep the traditional *terminus technicus*, archon.

²⁵*šalliṭanē*. Pognon translates "Les Puissances," and Puech "Les Dominations." Puech ("Fragments retrouvés," 398 n. 1) says that the term *šalliṭanē* corresponds to the Greek *ἐξουσίαι* and refers to the seven planetary archons. He points out that this word translates *ἐξουσίαι* in the Syriac version of Epiphanius's *Anakephalaiosis* and adds that *šalliṭanē* refers to planets in Bardesanes. See *Book of Laws of Countries*, PS 2, 567–568; cf. *Poimandres*, 9, l.18, in Nock-Festugière, *CH*, I, and n. 27, p. 20.

and let us make use²⁶ of her first, so that what will be born of her will be under our dominion'” (Bar Khonai; *Apoc. Strangers*). Or: “The authorities . . . : Come, let us lie with Eve, that what will be born be ours” (Bar Khonai; *Book of Demands*)

(4) “The authorities led Eve and lay with her, so that she would not go to Adam” (Bar Khonai; *Book of Demands*). Or: “They led Eve far from this Adam’s face and knew her” (*Apoc. Strangers*).

Eve and the Archons in Nag Hammadi texts

The theme of Eve’s seduction by the archons, the authorities, or their leader (Sammael) reappears in certain texts discovered at Nag Hammadi which embody, in different ways, the Sethian myth about the origins of mankind and of the pure seed. For example, *Hyp. Arch.* 89:17–28 relates,

Then the authorities (ἐξουσίαι) came up to their Adam. And when they saw his female counterpart speaking with him, they became agitated with great agitation; and they became enamored of her. They said to one another, “Come, let us sow our seed (σπέρμα) in her,” and they pursued her. And she laughed at them for their witlessness and their blindness; and in their clutches she became a tree, and left before them her shadowy reflection resembling herself; and they defiled (it) foully. . . .²⁷

In this text, the authorities are simply said to have fallen in love with the spiritual Eve (89:11); in a way, they were “seduced” by her. This is, *in*

²⁶Obviously a sexual reference. Although Payne-Smith, *A Syriac Thesaurus* does not give such a meaning under the entry ܫܡܫ, the sexual connotations of the root ܫܡܫ are well attested in Jewish Aramaic and in rabbinic Hebrew. See Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Talmud*, 1601b. For a semantic equivalent in Hebrew (זקק), see Ginzberg, *Legends*, V, 122 n. 128. Similarly, χράομαι may also refer to sexual intercourse. See LSJ, 2002b. The use of a compound of this verb in Coptic, with the same meaning, is attested in *Exeg. Soul* 128:6. Cf. *Hyp. Arch.* 92:31, where the arrogant archon says to Norea: 𐩌𐩨𐩣𐩪 𐩢𐩪 𐩨𐩣𐩪𐩠 𐩪𐩠𐩢 𐩪𐩠𐩢 𐩪𐩠𐩢 𐩪𐩠𐩢, translated by Layton: “You must render service to us” (*HTR* 67 [1974]). In his commentary (*HTR* 69 [1976], 64, n. 114) Layton recognizes that the intention here is sexual and adds that 𐩢 𐩪𐩠𐩢 probably translates δουλεύειν (see Crum, 30a, b). A sexual meaning of δουλεύειν, however, is not attested in Greek. It is thus probable that the Greek *Vorlage* of *Hyp. Arch.* read here χράομαι (intended in the sexual sense), which the Coptic translator misunderstood and translated in the sense of “to be subject to,” possible both for χράομαι and for 𐩢 𐩪𐩠𐩢. On the Greek *Vorlage* of *Hyp. Arch.* see P. Nagel, *Das Wesen der Archonten* (Halle, 1970), 19.

²⁷The tree is the tree of knowledge. But see B. A. Pearson, “‘She Became a Tree’—A Note to CG II, 4:89, 25–26,” *HTR* 69 (1976), 413–415, for precise iconographic references to a similar pagan myth. It is impossible here to go into a detailed analysis of this passage in the context of *Hyp. Arch.* On this see Layton’s notes 58–61 (*HTR* 69 [1976], 56–57) and Tardieu, *Trois Mythes*, 130. Tardieu analyzes the various steps of Gnostic anthropogony reflected in *Hyp. Arch.* and *Orig. World* and notes, “Ce n’est pas l’Eve supérieure qui est souillée, mais sa ressemblance, son reflet dans la personne de la compagne du troisième Adam.”

nuce, the typical Gnostic notion of the "seduction of the archons," to which we shall return at greater length. Eve escaped before the archons could unite with her, but the defilement of her "shadow" is a docetic device, one which lets the heavenly Eve keep her purity untainted.²⁸

A slightly different view is expressed in *Orig. World* 116:13–19. When the seven archangels sent by the authorities saw Eve speaking with Adam, they said to one another:

What is this (female) light-being? For truly she is like the likeness which appeared to us in the light. Now come, let us seize her and let us cast our seed (σπέρμα) on her, so that when she is polluted she will not be able to ascend to her light, but those whom she will beget will serve us (ὑποτάσσεσθαι). (116:13–19)

As told here, the myth is significantly different from the version in *Hyp. Arch.*,²⁹ for the authorities were not simply moved by their lustful love for Eve. Since they realized with awe that Adam and Eve had been granted life (i.e., spirit) by the power on high, they intended to use this lust in their mischievous plan,³⁰ to maintain their domination over mankind. Indeed Eve was Zoe (life), Sophia's daughter, whom her mother sent as an instructor to Adam in order to awaken him and to give him a soul, which would turn his offspring into vessels of light (*Orig. World* 115:31–36). To oppose Eve's awakening of Adam (116:1–5),³¹ the authorities again tried to make him sleep.

But here, too, Eve succeeded in foiling the plot:

Then (the Life-) Eve, since she existed as a power (δύναμις), laughed at their intention (γνώμη). She darkened their eyes and left her likeness there stealthily beside Adam. She entered the tree of knowledge and remained there. (*Orig. World* 116:25–29)³²

It should be pointed out that since Eve escaped the rapist demiurge by disobeying his order to stay away from the tree, her biblical "fall" can in no way be related to the origin of evil.³³

²⁸On Gnostic docetic attitudes, see U. Bianchi, "Docetism. A Peculiar Theory about the Ambivalence of the Presence of the Divine," in his *Selected Essays on Gnosticism, Dualism and Mysticism* (Suppl. to *Numen* 38; Leiden: Brill, 1978), 303–311.

²⁹This difference was not noted by Tardieu, who claims that "the two texts mean one and the same thing" (*Trois Mythes*, 130).

³⁰See also the quotation from the *Book of Demands* (*supra*): "so that she [Eve] would not go to Adam."

³¹Sleep is a symbol of death, matter, and ignorance. See G. W. MacRae, "Sleep and Awakening in Gnostic Texts," *Le origini*, 496–507. Cf. Nock-Festugière, *CH*, I, n. 44, p. 22.

³²Cf. *Hyp. Arch.* 89:25 and n. 27 *supra*. A *dynamis* is a heavenly figure. See Bauer's *Lexicon*, s.v. *δύναμις*. Cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I.15.6 (I, 155–156 Harvey), where the Christian hymn against Marcos claimed that through Azazel, "the angelic *dynamis*," his father Satan permitted him to accomplish his evil deeds.

³³See also Justin's *Baruch* (n. 20 *supra*), where the tree of knowledge was identified with Naas, the biblical serpent who became the third angel of Edem. The inversion process is

By this stratagem, Eve was able to escape the followers of Sammael, "the blind one" *par excellence* according to a traditional etymology harking back to Jewish sources.³⁴ These handicapped archons could not really see her, but only her shadowy likeness, which they mistook for her true nature. Thus,

They were troubled, thinking that this was the true Eve. And they acted recklessly, and came to her and seized her and cast their seed upon her. (*Orig. World* 117:1–4)

As a consequence of the rape, Eve's likeness "first conceived Abel from the first archon; and she bore the rest of the sons from the seven authorities and their angels" (117:15–18). Surprisingly enough, this text not only fails to mention Cain, it implies that Eve had seven other sons, from Yaldabaoth's seven sons (101:24–25).³⁵ The singling out of Abel as the son of the first archon is not quite clear. It may somehow be related to the "Cainite" theologoumenon reported by Pseudo-Tertullian, according to which Abel was created by "an inferior being."³⁶ Indeed, in "Cainite" contexts, with their thoroughgoing "inversion" of the biblical text, Cain is more valued than his brother on the basis of an overly literal exegesis of Gen 4:1b: "She [i.e. Eve] conceived and bore Cain and she said: 'I got a man from the Lord.'"³⁷ The same view of Cain's conception is found in Marcionite theology.³⁷

Irenaeus related the myth in the following way: "The jealous Yaldabaoth wanted a plan for depriving man [of the moist nature of light] through woman, and from his own desire he brought forth a woman whom Prunikos [= Sophia] took and invisibly deprived of power. The others [*reliques*; presumably the other archons] came and admired her beauty, and called her Eve; they desired her and from her generated sons

more thoroughly developed in Naassene theology, where the serpent became good. See the discussion in Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 92–94.

³⁴According to this exegetical etymology, "Sammael" is derived from Aramaic סומא (= blind). Sammael appears in both *Hyp. Arch.* 87:3–4; 94:25–26 and *Orig. World* 103:18, where he is also called Yaldabaoth. On his birth and his nature, see *Orig. World* 100:1–26. Cf. Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, III.39, where Simon Magus taught that Adam, created in the image of the biblical God, was born blind. This is based upon an exegesis of Gen 3:5–7. B. Barc has argued that the figure of Sammael, which already occurs in *Ascens. Isaiah* 1:11; 2:1, originated in the *semel haqin'a* of Ezek 8:3–6; see the introduction to his *L'Hypostase des Archontes* (BCNH; Textes 5; Québec-Louvain: Presses de l'Univ. Laval-Peeters, 1980), 34–35, and his "Samaël-Saklas-Yaldabaoth. Recherche sur l'origine d'un mythe gnostique," in *Colloque international sur les textes de Nag Hammadi* (BCNH; Etudes 1; Québec-Louvain: Presses de l'Univ. Laval-Peeters, 1981), 123–150.

³⁵In *Hyp. Arch.* 91:11–14, Cain seems to be the son of the authorities, while Abel is the son of Adam; see Layton's commentary, *HTR* 69 (1976), 60, n. 84. See also *Apoc. Adam* 66:26–28, where the corrupt text is partly reconstructed by MacRae, but the identity of the son of Eve and Sakla remains unclear.

³⁶2, 217 Kroymann.

³⁷On Cainite theology, see Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I.31.1 (I, 241–242 Harvey). For Marcion, see *ibid.*, I.27.2 (I, 218 Harvey).

who are called angels.”³⁸ Here Eve, who is evil, did not escape the archons. Once deprived of power, however, she was identical to the shadowy Eve in *Orig. World*. The archons, seduced by the carnal Eve’s beauty, behaved like the Sons of God in Gen 6:2 and generated angels just as the latter had generated giants. To the seven sons of Eve by the demiurge, who ruled the seven planets, the Sethians opposed the seven *Allogeneis*, the mythical sons of Seth.

In these last versions of the myth, there is no “fall” of Eve in the Christian, metaphorical use of the word, which implies sin and/or guilt. The spiritual Eve deliberately surrendered her shadowy likeness to the archons in order that she herself become the pure “Mother of Life.” Her spiritual figure thus probably lies at the origin of the “Mother on High,” or, simply “the Mother,” who appears in many of the heresiologists’ reports. This Mother stands in opposition to “the first mother,” who is the demiurge’s mate:

Now all this [Eve’s rape] came to pass according to the will of the First Father (**αρχιγενετωρ*), so that the first mother might beget within herself every mixed seed which is joined together (*ἀρμόζειν*) with the Fate (*είμαρμένη*) of the world. (*Orig. World* 117:18–23)³⁹

The various aspects and the ambiguity of Eve in these texts (as both soiled and pure, giver of life and cause of death) have been thoroughly analyzed by Tardieu⁴⁰ and need not be dealt with here. For the purpose of our study, it is sufficient to emphasize the way in which the text integrated the two interpretations: Eve’s rape by the evil powers and her escape from their lust.

Eve and the Serpent

Although the mythologoumenon of Eve’s sexual relationships with the demiurge did not originate with Valentinianism, it was integrated into Valentinian theology in a peculiar way. Thus in the *Extracts of Heracleon*, the material ones (*choïkoi*) “have the devil for father” and are the children neither of Abraham nor of God (the passage is an exegesis of John 8:44).⁴¹ More precisely, the *choïkoi* were sons of the Devil by nature, while the *psychikoi* were his sons only by intent.⁴² In the words of Theodotus, there were the sons of Cain and Abel respectively, while the *pneumatikoi*, the Gnostics by nature, were the sons of Seth.⁴³ Similarly, in *Gos*.

³⁸ *Adv. Haer.* I.30.7 (I, 233–234 Harvey).

³⁹ See *Orig. World* 113:5–10: “All this happened according to the *πρόνοια* of Pistis . . .”; *Hyp. Arch.* 88:9–10: “All these things happened according to the will of the Father of All.” See also Yaldabaoth’s role in Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I.30.8 (I, 234 Harvey).

⁴⁰ *Trois Mythes*; see particularly Eve’s hymn in *Orig. World* 114:4.

⁴¹ Fragment 44, in Origen, *Com. in Ioh.* XX.20 (83 Völker).

⁴² Fragment 46, in Origen, *Com. in Ioh.* XX.24 (83–84 Völker).

⁴³ *Extr. Theod.* 54.1 (170 Sagnard).

Phil. 61:5–7, Cain was the son of the serpent: “First adultery came into being, afterward murder. and he was begotten in adultery, for he was the child of the serpent.” This conception was systematically integrated to the soteriological process in *Gos. Phil.* Mary was, in a sense, the anti-Eve, “the virgin whom no power defiled” (55:27–31). She united not with the serpent, but with the Father of everything, so that Christ “was born from a virgin to rectify the fall which occurred in the beginning” (71:3–21).

In *Val. Exp.* 38:22–27, both Cain and Abel were said to be sons of the Devil. The same theme also appeared in later dualist systems such as Manichaeism and Bogomilism. According to the *Interrogatio Iohannis* (a work of Bogomil inspiration later imported from Bulgaria by the Cathar Bishop Nazarios), for instance, the Devil was the *initiator peccati*. Through various means and in the guise of the serpent, he united with Eve and impregnated her with both Cain and his twin sister Kalomena (or Kalmena). He then poured lust “on the head of the angel who was in Adam.” Adam then impregnated Eve with Abel, who was killed by Cain as soon as he was born.⁴⁴

The same themes that we have followed in Gnostic literature also occur in some rabbinic texts mentioning Eve’s sexual relations with Satan or the serpent. The evidence suggests that this theme originated in Judaism.⁴⁵ Actually, the theological questions raised both by the serpent’s seduction of Eve and by the birth of the murderer Cain are far from confined to Gnosticism. Even before the Gnostics, Jews could have combined these two questions into one by arguing that the serpent (or Satan) was directly responsible for Cain’s birth (but not Abel’s!), for he himself had had sexual relations with Eve. This Jewish conception already occurred in the Gospel of John 8:44: “You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning.”⁴⁶ Like the seduction of the women by the angels, this theme was probably borrowed from Jewish traditions. In rabbinic Judaism, such traditions

⁴⁴Puech has collected the relevant sources in his book, written in collaboration with A. Vaillant, *Le traité contre les Bogomiles de Cosmas le Prêtre* (Travaux publiés par l’Institut d’Etudes Slaves 21; Paris: Droz, 1945). See the edition of A. Reitzenstein (in collaboration with L. Troje) of the *Interrogatio Iohannis*, in his *Vorgeschichte der christliche Taufe* (Leipzig–Berlin: Teubner, 1929), 297–311, esp. 301–302. The text is quoted by Puech, *ibid.*, 201; he refers to parallels from the heresiological literature on Audians and Archontics (*ibid.*, 339 and nn. 2, 3) but nevertheless regards Manichaeism as the more probable source of Bogomil speculation. See now the new ed., trad., and comment. of E. Bozoki, *Le livre secret des Cathares, Interrogatio Iohannis, Apocryphe d’origine bogomile* (Textes, dossiers, documents 2; Paris: Beauchesne, 1980).

⁴⁵For a similar argument, based upon a detailed analysis of the role of the serpent of Genesis in Jewish and Gnostic texts, see B. A. Pearson, “Jewish Haggadic Traditions in the *Testimony of Truth* (CG IX, 3),” “*Ex Orbe Religionum*”: *Studia Geo Widengren Oblata*, 1 (Suppl. to *Numen* 21; Leiden: Brill, 1972), 457–470. But see doubts raised by A. Henrichs, in W. Wuellner, ed., *Jewish Gnostic Nag Hammadi Texts*, 8–14.

⁴⁶On the background and the implications of this verse, see N. Dahl, “Der Erstgeborene Satans und der Vater des Teufels (Polyk. 7:1 und John. 8:44),” *Apophoreta: Festschrift für Ernst Haenschen* (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1964), 70–84.

appeared in different *midrashim*. In Gnosticism, however, they gained a higher status, as it were, and became integrated into an etiological myth.

Hyp. Arch. 89:31–32 states, “Then the Female Spiritual Principle came (in) the Snake, the Instructor.” We have here (partly obscured, since Eve’s name is not mentioned) what must originally have been a pun in Aramaic on the words Eve (חווה), the snake (חויא), and the instructor (*חווה, or rather מַחווה).⁴⁷ The same pun is known from rabbinic sources, where it seems to have originated, but with a very different meaning. While in *Hyp. Arch.* the snake is the instructor of Gnosis, the rabbis considered him to have taught Eve the evil ways of lust.

And Adam knew . . . [Gen 4:1]: R. Huna and R. Jacob in the name of R. Abba: he knew what his serpent (חוייה) [i.e., Eve, his tempter] had done to him. R. Aha added: The serpent was your serpent, and you were Adam’s serpent (חוייה חויך ואת חוייה דאדם).⁴⁸ (*Gen. Rab.* 22.2; 204–205 Theodor)

Another explanation of Eve’s name is the following:

Adam called his wife Eve [Gen 3:20]. She was given (to him) as an adviser, and he showed her (חוייה ליה) how many generations she had destroyed. (*Gen. Rab.* 20.11; 195 Theodor)

These passages should be read in the context of similar Jewish traditions. Already in targumic literature, the sexual relations between Eve and Sammael were mentioned, e.g., in Pseudo-Jonathan:

And Adam knew that Eve (ידע ית חווה) his wife had conceived from Sammael, the angel of the Lord, and she became pregnant and bore Cain (וילידת ית קין), and he was like those on high, not like those below; and she said: “I have acquired the angel of the Lord as a man.”⁴⁹

The Targum here interprets the two particles את (Aramaic ית) in Gen 4:1. The difficulty—how can Eve acquire a man from (את) the Lord immediately after Adam is said to have known (ידע את) her?—is removed if the

⁴⁷See Layton’s commentary on *Hyp. Arch.*, 55 n. 57. See also *Orig. World* 113:32–33: “But the Hebrews call his mother Eve of life, i.e. ‘the instructor of life.’” What we have here is a double pun, since it also plays upon the biblical etymology of Eve’s name, “mother of all living” (Gen 3:20). In *Orig. World* 113:21–34, the birth of the instructor (πρεφταμο) in the form of a drop of light on the water sent by Sophia is described. This drop of light took the shape of a woman’s body, and the woman was called by the Hebrews “Eve of life” (עַוְלַת חַיָּה), i.e., the instructor of life (πρεφταμο . . . מוֹלֵדַת חַיָּה). On this passage see Böhlig’s note in his edition of the text, 72–74. Cf. *Orig. World* 104:28–31, where the daughter of Pistis is called Zoë.

⁴⁸Trans. H. Freedman, in *Midrash Rabbah I* (London: Soncino, 1939), 180.

⁴⁹Gen 4:1 in D. Rieder, ed., *Targum Jonathan Ben Uziel* (Jerusalem, 1974). On the Satanic origins of Cain in rabbinic literature, see further J. Bowker, *Targums and Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), 132.

first particle introduces a clause rather than the direct object of the verb. The second **את**, on the other hand, is taken as indicating the direct object. It follows that Cain is the son of an evil angel; like his father, he is described as having a heavenly appearance.

The same pattern of exegesis is found in later rabbinic texts, where Sammael is associated with the snake. *Pirque R. El.*, for instance, offers:

[Sammael] riding on the serpent came to her, and she conceived; afterwards Adam came to her, and she conceived Abel, as it is said: "And Adam knew his wife" [Gen 4:1]. What is the meaning of "knew"? [He knew] that she had conceived and she saw his likeness that it was not of the earthly beings, but of the heavenly beings, and she prophesied and said: "I have gotten a man with the Lord" [Gen 4:1].⁵⁰

The theme of Eve's intercourse with the serpent is expressed elsewhere in an even cruder way, very reminiscent of the Gnostic texts; like them, it describes rape rather than adultery. This tradition is based upon an exegesis of Gen 3:13 ("And the woman said: the snake tempted me [**השיאני**] and I ate"), where **הנהש השיאני** is understood as "the snake seduced me." This verse thus means "the serpent came upon Eve and threw impurity [i.e., semen] in her."⁵¹ In both Jewish and Gnostic contexts, Sammael appears as the villain, identified with Satan in the Jewish traditions and with the chief archon in the Gnostic ones. *Ap. John* 59:15–18, for instance, specifies, "This archon who was weak had three names: the first is Yaldabaoth; the second is Saklas; the third is Sammael."⁵²

The parallelisms in the texts quoted above thus reveal the existence of definite links between the Jewish and the Gnostic versions of Eve's adultery and/or seduction. As to the direction of this influence, the linguistic arguments support a Jewish influence on the Gnostic texts. Such a hypothesis does not, of course, imply that the redactor of *Hyp. Arch.* knew the pun in its original context. It does suggest, however, that in the

⁵⁰140–141 Higger. See chap. I, n. 33 *supra*; pp. 150–151 in Friedländer's trans. Cf. *Pal. Targs.* on Gen 4:1, *Midr. Haggadol* on Genesis, 112 (ed. Margalioth; Jerusalem: Mossad haRav Kook, 1947); *Zohar* I.31a, 54b; III.117a. For the related but more general theme of Eve's relations with male spirits (as well as Adam's relations with female spirits), see *Gen. Rab.* 20.11, 24.6 (195, 236 Theodor), *b. Erub.* 18b; *Tan. B.* I, 20; and *Zohar* I, 54b; III, 76b. See *Pirque R. El.* 14 (110 Higger) for a description of the fall of Sammael and his acolytes from their holy abode in heaven. *Pirque R. El.* is dependent there on *Adam and Eve*; cf. I. Levi in *REJ* 18, 86ff., and Ginzberg, *Legends*, V, 114 n. 106. This fall from heaven is somewhat similar to the fall of Truth, which was also ordered by God since it opposed the creation of man. In *Pirque R. El.*, Sammael voluntarily went down from heaven in order to work evil deeds with the help of the snake (105 Higger). Further research might reveal connections between these themes and the Gnostic fall of Sophia.

⁵¹*b. Sabb.* 145b–146a; *b. Yebam.* 103b (in the name of R. Yoḥanan); *b. Abod. Zar.* 22b. See also *Gen. Rab.* 19:13 (182 Theodor, as well as Theodor's notes there on **השיאני** meaning sexual intercourse).

⁵²See Barc, "Sammael-Saklas-Yaldabaoth," and G. Scholem, "Jaldabaoth Reconsidered," in *Mélanges d'histoire des religions offerts à H.-C. Puech* (Paris: PUF, 1974), 405–421.

Gnostic milieu where *Hyp. Arch.* originated, there was some knowledge of rabbinic exegesis—knowledge which could have hardly reached these milieus through non-Jews. Moreover, the myth of Eve's sexual relations with the serpent does not seem to have been widely known in early Christian literature, a fact which strengthens the hypothesis of Jewish influence on the Gnostic mythologoumena. Although the rabbinic texts were probably redacted at a later date than the Greek or Aramaic *Vorlage* of the Gnostic texts, a previous oral tradition may be assumed. The evidence of the Targum—and of the Gospel of John—reflects the early date of the original Jewish exegetical traditions. Moreover, it is easier to understand Gnostics attributing previously known legends about the serpent to the demiurge, than to imagine rabbis integrating scandalous Gnostic sayings about God the Creator into their own thought simply by transferring them to Satan or the serpent. It is thus reasonable to see in the Gnostic texts the radicalization of Jewish conceptions.

Birth of Cain and of Seth

While *Ap. John* (24:32–34) hypostasized Cain and Abel into Elohim and Jahwe, the archons who are “over principalities (ἀρχή) so that they rule over the tomb,”⁵³ it described the conception and birth of Seth in a very different fashion:

And when Adam recognized the likeness of his own foreknowledge (πρόγνωσις), he begot the likeness of the son of man. He called him Seth according to the way of the race in the aeons. Likewise the Mother also sent down her spirit which is in her likeness and a reflection (ἀντίτυπος) of those who are in the pleroma, for she will prepare a dwelling-place for the aeons which will come down. (*Ap. John* 24:34–25:7)⁵⁴

Commenting on this passage, G. MacRae⁵⁵ states that it “explicitly associates the human Seth with the heavenly Seth mentioned in an earlier phase of the myth (9:11–17; BG, 35:20–36:7). The ‘son of man’ is of course the celestial son of the heavenly Adam, but it may also be an interpretation of Gen 5:3.” MacRae then connects this text with *Apoc. Adam* 65:5–9, where Adam declares to Seth, “For this reason I myself have called you by the name of that man who is the seed of the great generation or from whom (it comes).”

⁵³I.e., the bodies of later generations. See Giversen, *Apocryphon Johannis*, 264.

⁵⁴Giversen's translation (*ibid.*, 95), “He called him ‘Seth’ as among the generation of aeons,” is inadequate. The shorter recension of *Ap. John* mentions Seth's birth only briefly (BG, 63:12–14). On Gnostic conceptions of anthropogony, see H. M. Schenke, *Der Gott ‘Mensch’ in der Gnosis: ein religionsgeschichtlicher Beitrag zur Diskussion über die paulinische Anschauung von der Kirche als Leib Christi* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), *passim*.

⁵⁵“Seth in Gnostic Texts and Traditions,” 19.

We have seen that the genealogy of Cain was problematic for Gnostic as well as for Jewish theology. The opposition of Abel to Cain is so clearly expressed in the Bible that it did not generate particularly difficult questions in the exegesis of the first chapters of Genesis. Indeed, most of the rich midrashic developments on the relationships between these two figures are rather predictable.⁵⁶ While Abel was opposed to his brother Cain (Gen 4:2: "And again, she bore his brother Abel"), he was also associated with Seth in a way that stressed the difference between the two brothers. At Seth's birth, Eve said, "God has appointed for me another child instead of Abel, for Cain slew him" (Gen 4:25b). This fact—together with the assumption that Abel died without offspring and was thus almost irrelevant to later *Heilsgeschichte*—may account for the ambivalence of the Gnostic sources towards him; sometimes Cain alone was described as being born from Sammael, while in other texts his brother was granted the same satanic fatherhood.

In order to understand the basis for the Gnostic exegesis of the antagonism between Cain (or Cain and Abel) and Seth, I wish to offer the following hypothesis. We have already noted the Jewish exegesis of Gen 4:1b: "and she [Eve] conceived and bore Cain, saying: 'I acquired a man from the Lord.'"⁵⁷ Yet this verse must have been read by Jews in connection with the two verses recounting Seth's birth:

And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said: "God has appointed for me another seed⁵⁸ instead of Abel, for Cain slew him." (Gen 4:25)

When Adam had lived a hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, after his image⁵⁹ and named him Seth. (Gen 5:3)

Now any reasonably alert reader of Genesis would obviously relate this last verse to Gen 1:26a: "Then God said 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.'"⁶⁰ Therefore, when the Gnostics came to meditate

⁵⁶For these, see V. Aptowitzer, *Kain und Abel in der Aggada, den Apokryphen, der hellenistischen, christlichen und muhammedanischen Literatur* (Veröffentlichungen der Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation I; Vienna: Löwit, 1922).

⁵⁷The Hebrew reads קניתי איש את ה'. The ambiguity has disappeared in the LXX: ἐκτίσαμεν ἄνθρωπον διὰ τοῦ θεοῦ.

⁵⁸זרע אחר; LXX: σπέρμα ἕτερον.

⁵⁹בצלמותו; LXX: κατὰ τὴν ἰδέαν αὐτοῦ καὶ κατὰ τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ.

⁶⁰בצלמותנו; LXX: κατ' εἰκόνα ἡμετέραι καὶ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν. For a medieval formulation of the problem, see, for instance, Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, I, 7, for whom "in his likeness" refers to understanding, which is human perfection. (S. Pines, trans. [Chicago-London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1963], 32-33.) He adds that Adam's children born before Seth were animals having the shape of men, an apparently new (philosophical) synthesis between two traditions. According to the first one, embodied in *Pal. Tgs.* to Gen 5:5; *b. Erub.* 18b or *Pirke R. El.* 22, Adam's first two sons were not created in his own image. The second tradition is preserved in *Gen. Rab.* 23:6 and 24:6 (227, 235 Theodor). The latter *midrash*, commenting on Gen 5:1, notes that "the generations of Adam" included only Adam, Seth, and Enosh, since these were the only generations "in the likeness and

upon this cluster of verses and the problem of man's nature and origin, four potential interpretations confronted them. I do not wish to claim that the Gnostics consciously developed sophisticated exegeses directly from this cluster of verses but rather that some of their basic theologoumena cannot be understood properly without presupposing a certain familiarity, on their part, with Jewish exegetical traditions.

(1) Gen 4:1b could be interpreted as meaning that Cain was the son of Sammael and Eve. Since Abel was often seen in the same light as his brother Cain, Seth would thus be *Adam's* first son. This was the solution adopted by the Archontics described by Epiphanius.⁶¹ The utterly antinomian "Cainites" also adopted this view, but with a twist; the Tetragrammaton in Gen 4:1 was not understood by them as referring to the lesser deity (the demiurge, Sammael), but rather—as in Jewish or Christian exegesis—to the supreme Lord God, thus giving Cain divine ancestry.⁶² Typologically, at least, this radical reinterpretation of the biblical text was a further development and may reflect a later stage of Gnostic thought.

(2) Another exegesis might have appealed to Gnostics who either did not know or did not accept the Jewish *midrash* according to which Sammael (or the snake) was Cain's father. They would have taken for granted that Cain was Adam's son and thus interpreted "another seed" in Gen 4:25 as meaning that Seth's father was the heavenly, not the earthly, Adam.⁶³ The celestial paternity of Seth would imply that he was the bearer

image," and that later generations were Centaurs and apes. Although this *midrash* does not speak about Cain and implies a myth of "golden origins," it would still have been suggestive to Maimonides in the sense that it described some of the earliest generations as other than human beings.

⁶¹ *Pan.* 40.7.1 (II, 87 Holt).

⁶² See Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.31.1 (I, 241 Harvey): "Alii autem rursus Cain a superiore principalitate [Theodoret: ἐκ τῆς ἁνω ἀνθερείας] dicunt."

⁶³ For the identification of the higher God with the Primordial *Anthropos* in Gnostic thought, see Schenke, *Der Gott "Mensch"*, *passim*. The heavenly figure of (ΠΙ)ΓΕΡΑΔΑΜΑΣ, which appears in some Gnostic texts (*Ap. John* 8:24; *Steles Seth* 118:26; *Zost.* 6:23; 13:16; 51:7; *Melch.* 8:6) is probably a Greek rendering (ὁ γεραιὸς ἄδαμας) of *adam qadmon*, a figure well known in medieval kabbalistic Hebrew texts. For a listing of all various suggestions, see B. A. Pearson, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codices IX and X* (NHS 15; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 36–37; cf. G. Quispel, "Ezekiel 1:26 in Jewish Mysticism and Gnosis," *VC* 34 (1980), 4; see also Schenke and Böhlig, in Layton, ed., *Rediscovery*, II, 604, n. 17 and 646, n. 44 respectively.

Similarly, further research might discover some links between the Gnostic and the Jewish figures of the heavenly Eve. See for instance, puzzling texts in *Gen. Rab.* 22:7: "Judah b. Rabbi said: Their [Cain's and Abel's] quarrel was about 'the first Eve.' Said R. Aibu: The first Eve had returned to dust" (213 Theodor). And *ibid.* 18.4: "And Adam said [Gen 2:23]: 'This at last is bone of my bones. . . .' R. Judah b. Rabbi said: God had first created her for him, but seeing her covered with discharge and blood, took her away and created her a second time. This is why Adam said: 'This at last is bone of my bones. . . .'" (163–164 Theodor). Ginzberg (*Legends*, V, 87, n. 57) points out that the first passage is "somehow related to the Gnostic doctrine concerning the first mother Sophia Prunicus," referring to E. Preuschen, "Die gnostischen Adamschriften," 60ff., 78ff. See also J. Dreyfus, *Adam und Eva nach den Auffassung des Midrasch* (Diss. Strasbourg, 1894; *non vidi*).

of the divine principle. This is what the Sethians taught, according to Epiphanius. After begetting Cain and his family, Eve repented, united with the heavenly Father, and begat Seth, the pure seed from which all humanity came.⁶⁴

(3) The attribution of Seth's paternity to the divine principle extant in Adam would not preclude seeing the chief archon as the father of Cain (and Abel). On the contrary, such a combination of the two themes would further emphasize the difference between Seth and Cain. This is the solution adopted in *Hyp. Arch.* (91:11–12), where Cain is said to be the archons' son: "Now afterwards, she bore Cain their son."⁶⁵

Seth's birth is related in the following way:

And Adam [knew] his female counterpart Eve, and she became pregnant, and bore [Seth] to Adam. And she said, "I have borne [another] man through God,⁶⁶ in place [of Abel]." (*Hyp. Arch.* 91:30–33)

Layton remarks: "Through God: i.e., by the providence of the Father of the Entirety,"⁶⁷ while MacRae notes that the passage remains quite close to Gen 4:25.⁶⁸ Yet "through God" is probably a rendering of the LXX version of Gen 4:1b (διὰ τοῦ θεοῦ). According to this exegesis, it was Seth, not Cain, whose birth owed something to God's help. Gen 5:3 was linked with Gen 1:26; so that Seth was considered to be "in the likeness and after the image" not of Adam, but directly of God.

A particularly difficult passage is found in *Orig. World* 114:14–15. In the declamatory hymn, Eve's heavenly counterpart ("the first Virgin"), sings, "I have borne a lordly man." This son of the primordial Eve is also referred to in the text as a "lord" whom the authorities called "the beast" (θηρίον) (*Orig. World* 113:34–114:1). A. Böhlig has pointed out that this reflects a play on words in Aramaic (beast = *hywah*).⁶⁹ The identity of this son, however, remains unclear. He might be a counterpart of Cain. Since κύριος renders the Tetragrammaton in the LXX, the expression "I have borne a lordly man" (. . . <α>ζιχπε οὐρῶμε νχοεic) might reflect Gen 4:1b; but it could also indicate a counterpart of Seth, since Gen 4:1b could be interpreted as referring to him. Incidentally, the only son of Eve mentioned by name in *Orig. World* is Abel: "She conceived Abel first from the prime ruler; and she bore the rest of her sons from the seven authorities and their angels" (117:15–18).

⁶⁴ *Pan., Anakephalaiosis.*

⁶⁵ ΠΟΥΨΗΡΕ. See Layton's commentary, 60, n. 84. Krause's emendation to "her son" is not necessary.

⁶⁶ αἰχπο ν[κε]ρῶμε ζμ πνούτε.

⁶⁷ Layton, commentary, 61, n. 94.

⁶⁸ "Seth in Gnostic Texts and Traditions," 19.

⁶⁹ In the commentary to his edition, p. 74.

(4) A fourth possibility of separating Seth's generation from that of his brothers entailed a forced exegesis of Gen 5:3. Since Seth's mother is not explicitly mentioned in this verse, Eve's role in Seth's birth could simply be erased or unrecorded, as is the case in Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* I.30.9), where the "other" Gnostics (identified by Theodoret as Sethians) related how Seth, and then Norea, were conceived "by the providence of Prunikos."⁷⁰

The following table summarizes these various possibilities of parentage for Cain and Seth.

	CAIN	SETH
(1)	Sammael	Adam
(2)	Adam	God
(3)	Sammael	God
(4)	earthly Eve	Prunikos

With the introduction of the heavenly prototypes of Adam and Eve and with the direct involvement of God or of Pronoia in the conception and birth of Seth, Gnostic thought escaped the limitations inherent in traditional exegesis. It created a new ontological level, building a pantheon of heavenly figures in order to solve the problem of human genealogy. This seems to me to be the background for the emergence of the concept of the heavenly counterpart of Seth.

Norea

We have studied the Gnostic texts which describe how Eve finally succeeded in escaping from the archons' clutches (and could then unite with

⁷⁰"secundum providentiam Prunici dicunt generatum Seth, post Noream." But see MacRae, "Seth in Gnostic Texts and Traditions," who argues that since the *alii* report that from Seth (and Norea) "the rest of the human multitude is descended" (I, 236 Harvey), and since they do not present Seth as the father only of the Gnostics, as opposed to the rest of mankind, "it is doubtful that Theodoret's identification of the 'others' with Sethians is appropriate." Indeed such an approach of Seth as the second father of mankind could have established itself on the basis of Genesis 5, where the first generations of mankind are recounted, again with no mention of Cain or Abel. Nevertheless, it remains doubtful that any Gnostic sect could have thought that Seth was the forefather of all men (and that Cain's offspring disappeared). I suggest therefore that Irenaeus's text does not here represent adequately the views of the "other" Gnostics, either because of a corruption in textual transmission or of Irenaeus's misunderstanding. This conjecture is strengthened by a similar error in the text of *Pirqe R. El.* 22 (145 Higger). While the Vulgate text reads, "R. Simeon said: From Seth arose and were descended all the creatures, and the generations of the righteous (כל הבריות וכל דורות הצדיקים)," new manuscript evidence led Horowitz, Friedländer, and Higger to suppress "all the creatures." See the facsimile of Horowitz's manuscript edition (Jerusalem: Maqor, 1972).

Adam). Yet Eve was not the only woman to escape from the rapist archons, indeed, the Gnostic texts seem to present her case as the first in a series exhibiting the same pattern. The other most famous heroine of this Gnostic myth is the Norea mentioned by Irenaeus and presented by him as Seth's sister. The same figure also appears—sometimes under the name Horaia, Noria, or even Nora—in other reports of the heresiologists. For the Sethians, according to Epiphanius, she was Seth's wife,⁷¹ while for the Nicolaitans (again according to Epiphanius) she was Noah's wife.⁷² Moreover, Norea played a major role in *Hyp. Arch.* and in *Norea*, and "the first book of Noraia" is mentioned in *Orig. World* 102:10–11.

In earlier scholarship, the most commonly suggested etymology for this strange figure ("of whom nothing is known," according to Harvey⁷³) derives her name from the Hebrew *na'arah* ("maiden").⁷⁴ Recent studies, however, have come to recognize in her a kind of female counterpart of Seth and a major salvific figure in Gnostic mythology.

For Judaism as well as for Gnosticism, the offspring of the first few generations raised a theological problem, since the sons of Adam and Eve had to marry their sisters, who were not mentioned in the Bible. Various traditions, stemming from pseudepigraphic literature, were developed about these sister-wives, who were said to have been born as the twin sisters of Cain, Abel, and Seth. As Seth's sister, Norea has been compared to Sophia (Prunikos), Jesus's sister in christianized Gnostic trends.⁷⁵

The Gnostic texts generally present Norea as the pure Eve's untainted or virgin daughter, who underwent an experience similar to that of her mother at the hands of the evil archons and their leader. This is how *Hyp. Arch.* 92:18–93:1 describes the event:

The Rulers went to meet her intending to lead her astray. Their supreme chief said to her: "Your mother Eve came to us." But Norea turned to them and said to them: "It is you who are the Rulers of the Darkness; you are accursed. And you did not know my mother; instead it was your female counterpart that you knew. For I am not your descendent; rather it is from the world above that I am come." The arrogant Ruler turned, with all his might, [and] his countenance came to be like (a) black [. . .]; he said to her presumptuously, "You must render service to us,⁷⁶ [as did] also your mother Eve, for [. . .]. But Norea turned, with the might of [. . .]; and in a

⁷¹*Pan.* 39.5.2 (II, 75 Holl): γυναῖκά τινα Ὠραίαν λέγουσιν εἶναι τοῦ Σήθ. See *Gen. Rab.* 22, 2; 61.4 (205 and 662 Theodor); *b. Yeb.* 62a; *b. Sanh.* 58b; *Pirqe R. El.* 21 (141 Higger); *Midr. Haggadol* on Genesis (113 Margalioth). One of these traditions attributes Cain's quarrel with Abel to the former's desire for Abel's twin sister. An echo of this legend is found in Ibn al-Nadīm's account of Manichaean anthropogony in his *Fihrist*; see chap. VIII *infra*.

⁷²*Pan.* 26.1.3–26.2.1.

⁷³In his edition of Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I, 236, n. 2.

⁷⁴E.g., Bousset, *Hauptprobleme*, 14, n. 2.

⁷⁵A. Orbe, "Sophia Soror," in *Mélanges d'histoire des religions offerts à H.-C. Puech* (Paris: PUF, 1974), 355ff.

⁷⁶I.e., "You must sleep with us." See n. 26 *supra*.

loud voice [she] cried out (up to) the Holy One, the God of the Entirety, "Rescue me (βοηθεῖν) from the Ruler of Unrighteousness and save me from them forthwith!"

In answer to her call, Eleleth, "the holy (or the great) angel," who is one of the four Light-Givers,⁷⁷ saved her and taught her the secrets of Gnosis, which she was then able to transmit to later generations of the elect.

The means of her salvation by Eleleth is not described here, but in *Norea* 27:11–29:5, she is said to have been brought to the heavenly Pleroma by the "four holy helpers." In this manner, Norea remained "the virgin whom the Forces did not defile," so that her mother could describe her as "a virgin (παρθένος)," as "an assistance (βοήθεια) [for] many generations of mankind" (*Hyp. Arch.* 91:35–92:2).⁷⁸ The latter epithet is reflected in the description of the Light-Givers, who saved her, as "holy helpers." The teaching of Gnosis is in and of itself salvation of the savior figure. This is the typical Gnostic pattern of the *salvator salvandus*.

Actually, the title "helper," βοηθός, occurs in other Gnostic contexts. In *Ap. John* 20:17, Epinoia, like the biblical Eve, was sent to Adam as a helper. Elsewhere, the Father is said to help the repentant soul (*Exeg. Soul* 128:33). "For I am a helper of everyone who has been given a name," states Derdekeas (*Paraph. Shem* 14:67). In *Setheus* 28:31–29:3, Gamaliel and the other guardians "gave help to those who believed in the spark of light." This help was provided only to Gnostics, as the last quotation indicates. In Justin's *Baruch*, Baruch was sent by Elohim to the help (εἰς βοήθειαν) of the spirit which is in man.⁷⁹ In christianized Gnostic texts, it is, of course, Jesus who was seen as the primary helper figure (2 *Ap. Jas.* 15:15–19, 59:23–24; *Gos. Thom.* log. 13 [35:5] should be read in the light of the latter passage).⁸⁰

⁷⁷See Layton's commentary, 66, n. 126; 67, n. 130. The origins of these four Light-Givers—whose role was to oppose the evil powers by teaching Gnosis to the elect and by saving pure women from the rapist archons—should probably be sought in the four archangels Raphael, Michael, Uriel, and Gabriel, who were sent by God (*1 Enoch* 9–10), to fight the Fallen Angels and their leaders; *Apoc. Moses* 40:1–2. These Light-Givers also appear in *Ap. John* (see Layton's commentary, n. 130) and in *Gos. Eg.* P. H. Poirier and M. Tardieu have argued for an Iranian origin ("Catégories du temps dans les écrits gnostiques non valentiniens," *Laval Théologique et Philosophique* 37 [1981], 3–13); their sophisticated argumentation, however, totally ignores the more obvious background of Jewish pseudepigraphic texts. Their suggestion to derive Eleleth's name from Aramaic *ʿillith*, "the tall one" (Greek *hypsiphronē*) is plausible; cf. 2 *Enoch* 18, where the size of the Grigori (i.e., the *egregoroi*, the *ʿirin*), is said to be "greater than that of giants." The four archangels—who are not identical with the *ʿirin* in *1 Enoch* (e.g., 40–41:2)—might therefore be related to the four Gnostic lighters, the φωστήρες. Later Jewish literature retained a trace of the four holy *ʿirin*, also called "great princes," שררים גדולים, e.g., the *Seder ʿIrin* attributed to R. Eleazar of Worms, and published by Sh. Mussajoff, *Merkavah Shelemah* (Jerusalem: Maqor, 1972²), 17.

⁷⁸Note that Eve, in LXX Gen 2:18, is called βοηθὸν κατ' αὐτόν.

⁷⁹Hippolytus, *Elenchos* V.26.22 (30 Völker).

⁸⁰See also *1 Clem.* 36.1. The epithet βοήθεια would be "translated" to Faryād and Pur-Faryād, the names of her twin avatars in the Manichaean version of the myth as reported by

As to the evil archon, Yaldabaoth-Saklas, he was punished by the God of the Entirety when an angel was sent to bind him and to cast him down into Tartaros below the Abyss (*Hyp. Arch.* 95:10–13); this is again reminiscent of the punishment of the leader of the Fallen Angels in Enochic literature. His son Sabaoth, however, is said to have repented (*Hyp. Arch.* 95:13–15),⁸¹ an act which seems to follow the pattern of the repentance of Shemhazai (one of the two leaders of the Fallen Angels) as known in the *Midrash of Shemhazai and Azael*, the medieval recension of very early traditions.⁸² But this is neither the only nor the main link between our Gnostic stories and this *midrash*. Shemhazai was said to have been attracted by a certain maiden (רִיבָה אַחַת) and he tried to seduce her. But the maiden pronounced the Tetragrammaton, which Shemhazai had revealed to her, and ascended to heaven, whereupon God turned her into a star. This maiden was named Esterah or Istahar,⁸³ or even Naamah.⁸⁴

The fullest study on the origins of the figure of Norea was offered by B. Pearson.⁸⁵ The core of his argument is that both the name and figure of the Gnostic Norea have their roots in the Jewish Naamah. Naamah is mentioned once in the Bible (Gen 4:22), as Tubal-Cain's sister—and therefore a typical Cainite. In midrashic literature, Naamah, who is said to be Noah's wife, is sometimes presented as an evil figure.⁸⁶ Pearson

Ibn al-Nadīm. See discussion in chap. VIII *infra*. For the parallel concept of "helper" in Manichaean literature, see Rudolph, *Die Gnosis*, 191–192. On the meaning of βοήθεια, βοηθεῖν in our text, see Layton's commentary, 62, n. 96; 64, n. 118.

⁸¹Cf. *Orig. World* 103:32–104:8, where Sabaoth was called "the Lord of the Forces" (104:10) when he received the light coming from Pistis Sophia and condemned his father (the darkness) and his mother (the abyss). In *Hyp. Arch.* 92:2–3, the forces were identified as the evil archons. On the repentance of Sabaoth, see F. Fallon, *The Enthronement of Sabaoth: Jewish Elements in Gnostic Creation Myths* (NHS 10; Leiden: Brill, 1978), *passim*.

⁸²This *midrash*, said to be part of the *Midr. Abkir*, is chap. 25 of the *Chronicles of Jerahmeel*; see Moses Gaster's translation (London, 1899; repr. with a prolegomenon by H. Schwartzbaum; New York: Ktav, 1971). It also appears in *Yal. Šim'oni* 44; *Midr. Berešit Rabbati* (ed. Albeck) 29, 14–31, 8; Raymond Martin, *Pugio Fidēi* (Leipzig, 1687), 937–39. For a critical edition (and a fresh translation) of this *midrash*, see Milik, *Enoch*, 321–328. There are other literary traces of the Fallen Angels in early medieval Judaism; e.g., a 10th-century Qaraite writer mentioned a Rabbinite book on Uza and 'Uziel (or 'Aziel); cited by J. Mann, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature*, II (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1935), 82.

⁸³Spelled differently in the various mss.: 'ystyrh, 'styrh, 'yslhr or 'styrh. See Milik, *Enoch*, 323.

⁸⁴*Midr. 'Ag. Ber.* on Gen 4:22. In other sources, Naamah is considered to be the seducer of the Fallen Angels. See *Midr. Haggadol* I, 118; *Yal.* 161; Rashi on *b. Yoma* 67b; and especially the developments in kabbalistic literature, *Zohar* I, 55a; III, 76b; *Zohar Ruth* 99a. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, V, 147, n. 45. I could not find the story in *Gen. Rab.* 24, as indicated by Milik, *Enoch*, 333. For a parallel story told in a Hermetic text about Isis, and its possible relationship to the Naamah/Esterah story, see chap. VII *infra*.

⁸⁵"The Figure of Norea in Gnostic Literature," in *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Gnosticism, Stockholm, August 20–25, 1973* (Filologisk-filosofiska serien 17; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1977), 143–151. A pre-publication presentation of Pearson's argument was made by Layton in his edition of *Hyp. Arch.*, 369–371.

⁸⁶The texts are cited in Pearson's article (*ibid.*). In *Gen. Rab.* 23.3 (224 Theodor), the Rabbis interpreted her name as meaning that "she was singing (*man'emet*) to the timbrel for

argues that "Naamah" was literally translated as *Ἠπαία* in Hellenistic Jewish circles, and that it is through this link that the "naughty girl" of Jewish legend was transformed by the Gnostics into a redeemer figure. Pearson, however, does not quote the *Midrash of Shemhazai and Azael*, which bears directly upon his argument, since Esterah's ascension to heaven in this *midrash* is strikingly similar to Norea's in the Gnostic texts. This *midrash* also adds new evidence to the basic argument of the present study, viz., that the traditions about the archon's deeds in Gnosticism are related to those about the sinful angels in Jewish literature. Both the Gnostic texts on Norea and the *Midrash of Shemhazai and Azael* clearly represent developments of the myth already present in the *Book of Watchers*.

Another passage, which has not previously been discussed in this context, can be adduced to prove the core of Pearson's contention definitively. It is found in the Armenian apocryphal book called the *Death of Adam*: "And after this she [Eve] bore Seth, the translation of which is 'comforter,' on account of the death of Abel, and a daughter Est'era" (v 7).⁸⁷ Neither Pearson nor Layton mention this text, while Stone, in the "Comments" to his translation of it, states, "A sister for Seth is not found in other sources."⁸⁸ Actually, Seth's sister is mentioned in *Jub.* 4:11, where she is called Azûrâ,⁸⁹ and in the *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* I:1 under the name Noaba: "Initium mundi Adam geruit tres filios et unam filiam, Cain, Noaba, Abel et Seth."⁹⁰ *Pseudo-Philo*, as this text is commonly called, is in fact a midrashic commentary on biblical history, written (originally in Hebrew) in the latter part of the 1st century C.E.

idolatry." On Naamah in this *midrash*, see my "Aḥer: a Gnostic," in Layton, ed., *Rediscovery*, II, 817–818. In the same vein, an interesting *midrash* (possibly of Jewish origin) is found in Augustine. In the fact that the Bible mentions names of women in the Cainite (but not in the Sethite) genealogy, he read an indication about the lustful nature of the members of the "earthly city." Augustine noted that the Bible concluded the list of the Cainite generations "with a woman, whose sex was responsible for initiating the sin through which we all undergo death. Moreover, a further consequence of this sin was the advent of carnal pleasure to oppose the spirit. In fact, the name of Lamech's own daughter Naamah means pleasure (Nam et ipsa filia Lamech Noemma voluptas interpretatur)" (*City of God* XV.20: 534–535 in LCL vol. 4, trans. P. Levine). A late echo of the same tradition is preserved in the Qur'ān, 66:10, where the wives of both Noah and Loth are said to have betrayed them.

⁸⁷The most recent translation is that of M. Stone, "The Death of Adam—An Armenian Adam Book," *HTR* 59 (1966), 283–291. See also *idem*, "Report on Seth Traditions in the Armenian Adam Books," in Layton, ed., *Rediscovery*, II, 459–471, esp. 469–470, where he refers to my argument here.

⁸⁸"Death of Adam," 289. This affirmation is repeated by E. Segelberg, "Old and New Testament Figures in Mandaean Versions," in S. Hartman, ed., *Syncretism* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1969), 231.

⁸⁹Prof. J. Strugnell has suggested to me that "Azûrâ" might be explained as a linguistic transformation of *ʿestyrā*.

⁹⁰I quote according to G. Kisch's edition, *Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (Publications in Medieval Studies, The University of Notre Dame, X; Notre Dame, 1949), III. In *The Chronicles of Jerahmeel* 26.1, following Pseudo-Philo, she is called Noba. The texts are reported by Pearson, "Norea," 149.

The form "Noaba" can be restored, through an easy phonetic change, to Noama/Naamah. It is therefore apparent that already before the 1st century C.E. (i.e., before the rise of Gnosticism, according to scholarly consensus), Jewish traditions identified Seth's sister as the maiden Naamah. On the other hand, the *Death of Adam* relates that Seth's sister was called Esterah, but this is also the name of the maiden who, according to the *midrash*, escapes Shemhazai. It is thus no mere coincidence that the Jewish story of Esterah (Naamah) is so similar to the Gnostic tale of Norea (Naamah); the seduction attempt was foiled in the same way: the heroine is one and the same.

The subsequent evolution of Esterah-Naamah-Norea is worth following. Islamic legends expanding upon Harūt and Mārūt (Qur'ān 2:102) are later versions of the same myth. In the Islamic texts, the pure maiden is named Anāhīd, Bīdukht, or Zukhra, and an Iranian etymology for Harūt and Mārūt is probable.⁹¹ Moreover, Father Jean de Ménasce has shown that the original legend reflects early Indian and Iranian legends about the goddess Anahita, i.e., Istahr or Venus.⁹² De Ménasce states that "In inner Asia, the Indo-Iranian legend came to merge with another cycle of stories about the fall of the angels. . . ."⁹³ De Ménasce does not specify the date of this merger, but the context implies that it happened at least a few centuries before the Christian Era. If so, the Jewish legends which developed the theme of the pure woman who had escaped the lust of the Fallen Angels⁹⁴ must have begun to circulate quite early.

In apocryphal literature, Noah is believed to have remained untouched by the corruption brought upon mankind by the sinful angels. The reason for Noah's purity was his mother Batenosh,⁹⁵ for in a generation in which women copulated with the angels, she alone stayed pure, and Noah really was Lamech's son (despite his father's original doubts).⁹⁶ Now Noah was

⁹¹See G. Vajda, "Harūt wa-Mārūt," *Encycl. Islam*² (French ed.), III, 243–244. But see Bousset, *Religion des Judentums*, 560, who calls attention to the two (positive) angelic figures Arioch and Marioch in 2 *Enoch* 33:11–12 (chap. 11:34–35 Vaillant). The same derivation is found in J. Horowitz, "Jewish Proper Names and Derivatives in the Koran," *HUCA* 2 (1925), 164–165. It is only in the Islamic texts that these two figures are identified with the leaders of the Fallen Angels.

⁹²"Une légende indo-européenne dans l'angélologie judéo-musulmane: à propos de Harūt et Mārūt," *Asiatische Studien—Etudes Asiatiques* I (1947), 10–18.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 15. On Anahita and the Gnostic and Manichaean Virgin of Light, see F. Cumont, *Recherches sur le Manichéisme*, I, *La Cosmogonie Manichéenne d'après Théodore bar Khoni* (Brussels: Lamertin, 1908), Appendix I, 54. In the wake of the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, Cumont takes the origins of the figure in Manichaeism to be Persian, despite the existence (which he notes but does not explain) of Gnostic parallels from the *Pistis Sophia*. It has also been suggested that the figure of Ishtar lies at the root of the Jewish *hokhma*; see Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity*, 198, n. 40, and E. Yamauchi, "The Descent of Ishtar, the Fall of Sophia and the Jewish Roots of Gnosticism." I am grateful to Prof. Yamauchi, who generously put the typescript of his paper at my disposal.

⁹⁴Milik's opinion (*Enoch*, 339) that the *Midrash of Shemhazai and Azazel* originated in a retroversion of the Manichaean *Book of the Giants* is far-fetched. See chap. VIII *infra*.

⁹⁵*Jub.* 4:28; *1QapGen*, col. 2.

⁹⁶*1 Enoch*, 106; *1QapGen*, col. 2:50–55. See Fitzmyer's commentary, 81–82. See chap. I, n. 23 *su ra*.

the son of the Sethite Lamech (Gen 5:28–29), while the biblical Naamah was the daughter of the Cainite Lamech (Gen 4:22). This could explain both the fact that Naamah was considered to be Noah's wife in Jewish traditions and the ambivalent attitude of these traditions toward her.⁹⁷ We therefore find the following identifications of Naamah in Jewish traditions: Noah's Cainite wife; Noah's pure wife; or Seth's pure sister/wife. Moreover, the legend about the pure woman who had escaped the lust of the angels was also attached to her name.

The shift of the figure of Norea and of the myth from Noah's generation to Seth's seems puzzling at first, but it may be explained in the context of Jewish theological thought. Noah and Seth are, in a sense, parallel heroes of the *Urzeit*. Like Seth, who is at the origin of the pure generation of mankind, Noah the Righteous renewed human history (and the transmission of the pure seed) after the flood. It is therefore not surprising to find, already in the Enochic corpus, that the older Noah saga was sometimes transformed into a Seth saga.⁹⁸ This shifting of the myth is also evident in the verse of the *Death of Adam* quoted above. Stone writes, "The etymology *comforter* for Seth is not found elsewhere, but it arises from Gen 4:25 and should be compared with *Jub* 4:7."⁹⁹ But if "comforter" is not the usual etymology for Seth,¹⁰⁰ it is the biblical one for Noah (Gen 5:29) and was taken over in apocryphal as well as in rabbinic literature.¹⁰¹ In moving from Noah's family to Seth's, Esterah took with her the attributes of her former husband; thus the etymology of Noah's name was simply transferred to Seth's.

In this respect, then, the Armenian *Death of Adam* (or, rather, its Greek or Syriac *Vorlage*) was indebted to early Jewish traditions. Nor is there any reason to think that the Armenian text is a "Sethian-Gnostic" work (as did Preuschen, its first translator).¹⁰² Legends about Seth and Adam do not in themselves constitute a criterion of "Sethianism," as Stone rightly observes.¹⁰³ A better criterion of Gnosticism is the salvific role of Seth's wife/sister and her help in the preservation of the pure seed. And in the *Death of Adam*, there is no hint whatsoever that Esterah played such a role (or any other).

Some of the early Gnostics seem to have adopted the Jewish traditions about the deeds of Naamah, Noah's wife. In the process, the meaning of these deeds was inverted, and Naamah/Norea became a heroine struggling with her evil husband. Epiphanius reported that according to the Nicolaitans, Noah would not let Norea enter the ark, since he was the

⁹⁷Pearson, "Norea," 148 and n. 29.

⁹⁸See chap. VIII *infra*.

⁹⁹"Death of Adam," 288–289; also "Armenian Seth Traditions," 466.

¹⁰⁰The passage of *ʾAbot R. Nat.* quoted by Klijn (*Seth*, 39 and nn. 33, 34) does *not* give an etymology for the name Seth, as Klijn claims. See the context in S. Schechter's edition (Vienna: Knöpfmayer, 1887), version A, chap. 14, pp 58–59.

¹⁰¹E.g., *Jub.* 4:28, *Sefer Hayyasar* 13b; *Gen. Rab.* 25:2.

¹⁰²"Die apokryphen gnostischen Adamschriften," 289ff.

¹⁰³"Death of Adam," 289.

servant of the demiurge who intended to destroy her in the flood. She then repeatedly burned the ark.¹⁰⁴ The same story appears in *Hyp. Arch.* 92:14–18, where Norea is said to have burned the ark twice. This deed, considered pure in both contexts, indicates that the Gnostic reinterpretation of Naamah was not entirely successful since, as in the Jewish legend, she burned the ark in anger. Why would Norea want to embark upon the evil Noah's ark? Why should she become angry when refused permission to board? Such a desire, and such behavior hardly befit a Gnostic heroine. As in the case of the angels' seduction of the women in *Ap. John* (*supra*, pp. 36–38), the ambiguous function of Norea's behavior in the overall structure of the Gnostic version indicates that the story was adapted from Jewish traditions.

The origins of the pure "other seed" (Gen 4:25), its transmission throughout human history, and its protection from the repeated attacks of the archons were all problems of crucial importance for the Gnostics,¹⁰⁵ and mythological solutions for them were sought. The Gnostics thus understandably integrated all the various traditions they were aware of into a new myth, whose heroine became specifically Seth's sister/wife, identified with the maiden-become-star. Our findings may be summarized in the following way:

Successful rape:

Angels $\top$ Women
giants

Sammael $\top$ Eve
Cain
(and other sons)

Failed rape attempt:

Lamech $\top$ Batenosh
Noah

Adam $\top$ Eve
Seth, Naamah/Norea
(Esterah)

Noah $\top$ Naamah/Norea
(Esterah)
pure seed

Seth $\top$ Naamah/Norea
(Esterah)
pure seed

The mythologoumenon of the heavenly woman soiled on earth is, of course, very widespread and may be found in various cultural contexts. The somewhat scabrous story of Helen of Troy, for instance, was allegorized by the Pythagoreans, who accepted the Homeric writings as sacred. They transformed the heroine (Ἑλένη) into a pure woman who had come

¹⁰⁴ *Pan.* 26.1.3–9 (I, 275–276 Holl).

¹⁰⁵ E.g., Epiphanius, *Pan.* 39, 2–4 (II, 72–75 Holl).

from the moon (σελήνη) and who returned to it by the will of Zeus. The Helen of Simon Magus was also considered to have a celestial origin.¹⁰⁶ As a matter of fact, she is referred to only as *luna* in the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* (II, 12). It is probable that Simon, who had a Greek education, knew this Pythagorean exegesis of Homer, as Marcel Détienne has argued.¹⁰⁷ In any case, it is in its Jewish form that the mythologoumenon formed the background of the Gnostic myth. So it seems more plausible to suppose that the figure of Helen was, in Simonian thought, a reformulation in "Hellenic" terms of the Jewish "core-myth." G. Quispel is therefore probably correct when he argues that in Simonian Gnosis, Helen was a "cover-name" for Wisdom, *hokhma*.¹⁰⁸

Barbelo

Barbelo is one of the main female figures in the Gnostic pantheon, where she usually represents the feminine aspect of the Father. In Irenaeus's report (*Adv. Haer.* I. 29), she is called "the virginal Spirit," to whom the unnameable Father revealed himself.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, the mythology Irenaeus described in that chapter has been attributed by modern scholarship to the postulated sect of "Barbelo-Gnostics"; Carl Schmidt, moreover, pointed out long ago how close that account is to *Ap. John*.¹¹⁰ where Barbelo was not only the "virginal Spirit," but also "the perfect aeon of glory," the "First Thought," and "the thrice male one." Although in this system Barbelo was completely apotheosized as one of the eternal aeons and hence a principle of light in Gnostic cosmology, the origins of the figure (and its name) remain unclear.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶In Hippolytus, *Elenchos* VI, 19 (145 Wendland). Epinoia is said to have dwelt in Helen. On the figure of Helen in Simonian thought, see G. Lüdemann, *Untersuchungen zur simonischen Gnosis* (Göttingen Theologische Arbeiten; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 72–77.

¹⁰⁷"La légende pythagoricienne d'Hélène," *RHR* 152 (1958), 128–152.

¹⁰⁸"Jewish Gnosis and Mandaean Origins, some Reflections on the Writing Brontè," in J.-E. Ménard, ed., *Les textes de Nag Hammadi*, 100; see also n. 93 *supra*.

¹⁰⁹Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I, 29.1 (I, 222 Harvey). In Epiphanius, *Pan.* 25.3,4 (I, 270 Holl), Barbelo, who was in the eighth heaven, was said to be Yaldabaoth's mother. In the *Pistis Sophia*, Barbelo appeared in the thirteenth aeon, near the invisible God and the 24 emanations (see the index in Schmidt's edition of the text). The same is true in the second *Book of Jeu* (326 Schmidt), where she is called the virginal spirit (παρθενικὸν πνεῦμα). In this latter work, she also appears in the twelfth aeon, near the uncreated God (chap. 52, p. 325).

¹¹⁰"Irenaeus und seine Quelle in *adv. haer.* I, 29," in *Philotesia Paul Kleinert* (Berlin, 1907), 315–336. In this article Schmidt claims that Irenaeus's account was dependent upon *Ap. John*, but he later retracted this view. See also R. McL. Wilson, *Gnosis and the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 103.

¹¹¹Rudolph (*Die Gnosis*, 89) speaks only of a "schwer erklärbaren Namen (sicherlich ein semitisch-aramäisches Kunstwort)." According to a common interpretation, the name was originally a cryptic description of the Tetragrammaton: בארבע אל'ה, "God is in four [letters]"; H. Lewy, "Gnosis," *Enc. Jud.* (German), VII, 455–456; Dorese's commentary on *Gos. Eg.*, 335, n. 83. For his part, Bousset has suggested that "Barbelo" should be understood as a deformation of παρθένος in uncial characters, pointing to the intermediary form παρθεως (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 26.1.6; I, 276 Holl; Bousset, *Hauptprobleme*, 14 and n. 3).

The Nicolaitans, at least according to Filaster, associated Barbelo with Norea and revered both figures.¹¹² In his refutation of the Nicolaitans, however, Epiphanius said that they were fantasizing, since the name of Noah's wife was neither Pyrrha (supposedly the Greek original for Norea, etymologized by the Nicolaitans as coming from *nūrā*, "fire," in Syriac, on account of her repeatedly setting fire to the ark) nor Norea, but Barthenōs.¹¹³ It is clear that Epiphanius, or rather his source, mistakenly attributed the name of Noah's mother to his wife.¹¹⁴ The figure of Batenosh (i.e., *ba(r)tenoš* in Aramaic or Syriac) thus might have been connected to the original form of the Gnostic Barbelo, although this suggestion cannot be affirmed with certainty.

In any case, the myth of the seduction of the archons by Barbelo, as described by the *gnostikoi*, no doubt reflects the ultimate transformation and inversion of the original myth of the angels' sin with the women. In one version of this myth, Batenosh, Noah's mother, played a distinct role: it was through her escape from the angelic seductors that the pure seed was preserved.¹¹⁵

The Seduction of the Archons

The myth of the seduction of the archons represents the ultimate transformation and inversion in Gnostic consciousness of the original myth of the sin of the angels with the women. In *Hyp. Arch.* 89:17–30, the "authorities" of the demiurge had planned to approach the spiritual Eve and to seduce her, although it was only her shadowy reflection (the material Eve) whom they succeeded in raping. A similar attempt by the archons and their chief (the demiurge) to rape Norea also failed (*Hyp. Arch.* 92:18–93:13). In *Ap. John* 28:5–32, a parallel description of the rape of a feminine figure by the demiurge and his "authorities" is given. Here the seduction attempt is successful. The archons "made a plan" and "committed adultery" with Sophia "with whom the Gods are united and the demons and all the generations until this day."¹¹⁶ The pattern in these cases is similar to the description of the sin of the angels in *1 Enoch* 6ff. In the Gnostic texts, as in *1 Enoch*, the male heavenly powers initiated the adultery. The female figures (daughters of men, Eve, Sophia), on the other hand, were the passive victims of male lust.

Indeed, some texts call Barbelo a *παρθενικὸν πνεῦμα* or an *ἀρσενικὴ παρθέρος*, e.g., *Gos. Eg.* III, 61:25–62:1; see also 44:11–13; 49:23–25; 53:16–18; 55:19–21; 61:24–62. See also *Sicles Seth* 121:21–22, *Allogenes* 61:6–7, *Zost.* 83:8–12, all quoted in Tardieu, *Trois Mythes*, 106, n. 145; *Orig. World* 102:18; Tardieu, *ibid.*, 65, n. 91. On *παρθενικὸν πνεῦμα* see Bousset, "Gnosis," *PW*, VII, 2, col. 1514. Cf. *Eugnostos* 89:2–3.

¹¹²*Divers. Haer. Lib.* 33.3 (18 Marx).

¹¹³*Pan.* 26.1.6 (I, 276, Holl).

¹¹⁴As conjectured by Litzmann; see Holl's *apparatus*, *ad loc.*

¹¹⁵*IQapGen* 2:14–16 (52–53 Fitzmyer).

¹¹⁶See also *Treat. Seth* 68:28–30. The first archon was prompted to this act by his jealousy of the perfect race; on this jealousy see *Orig. World* 99:2–10.

A very different description of the sexual behavior of Sophia (and Pronoia) is given in *Orig. World*. Due to the extreme complexity of the text, it is necessary to quote it at some length.

And immediately, behold, <a> light came out of the eighth [heaven], which is above, and passed through all of the heavens of the earth. When the First Father saw that the light was beautiful as it shone forth, he was amazed and was very much ashamed. When the light appeared, a human likeness, which was very wonderful, was revealed within it; and no one saw it except the First Father alone and Pronoia who was with him. but its light appeared to all the powers of the heavens. Therefore they were all disturbed by it. Then when Pronoia saw the angel she became enamored of him. But he hated her because she was in the darkness. Moreover, she desired to embrace him, and she was not able. When she was unable to cease her love, she poured out her light upon the earth. From that day, that angel was called "Light-Adam," which is interpreted "the enlightened bloody (one)." And the earth spread over him, Holy Adamas, which is interpreted "the holy Adamantine [steel-like] earth." At that time, all of the authorities began to honor the blood of the virgin. And the earth was purified because of the blood of the virgin. But especially the water was purified by the likeness of Pistis Sophia, which appeared to the First Father in the waters.¹¹⁷ (*Orig. World* 108:2–31)

The last sentence should be read in connection with another passage in this text (113:22–34), which describes the birth of the first Eve:

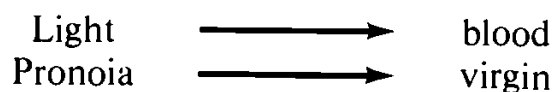
When Sophia cast a drop <of> light, it floated on the water. . . . that drop first patterned itself (τυποῦν) as a female body . . . the Hebrews call her "Eve of Life," i.e. "the instructor of life."

The angel with whom Pronoia, the consort of the First Father (**αρχιγενετωρ*, 108:11–12), fell in love was the wonderful human likeness called Light-Adam, or Adamas. He is the Primordial Man, in the likeness of the higher God, and is elsewhere called Anthropos. Pronoia could not unite with the angel, so she "poured out her light," which fell upon the earth (³*adama* in Hebrew). As a consequence, the angel was called Light-Adam, a name said to refer to blood.¹¹⁸ "The blood of the

¹¹⁷This revelation of the feminine heavenly figure in a reflection on the water to the male lower figure is an inversion of the mythical pattern in *Poimandres* 12–14, where it is the heavenly Anthropos who is revealed to the feminine and earthly Physis upon the water.

¹¹⁸On this pseudo-etymology of Adam, based on a pun in both Hebrew (between ³*adam*, and *dam*, "blood," connected also in *Orig. World* 108, 22–25 with ³*adama*, "earth") and Greek (with *ἀδάμας*, "strong iron, steel," from which the adjective *ἀδαμάντινος*), see Tardieu, *Trois Mythes*, 88; cf. the etymology of Edem—*adama* in Justin's *Baruch*. The thrust of Tardieu's analysis is to differentiate between the various stages of anthropogony. He distinguishes three stages in the creation of Adam during the Gnostic octohemeron: Adam-Light, the psychic Adam, and the terrestrial Adam; *ibid.*, 85–139.

virgin” is then mentioned in the same context.¹¹⁹ Tardieu, who comments in great detail upon these passages, draws the following chart:¹²⁰



The “light” (i.e., the blood) of Pronoia that fell upon the earth gave the Primordial Adam his name, while the light of Sophia fell upon the waters and gave rise to the Primordial Eve. The light/blood corresponds exactly to the semen of the (male) archons, which is also said to be at the origin of the lower Adam.

Then each one of them [the archons who were with the First Father] cast his semen (σπέρμα) in the midst of the navel of the earth. Since that day, the seven archons have formed the man: his body is like their body, his likeness is like the man who appeared to them. (*Orig. World* 114:27–32)

Now in *Orig. World* it was Sophia and Pronoia who were held responsible for the lustful process. Both behaved like “female archons” and partook, with the archons, in the anthropogonic process where they represented the “female” side of human genealogy. Pronoia did not succeed in seducing “the angel,” just as the archons, in *Hyp. Arch.* 87:11–34, did not succeed in staining the heavenly Eve and Norea.

As Incorrptibility looked down into the region of the Waters, her Image (ΙΝΕ [= ΕΙΝΕ]) appeared in the Waters, and the authorities of the darkness became enamored of her. But they could not lay hold of that Image, which had appeared to them in the Waters, because of their weakness . . . for they were from below, while it was from Above.

The archons then concerted among themselves and decided to create a man after the image “of God that had appeared (to them) in the Waters.”¹²¹ The lustful attitude of Pronoia thus seems to follow, *mutatis mutandis*, the pattern of the myth of the union of the women and the angels in the version attested in the Jewish sources (*T. Reub.*), in which the women seduced the angels.

Although the original myth had been transformed considerably, the inversion process was not complete. Indeed, it seems that in the myth as it appears in *Orig. World*, an intermediate stage is recognizable towards the formation of the “full fledged” myth of the seduction of the archons.

¹¹⁹“From this first blood was Eros revealed.” For the figure of Eros, see Tardieu, *ibid.*, 141–174. However, Adam as well as Eros was linked to Pronoia’s blood.

¹²⁰*ibid.*, 142.

¹²¹The Coptic reads: ἀναρχον διανούς μολοιον (*Hyp. Arch.* 87:24–25). Layton translates, “The Rulers laid plans,” while Tardieu offers a better rendering: “Les archontes tirent conseil.” See LSJ, 1677a.

This latter myth was crucially important in Manichaeism cosmogony, cosmology, and anthropogony (where in one case Norea [Horiaia] was presented as the heroine). But long ago Bousset also discerned an instance of the myth in Epiphanius's report on the so-called Gnostics,¹²² according to some of whom Barbelo

always appears to the archons in beauty [i.e., presumably naked] and takes from them their seed through pleasure [causing] its emission, in order that by so doing she may recover again her power that was inseminated into those various beings.¹²³

In this text, the female figure (Barbelo) initiated the "lustful process," as did Pronoia in *Orig. World*. Unlike Pronoia, however, Barbelo started the process intentionally, not by her lust, and she succeeded in her attempt to seduce the archons.

We shall see in chapter VIII how in Manichaeism mythology the "power" of the female figure, also called her "light," was captive in the semen of the archons. As in Manichaeism, therefore, the act of seduction here played a positive and specific role in the economy of salvation.

In Gnostic vocabulary, Prunikos ("the lewd one") was one of the names of Sophia. Although the paradoxical use of this name has already been studied,¹²⁴ it has not yet been completely elucidated; the preceding analysis might furnish another clue about the meaning of the name Prunikos. In order to perform her salvific role, the pure woman had to use the only weapon available to her against the archons; through cunning, she had to draw them into the trap through which they could be subdued: the compulsion of their lust.

Three different patterns of the sexual myth can thus be identified, and they may well reflect various stages in its evolution. In the first stage, the female figure was the object of archontic lust. In the second (*Orig. World*), she herself behaved like an archon, led on by her lust, and in the final stage, the female heroine deliberately seduced the lustful archons.

Giants and Abortions

As shown above, *Orig. World* retained a specific version of the myth of seduction, one which stood mid-way between the Jewish and the Manichaean versions of this myth. The consequences of this seduction must now be considered. In both the Bible and the Apocrypha, the seduced

¹²²*Hauptprobleme*, 76, also 72–74, where Bousset detects the origin of the myth in the "love adventures" of Ištar, Astarte, or the Syrian Aphrodite.

¹²³Epiphanius, *Pan.* 25.2.4 (I, 269 Holl). Again in *Pan.* 21.2, 4–5 (I, 240 Holl) the Simonians, who call the "Power from on high" Prunikos or Barbelo (the text has also βαρβηρώ), claim that she showed her beauty to the archons in order to arouse their lust. Note that Barbelo was identified with Prunikos, "the lewd one," as well as with Helen. Prunikos is also identified with Sophia; see Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1, 29.4 (I, 225 Harvey) and 1.30.3 (I, 228 Harvey).

¹²⁴M. P. Nilsson, "Sophia Prunikos," *Eranos* 45 (1947), 169–172.

women gave birth to giants. Here, too, the reinterpretation of the myth in *Orig. World* is closely related to the Manichaean version and thus appears to represent a step toward it.

In his detailed study of *Orig. World*, Tardieu rightly links Pronoia's act of throwing the light upon the earth with Yaldabaoth and the archons discharging their semen onto the earth. Tardieu recognizes in Pronoia's act "a symbol of demiurgic attitude."¹²⁵ Beyond this general characterization, however, Tardieu detects no sexual connotation in Pronoia's act.¹²⁶ Yet the text seems to contain references that are much more precise.

In *Orig. World* 108:26–28, Pronoia is said to be a virgin. In this she is paralleled with, and contrasted to, Eve, "the first virgin," who gave birth without having a husband (114:4–5).¹²⁷ In a hymn (114:8–10), Eve declares:

I am a portion of my mother
and I am the mother.
I am the woman
and I am the virgin
I am the pregnant one . . .¹²⁸

Pronoia, a "virgin wife" like Eve, could also give birth. Indeed, the First Father, her consort, and the authorities, who were in love with the image that they had seen from above, let their semen fall upon the earth (*Orig. World* 114:24–32; *Hyp. Arch.* 87:11–34). Similarly, as a consequence of her lust, Pronoia became pregnant by herself and immediately thereafter aborted the fetus. This abortion is what the text calls her "blood." The ambiguity of the female blood is here explicit. In addition to the obvious reference to menstrual blood,¹²⁹ it is both a sexual emission—parallel to the male semen—and a miscarriage. Thus the text can say that Adam "had taken form like the aborted fetuses."¹³⁰ It may be noted that a

¹²⁵*Trois Mythes*, 102, n. 112, where he refers to similar expressions in the Aggada, quoting Ginzberg (*Legends*, V, 14, n. 39). But the texts collected by Ginzberg have no sexual connotations. See also Tardieu, *Trois Mythes*, 142.

¹²⁶See however his reference (*ibid.*, 123 n. 250) to P. Kraus, *Jābir ibn Hayyān; contribution à l'histoire des idées scientifiques dans l'Islam*, II (Mémoires de l'Institut d'Égypte 44–45; Cairo: Institut français d'archéol. orient., 1942), 156, n. 9, dealing with the projection of semen upon matter, i.e., of the sexual relations between the eternal substance (God) and matter.

¹²⁷Tardieu, *Trois Mythes*, 143, n. 15: "L'Eve de l'hymne déclaratoire (ou deuxième Adam) qui est également vierge, épouse et mère, se présente ainsi comme une anti-Pronoia."

¹²⁸See also *Thund.* 13:19–21, where the Perfect Mind declares: "I am the wife and the virgin, I am <the mother> and the daughter," etc. On these paradoxical formulas in Gnostic hymns, see G. MacRae, "Discourses of the Gnostic Revealer," in G. Widengren, ed., *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Gnosticism; Stockholm. 112–122*. See also *Setheus* 40:17–25, where, by the power of the aeons, the virgin mother secretly gives birth.

¹²⁹A. Böhlig points out this fact and speaks of "die Umdeutung von jüdischen Traditionsgut in gnostische Gedankengänge" ("Der jüdische Hintergrund in gnostischen Texten von Nag Hammadi," *Mysterion und Wahrheit*, 83 and n. 3).

¹³⁰ϵαϥϭι μορφη νοε ννιζοϥζε (115:4–5). The subject of this sentence, however, might refer to the Shadow. As we shall see in chap. VIII, the same metaphor was used in

similar identification between blood and abortion was made in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* where the giants of Genesis 6 (the *Nephilim*) were even said to have been born “of the fire of the angels and the blood of the women.”¹³¹

The self-induced “virginal” pregnancies of Eve and Pronoia in the context of anthropogony are actually repetitions of, and consequent upon, Sophia’s self-induced conception in the context of cosmogony.¹³² Sophia’s “drop of light” is therefore her “abortion.”

Then the shadow perceived that there was one stronger than it. It was jealous, and when it became self-impregnated, it immediately bore envy. (*Hyp. Arch.* 99:2–6)

Then Pistis ^{Orig. World} came and appeared over the matter of Chaos, which was cast off like an aborted fetus. (99:24–26)

A clearly parallel passage is *Hyp. Arch.* 94:15–16, where the author, speaking about Sophia, said, “And what she had created became a product in the Matter, like an aborted fetus.”¹³³ In both texts, this aborted fetus is described as an arrogant (*αὐθάδης*), androgynous, lion-faced animal, from which Death and her sons were born; that is, the fetus survived, but it was a monster. As PHEME PERKINS has shown, striking parallels to such “biological metaphors,” which play a major role in Gnostic cosmogonies, and especially to *ἐκβαλλεῖν* (*NOYXE EBOΛ*) as a term for abortion, are found in the vocabulary of 2nd-century medical writers.¹³⁴

Sophia was indeed the first female heavenly figure to give birth to an aborted fetus. The event is explained in the following way in *Ap. John* 9:25–10:7:

And the Sophia of the Epinoia, being an aeon, conceived a thought from herself with the reflection of the invisible Spirit and Pronoia. She wanted to bring forth a likeness out of herself without the consent of the Spirit—he had not approved—and without her consort and without his consideration. . . . Yet she brought forth. And because of the invisible power which is in her, her thought did not remain idle, and a thing came out of her which was imperfect and different from

Manichaean anthropogony.

¹³¹ *Homilies*, 8.18.2 (128–129 Rehm).

¹³² Pronoia here seems to be a lower figure than Sophia. MacRae points out that in *Ap. John* 30:11–31:25, the description of Pronoia’s triple descent to the world in order to awaken man from his deep sleep is strikingly similar to the myth of Wisdom’s descent, although Sophia is not explicitly identified with Pronoia (“The Jewish Background of the Gnostic Sophia Myth,” *NovT* 12 [1970], 91). See also *Ap. John* 13:6–14:13 and *Hyp. Arch.* 94:32–33.

¹³³ See Layton’s commentary, 70, n. 149. According to *Orig. World* 98:23–27, the “darkness” (*πκακε*) is the proper name of the shadow (*τzaibec*) that surrounds the aeon of truth.

¹³⁴ “On the Origin of the World” (CG II, 5): A Gnostic Physics,” *VC* 34 (1980), 36–46, esp. 37–38.

her appearance, because she had created it without her consort. And it was dissimilar to the likeness of its mother for it has another form.

The highly syncretistic author of *Orig. World* integrated various elements of Hellenistic mythology into the basic Gnostic sexual myth of generation. One of the most interesting of these figures is Eros, an androgynous being who appeared out of the "first blood" of Pronoia (109:1–2).¹³⁵ Eros is here completely assimilated into the mythical pattern: in the same way that he owed his origin to the miscarriage of a self-conceived pregnancy, his beautiful appearance led female figures to become enamored of him. He seduced successively both Psyche and "the beautiful fragrant flowers,"¹³⁶ which originated "from (the blood of) each of the virgins of the daughters of Pronoia," and they "poured out their blood upon him and upon the earth." In this manner they gave birth to the species of flora and fauna, all of which had "the seed of the authorities and their angels," as specified by the text to indicate that the love stories with Eros cast as the passive hero were part of the broader myth of the archontic creation process (111:8–28).

The aborted figures of the *Urzeit* reappear in the *Endzeit* of Gnostic apocalypses.¹³⁷ According to *Orig. World* 126:20–28, for instance,

[the woman] will drive out the gods of Chaos whom she had created together with the First Father. She will cast them down to the abyss. They will be wiped out by their (own) injustice. For they will become like the mountains which blaze out fire, and they will gnaw at one another until they are destroyed by their First Father. When he destroys them he will turn against himself and destroy himself until he ceases (to be).

This text should be read with the parallel version in *Hyp. Arch.* 97:10–13:

Then the authorities will relinquish their ages: and their angels will weep over their destruction: and their demons will lament their death.

In a similar vein, *Ap. John* 27:21–30 describes the final punishment of the sinners, who

will be taken to the place where there is no repentance, and will be kept for the day on which those who have blasphemed the spirit will be tortured, and will be punished with eternal punishment.

These are clearly echoes of the destruction and punishment of the sinful

¹³⁵See n. 119 *supra*.

¹³⁶Cf. *Apoc. Adam* 79:29–80:6.

¹³⁷On Gnostic apocalypses, see F. T. Fallon, "The Gnostic Apocalypses," in *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre* (*Semeia* 14 [1979]), 123–158, as well as G. MacRae, "Apocalyptic Eschatology in Gnosticism," in D. Hellholm, ed., *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1983), 317–325.

angels and the "allelophagy" of the giants, as these themes appeared in *1 Enoch* 7 and 10, for instance, and they recall the death of children of the giants:

The murder of their beloved ones shall they see, and over the destruction of their children shall they lament, and shall make supplication unto eternity, but mercy and peace shall ye not attain. (*1 Enoch* 12:6)

In Gnostic works, the sin of the angels-turned-archons is presented as beginning and ending with time. Gnostic thought, indeed, sought to mythologize history altogether, rather than to suppress it. The whole span of history followed, as it were, the pattern of the sin of the angels/archons in the *Urzeit* and of its consequence: the enslavement of mankind by the senses (e.g., *Ap. John* 29:16–30:11).¹³⁸ The metaphor of abortion strongly expresses the conviction that the world "came about through a mistake," and that its creator "fell short of attaining his desire" (*Gos. Phil.* 75:2–6). It so appears in various Gnostic trends. According to Hippolytus's presentation of Basilidian conceptions, for instance, "the Sonship had been left in the formlessness like an abortion."¹³⁹ An abortion also played a role in Valentinian mythology, where it concerned the essentially ambiguous figure of Sophia.¹⁴⁰ Sophia herself was linked both to Pistis (below)¹⁴¹ and to the Pleroma (above). The "upper" (or "interior") Sophia was the last and youngest of the twelve aeons. Instead of uniting with her misnamed consort Θέλητος (i.e., the "willed one") in order to generate, she fell in love with the perfect Father.¹⁴² Since she did not succeed in her audacity (τολμή) and could not unite with the Father,¹⁴³ she "experienced passion" (ἐπαθε πάθος) without a consort. In other words—and here is a Valentinian reformulation of the original Gnostic myth—"she wished to comprehend the magnitude of the Father," or to imitate him, since he who was uncreated, could procreate without a consort.

¹³⁸Cf. *1 Enoch* 100:2; *2 Apoc. Baruch* 70:10; Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, 8.16.2 (128 Rehm), texts quoted by Tardieu, *Trois Mythes*, 77, n. 202 and 79, n. 220. Tardieu adds: "De la sorte, le thème de l'alleléphagie des archontes dans l'eschatologie d'*EsT* [= *Orig. World*] ne fait qu'accomplir le retour cyclique du *télos* dans l'*archè*—archontes des derniers temps se détruisant comme s'étaient détruits les géants des premiers temps." On the theme of the allelophagy, see also *Paraph. Shem* 44:23–26: "And five races by themselves will eat their sons," and *Great Pow.* 40:9–23. In *Great Pow.* 41:25, the archons "brought judgment upon themselves." In *Gos. Eg.* III 59:24–25, the "defiled seed of the demon is a begetting god which will be destroyed."

¹³⁹Hippolytus, *Elenchos* 6. 26.7 (205 Wendland).

¹⁴⁰G. C. Stead, "The Valentinian Myth of Sophia," *JTS* 20 (1969), 75–104. See also MacRae, "The Gnostic Sophia Myth," 91; Tardieu, *Trois Mythes*, 57, n. 47.

¹⁴¹Cf. *Orig. World* 98:13–14, where it is Sophia who flows out of Pistis.

¹⁴²The myth is related in detail by Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* 1.2.2.; I, 13–16 Harvey) and by Hippolytus (*Elenchos* 6.30–31; 157–159 Wendland). The account here follows these two descriptions. See also MacRae, "The Gnostic Sophia Myth," 94.

¹⁴³See *Gos. Phil.* 59:31–32.

This was Sophia's tragic mistake or sin, since she herself was a created being, the fruit of her parthenogenesis was bound to be a shapeless and unformed substance (only her male consort could have given the fetus its "form"). This offspring—who was in some cases the demiurge¹⁴⁴ or the world itself—is also said to be the "lower" Sophia (also called the "exterior" Sophia, ἡ ἔξω σοφία, i.e., outside of the Pleroma and prevented by the Limit from entering it).¹⁴⁵ When Sophia understood that she could give birth only to an abortion (ἔκτρωμα is the term used by the Valentini-ans), she cried and mourned over it,¹⁴⁶ just as a non-Valentinian account of the myth reports that Barbelo wept when her son Yaldabaoth revolted.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴See *Orig. World* 100:10–14. See also Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.29.4.

¹⁴⁵Hippolytus, *Elenchos* 6.36.3 (166 Wendland): τὰ πάθη τῆς ἔξω Σοφίας, τούτέστι ἐκτρώματος.

¹⁴⁶*Elenchos* 6.31.2 (158 Wendland): ἔκλαιε γὰρ καὶ κατωδύρετο ἐπὶ τῷ γεγεννημένῳ ὑπ' αὐτῆς ἐκτρώματι, οὕτω γὰρ καλοῦσιν. And see *Elenchos* 6.31.4–5 (159 Wendland). See also *Orig. World* 99:29–30.

¹⁴⁷Epiphanius, *Pan.* 25.2.2–4.

Part II

THE GNOSTIC RACE

The multifaceted sexual etiological myth, which purports to account for the existence and the origin of evil in this world, reveals a major aspect of Gnostic consciousness. Another aspect, no less central, is the self-image of the offspring of the pure seed—the Sons of Seth—who throughout history remained untainted by the evil archons and who succeeded in escaping the repeated attempts to annihilate them. In other words, it is to various facets of the Gnostic conception of *Heilsgeschichte* that attention must now be turned. The principal textual focus here will be on the *Apocalypse of Adam*. In addition to a phenomenological approach to this important side of Gnostic consciousness, this part of the investigation will attempt to further the conclusions already reached and to shed new light on the possible origins of the mythological identification of the Gnostics with the “Sons of Seth,” an identification which bears upon the exegesis of the “Sons of God” of Gen 6:2. The figure of Seth himself, it should be noted, is ambivalent: Seth was both the archetypal Father of the Gnostic “race” and, in some texts, the first incarnation of the Perfect Child.

CHAPTER THREE

SETH AND THE CHILD

*Seth*¹

Jewish traditions about the virtuous Seth are clearly attested already in the 1st century C.E., as Robert Kraft has observed.² He argues convincingly that Philo was not opposing any “Sethian position” (whatever that means), but that his treatment of Seth was similar to that of other biblical figures.³ Yet some of Philo’s remarks on Seth’s name might be relevant here, for he repeatedly gave a seemingly puzzling etymology in the *De Posteritate Caini*. According to Philo, it meant (in Hebrew) “watering” or “irrigation,” for which he used a rare word: ποτισμός.⁴ In the first passage where this etymology appears, it was used to interpret the σπέρμα ἔτερον of Gen 4:25, but its meaning remains rather opaque.⁵ Elsewhere, however, Philo expanded upon his understanding of ποτισμός. A seed and a plant sprout, grow, and produce fruit only if they are watered; thus it is with the soul, which must be “fostered with a fresh sweet stream of wisdom” in order to “shoot up and improve.”⁶ Later on, Philo attempted to prove that from Seth to Noah, there was a progressive growth in knowledge and virtue.⁷

In *Quaest. Gen.* I, 78, Philo gave a different etymology for Seth, explaining the meaning of the name as: “one who drinks water.”⁸ This derivation of Seth from the Hebrew root שתה, “to drink,” sheds some light on the first etymology, where Philo seems to have in mind a factitive form of the same verb. Such a factitive form of שתה, however, does not appear to be attested in rabbinic sources.⁹

¹As mentioned, the figure of Seth in various bodies of literatures has been studied on several occasions, especially by Klijn, *Seth*; see also M. E. Stone, “Report on Seth Traditions in the Armenian Adam Books,” in Layton, ed., *Rediscovery*, II, 459–471, and B. A. Pearson, “The Figure of Seth in Gnostic Literature,” in *ibid.*, 472–504. Since Pearson’s article treats extensively the various texts and traditions, I shall deal only with some points which have not received sufficient attention, in particular the Manichaean figure of Sethel.

²“Philo on Seth: Was Philo Aware of Traditions which Exalted Seth and His Progeny?” in Layton, ed., *Rediscovery*, II, 457–458; Kraft refers to the testimony of Josephus (*Ant.* 1.68–72 [IV, 32–34 LCL]).

³*Ibid.*, 504–505.

⁴LSJ gives very few occurrences (from papyri), while *LPGL* gives one occurrence with the meaning “water-supply.”

⁵*Post. Cain.* 10 (II, 232 LCL); also 170 (II, 428 LCL).

⁶*Ibid.*, 124–126 (II, 400 LCL).

⁷*Ibid.*, 173 (II, 430 LCL). Moreover, the generations between them are represented by a perfect number, ten. With Noah humanity reaches new spiritual heights.

⁸In R. Marcus’s translation (49 LCL). Klijn (*Seth*, 34) mentions only this etymology.

⁹An *aph’el* form of שתה is found in Palestinian Syriac, but with a *qal* meaning. See M. Bar Asher, *Palestinian Syriac Studies: Source-Texts, Traditions and Grammatical Problems* (unpublished Ph.D diss., Hebrew University, 1977), 300 (Hebrew).

Some rabbinic texts record yet another etymology. One passage states that Adam "called him Seth because he was planted (נשתל), because the kingdom of the house of David was planted (הושתלה) from him."¹⁰ Elsewhere, this etymology was explicitly based on a word play upon שת לי (Gen 4:25).¹¹ The name Seth, therefore, would derive from the root שתל, "to plant," and not from שתה, "to drink." Like the first one, this etymology referred to the "other seed" of Gen 4:25. Since Philo's metaphor in *Post. Cain.* was a vegetal one, involving seeds and plants, one wonders whether he confused the שתה etymology with the שתל one and integrated them in his explanation of the name's meaning.

The derivation from *štl* was also known in Gnostic milieus. In his description of Manichaeism in the *Fihrist*, the 10th-century bibliographer Ibn al-Nadīm, following his Manichaean source, reported that Adam called his son Shāthil only after a lotus tree had grown from the earth (as a divine answer to Adam's prayer) to provide milk for the child.

Then there appeared to Adam a tree called the lotus, from which came forth milk with which he nourished the boy. He called him by its [the tree's] name, and later he called him Shāthil.¹²

Since the Manichaean source clearly linked the child's name to the growing of the tree,¹³ it probably reflected the same Hebrew etymology (from the root שתל) already known to the Rabbis and perhaps to Philo.

Shitil, the hypostatic figure of Seth, who played a major role in Mandaean mythology,¹⁴ echoed the same traditions. Shitil, son of Adam, was called "the Perfect Plant," "planted in the generations and in the worlds," in the *Johannesbuch*,¹⁵ while the *Right Ginza* III, 114:19ff. reported that Shitil *mqarilh inaṣbh*, "approached his planter."¹⁶ Because

¹⁰Oxford ms. of a *midrash* on Genesis, quoted by M. Kasher, *Torah Sheleimah* I, 353. This text is also cited by T. Gluck, *The Arabic Legend of Seth* (unpublished Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1968), 21, n. 4.

¹¹*Ag. Ber.* (Brit. Lib. ms. add. 37), cited by Ginzberg, *Legends*, V, 148, n. 50.

¹²G. Flügel, *Mani, seine Lehre und seine Schriften* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1862), 61; trans. p. 93 "... und gab ihm den Namen des Baumes. Später nannte er ihn Schātīl." The structure of the Arabic sentence is ambiguous. Flügel's translation retains this ambiguity, but B. Dodge renders, "He (at first) called him by its name, but later he called him Shātīl" (*The Fihrist of al-Nadīm* [New York-London: Columbia, 1970], II, 786). The only possible understanding of the sentence is that Adam named his son Shātīl ("plant" in Aramaic and Hebrew) in connection with the tree. Gluck (*Arabic Legend*, 24) implausibly suggests that one of the Arabic forms of Seth's name, *št*, might be related to the word *šatl*, "a plant used by tanners or a species of tree."

¹³The various legends connecting trees to human beings are analyzed by A. Henrichs, "'Thou Shalt not Kill a Tree': Greek, Manichaean and Indian Tales," *BASP* 16 (1979), 85-108.

¹⁴On the figure of Shitil in Mandaeism, see E. S. Drower, *The Secret Adam: A Study of Nasorean Gnosis* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960), 34-38.

¹⁵M. Lidzbarski, *Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer*, 2 Teile (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1915), 244.

¹⁶K. Rudolph (*Theogonie, Kosmogonie und Anthropogonie in den mandäischen Schriften* [FRLANT 88; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965], 296) translates the verse "und Šitil ruft nach seinem Planzer (Helfer?)." M. Lidzbarski (*Ginzā: Der Schatz oder das grosse*

this same root exists in both Aramaic and Syriac, it is easy to understand how the name was preserved in Mandaean and Manichaean traditions as Shitil or Shatil (or Sethel or Sithil [CΘΗΛ], as in Coptic texts). The last syllable, therefore, resulted from the Hebrew *midrash* on Seth as the “planted” seed—and not from a theophoric “el” appended to the biblical name, as has sometimes been suggested¹⁷ (although later traditions may have so interpreted the name).

A different connection between Seth and planting appears in another Gnostic context, where it is Seth who planted the seed (σπόρα).

But others (say) that the great Seth took his plant out of Gomorrah and planted it in the second place, to which he gave the name Sodom.¹⁸

The motif is here mixed with that of the “pure seed” which Seth, its first inheritor, transmitted to his offspring. But the use of τωσε, “plant,” clearly refers to the Jewish word play on שֶׁת לֵי, and shows that the two metaphors were integrated. This “plant” of Seth was the community of the Gnostics through the ages, those who were called, in various texts, the “unshakeable” or “unwavering race” of the Perfect Man, i.e., Seth.¹⁹ In Gnostic mythology, therefore, the שֶׁתל etymology was understood in the factitive sense (as was the שתה etymology in Philo). We shall return later to these “planted” children of Seth.

Buch der Mandäer [Quellen der Religionsgeschichte, 13; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1925], 127) translates only “Helper.” For an analysis of the motif of planting as it appears in various Gnostic sources, see Rudolph, *Die Mandäer*, II, *Der Kult* (FRLANT 57; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), 23, n. 1. The related metaphors of planting and uprooting (for giving and taking life) are common stock in ancient literatures. A. Altman, therefore, seems to be mistaken when he considers the use of the motif in Jewish literature as a sign of Gnostic influence (“Gnostische Motive im rabbinischen Schrifttum,” *MGWJ* 83 [1939], 379–383).

¹⁷E.g., Rudolph, *Theogonie*, 304, n. 4.

¹⁸*Gos. Eg.* III, 60:15–18; see also CG IV, 71:25–30. See Klijn, *Seth*, 37, and Pearson, “Seth in Gnostic Literature,” 488. J. Doresse (*Les livres secrets des Gnostiques d’Égypte*, I [Paris: Plon, 1958], 327–329 [see also the revised English trans., *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics* (New York: Viking, 1960), including vol. II of the French ed.]) remarks that Qumrān, like Sodom and Gomorrah, lies on the western shore of the Dead Sea and hastily concludes that Essenes-turned-Gnostics are speaking here about their original home. However, it is much more probable that here is a dialectic interpretation of the biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah that does not refer to a particular *Sitz im Leben* of the Gnostic community. See also Böhlig, “Christentum und Gnosis im Ägypterevangelium . . .,” in W. Eltester, ed., *Christentum und Gnosis* (BZNW 37; Berlin, 1969), 17.

¹⁹*Ap. John*, 2:24–25 (with restoration from other versions), 25:23; 29:10; 31:31; *Zost.* 6:27. On the ἀσάλευτος γενεά see Williams, *Gnostic Concept of Stability*. Williams insists upon parallel metaphors in philosophical language. On pp. 190–191 he notes the striking similarity between Philo’s description of Moses’s “stability” and that of the Gnostic Allogenes (i.e., Seth). See also his “Stability as a Soteriological Theme in Gnosticism,” in Layton, ed., *Rediscovery*, II, 819–829.

In Gnostic mythology, Seth was often considered to be the first son of Adam. The complex traditions that developed about Adam do not directly bear upon the topic of this investigation, and it is sufficient here to recall that various Gnostic traditions showed a distinct tendency to identify Adam—or rather his heavenly counterpart, the First Adam, the *ἄνθρωπος par excellence*—with the supreme God. As H. M. Schenke has shown, God came to be called “Man,”²⁰ through the Gnostic exegesis of Gen 1:26: “to our image, according to our likeness.” In a similar fashion, a heavenly counterpart for Seth was developed in Gnostic mythology on the basis of Gen 5:3, where Adam’s son was born “according to his likeness, to his image.” Seth was the savior of mankind, since he was the one who “recovered” the glory that had been Adam and Eve’s before their fall, which was caused by the demiurge. “And the glory in our hearts left us, me and your mother Eve, along with the first knowledge that breathed within us,” said Adam to Seth (*Apoc. Adam* 64:24–27). Thus Adam called his son “by the name of that man who is the seed of the great generation” (69:6–8); i.e., he gave him the name of the heavenly Seth, the planter of the righteous seed. Seth then recovered from “the great aeons” the glory that had left his parents. His mission was to preserve this glory against the repeated attempts of the demiurge to steal it and, ultimately, to reinstate mankind in this glory at the end of time, when the demiurge and his followers would be subdued and destroyed. At that time, Seth would reappear as a glorious savior.

In some christianized Gnostic trends, this *parousia* of Seth became identified with the advent of Jesus, who was considered to be the earthly manifestation of the heavenly Seth. This identification, which also appears in a magic text,²¹ is particularly evident in *Gos. Eg.*²² The related idea of the various appearances of the “true prophet” throughout history was, of course, not specifically Gnostic. It was a cornerstone of Ebionite theology, studied in detail by H.-J. Schoeps.²³ More precisely, the Elchasaïtes, who represented another branch of Jewish Christianity, believed that it was Jesus himself who had appeared, in different incarnations, as Adam and the prophets.²⁴ Elchasaïte and other Jewish-Christian baptist groups with gnosticizing tendencies may well have provided the

²⁰*Der Gott “Mensch,” passim.* See also Böhlig, “Der Name Gottes im Gnostizismus und im Manichäismus,” in H. von Stietencron, ed., *Der Name Gottes* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1975), 131–155.

²¹A. Kropp, *Ausgewählte koptische Zaubertexte* (Brussels: Ed. de la Fondation égyptologique Reine Elizabeth, 1931), III, 231.

²²*Gos. Eg.* CG III, 64:1ff. and CG IV, 75:15ff.; CG III, 65:17ff. and CG IV, 77:13ff.

²³See in particular his *Theologie und Geschichte des Judentums* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1949).

²⁴Hippolytus, *Elenchos* 9.14.1 (252 Wendland); 10.29.2 (284 Wendland); Epiphanius, *Pan.* 53.1.8 (Sampseans; II, 315–316 Holl), cf. 30.3.1ff. (Ebionites). The correlate idea of a metamorphosis of gods is widespread in Late Antiquity. See Zosimus, *Commentary on Omega*, in A. J. Festugière, *La Révélation d’Hermès Trismégiste*, I (Études Bibliques; Paris: Gabalda, 1943), 266, n. 6; cf. *Chaldaean Oracles* (56 Kroll) and Hippolytus, *Elenchos* 5.7.25 (84 Wendland). Festugière points out that Evagrius fights this theory.

channel through which these ideas reached Gnostic circles. Celsus, for one, clearly testified to the survival of such ideas among

those who because of his teaching of the name of Jesus have departed from the Creator as an inferior being . . . [and who] say that even before him some have visited mankind from the Creator.²⁵

This idea of Seth's avatars could well have been based on the LXX version of Gen 4:25, where **שֵׁת לִי** ("has appointed for me") is translated **ἐξανέστησεν . . . μοι** ("has arisen for me"). "Seth" would therefore have been understood as meaning "resurrection"; "Porro ille Seth interpretatur resurrectio," in the words of Augustine.²⁶ I have not found this etymology in any earlier author. But it appears to have been traditional, since Augustine included it in a list of traditional etymologies of biblical names, and since he was not familiar with the Greek Bible. Augustine, however, integrated this tradition into his own theological framework. Unlike the citizens of the earthly city, the Cainites, who knew of only one means of reproduction (*copulatio*), the members of the heavenly city (of which the Sethites are a *typos*) "need regeneration as well, to escape the corruption of generation."²⁷

The Child

As the savior and first-born of Adam, Seth appears in many Gnostic texts simply as "the [male] child." This is also the case in the Gnostic traditions inherited by the Manichaeans. As we have seen, al-Nadīm reported that Adam and Eve's son ("a handsome male with a comely visage") was not named at his birth; indeed, until the lotus tree grew, he appeared only as "the child."²⁸

The child-as-savior was a common motif in the literature of Antiquity—especially of Late Antiquity—as Eduard Norden has shown in his *Die Geburt des Kindes*. This classic work, however, barely touches upon the occurrences of the theme in Gnosticism.²⁹ Probably the most

²⁵Origen, *Contra Celsum* V.54 (I quote Chadwick's translation, p. 304). For Quispel (*Gnosis als Weltreligion*, 8) the teaching of the "true prophet" is to be found in *Apoc. Adam*.

²⁶*City of God* XV.17 (IV, 512 LCL; cf. 514).

²⁷*Ibid.* XV. 16 (IV, 508–509 LCL). See H. Guttman, "Die Kain und Abel Aggadot in den Werken des Kirchenvaters Augustin," in A. Scheiber, ed., *Semitic Studies in Memory of Immanuel Löw* (Publ. Kohut Memorial Foundation; Budapest, 1947), 272–276, esp. 274–275. Augustine saw a clear reference to Jesus in Seth's name and personality; *City of God* XV.18 (516ff. LCL). For later evidence of this etymology, see Klijn, *Seth*, 35, n. 8. Isidore of Seville expressly stated, "Seth quippe interpretatus resurrectio, qui est Christus" (*PL* 83, 228 A). The tradition was carried on as late as Cedrenus, who wrote *σημαίνει δὲ Σῆθ ἐξανάστασιν* (88 Bekker). For Hilarius of Poitiers, the meaning of Seth's name was *fundamentum fidei*; see his *Traité des Mystères* (ed. and trans. J. P. Brisson; SC 19 bis; Paris: Cerf, 1967), IX, 94–96.

²⁸Flügel, *Mani*, 60. Flügel does not refer to this detail in his commentary.

²⁹See also Kerényi's study on the divine child in C. G. Jung and K. Kerényi, *Einführung in das Wesen der Mythologie* (Zurich: Rhein Verlag, 1941); see also F. Dornseiff, *Das Alphabet in*

famous instance of the salvific function of the child in Gnostic trends is found in the *Hymn of the Pearl*, where the anonymous child, the Son of the King, is the paradigmatic *salvator salvandus*. The child (or, more precisely, the beautiful little male child, *παιδίου*) is presented in various Gnostic contexts as the recipient of revelations.³⁰ According to the Manichaean *Kephalaia* and *Homilies*, the child was the third appearance in the series of emanations of Jesus.³¹

In Gnostic mythology, Seth was one of the clearest manifestations of the savior-child.³² The peculiar logic of Gnostic thought enabled a concept, or a figure, to be duplicated many times on various ontological levels. It is not surprising, therefore, that in some texts, the child reached higher and higher degrees in the "chain of being," even to the point of losing almost all contact with his earthly counterpart, Seth, the son of Adam. In at least one text, the *Setheus*, the relationship between the heavenly Adam and the heavenly Seth is reversed, with Adamas said to be Setheus's son.

In *Gos. Eg.*, the incorruptible child named "Telmael Telmichael Eli Eli Machar Machar Seth," who was "the power who truly lives," is also identified with "the Great Christ, who is from silence" (III, 59:16–21). He is also called "the thrice male child" (III, 49:26). The Great Seth, the father of the immovable incorruptible race, was the son of the incorruptible Adamas (III, 51:5–9) and also of lesser rank than the incorruptible child, from whom he received a gift (III, 56:13–17). At this higher level of reality, there appeared another figure, Esephech, "the Child of the Child," who was the "holder of glory"³³ and the crown of the child's

Mystik und Magie (Leipzig: Teubner, 1925²), 17–20, on "Kindheitsmystik." Cf. F. Cumont, "La fin du monde selon les mages occidentaux," *RHR* 103 (1931), 73 and n. 31, for a description of the role of the *παῖς ἄφθαρος* in divination. For further references about "the child" in Jewish literature, see Josephus, *Ant.* 2.232, where the new-born Moses is called *παῖς μορφῇ τε θεός*. The amphilogy of *παῖς*—both "child" and "servant"—is also found in its Hebrew counterpart נַעַר. In Merkavah texts, Meṭatron is called the נַעַר of God, i.e., his servant. See J. C. Greenfield's Prolegomenon to the reprint of H. Odeberg, *3 Enoch or the Hebrew Book of Enoch* (New York: Ktav, 1973), p. xxi. For the implications of this amphilogy in both Jewish and Gnostic texts, see my "Polymorphie divine et transformations d'un mythologème: l'Apocryphon de Jean et ses sources," *VC* 35 (1981), 412–434.

³⁰See Henrichs' and Koenen's edition of the *Cologne Mani Codex* (=CMC), *ZPE* 19 (1975), 79, n. 41.

³¹*Hom.* 87:17; cf. Schmidt-Polotsky, "Ein Mani-Fund in Ägypten: Originalschriften des Mani und seiner Schüler," *SPAW* (1933), 74, n. 4. Also *Keph.* 35:28; 61:27; 92:7; *MPs.* 209:27f.; cf. Andreas-Henning, *Mir Man* III, 878–881, and Henning's remark there (= W. B. Henning, *Selected Papers*, I [Acta Iranica 14; Leiden: Brill, 1977], 33, n. 4). See also A. Adam, *Die Psalmen des Thomas und das Perlenlied als Zeugnisse vorchristlicher Gnosis* (BZNW 24; Berlin, 1959), 43, n. 31, and Böhlig, "Christliche Wurzeln im Manichäismus," *Mysterion und Wahrheit*, 218 and n. 1. The motif appears also in Persian traditions on Zarathustra and in Hindu legends on Krishna; see G. Quispel, "The Birth of the Child, Some Gnostic and Jewish Aspects," *ErJb* 40 (1971), 285–308.

³²On this notion, see B. Aland, "Erwählungstheologie und Menschenklassenlehre: die Theologie des Herakleon als Schlüssel zum Verständnis der christlicher Gnosis?" in M. Krause, ed., *Gnosis and Gnosticism* (NHS 8; Leiden: Brill, 1978), 148–181, esp. 178–181.

³³See the Manichaean figure of the *φεγγυκάτοχος*, studied by F. Cumont, *Recherches sur*

glory (III, 53:25–54:3). This “Child of the Child” also appears in the *Pistis Sophia*, where he is identified with the “twin savior,” a figure probably related to Mani’s conception of his own “spiritual twin.”³⁴ The Child of the Child might have originally been, in some Gnostic trends, the son of the heavenly Seth or else the eschatological appearance of the historical Seth.

Douglas M. Parrot has shown that in *Eugnostos*, the third emanation—the savior—was none other than Seth. The entire triple-emanation pattern of the Immortal Man, the Son of the Immortal Man, and the Son of the Son of Man should be understood as an esoteric Gnostic exegesis of anthropogony and salvation. In this exegesis, which was based on the figures of Genesis (God, Adam, Eve, and Seth), God was the Immortal Man, Adam the Son of the Immortal Man, Seth the Son of the Son of Man, and Eve the female aspect of these androgynous figures, called Sophia (or Pistis Sophia).³⁵ In a paradoxical expression typical of Gnostic style, the author of *Steles Seth* prayed to the “Fatherly God, Divine Child” (123:6–7).³⁶ Zostrianos, in turn, announced that he had seen “the Perfect Child” (*Zost.* 2:9, 12:4–6). In *Allogenes* 51:33–37, this “Perfect Child” was related to the “triple male.”

At least two Gnostic texts clearly identified the child (or “a little child”) with Jesus.³⁷ However, since there is no evidence of an undisputably pre-Christian text in which the Gnostic σωτήρ was characterized as a child, it is very difficult to know whether the widespread child image helped promote the identification of Seth with Jesus, or whether, conversely, it was this identification which furthered the representation of Seth as the perfect child.

This child also appears as the revealer in *Paraph. Shem*, where his name, Derdekeas, should be derived from the Aramaic דרדקא, a male child.³⁸ Although recent studies of this text have shown that it is different from the *Paraphrasis of Seth* used by Hippolytus in his description of Sethian theology,³⁹ it seems that these two works are somehow related. It is certainly very tempting to see in Derdekeas the perfect child, one of the spiritual parallels of Seth (as in *Gos. Eg.*). In this context of child imagery in Gnosticism, it is significant that the Valentinian *Excerpta ex Theodoto*

le Manichéisme, I (Brussels: Lamertin, 1908), 22ff. The numerous parallels between *Gos. Eg.* and the Manichaean mythological system are particularly striking.

³⁴*Pistis Sophia* I. 86 (p. 125) *et passim*. On the spiritual twin, see A. Henrichs and L. Koenen, “Ein griechischen Mani Codex,” *ZPE* 5 (1970), 161–189.

³⁵Douglas M. Parrot, “Evidence of Religious Syncretism in Gnostic Texts from Nag Hammadi,” in B. A. Pearson, ed., *Religious Syncretism in Antiquity: Essays in Conversation with Geo Widengren* (Missoula: Scholars, 1975), 173–189, esp. 178–180.

³⁶Similar paradoxical expressions (especially in *Thund.*) have been studied by MacRae, “Discourses of the Gnostic Revealer.”

³⁷*Great Pow.* 44:32–33; *Apoc. Paul* 18:6.

³⁸Doresse would derive this name from דרדקא, “to fall in droplets,” which seems far-fetched (*Secret Books*, 147, n. 1). On דרדקא, see Jastrow’s dictionary, 321b.

³⁹See for instance F. Wisse, “The Redeemer Figure in the Paraphrase of Seth,” *NovT* 12 (1970), 130–140.

explicitly mentioned the child (i.e., Jesus) who came from the pneumatic nature of Seth. And since Seth was pneumatic, he was neither a shepherd nor a farmer, but rather “bore fruit” in a child—like pneumatic beings.⁴⁰

It should also be recalled that the figure of the perfect child (*al-walad al-tāmm*) was later developed in a remarkable way in Ismaʿīlī Gnosticism, where he was considered to have been the first progeny of the heavenly Adam. In the Ismaʿīlī texts published by R. Strothmann, the perfect Child—who is not, however, expressly identified as Seth—appears at various ontological levels as the *qāʾim*, the Redeemer.⁴¹ H. Corbin, who has analyzed the figure and the role of the *qāʾim* in Ismaʿīlism,⁴² states that at each level or rank, he was only *in potentia* in relation to the higher degree; he was empowered to become *qāʾim in actu* only when he rose to the next stage. At the highest stage, according to Corbin, he became the *qāʾim al qiyāmat* and reached “the lotus of the limit” (cf. Qurʾān 53:14). Although these passages from potential to actualization during the spiritual ascent of the *qāʾim* remain somewhat obscure (at least in Corbin’s description), the spiritual ascent of the *qāʾim* might reflect a theme that appears in certain Coptic Gnostic texts: the successive hidden advents of the Child until his final epiphany.

⁴⁰Exc. Theod. 54.3 (170 Sagnard).

⁴¹*Gnosis-Texte der Ismailiten; arabische Handschrift Ambrosiana H75* (Abhandl. Akad. Wissenschaften Göttingen, philol.-hist. Klasse, 3 folge, 28; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1943). On Ismaʿīlī Gnosis, see H. Halm, *Kosmologie und Heilslehre der frühen Ismaʿīliya: eine Studie zur islamischen Gnosis* (Abhandl. für die Kunde des Morgenlandes 44.1; Wiesbaden: DMG-F. Steiner, 1978), esp. 119.

⁴²“Epiphanie divine et naissance spirituelle dans la gnose Ismaélienne,” *ErJb* 18 (1950), quoted here according to the English translation in J. Campbell, *Man and Transformation* (Bollingen Series; New York: Pantheon, 1964), 69–160, esp. 109 and nn. 26, 94, 113.

CHAPTER FOUR

GNOSTIC SALVATION HISTORY

Scholars have long considered the Gnostic soteriological attitude to be totally ahistorical and non-temporal. This view was best expressed by H.-C. Puech in his famous study "La Gnose et le temps";¹ according to him, Gnosticism (like classical Greek tradition and contrary to Judaism and Christianity) denied that time and history had any positive value. We now know how inaccurate this description is. The close relationship between Gnosis and Jewish apocalypticism leaves no doubt as to the importance of *Heilsgeschichte* for Gnostic consciousness. From this point of view, the *Apocalypse of Adam* may be the most interesting of all the newly discovered texts. *Apoc. Adam* presents us with a remarkable description of the mythical Child in a beautiful and puzzling hymnic section (77:27–82:29), which I propose to call "The Hymn of the Child." Some studies of *Apoc. Adam* have considered this hymn to be a discrete lyrical unit, describing a hitherto unknown myth that had somehow been interpolated into the prose sections of the text, which present a Gnostic vision of *Heilsgeschichte*.² While a source analysis of *Apoc. Adam* such as that undertaken by C. W. Hedrick³ is indeed a legitimate approach, it would probably be more fruitful once the total structure of the text is precisely understood. In the following pages I will thus analyze the place and function of the "Hymn of the Child" in the work as a whole and examine its relationship to the prose account.

¹Conveniently reprinted in the collection of Puech's essays, *En quête de la gnose*, I, 215–270.

²Böhlig, in the *editio princeps* of *Apoc. Adam*, described the hymn as an "excursus" (*Koptische-gnostische Apokalypsen aus Codex V von Nag Hammadi* [Halle–Wittenberg: Martin Luther Universität, 1963], 91–93, 109, note). He was followed in this by M. Krause in the introduction to his own translation of *Apoc. Adam* (in W. Förster, ed., *Gnosis* [Engl. trans.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1972], 14), as well as by C. Colpe, "Heidnische, jüdische und christliche Überlieferung in den Schriften aus Nag Hammadi IV," *JAC* 18 (1975), 164. The same attitude is implicit in P. Perkins, "Apocalypse of Adam: The Genre and Function of a Gnostic Apocalypse," *CBQ* 39 (1977), 382–395. R. Kasser, for his part, asks whether we have here "à l'origine . . . un hymne sémitique (ou iranien)" ("Bibliothèque Gnostique V, Apocalypse d'Adam," *RTP* 17 [1967], 317).

³"The Apocalypse of Adam: a Literary and Source Analysis," *SBL, 1972 Proceedings* (ed. L. C. McGaughey; Missoula: Scholars, 1972), 581–590, summarizing results of his unpublished Ph.D dissertation, Claremont College, 1977.

The Apocalypse of Adam

Apoc. Adam is presented as a revelation (ἀποκάλυψις) by Adam to his son Seth about the future of mankind. As MacRae has pointed out, however, the title of the document "is not especially apt," since it is an apocalypse revealed by Seth.⁴ The work is actually a "testament" of Adam, for the revelation took place at the time of his death.⁵ In fact, Seth is the only son of Adam mentioned in the text: Abel is absent, and Cain, Eve's first son, was begotten by the demiurge Sakla (66:25–28).⁶ The appearance of human lust—the "sweet desire" felt by Adam for Eve⁷—is implicitly presented as consequent to this intercourse of the demiurge with Eve (67:2–4), while the shortening of human life and the appearance of death, as well as the disappearance of Gnosis, are explicitly said to be due to lust: "Therefore the days of our life became short" (67:10–11). This statement should be compared to Gen 6:3, where God limited human life to 120 years as a punishment for the sin of the women with the angels.⁸ The same biblical passage may be alluded to elsewhere in *Apoc. Adam*: "The shall live forever because they have not been corrupted by their desire, along with the angels" (83:14–17).

Sakla, who was lower than his creatures Adam and Eve (64:16–17) is called "god" (ΠΝΟΥΤΕ = ὁ θεός), like "the eternal God." While this lack of technical differentiation in the Gnostic terminology of *Apoc. Adam* might provide an argument in favor of a relatively early stage of redaction of the text, it is noteworthy that Marcion, too, called the demiurge "god."⁹

Adam revealed to his son the various attempts the demiurge would make to destroy the righteous seed of Seth. First, Sakla would send a flood in order to obliterate, together with all flesh,

⁴"Seth in Gnostic Texts and Traditions," 18.

⁵According to the masoretic text (Gen 5:3), Adam was 130 years old when Seth was born. In LXX, Gen 5:3–4, Adam's age at Seth's birth was 230 and he lived for 700 years more. This number 130 (which also occurs in *Adam and Eve* 23:2) probably lies behind *Gos. Eg.* III, 68:11–12: "The Great Seth wrote this book [i.e., *Gos. Eg.*, the God-written, holy, secret book] with letters in one hundred and thirty years." As far as I know, this is the only other instance of 130 years in a Gnostic text. In the theological substratum of *Gos. Eg.*, the writing of the book might have lasted 130 years until the birth of the earthly Seth. Böhlig and Wisse (*The Gospel of the Egyptians* [NHS 4; Leiden: Brill, 1975], 31, and commentary, *ad loc.*) give no explanation for the 130 years. The fact that *Apoc. Adam* uses the LXX account while *Gos. Eg.* apparently depends on the masoretic chronology is one more argument against the direct links between these two texts advocated by Doresse in his commentary to *Gos. Eg.*, Appendix II, 370–376.

⁶Cain's name does not appear in the corrupt text.

⁷ΟΥΕΠΙΘΥΜΙΑ ΕCΖΟΛΕ. See *MPs.* 70:26–28: "A Custom both sweet (ΖΑΛΕ) and bitter is the intercourse (συνήθεια) of the flesh (σάρξ)." See also *Thom. Cont.* 140:20–25.

⁸Cf. *Val. Exp.* 38:21–37 (cited above, p. 33).

⁹Indeed, here lies the reason for Appelles's break with him, since the demiurgic figure was an *angelus inclitus* for Appelles; see Tertullian, *De Carne Christi*, VIII.2 (ed. and trans. J. P. Mahé, SC 216, 97–99).

the seed of the men to whom passed the life of the knowledge, that came from me and Eve, your mother. For they were strangers to him. (69:11–18)¹⁰

This passage refers to the offspring of Seth, a figure named “by the name of that man who is the seed of the great generation” (65:7–8), and who remained a stranger to the powers of the demiurge unlike his parents (65:18–19). Seth was thus described as the forefather of the Gnostics. These Gnostics would be saved from the flood by “great angels” who “would come on high clouds” in order to bring them “into the place where the spirit of life dwells” (69:23–24), i.e., to their proper land, where the Great Seth “will build for them a holy place” (72:4–6). It is noteworthy that since Noah was evil, the ark could in no way be a vessel of salvation for the Gnostics.

To the Gnostics are opposed Noah, his sons, and their wives (see Gen 6:18), who would be protected from the flood by Sakla (70:6–25). A difficulty in the interpretation of the whole passage arises from the fact that Adam mentioned that Sakla would “give power to his sons and their wives by means of the ark” (70:10–11). According to a literal understanding, the first possessive article refers to the demiurge. Since Cain was Sakla’s son, it would follow that the author of *Apoc. Adam* transformed Noah (A Sethite in the Bible) into a Cainite. This interpretation, however, generates other problems in the understanding of the text, problems which are noted below. One could just as legitimately speculate that the Nag Hammadi papyrus suffers here from a haplography, and that the original text paraphrased the Bible (Gen 7:7) and read: “and he will give power to *Noah, his wife*, his sons and their wives.”¹¹ As the price of their salvation, the demiurge made them swear not to mingle with the Gnostics, who opposed him (“and no seed will come from you of the men who will not stand in my presence in another glory” [71:4–8]). In exchange, the demiurge undertook to establish them as rulers of the earth “in a kingly fashion.” Noah and his sons accepted the alliance with the demiurge, and the earth was divided between Japheth, Ham, and Shem

¹⁰*Contra* MacRae (“Seth in Gnostic Texts and Traditions,” 22), a description of the flood as an “unsuccessful attempt of opposing powers to eliminate the race of Seth” is not typical of all the Nag Hammadi versions of the story; see *Ap. John* 28:35ff., *Great Pow.* 38:17ff. On the flood in *Apoc. Adam*, see also A. F. J. Klijn, “An Analysis of the Use of the Story of the Flood in the *Apoc. Adam*,” in van den Broek and Vermaseren, eds., *Studies in Gnosticism*, 218–226. More generally, see J. P. Lewis, *A Study of the Interpretation of Noah and the Flood in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), who shows the identification Noah = Deucalion (which is found in *Apoc. Adam*) to stem from Hellenistic Jewish sources. The same identification is in Ps.-Clem. *Hom.* II.16.4 (41 Rehm).

¹¹The same suggestion is made by MacRae in his edition (in D. M. Parrott, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codices V, 2–5 and VI* [NHS 11; Leiden: Brill, 1979]); see his note on 70:10. Böhlig’s reconstruction of the corrupt line 10 also includes a haplography, “Und er wird schonen Noah und seine Söhne,” but his reading [ϣΝΑ]†ϭΟ ΜΝ ΝΕϣΨΗΡΕ, “[he will] spare and his sons,” is difficult. MacRae’s reading is better: [ϣΝΑ]†[ϥ]ΟΜ ΝΝΕϣΨΗΡΕ, “[he will] give power to his sons”; see 70:20–23, where the biblical verse is paraphrased *in extenso*.

(72:15–17). This remarkably sophisticated attitude of the demiurge is not to be found in the earliest strata of Gnosticism. As noted above, in the earliest stages of Gnostic thought, it was the Gnostics who sought to prevent mixture with the evil seed, while the latter tried to corrupt the former by intermingling with them.

In chapter II, we saw how the figure of Seth as a Righteous One was related, in some Gnostic contexts, to that of Noah. We have also shown how some of Seth's attributes in the apocryphal legends had in the earliest Jewish traditions belonged to Noah (e.g., the "etymology" *comforter* for his name and the identity of his wife Naamah). In Gnosticism these legends were usually associated solely with Seth because of the central role which Adam's son played in Gnostic mythology. Nevertheless, in various Gnostic contexts Noah remained a typical Sethite. In Epiphanius's testimony about the Archontics, for instance, Noah came from the offspring of Seth and was persecuted by the demiurge and his archons until Pronoia helped him escape their evil schemes by means of the ark.¹² In Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.30.10 (I, 237 Harvey), Noah was saved by Prunikos, while in *Ap. John* 29:1–11, Noah, informed by "the greatness of the light of Pronoia," hid in "a place," i.e., in a "luminous cloud," with "many people from the immovable race." According to *Great Pow.* 38:21–39:13, he and his sons were moved "from the aeon" into "the permanent places." The text recalls that before escaping the flood, Noah had preached piety for 120 years, but no one listened to him.¹³ *Hyp. Arch.* 92:8–14 presents a different attitude to Noah's escape. On the one hand, he was saved by the archon of the forces (i.e., Sabaoth, Yaldabaoth's repentant son). But on the other hand, he did not really belong to the pure seed and refused to let Orea into the ark.¹⁴ The ambivalent attitude of *Hyp. Arch.* towards Noah seems to be intermediate between the earlier view of Noah as a "faithful Sethite" and his complete rejection in the trends represented by *Apoc. Adam*. It is only in later Gnostic trends, as a result of a greater estrangement of the Gnostics from the biblical text and its traditional (Jewish and Christian) interpretations, that Noah was transformed into one of the most devoted servants of the evil demiurge.

This reasoning is, of course, typological, since texts with a positive view of Noah could also be relatively late (e.g., Epiphanius's sources and *Great Pow.*). The same assumption can be applied, on logical grounds, to other figures: "Cainite" theology, for instance, in which Cain was the first righteous one stemming from the Upper World (see Gen 4:1b), represents a *typologically* later stage in the evolution of the Gnostic myth. By making Noah the arch-servant of the demiurge, *Apoc. Adam* thus probably reacted against a previous Gnostic stand.

¹²Epiphanius, *Pan.* 39.3.1 (II, 74 Holl). In the next lines (sections 2 and 3), Epiphanius reported how the angels, bringing evil into the ark, foiled the Mother's plan.

¹³This tradition, obviously based upon Gen 6:3, is indeed common not only in ancient Christian literature, including the "Gospel of Seth" (see Preuschen, "Adamschriften," 39), but also in rabbinic literature; see the texts mentioned by Ginzberg, *Legends*, V, 174, n. 19.

¹⁴See Layton's remarks in his commentary, p. 62, n. 99.

After the flood, Noah, in his obedience to the demiurge, encouraged his sons to remain fearful slaves of Sakla all their lives. Indeed, the drastic inversion of the biblical text was carried even further. While Shem's name does not appear again in the text, there is a probable reference to him: "For the seed of Noah through his *son* has done all [Sakla's] will" (74:17–18). In this literally "antisemitic" text, it is Shem, the Israelites' forefather, who was Noah's real heir and therefore altogether evil.

On the other hand, "the seed of Ham and Japheth will form twelve kingdoms" (73:25–27). The text is here extremely difficult, and some ambiguity remains. Like the offspring of Shem, the offspring of Ham and Japheth were also evil; it is probably to them that 74:3–7 refers: "they will go to Sakla their God . . . accusing the great men who are in their glory." Yet they were not as completely doomed as the Shemites, since the Gnostics stemmed from them. The "great men" should be identified with the 400,000 men from the seed of Ham and Japheth who "will enter another land and sojourn with those men who came forth from the great eternal knowledge" (73:13–20). Striking parallels to these 400,000 men occur in Manichaean literature, not only in *Hom.*, as Böhlig noted,¹⁵ but also in fragments of Mani's *Book of Giants*, where the 400,000 Righteous Ones were killed by fire, naphtha, and brimstone.¹⁶ The 400,000 men of *Apoc. Adam* should also be identified with those men whom the illuminator "will bring into their proper land" (probably a heavenly one, since it did not belong to the "dead earth"), and who "will be called by that name" (i.e., probably Seth's). It is said that "they have been received into another aeon from which they had come forth," and that "they have overturned all the glory of [Sakla's] power and the dominion of [his] hand." Ham and Japheth, like their father Noah, belonged to the offspring of Seth. Yet, they accepted their father's pact with Sakla and were therefore *sinful* Sethites. On the other hand, the 400,000, who dissociated themselves from the seed of Ham and Japheth, were the sons of

¹⁵In *Hom.* 68:18, the 400,000 righteous ones are related to Enoch. See Böhlig's edition of *Apoc. Adam*, *ad loc.* MacRae calls this parallel "obscure" ("The Coptic Gnostic Apocalypse of Adam," *Heythrop Journal* 6 [1965], 29 and n. 1), while he himself mentions the fact that 400,000 is the number of the tribe of Judah in Josephus's version of the Davidic census (*Ant.* 7.13.1).

¹⁶Fragment *i* from the *Kawān*, in Henning, "The Book of the Giants," *BSOAS* (1943), 58, trans. 62. See also the Sogdian fragment G, *ibid.*, 68–69 (the article is reprinted in Henning's *Selected Papers*, II, 115–137). The idea that the number of the perfect ones should also be perfect appears elsewhere in Gnostic literature. *Pistis Sophia* mentions the τέλειος ἀριθμός, which is a prerequisite for the final salvation (50, p. 89; trans. 57). Multiples of 4 were very widely considered as perfect in Antiquity (e.g., already Judg 5:8). See van Unnik, "The 'Wise Fire' in Gnostic Eschatological Vision," in P. Granfield and J. A. Jungmann, eds., *Kyriakon: Festschrift Johannes Quasten* (Münster, 1970), I, 277–288. For a long list of parallels (mainly from alchemical literature) about the magic virtues of the number 40, see Tardieu, *Trois Mythes*, 125, n. 266. See also *Pesiq. Rab. Kah.* 15.7 (257 Mandelbaum). Last but not least, 400,000 aeons occur in Isma'ili literature; R. Strothmann, *Gnosis Texte der Ismailiten*, 12 (German summary, p. 22). In his commentary to *Gos. Eg.* (p. 374), Doresse has proposed seeing the 400 angels mentioned in *Gos. Eg.* III, 62:14–15 as corresponding to the 400,000 righteous ones of *Apoc. Adam*.

Seth who remained pure, i.e., the Gnostics (see 76:8–15). The suggestion made earlier of an omission in 70:10 can now be justified on other grounds. Had Noah and his sons belonged to the seed of Sakla (i.e., had they been “Cainites”), the 400,000 would have to be understood as converts to Gnosticism. Such a possibility is excluded by the rigidly racial theology of *Apoc. Adam*.

Three times the text insists upon the fact that in their proper land, the Gnostics would remain pure: “No foul deed will dwell in their heart(s)” (72:12–13), they will be protected “from every evil thing and every unclean desire” (73:23–24), they are “the great men . . . who have not been defiled, or will be defiled by any desire (ἐπιθυμία)” (75:1–4). In each case, it is from lust that the Gnostics would be protected. Indeed, lust is directly related to the demiurge, his works, and his powers. It is not clear, however, whether this defilement referred to a specific act, although it is possible that the text reflected the exegesis of Gen 6:1–4 (dealt with in chap. VI *infra*) according to which the “Sons of God” were Sethites seduced by the charms of Cainite women.

One question remains: Who were “those men who came forth from the great eternal knowledge” (73:18–20) whom the Gnostics joined, and who protect the Gnostics by “the shadow of their power” (73:21)? According to the similarity already detected between 72:1–14 and 73:13–24, they should be identified with the “angels of the great light” (72:10–11). I therefore propose to identify them with the seed of the heavenly Seth. Just as Seth, son of Adam, had a heavenly counterpart, so did his offspring.¹⁷ Indeed, our text distinguishes the Great Seth from Adam’s son and calls him “that man who is the seed of the great race” (65:5–9). Yet some of the exegetical difficulties encountered by the modern reader of *Apoc. Adam* probably stem from the theological problems of the author himself; as a result, not all ambiguities can be solved by a logical analysis of the text. The overall inversion of the biblical account could not avoid raising some crucial problems. Concerning Noah’s genealogy, if he was evil, how could he be a Sethite? Cainite theology, of course, solved this problem very neatly by transforming *all* Sethites into servants of the evil demiurge. Indeed Noah’s problematic status may have played a role in the emergence of “Cainite” conceptions. For developed “Sethian” theology, however, Noah could only be considered a *sinful* Sethite, since he obeyed the demiurge’s orders and mingled with the Cainites, betraying the laws of purity required by his lineage. Once the logical necessity of the theologoumenon of sinful Sethites was established, the Gnostics might have found it already in existence (although not applied to Noah!), in some trends of Jewish exegesis.

In any case, *Apoc. Adam* describes the opposition between the pure and the evil seed as radical: it is over a kingdom of *death* that Sakla ruled. Under his sway, men learn about “dead things” (65:14–16). Actually,

¹⁷Cf. in the mythological system of *Ap. John*, Daveithai, the third Light, or Aeon, in which the Sons of Seth are placed (CG II, 9:14–16).

the whole creation is under the authority of death; the earth itself is "dead" (76:16–20). The Gnostics, on the other hand, "work in the imperishable seed" (76:7), and "their fruit does not wither" (85:1). *Life*, therefore, belongs to them—and only to them. It is eternal, like their knowledge (65:10; 69:14–15). The Gnostics are, in a word, *strangers* to the demiurge and to his powers; they belong to the holy angels in the aeons (65:18–19; 69:17–18; 76:5–6). This *alienation* from the world and its rules, a major theme in Gnostic symbolic language, has been thoroughly analyzed by Jonas and Puech.¹⁸ The Gnostics kept themselves apart. In contradistinction to the kingdoms of the evil seed, all ruled by Sakla, the Gnostics saw themselves as a "kingless race," ruled by no one.¹⁹ The theology of *Apoc. Adam* is thus organized around a series of absolute contrasts:²⁰

evil seed	pure seed (of the Great Seth)
earth	(foreign) air, aeons
death	(eternal) life, imperishability
darkness	(great) light, glory
defilement	purity
sleep	awakening
slavery	freedom
ignorance	knowledge

After the flood, Sakla attempted once more to kill the pure Gnostics, in what is clearly an inverted interpretation of the catastrophe which befell Sodom and Gomorrah: "Then fire and sulphur and asphalt will be cast upon those men" (75:9–11). But the Gnostics escaped his wicked schemes again: "great clouds of light" descended from the aeons, hiding the Gnostics from the evil powers and thus protecting them from death. Three heavenly figures, Abrasax, Sablo, and Gamaliel, who also appear elsewhere in Gnostic literature,²¹ then descended and brought the Gnostics "out of the fire" (75:14–28).

On the third occasion in which the Gnostics were saved, it was not from a catastrophe sent by the demiurge that they escaped, but from "the day of death," the final destruction of the earth at the end of time. "The

¹⁸Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 49–51; Puech, *En quête de la gnose*, I, 207–213.

¹⁹We owe to F. T. Fallon a detailed study of this striking metaphor in Gnostic language, "The Gnostics: the Undominated Race," *NovT* 21 (1978), 271–288.

²⁰There is a similar opposition, in *Setheus* 19 (260–261 Schmidt-MacDermot) between the lands (χωρα) of the left and of the right, the one being the place of death, darkness, and toil, and the other the place of life, light and, rest. These two lands are separated by veils and Watchers.

²¹See the texts referred to by MacRae, p. 174, in his edition of *Apoc. Adam* (on 75:22–23).

illuminator of knowledge," who was not mentioned previously, was said to "pass by in great glory" for the third time "in order to leave (something) of the seed of Noah and the sons of Ham and Japheth—to leave for himself fruit-bearing trees" (76:8–15). The illuminator was indeed the Great Seth, as a parallel passage reveals:

He [the Great Seth] passed through the three parousias which I mentioned before: the flood, and the conflagration, and the judgement of the archons and the powers and the authorities. (*Gos. Eg.* III, 63:4–8)

The third coming was thus the final one; it brought the Gnostics everlasting salvation by destroying the kingdom of Sakla.

Far from being a pattern peculiar to *Apoc. Adam*, this scheme of the three comings of the savior is a major theologoumenon of Gnostic *Heilsgeschichte*, as confirmed by its occurrence in various contexts. Moreover, the Manichaean figure of the *tertius legatus* probably stood in a genetic relation to the third and final parousia in the soteriological process.²² The three advents of Pronoia are described in *Ap. John*. On her third coming, she "filled [her] face with the light of the completion of [the archon's] aeon" (31:1–2).²³

It is noteworthy that this ultimate coming of the savior figure is identified in some christianized texts with Christ's incarnation. Such is the case, for instance, in *Trim. Prot.* 47:13–15, where the Protennoia says: "The third time I revealed myself to them in their tents, being Logos."²⁴ In *Treat. Seth*, similarly (the "Great Seth" appears only in the title), the savior figure is Christ. This text, which has a marked docetic tendency, describes the savior's attempts to rescue mankind and the foiled plans of the evil powers to persecute him, like the Phoster in *Apoc. Adam*.²⁵ About his third coming (which is Christ's incarnation, since it ended in the crucifixion), the savior said: "It was my going to the revealed height which the world did not accept, my third baptism in a revealed image."²⁶

The Hymn of the Child

The prose account of history and of the tribulations of the sons of Seth, i.e., of the Gnostics, is followed by a moving hymn. Written in a strange language replete with symbolism, this hymn was by no means arbitrarily inserted into the text, as has sometimes been argued, but rather is parallel

²²G. Stroumsa, "Aspects de l'eschatologie manichéenne," *RHR* 198 (1981), 63–81. On the figure of the *tertius legatus* see Polotsky, "Manichaeismus," *PWSup*, VI, 254–255 (= *Collected Papers* [Jerusalem: Magnes, 1971], 705–706).

²³See the entire passage, *Ap. John* 30:16–31:25. Cf. *Setheus* 49:31–50:4, which speaks about "one who was brought forth (ΠΕΝΤΑΥ ΔΠΟC) three times."

²⁴As Y. Janssens points out, "in their tents" (σκήνη) might reflect John 1:14: ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν. See Janssens, ed. and trans., *La Prôtennoia Trimorphe* (BCNH, Textes 4; Québec: Laval, 1978), 78.

²⁵*Treat. Seth* 52:29–30; 54:32–55:2.

²⁶*Treat. Seth* 58:13–16.

to the historical account in the overall structure of *Apoc. Adam*. This is the key to solving some of its mystery and to understanding the drama of the *Endzeit*. Actually the hymn is the response of the defeated powers to Adam's description of *Heilsgeschichte*. Indeed, it is put into their mouths, a fact which explains its mythological, i.e., ahistorical, language. The powers of Fate can speak no other language, since history is understood meaningfully only by those who know that it has a goal beyond the persecutions which they suffer and that it ends in salvation. Only the Gnostics, who believed in the final parousia of the Great Seth, the illuminator of Gnosis, could speak a historical language. At the end of time, however, the powers would be so confused or disturbed (77:5)²⁷ that they would be unable to understand how the Gnostics managed to suddenly come to light and subdue them, or how they were able to escape from "this kingdom" (77:25) and reach safety in their land of light.

In the hymn the powers try, one after the other, to answer their own question: "Where did it come from?" (77:22–23).²⁸ This question was interpreted by the narrator: "Where did the words of deception, which all the powers have failed to discover, come from?" (77:24–27). The powers, "corrupted by their desire (*ἐπιθυμία*) along with the angels" (63:15–17; a reference to the Fallen Angels), belong to Sakla, the lustful demiurge. They are therefore blind to truth, and the hymn reflects their defeat; they are unable to perceive that their own kingdom was coming to an end through the final advent of the savior. Their choir was composed of thirteen spokesmen, who must be seen as representing the twelve kingdoms of the seed of Ham and Japheth plus "the kingdom of another people" into which the sons of Ham and Japheth had entered, as mentioned in the historical account (73:25–29). In this mythological account, thirteen different versions of the final coming of the illuminator are given. All are incorrect, of course, since the powers are "in error" (77:21–22). In Adam's account, on the other hand, the illuminator appeared three times in history: once to save the Gnostics from the flood, once to rescue them from the conflagration, and finally to separate the righteous ones from the doomed at the end of time.

In the hymn, each spokesman presents his own conception of the savior's advent, how each kingdom perceives the birth of a child and his upbringing until he received "glory and power," and how the child thus came "to the water" (or "upon the water"). The sentence, repeated in each account, remains ambiguous. It may well refer to baptism, but could also be an image for "coming into the world" (both senses are attested

²⁷For this confusion of the powers (or the archons) see e.g., *Pistis Sophia* 1.27 (38 Schmidt-MacDermot).

²⁸*ἁρῶν πε εβολ*. The feminine pronoun might refer to the "error" (*πλάνη*) in which they had been using "the Name" (according to the author; 77:22–23). Only in true baptism does the savior reveal his name; *Melch.* 16:12–16. On the *Planē*, see the Manichaean *Hom.* 11, *passim*; cf. my "Aspects de l'eschatologie manichéenne," 170. On references to the Divine Name in Gnostic literature and its Jewish overtones, see J. D. Dubois, "Le contexte judaïque du 'Nom' dans l'Evangile de Vérité," *RTP* 3 (1979), 198–216.

for similar sentences in other Nag Hammadi texts).²⁹ Now according to the various descriptions, the child was conceived either unnaturally or illicitly. Conception is attributed to a prophet, a god, a virgin womb,³⁰ a virgin raped by Solomon "and his army of demons," incestuous relations between a father and daughter, parthenogenesis (human or divine), a "drop" from heaven, the sun and the moon,³¹ or even a cloud. Nor was the child raised in his own natural milieu, but rather in various hidden or secret places: on a mountain, in the desert,³² in an abyss or a cave, on a rock or above a cloud. And his caretaker was a spirit, a bird, angels, dragons, or his own mother in the desert. Most of the descriptions thus seem to suggest that the child's birth was mysterious or illegitimate (resulting from a sexual sin) and/or that during his secret upbringing he received "glory and power"³³ before coming "to the water." In fact, it could even be said that the first twelve spokesmen enumerated the various ways of begetting, ways which they know through the lust imparted to them by their god Sakla (74:3-4). The description of the child given by the thirteenth kingdom is somewhat different. The speaker does not actually describe the child's birth but says cryptically, "Every birth of their archon is a word (λόγος) and this word (λόγος) received a mandate here" (82:12-15).

The entire hymn, indeed all of *Apoc. Adam*, is pervaded by a puzzling ambiguity; while the conditions of the child's birth and upbringing are variously described as morally blemished, the child himself appears as a positive figure.³⁴ Indeed there is little doubt concerning his identity: he is

²⁹The sentence reads: $\alpha\gamma\omega\ \eta\tau\tau\epsilon\ \alpha\eta\epsilon\iota\ \epsilon\chi\mu\pi\mu\omicron\omicron\gamma$. On the ambiguity of $\epsilon\chi\mu$ -, see Böhlig, "Jüdisches und iranisches," 157. MacRae, for whom the expression is a probable reference to coming to the world, cites *Treat. Seth* 50:16-18, *Paraph. Shem* 32:5-12 (with this meaning), and *Zost.* 18:2-3 (possible reference to baptism); see his note to *Apoc. Adam* 78:5, pp. 178-179 of his edition. One might add that in other contexts, water is the *locus classicus* of theophany: God's image is reflected on water. See for instance, *Ap. John* 14:33-34; *Poimandres* 14 (*CH* 1; 11 Nock-Festugière). See also the Quqite tradition, reported by Theodore ben Khonai, and analyzed by H. J. W. Drijvers, "Quq und the Quqites: an Unknown Sect in Edessa in the Second Century A.D.," *Numen* 14 (1967), 104-129, esp. 113. For the same theme in the oldest Merkavah text, the *Visions of Ezechiel*, see I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (AGJU 14; Leiden-Cologne: Brill, 1980), 134-141, esp. 135.

³⁰See the Elkasaite teaching according to which Christ was already born from a virgin in his previous avatars; Hippolytus, *Elenchos* 9.14.1 (116 Klijn-Reinink).

³¹To which the "two illuminators" ($\phi\omega\sigma\tau\eta\rho\epsilon\varsigma$) of the twelfth kingdom (82:4-7) probably refer.

³²On the desert motif as it appears in Revelation 12 and its/background in Near Eastern mythologies, see Adela Yarbro-Collins, *The Combat Myth in The Book of Revelation* (Missoula: Scholars, 1976), 120-122. Yarbro-Collins cites *Pesiq. R.* 49b, where the Messiah, like Moses, will retire to the desert (of Judah). *Pesiqta* here presents an Exodus typology combined with the theme of the temporarily hidden Messiah. For phenomenological parallels to the secret raising of the child, see D. B. Redford, "The literary motif of the exposed child," *Numen* 14 (1967), 209-228.

³³Possible allusion to Pss 29:1, 96:7.

³⁴For a detailed analysis of the ambiguity of purity and impurity in *Apoc. Adam*, see L. Schottroff, "Animae naturaliter salvandae," in W. Eltester, ed., *Christentum und Gnosis*

the illuminator, the Phoster, the figure identified in the closely related text of *Gos. Eg.* with the Great Seth. The reason for this ambiguity is inherent in the setting of the hymn. The only way in which the kingdoms of darkness (or the angels who ruled over these kingdoms) could describe the coming of the savior-child was in their own language of lustful begettings and carnal births. They therefore were unable to see the real savior, whose origin owed nothing to such ways: "[Out of] a foreign air, [from a] great aeon, [the great] illuminator came forth" (82:25–28; see 65:6–9).

It was not only because of their innate blindness that the kingdoms' rulers could not recognize the savior-child when he appeared. He hid himself deliberately;³⁵ secrecy was part of the nature of his "rescue trips" to earth. He had to remain hidden when appearing among the powers lest he himself become their prey and his seed fall into their clutches.

Similar descriptions of the hidden savior are found in other Gnostic texts. In *Pistis Sophia*, it was Jesus's mission to save the repentant Sophia and bring her back to her proper place, the thirteenth aeon from which she had fallen. In order to accomplish this task, the powers from on high gave him a garment (ἔνδυμα) to prevent him from being recognized by the archons of the sphere and of the aeons.³⁶ (He is also said to have appeared like Gabriel in order not to be identified.) All the powers thus remained ignorant of Jesus, since the glory of his light was hidden in him. Only at the end of time would he wear his "two garments" (the difference between them is not quite clear, but presumably one is his "garment of light,"³⁷ while the other is connected with his twin) and reveal himself in all his brightness, i.e., in the brightness of "the first mystery."³⁸ At last, when the time came, Jesus wore the garment of light and ascended through the aeons, while all the archons, finally discovering him, were "greatly troubled" upon seeing his "great light," his "shining glory."³⁹ Here, therefore, Jesus, as opposed to the hero of the *Hymn of the Pearl*, never forgets his duty and does not appear as a *salvator salvandus*.

The theme of the savior hiding in the world disguised in garments which preserve his anonymity also appears in other Gnostic texts. At the end of *Ap. John*, Pronoia appeared three times in "the realm of darkness" with the intention of shaking "the foundations of Chaos." She changed

(BZNW 37; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1969), 75–79.

³⁵For Appelles, similarly, Jesus "lived his earthly life concealed from the cosmic powers" (Hippolytus, *Elenchos* 6.38).

³⁶I.7 (10 Schmidt-MacDermot). The theme of the garments put upon the savior figure also appears in Justin's *Baruch*, where Elohim clothes Herakles, who accomplishes twelve labors (Hippolytus, *Elenchos* 5.26–28; 131 Wendland).

³⁷On "garments of light" in Gnostic symbolism, see Puech, *En quête de la gnose*, II, 118–122.

³⁸*Pistis Sophia* I.10 (16–20 Schmidt-MacDermot).

³⁹*Ibid.*, I.11 (20–22 Schmidt-MacDermot).

herself into her "seed," i.e., "the light which exists in the light, the remembrance of Pronoia." The first time she hid; the second time she did not accomplish her mission "lest [the foundations of Chaos] be destroyed before the time." Only the third time was presented as an epiphany, in which she revealed herself in her light (30:16–31:25).

In *Trim. Prot.* the savior-revealer is portrayed as the Light, the Voice, and the Word, who was hidden "in ineffable silence" (46:5, 11–13). The text describes his third appearance in these terms (47:16–19): "And I wore everyone's garments and I hid myself within them, and they did not know the one who empowers me."⁴⁰ Or, even more explicitly (49:7–22),

The [archons] thought [that I] was their Christ. . . . In that place I clothed myself [as] the son of the archigenitor, and I was like him until the end of his regime, which is the ignorance of chaos. And among the angels I revealed myself in their likeness, and among the powers as if I were one of them, but among the sons of men, as if I were a son of man, even though I am Father of everyone. I hid myself within them all until I revealed myself among my members, which are mine.

In the same way, the Gnostic, imitating his savior, would "strip off the garments of ignorance and put on a shining light," i.e., Jesus (49:30–32; 50:12–13). In *Gos. Eg.* Jesus is presented as the luminous garment of the savior, the Great Seth, "the incorruptible, Logos-begotten one, even Jesus the living one, even he whom the Great Seth has put on."⁴¹

In *Allogenes*, a work much influenced by Neoplatonism but which bears no trace of christianization, the "guardian," a heavenly figure sent to enlighten potential Gnostics, is said to be hidden.⁴² Here, too, the Gnostic, like his savior, would be stripped of the garment of anonymity, and would be taken up to the holy place, which remained secret to the world (58:26–33).

Other texts give various epithets to the savior's attire of light, and describe how he would wear his "unequalled" or "ineffable" garment (*Paraph. Shem* 39:1–2). In *Setheus*, the perfect Gnostics are presented as the ones who, by imitating "the only begotten one hidden in Setheus" are "the hidden ones," i.e., "those who truly are."⁴³ The dialectic of the savior's hiding and revelation is well emphasized in the Manichaean

⁴⁰See *Melch.* 1:11. The vestment of the savior is probably referred to in the name *Chelkea*, which is mentioned (under various forms) in *Paraph. Shem* as one of the names of the savior in his earthly appearances. As M. Schwartz has pointed out, the name is probably a transformation of the Hebrew *ḥalūq*, Jewish Aramaic *ḥalūqā* (garment). See the Appendix to Wuellner, *Jewish Gnostic Nag Hammadi Texts*, 25–27. The same word appears later in Jewish mystical speculation; G. Scholem, "The Paradisiac Garb of Souls and the Origin of the Concept of Haluka de-Rabbanan," *Tarbiz* 24 (1954–55), 290–306 (Hebrew).

⁴¹*Gos. Eg.* III, 63:25–64:3; see 60:2–8.

⁴²*Allogenes* 45:3 *et passim*; see *Setheus* 8 (239 Schmidt-MacDermot), Gamaliel, Strepsuchos and Agramas are also called "guardians" (φύλαξ).

⁴³*Setheus* 7 (235 and 237 Schmidt-MacDermot).

Kephalaia, where the three vestments which the Living Spirit wore in order to reveal himself to the archons are said to have been hidden in the body of all the archons.⁴⁴

Thus the powers in *Apoc. Adam* 77:18–27 did not see the illuminator until he appeared for the third time and overruled them, and why even then they were unable to understand how he arose and how their kingdom came to an end. (Similarly, in *Pistis Sophia* I.57 the tyrants of the twelve aeons fought against Jesus in his garment of light, desperately seeking to prolong their rule.) Troubled and blinded by the Phoster's appearance in garments of light, the powers could not ask the right question and they "used the name in error." They did not know the real name of the savior, which was hidden from them; it was pronounced only during holy baptism among the Gnostics, the seed of Seth.⁴⁵

Because the child came to save the world from his heavenly abode, his birth is described in mythological language by the various kingdoms in ways which accounted for the link between heaven and earth. Some of these ways are already familiar. The rape of a virgin by Solomon and his armies, unable to catch the virgin "they originally sought"⁴⁶ (fourth kingdom), is reminiscent of Sammael's rape of the earthly Eve (instead of the desired heavenly one) in *Hyp. Arch.* 89:17–28.⁴⁷ The drop fallen from heaven (seventh kingdom) and the god who loved a cloud of desire (tenth kingdom) call to mind the drop of semen of the archons at the origin of the anthropogonical process in the Manichaean myth told by Theodore bar Khonai. This drop should also be connected with the light fallen into the sea in *Orig. World* 109, a text which also offers an interesting parallel to the description of the sixth kingdom, in which the birth of the child was linked to "the desire of the flowers." Yet in *Orig. World* 111:8–28 the scene is somewhat different. The first Psyche (Soul) generated the first rose, and then the virgin daughters of Pronoia generated other "beautiful, fragrant flowers" in a parthenogenesis inspired by their love of Eros. As to the Muse who desired herself in order to become androgynous (ninth kingdom), her behavior recalls the sin of Sophia, who tried to generate an offspring without her mate.

⁴⁴*Keph.* XLII, 107:16–18. The three vestments are made of wind, fire, and water respectively. The Living Spirit took them off in front of the righteous ones (*Keph.* XXX, 83:27–28). Mani was the last avatar of the Living Spirit; see CMC 86:1–9.

⁴⁵*Apoc. Adam* 77:18–27; 83:4–6. See *Melch.* 16:12–16: "I shall pronounce my name as I receive baptism [now] (and) for ever among the living and holy [names], and in the [waters], Amen." The link between baptism (and esoteric practices in general) and the revealing of the Name also occurs in other contexts, e.g., *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 76. 3–4, or 80.3: "He who was sealed by the invocation of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit will not be attacked by the other powers, through the three Names he is cleansed from the triad of corruption."

⁴⁶On this expression, cf. *Apoc. Peter* 71:5–9.

⁴⁷Compare the Ebionite virulent hatred of David and Solomon (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30.18.4; 186 Klijn-Reinink).

In his edition of the text, Böhlig points to several parallels to the form of birth in each of the thirteen kingdoms. He remarks that in kingdoms 1–4, the child's parents were human beings; in kingdoms 5–8, they were material physical entities (*physikalisch-materielle Grössen*); but in kingdoms 9–11, they appear as lustful Gods.⁴⁸ Böhlig returned in greater detail to the possible origin of the various sayings of the hymn in his study "Jüdisches und iranisches in der Adamapokalypse des Codex V von Nag Hammadi,"⁴⁹ where he cites parallels from Jerome and Plutarch involving rocks impregnated by clouds or by gods who deposited their semen upon them and also refers to traditions concerning the birth and raising of Mithra, the typical end-of-time king.⁵⁰ Yet, as Böhlig himself recognizes, the motif of supernatural birth for half-gods and heroes was common stock in Antiquity. Our task, however, is to try to understand the precise significance of such themes in Gnostic contexts.

In the descriptions of the twelfth and the thirteenth kingdoms, and of the kingless race—which, as MacRae rightly insists, is not a fourteenth kingdom—Böhlig sees the presence of what he calls "higher scientifico-philosophical entities" (*höhere naturwissenschaftlich-philosophische Grössen*). The main fallacy in his reasoning is his attempt to integrate the thirteenth kingdom—and the kingless race—into the same category as the first twelve kingdoms.⁵¹

The relationship between the twelve kingdoms and the thirteenth in the first part of the text and in the Hymn of the Child constitutes a crucial problem for the understanding of *Apoc. Adam*. The question may be formulated more precisely: What does the thirteenth kingdom represent?

⁴⁸ *Koptisch-gnostische Apokalypsen*, 92–93.

⁴⁹ *In Mysterion und Wahrheit*, 155–156.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 156, referring to G. Widengren, *Die Religionen Irans* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1965), 199ff. The same identification of a Mithraic motif (about the rock of the eighth kingdom) was made by E. Yamauchi, "The *Apocalypse of Adam*, Mithraism and pre-Christian Gnosticism," in *Etudes Mithraïques (Acta Iranica, 1 ser., 4; Leiden-Liège-Teheran: Brill, Bibliothèque Pahlavi, 1978)*, 537–563.

⁵¹ It is on these grounds that MacRae ("Coptic Gnostic Apocalypse of Adam," 31, n. 1) rejects Böhlig's parallel of the fourteen aeons mentioned in Manichaean literature ("Jüdisches und iranisches," 152, n. 3; cf. Schaefer, *Gnomon* 9 [1933], 353, n. 2). However, these fourteen aeons appear in the context of traditions concerning Seth in *Keph. X*, entitled "On the significance of the 14 aeons, about which Sethel has spoken in his prayer." The same number also occurs elsewhere; *Keph. VIII* speaks about the fourteen trips of Jesus to the world. See also the Naassene quotation from *Gos. Thom.* (Hippolytus, *Elenchos* 7.5; 83 Wendland): "There, in the fourteenth aeon, having been hidden, I will reveal myself." In the *Second Book of Jeu* 52 (127–138 Schmidt-MacDermot), the last chapter, fourteen aeons are mentioned, while fourteen firmaments (*στερέωμα*) are found in the magical books edited by Kropp (*Koptische Zaubertexte, II, Übersetzungen* 178–179). Note further the fourteen demons under the leadership of Ariûth, "the Ethiopian" (= black) female demon (who might be connected to the Islamic Harûth), in *Pistis Sophia* IV.140 (362 Schmidt-MacDermot). In other passages of *Pistis Sophia* (on the fourteen redemptions of Pistis Sophia), one can follow the evolution in Gnostic thought from 12 + 1 to 13 + 1. Böhlig's parallel, therefore, is relevant. The number 14 could have been retained in later contexts after its original significance was forgotten or modified.

The numbers twelve and thirteen also appear in other Gnostic texts, where a special importance is attributed to them. Manichaeism, moreover, developed a similar interplay between twelve and thirteen, which probably shows affinities with earlier Gnostic speculation.⁵²

In Antiquity, speculation about the number twelve generally referred to zodiacal conceptions. In Late Antiquity, in particular, the desire to escape astral destiny was a common goal of religious life and appeared in otherwise widely different theologies. The soul could attain union with God and salvation only by reaching the upper regions, above the zone of the planets, i.e., by escaping from their power.⁵³ For the Gnostics, too, salvation coincided with the escape from fate.⁵⁴ So it is not surprising that the twelve kingdoms, or aeons, are identified in some Gnostic texts with the twelve months. For the signs of the Zodiac represented fate (*είμαρμένη*) or the sway of the archons. The god of astral destiny was "the god of the twelve aeons," which stood for unredeemed history, ruled by the movements of the cosmos and the blind power of fate. "The twelve months came to be as a type of the twelve powers," according to *Eugnostos* 84:2–4. *Eugnostos* is a work untouched by Christian influence (*Soph. Jes. Chr.* is its christianized version⁵⁵), and it seems that only in christianized Gnostic texts were the twelve signs of the Zodiac associated with the twelve "kingdoms" of Israel.

These twelve aeons are also called, literally, children of the archons; *Gos. Eg.* testifies that they were conceived by Satan and his consort, the female demon Nabruel (who is Sakla's consort in Manichaean mythology).⁵⁶ They were thus considered to be enemies of the Gnostics; the Gnostics had to fight them in order to break free from their bonds. Thus in Justin's *Baruch*, the twelve contests of Herakles are identified with his struggles against the twelve angels of Edem.⁵⁷ In *Pistis Sophia*, similarly, numerous warnings are issued against the archons of the twelve aeons, which correspond to the twelve repentances of Pistis Sophia (I.57, 110 Schmidt-MacDermot). In the same work, so typical of ripe (or decadent) Christian Gnosticism,⁵⁸ twelve saviors were symmetrically

⁵²L. Troje, *Die Dreizehn und die Zwölf im Traktat Pelliot (Dogmen in Zahlenformeln)* (Veröffentlichungen des Forschungs-Instituts für vergleichende Religionsgeschichte an der Universität Leipzig, II Reihe, Heft I; Leipzig, 1925).

⁵³See F. Cumont, *Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and Romans* (New York: Dover, 1960), 64–68, and A. J. Festugière, *L'idéal religieux des Grecs et l'Evangile* (Etudes Bibliques; Paris: Gabalda, 1932), 112–113.

⁵⁴E.g., *Exc. Theod.* 72.1, 74.1–2, 75.1, as well as the texts cited by Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 160, n. 14. On astrology among the Gnostics, see W. and H. G. Gundel, *Astrologoumena*, 318–332 (*non vidi*).

⁵⁵On the relationship between these two texts, see Parrot, "Religious Syncretism in Gnostic Texts," *passim*.

⁵⁶III, 57:16–21; see chap. VIII *infra*.

⁵⁷It was at Elohim's request that Herakles accomplished these fights (Hippolytus, *Elenchos* 5.26.27; 131 Wendland).

⁵⁸Lipsius characterizes what he calls "the third stage" of Gnosticism as a period of baroque and decadent developments (*Der Gnosticismus*, 155–159).

opposed to the twelve aeons. These saviors helped the Gnostic in the successive stages of his ascent towards freedom. At the end of time, "when the perfect number [of Gnostics] will be reached" (see the 400,000 righteous ones in *Apoc. Adam*) and when "the whole (πτρῶ, i.e. τὸ πᾶν, the world) will be raised," these twelve saviors would judge the twelve tribes of Israel, all guilty of remaining under the sway of the demiurge and his *εἰμαρμένη*. The saviors will sit in glory with Jesus in the thirteenth aeon, "the place of heritage."⁵⁹ In another passage of *Pistis Sophia*, the twelve saviors of the treasures would become kings with Jesus in the place of the heritage of light.⁶⁰

In the mythology of the christianized Gnostic text of *Pistis Sophia*, we thus find thirteen kingdoms; twelve representative of the tribes of Israel and another, Jesus's real and perfect kingdom of light. This thirteenth aeon is also called the place (τόπος) of righteousness (δικαιοσύνη)⁶¹ and is mentioned elsewhere as the thirteenth seal, where there is "certainty of rest."⁶² In Christian Gnostic context, therefore, the kingdom of Jesus was considered to be the thirteenth kingdom, coming after the twelve "kingdoms" of Israel. In *Pistis Sophia*, the chronological element is almost completely non-existent. Elsewhere, however (in what probably reflects an earlier expression of the same theme), the twelve revealers are said to be successive reincarnations of the figure of the Righteous One, who "visits during twelve periods, that he may visit them during [another] one period" (*Paraph. Shem* 48:2–5). These successive "visits" are reminiscent of the theory of the "true prophet" running through history, typical of the Jewish Christian theology exemplified in the Pseudo-Clementine writings.

Jewish-Christian influence might also be reflected in *Treat. Seth*, where the twelve biblical prophets, together with John the Baptist and others, are despised, "since they have come forth as imitations of the true prophets."⁶³ To be sure, a list of the twelve prophets is not to be found in extant Ebionite traditions,⁶⁴ but at least two non-Gnostic, early Christian texts (of Jewish origin) mention twelve soteriological advents before Christ's coming. Thus the *Testament of Isaac* speaks of "the twelve mighty ones" (and "the twelve generations") who shall come forth before Jesus the Messiah, while a Christian addition to *2 Enoch* mentions "the twelve priests" who will precede Christ.⁶⁵

⁵⁹*Pistis Sophia*, I.50 (90 and 94 Schmidt-MacDermot).

⁶⁰II.86 (191 Schmidt-MacDermot); the theme recurs throughout the chapter.

⁶¹*Pistis Sophia* I.50 (94 Schmidt-MacDermot).

⁶²*Marsanes* 2:12; cf. 4:20.

⁶³*Treat. Seth* 63:18–20.

⁶⁴There is a list of only seven (the Messiah excluded) in the Pseudo-Clementine literature (*Homilies* 17.4; *Recognitions* 2.47).

⁶⁵For the *Testament of Isaac*, see M. E. Barnes's translation of the Arabic version in M. R. James, *The Testament of Abraham* (Cambridge, 1892), 140–151, and Gaselee's translation from the Coptic in G. H. Box, *The Testament of Abraham* (London, 1927), 57–75. For *2 Enoch*, see Vaillant's edition, 115–117. I owe these references to D. Flusser, "Salvation

As noted, *Paraph. Shem* is a Christian Gnostic work, related to the *Paraphrasis of Seth* used by Hippolytus to describe Sethian theology. The figure of the revealer, Derdekeas ("the child"), the Righteous One, is very reminiscent of Seth in other works. Like him, he appeared in successive reincarnations during history until his final appearance as Jesus Christ (*Paraph. Shem* 48:2–3). It is significant that the revelation was made to Shem, who was viewed as a positive figure at a stage of Gnostic development when all biblical values had not yet been completely inverted. His seed represented the Gnostics, like the 400,000 who came from the seed of Ham and Japheth in *Apoc. Adam*.

For Christian Gnostics, as for all Christians, the coming of Jesus meant the beginning of his kingdom.⁶⁶ The thirteenth kingdom was strongly contrasted to the first twelve, since it heralded the reign of justice and implied release from destiny, imposed by the tyrant of this world upon his servants. This total rupture was considered by the Gnostics not only in terms of a historical revelation, but also of a cosmic one. In various texts, Jesus is explicitly said to have changed the course of the physical world:

But the Son of Man came forth from Imperishability, being alien to defilement. He came to the world by the Jordan river and immediately the Jordan turned back.⁶⁷

This reinterpretation of Josh 3:7–17 (Joshua being the *typos* of Jesus), where Joshua stopped the river Jordan from flowing in order to let the Israelites enter the Promised Land, also appeared in Hippolytus's report on the Naasenes.⁶⁸ The theme of the cosmic revolution launched by Jesus's coming is best exemplified in *Pistis Sophia*, where Jesus explicitly said that he affected the Heimarmene and the Sphere, as well as those upon which they both rule, by having them change the course of their revolution (from left to right) every six months, so that they would not be free to make use of their influences (ἀποτελέσματα): "I turned their paths for the salvation of all souls."⁶⁹ The kingdom ushered in by Jesus

Present and Future," in R. J. Z. Werblowsky and C. J. Bleeker, *Types of Redemption* (Suppl. to *Nunien* 18; Leiden: Brill, 1970), 55, nn. 21, 22.

⁶⁶Only for his believers, that is; the opponents of Light would be prevented from entering the thirteenth kingdom (*Pistis Sophia* 1.32 [50 Schmidt-MacDermot]).

⁶⁷*Testini. Truth* 30:18–23; see *Gos. Phil.* 70:34–36, *Paraph. Shem* 48:7–8. In the wild sexual imagery of the latter work, the ultimate coming of the savior renders nature idle.

⁶⁸Hippolytus, *Elenchos* 5.8.3–4 (89 Wendland): τοῦ ἐπὶ τὰ ἄνω ῥεύσαντος Ἰορδάνου. Cf. Origen's reinterpretation of "Jordan" as meaning "our Lord"; *In Ioh.* VI. 42 (217 Preuschen); cf. *In Ioh.* XXI. 4.

⁶⁹*Pistis Sophia* 1.23 (32 Schmidt-MacDermot); see also 1.15 and 1.21. On this theme, see the Appendix "La venue du Sauveur en ce monde et le bouleversement de l'ordre cosmique," in J. Doresse, *Livres Secrets des Gnostiques d'Egypte*, II: *L'Evangile selon Thomas ou les paroles secrètes de Jésus* (Paris: Plon, 1959), 207ff., and p. 348, n. 137 in his commentary on *Gos. Eg.* Doresse shows that the problem, inherited from classical physics (it is found in Plato and Aristotle), was given a theological interpretation by the Hermetists as well as in various Gnostic writings. See also *Exc. Theod.* 72–75; cf. Puech, *En quête de la gnose*, I, 241 and n. 2.

was thus usually considered by Christian Gnostics to be the thirteenth one.

In other texts, however, the world from which the Gnostic must escape comprises thirteen kingdoms, or thirteen aeons: "I was rescued from the whole world and the thirteen aeons in it and their angelic beings," affirmed Zostrianos in his revelation (*Zost.* 4:25–29). In a similar vein, *Gos. Eg.* mentions the god (III, 63:10–18) or the powers (III, 64:34) of the thirteen aeons. This is also why Pistis Sophia, once back in the aeon from which she had fallen ("the place of justice") added a thirteenth repentance. The thirteenth aeon was still part of the chaos. Jesus then took her "completely out of the chaos."⁷⁰ The thirteenth aeon is thus ambiguous: sometimes it is considered to be the last one, beyond chaos, and sometimes it is the penultimate step before total relief from the power of the archons. The latter interpretation is found in some Christian (as well as non-Christian) Gnostic works. It is not necessary to appeal to literary influences in order to explain the presence of the thirteenth aeon in a Christian context, for once it was identified with the established church, the Christian Gnostic, too, was compelled to seek a higher abode for his own salvation.

Among the non-Christian texts, for which the thirteenth kingdom still belonged to the unredeemed world, *Apoc. Adam* is the best example. While a Christian Gnostic could say about Jesus (*Great Pow.* 42:4–11):

Who is this? What is this? His word (λόγος) has abolished the law of the aeon. He is from the Logos of the power of life. And he was victorious over the command (CΑΖΝΕ) of the archons, and they were not able by their work to rule over him,

in *Apoc. Adam* (92:10–17), the thirteenth kingdom commented on the birth of the child,

every birth of their ruler is a Logos and this Logos received a mandate (τωω) there. He received glory and power and thus he came to the water.

Although the appellation "Logos" for Christ is the adaptation of an originally non-Christian term,⁷¹ the use of the word λόγος here suggests that this might be a reference to Christianity and to Jesus (who is also called the "logos-begotten body," which Seth prepared for himself; see *Gos. Eg.* III, 63:9–13).⁷² Similarly, on his third appearance the savior is called *logos*

⁷⁰*Pistis Sophia*, I. 57–58 (110–115 Schmidt-MacDermot).

⁷¹The problem is too complex—and the literature too vast—to be dealt with here; for bibliographical orientation, see W. Bauer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, s.v. λόγος.

⁷²The case for seeing references to Christianity in *Apoc. Adam* has been strongly argued by G. M. Shellrude, "The Apocalypse of Adam: Evidence for a Christian Gnostic Provenance," in Krause, ed., *Gnosis and Gnosticism*, 82–91. See also L. Koenen, "From Baptism to the Gnosis of Manichaeism," in Layton, *Rediscovery*, II, 751–752 and nn. 73–74.

in *Trim. Prot.* 47:13–15, where the reference to Jesus is manifest.⁷³

Obviously, this suggestion about the word λόγος is not by itself an argument for reading a clear reference to Christianity into the thirteenth kingdom. However, if we add to it the various instances (including non-Gnostic Christian works) where Christ came as the thirteenth prophet or in the thirteenth generation, the presumption becomes much greater that the thirteenth kingdom of the Hymn of the Child indeed referred to Christ's coming. Hesitancy on the part of some scholars to see a reference to Jesus in this stems partly from the commonly accepted early dating of *Apoc. Adam*.⁷⁴ Such an early dating, however, remains to be proved. On the other hand, my contention that its thoroughly inverted reading of biblical history (specifically, the description of the Sethite Noah as wicked) probably does not reflect one of the oldest strata of Gnosticism argues against the earliness of *Apoc. Adam*, at least on typological grounds; it also strengthens the possibility of reading a reference to Jesus in the word λόγος, since a later author could have been aware of Johannine Christology. In fact, the words of the thirteenth kingdom, as well as those of

⁷³Cf. *Stiles Seth* 120:27–28, ΟΥΨΑΧΕ ΕΒΟΛ ΖἼΝ ΟΥΓΑΖΝΕ (“a word from a command”), perhaps a similar reference to the Logos, but certainly not to Christ; see *Setheus* 26:24–26, and *Allogenes* 51:36–37. In the non-Christian work *Zost.*, the third Phoster was named Setheus (126:15–16). In the prose account of *Apoc. Adam*, it is said that at the time of the illuminator's third advent, the powers would “punish the flesh of the man upon whom the holy spirit has come” (77:16–18). The figure remains mysterious. MacRae has suggested that it might refer to a founder of the sect, arguing for “a clear dependence on the Servant-Messiah tradition” of Deutero-Isaiah. MacRae rejects the possibility of an allusion to Jesus; according to him the figure would be closer to the Essene Master of Justice than to a savior figure (“The Coptic Gnostic Apocalypse of Adam,” 27–35). Schenke (in Layton, *Rediscovery*, II, 608) is not convinced by this suggestion.

⁷⁴For a disclaimer of any substantial references to Christianity in *Apoc. Adam*, see P. Perkins, “Apocalypse of Adam: The Genre and Function of a Gnostic Apocalypse,” *CBQ* 39 (1977), 383–395, esp. 383; MacRae, “The Apocalypse of Adam Reconsidered,” *SBL 1972 Proceedings* (ed. L. C. McGaughey; Missoula: Scholars, 1972), 573–575. On the other hand, MacRae points out that “there may be a trace of an extremely superficial allusion to Jesus of Nazareth in the magic name(s) ‘Jesseus Nazareus Jessedekeus’ which occur at the very end of the work,” adding that “the occurrence of such a name here proves very little except that if it is a garbled form of the name of Jesus, the work can hardly antedate the spread of Christianity (*ibid.*, 573–574). For Schottroff, too, the work shows no Christian influence, although the thirteen kingdoms represent the author's opponents; see her “Animae Naturaliter Salvandae,” 78 and 96. A late dating for *Apoc. Adam* has been argued by H. M. Schenke and W. Beltz, the former in his review of Böhlig and Labib's edition, *OLZ* 61 (1966), 31–32, the latter in his (unpublished) *Habilitationsschrift, Die Adam-Apokalypse aus Codex V von Nag Hammadi: Jüdische Bausteine in gnostischen Systemen* (Berlin, 1970), 204–205, 215. For both scholars, the relatively simple mythology of *Apoc. Adam* implies the more complex developments extant in texts such as *Gos. Eg.*, which represent the full-fledged Gnostic mythology. MacRae, who argues for an early dating of the work, rejects their arguments and adds, “There is no reason to suppose that this transition [to Gnostic exegesis] was effected instantly in a highly developed way” (“The Apocalypse of Adam Reconsidered,” 576). Yet this is precisely my argument *against* a very early dating of *Apoc. Adam*, in which the inversion of biblical data is indeed “highly developed,” more so than in some other Gnostic texts. *Apoc. Adam* need not be a work of 4th-century Gnosticism, as Beltz claims; nor is it representative of the *earliest* strata of Gnosticism.

Christ in 2 *Apoc. Jas.* 49:12–13, “I command even as I [received] the order (ἐντολή),” might well allude to John 12:48–50.

Yet unlike the Christian Gnostic works (*Great Pow.*, *Gos. Eg.*, or *Trim. Prot.*), *Apoc. Adam* does not regard Jesus’s earthly appearance as announcing the ultimate redemption. His kingdom still belonged to the material world, ruled by its king Sakla and his powers. Moreover, the phrase “in order that the desire of those powers might be satisfied” seems to be a polemic directed against a specific Christian Gnostic trend. This thirteenth kingdom may now confidently be identified with “the kingdom of another people” in the prose account (*Apoc. Adam* 77:28–29), the kingdom which the seed of Ham and Japheth are said to have entered after forming twelve kingdoms. Just as those twelve kingdoms (an inverted version of the twelve tribes of Israel) were parallel to the twelve kingdoms of the Hymn, so the thirteenth should be identified with Christianity. For the author of *Apoc. Adam*, the “kingdom” announced by Jesus also remained under the sway of Sakla.

As opposed to the thirteen kingdoms, *Apoc. Adam* 92:19–20 calls the Gnostics, i.e., the Sons of Seth, a “race (γενεά) without a king over it.” The image is common in Gnostic literature and also occurs in Greek as ἡ ἀβασίλευτος γενεά in reference to the Naassene elect.⁷⁵ Γενεά, however, is amphibolous and can mean either “race” or “generation.” In *Hyp. Arch.*, for instance, the main connotation is chronological: only in the last stage of history would the Gnostics come into their own.⁷⁶ Yet the primary sense seems to be “race.” The Gnostics, who were fundamentally different from common humanity and who did not share its fate throughout history,⁷⁷ considered themselves to belong to a race⁷⁸ or seed that was different, being both immovable (ΔΤΚΙΜ, ἀσάλευτος)⁷⁹ and eternal.⁸⁰ Whereas other men remained under the rule of the archontic Heimarmene, the Gnostics did not obey the orders of any king. Indeed,

⁷⁵Hippolytus, *Elenchos* 5.8.2 (89 Wendland). Same expression in *Hyp. Arch.* 97:4–5 and *Orig. World* 125:5–7. See Layton’s commentary on *Hyp. Arch.* p. 79, n. 200.

⁷⁶Cf. “the last γενεά” in the Manichaean *Keph.* 14:7 and 179:16–17. Similarly, the Qur’ān speaks about “the last *umma*.” See my “Aspects de l’eschatologie manichéenne,” 169, n. 28.

⁷⁷*Apoc. Pet.* 83:17–18: “those of another race, who are not of this age.”

⁷⁸On the idea of a Gnostic “race,” see for instance, Epiphanius, *Pan.* 39.2.7 (I, 441 Holl); Clement, *Strom.* 4.13.89 (II, 287 Stählin); and *Poimandres* 32 (CH 1, 19 Nock-Festugière). Cf. *Odes Sol.* 41:8, where Christ says that he is “from another race” (139 Charlesworth). For a study of this concept, see F. Fallon’s “The Gnostics: the Undominated Race,” and his *The Enthronement of Sabaoth: Jewish Elements in Gnostic Creation Myths* (NHS 10; Leiden: Brill, 1978), 78–80.

⁷⁹See *Ap. John* III, 33:3 (ἀσάλευτος); II, 25:23; IV, 39:25 (ΔΤΚΙΜ). BG 65:2–3 (ΕΤΕ ΜΑΔΚΙΜ). *Gos. Eg.* III, 51:8–9 (ΕΤΕΜΕΚΙΜ Ν ΔΦΘΑΡΤΟΝ). Cf. Y. Janssens, “L’apocryphon de Jean,” *Muséon* 83 (1970), 164.

⁸⁰†ΓΕΝΕΑ ΕΤΟΝΖ, in 3 *Stèles Seth* 118:12–13; cf. the “imperishable seed” in *Marsanes* 26:14. Mani’s Living Gospel (CMC 67:5–6): ἐλπίδα δ’ ἐκήρυξα γένει τῷ ἀθανάτῳ; cf. Tardieu, “Les trois stèles de Seth,” *RSPT* 57 (1973), 552, n. 50.

the adherents of Prodicus could call themselves "royal ones," since "to a king, they say, there is no law prescribed."⁸¹

For *Apoc. Adam*, then, the Gnostics, unlike the rest of mankind, were not enslaved by Sakla or his servants, the Noahites (65:20–21; 71:1–4). The term *γενεά* is not simply metaphorical, but refers directly to the biological origin of the Gnostics—an origin which was *not* linked to Eve's rape by the demiurge. Again it is "out of a foreign air" that the Great Seth (or his avatar, the illuminator) was said to have come (82:25–26). In other words, he might be called the *ἀλλογενής* *par excellence*.⁸² The seed of Seth is described as "those who will receive his name upon the water" (83:5–6). This terminology clearly reflects a baptist theology. Indeed, in the last part of *Apoc. Adam*, the Gnostics are described as a baptist group in a way which clarifies their opposition to the thirteen false descriptions of baptism in the Hymn of the Child.

The last section of the text (83:4–85:18) has been interpreted as an "anti-baptismal polemic." This polemic has been studied by Françoise Morard,⁸³ who accepts Charles Hedrick's theory about the two sources of *Apoc. Adam*. According to Hedrick, both sources were Jewish, one less thoroughly apocalyptic than the other, and they were integrated, rather loosely, by the editor of *Apoc. Adam*.⁸⁴ Based on this, Morard reaches the conclusion that the polemic was directed against a Gnostic baptist group to which the author had belonged before he rejected baptism.⁸⁵ Moreover, Morard argues for a direct link between this anti-baptismal polemic and Mani's rejection of baptism.⁸⁶ Her argument, however, is much weakened by the fact that she ignores the last lines of *Apoc. Adam*, which praise "the living water" and "the holy baptism of those who know the eternal knowledge." This baptism is specifically defined by the author as the hidden knowledge given by Adam to Seth (85:22–26).

With this "living water" are associated Yesseus, Mazareus, and Yessedekus, the three "imperishable illuminators who come from the holy seed" (85:28–31).⁸⁷ In parallel to these three mysterious

⁸¹Clement, *Strom.* 3.4.30 (II, 209–210 Stählin).

⁸²For a phenomenological study of this theme, see Puech, *En quête de la gnose*, I, 207–213.

⁸³"L'Apocalypse d'Adam du Codex V de Nag Hammadi et sa polémique anti-baptismale," *RSR* 51 (1977), 214–233. See also her "Thématique de l'*Apoc. Adam* du Codex V de Nag Hammadi," in Barc, ed., *Les Textes de Nag Hammadi*, 288–294.

⁸⁴"The Apocalypse of Adam," *passim*. Hedrick's theory, however, does not account for the function of the "Hymn of the Child" in the work as a whole.

⁸⁵On the various baptist groups in the first Christian centuries, see J. Thomas, *Le mouvement baptiste en Palestine et en Syrie* (Gembloux, 1934).

⁸⁶In *Keph.* VI, 33:29–32, Mani says that the king of the archons of water rules upon the sects of heretics who baptize in water. The evidence is collected by Henrichs and Koenen in their commentary to CMC 84:12. For a detailed list of parallels between *Apoc. Adam* and Manichaean texts, especially the figure of the redeemer in both theologies, see Henrichs's "response" in Wuellner, *Jewish Gnostic Nag Hammadi Texts*, 4–6. The whole problem of baptism and its sublimation among Gnostics has been studied by L. Koenen, "From Baptism to the Gnosis of Manichaeism," in Layton, ed., *Rediscovery*, II, 734–756, esp. 749ff.

⁸⁷These three figures are called "the immortal spirits" in *Zost.* 47:5–6, while in *Gos. Eg.*

illuminators—who might represent the avatars of Seth at each of his three comings—three other figures (possibly mythic leaders of the community), who are also “over the holy baptism and the living water” (84:5–8) are introduced. According to the various translations, the passage (84:4–23) reads as follows:

Then a voice came to them, saying (ⲁⲉ): “Micheu, Michar and Mnesinous, who (are) over the holy baptism and the living water, why (ⲁⲉ ⲉⲧⲃⲉⲟⲩ) were you crying out against the living God with lawless voices . . . ? Having defiled the water of life, you have drawn it within the will of the powers to whom you have been given to serve them.”

Micheu, Michar, and Mnesinous appear in other Gnostic texts, both with and without Christian influences.⁸⁸ In *Gos. Eg.* III, 64:14–15, they are called “they who preside over the spring of truth” and are linked to “Yesseus Mazareus Yessedekus,” here regarded as a single figure also called “the great attendant.” Similarly *Trim. Prot.* describes how the baptizers (βαπτιστής) Micheus, Michar, and Mnesinous immerse the savior, during one of his comings, “in the spring of the [water] of life” (48:18–21). For *Zost.*, Michar and Mi(cheu?) are “these powers upon the living waters” (6:9–10). In all these contexts, they are unambiguously positive figures. The fact that they seem to appear in *Apoc. Adam* as betrayers of their mission would imply that the author was rejecting an earlier Gnostic trend shared not only by the Christian (or christianized) works *Gos. Eg.* and *Trim. Prot.*, but also by the pagan and philosophizing *Zost.* This is how Morard seems to understand both the passage, which is central to her argument, and the text in general.

It is probable, however, that all previous understandings of the passage have been based upon a mistranslation. Together with MacRae and Böhlig, I wish to suggest that “Micheu and Michar and Mnesinous, who are over the holy baptism and the living water” should be understood as a gloss by the redactor, introduced by the preposition ⲁⲉ, “namely,”⁸⁹ and indicating the provenance of the voice.⁹⁰ If so, the passage would read:

Then a voice came to them (ⲁⲉ [from] Micheu and Michar and Mnesinous, who (are) over the holy baptism and the living water),

the list of the three names refers to a single entity (III, 66:10–11; IV, 78:12–14).

⁸⁸See the note to *Apoc. Adam* 84:5–6 in MacRae’s edition (pp. 190–191).

⁸⁹Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 746b.

⁹⁰See MacRae’s note to *Apoc. Adam* 84:5–8 (p. 191), and Böhlig’s remark in Layton, ed., *Rediscovery*, II, 557–558. Schenke, in *ibid.*, 598, comments that “the broader context of overall Sethianism . . . seems to exclude the possibility that the guardians of the holy baptismal water Micheus, Michar, and Mnesinous are *fallen* angels. The celestial scolding in 84:4ff. can only be directed at human beings, namely those who have been hostile to Gnostics and Gnosticism.”

saying (ⲁⲉ): "Why (ⲉⲧⲃⲉⲟⲩ)⁹¹ are you crying out against the living God . . . ?"

This suggestion clarifies the text to a great extent. Morard is indeed correct in speaking about the "polemic" in the last section of *Apoc. Adam*, but she errs in calling it anti-baptismal. The author did not speak against baptism, but on the contrary was himself a "real" baptist arguing against false baptist theologies and evil baptist groups. The Gnostics, represented by the three "baptizers," attacked those who defiled the water of life by having "drawn it within the will of the powers," whom they served (84:18–23). The vituperativeness of the tone here is similar to that at the end of the hymn ("in order that the desire of those powers might be satisfied" [82:18–19]). It thus stands to reason that the author was against the Christian "perversion" of baptism. Therefore, although no precise dating can be offered, *Apoc. Adam* was apparently written no earlier than the middle of the 2nd century C.E. Consequently, the relationship between *Apoc. Adam* and Christian Gnostic texts such as *Gos. Eg.* can be tentatively reevaluated. *Gos. Eg.*, which shows, at least typologically, clear signs of a later development, should not be viewed as a later evolution (either literary or theological) of the trend represented by *Apoc. Adam*.⁹² Instead, this work should be seen as emerging from theological developments inside christianizing Gnostic trends, while *Apoc. Adam* represents a reaction to these very trends.

Cataclysms, Steles and Advents of the Savior

Böhlig has made a case for a specifically Iranian origin for some of the mythological elements in *Apoc. Adam*.⁹³ At the heart of such an argument is the implicit assumption that the long political supremacy of Iran in the Near East must have influenced indigenous theologies. A pervasive Iranian influence is evident, for example, in Jewish apocalypticism.⁹⁴ Yet *Apoc. Adam*, like all Gnostic literary works, was written several centuries after the end of Iranian rule, so *direct* Iranian influence on this literature is only a remote possibility. Therefore, it is preferable to speak about possible convergences between Gnostic (or Jewish) and Iranian thought, rather than about influences of one on the other.⁹⁵

More precisely, Böhlig's argument for the Iranian influence on *Apoc. Adam* depends upon the work's alleged tripartite view of history. Böhlig recalls that Iranian *Heilsgeschichte*, from Parthian times, mentioned a

⁹¹Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 468a.

⁹²As first suggested by Doresse in his commentary on *Gos. Eg.*, Appendix II. Doresse sees in *Apoc. Adam* one of the sources of *Gos. Eg.* This claim has already been challenged on literary grounds (e.g., MacRae, "The Apocalypse of Adam Reconsidered," 573).

⁹³"Jüdisches und iranisches," *passim*.

⁹⁴G. Widengren, "Iran and Israel in Parthian Times, with Special Regard to the Ethiopic *Book of Enoch*," in Pearson, ed., *Religious Syncretism in Antiquity*, 85–129.

⁹⁵See MacRae, "The Coptic Gnostic Apocalypse of Adam," 27–35, esp. 33; he refers to B. Reicke, "Iranische Religion, Judentum und Urchristentum," *RGG*³, III, 881ff.

6000-year fight between the good god and the evil god, until the appearance of Mithra; this time span was divided into three periods.⁹⁶ Böhlig points out that in *Apoc. Adam*, history is similarly characterized by the fight between the Pantokrator and Seth (together with the righteous ones). According to him, the illuminator came during the third period to separate the righteous from the evil ones in a final struggle.⁹⁷ In order to be completely convincing, the argument should have been based on specific details of *Apoc. Adam*, which could best be understood as Iranian. This is not the case. First, any *Heilsgeschichte* is bound to speak of a decisive fight at the *Endzeit*, so the third advent of the illuminator does not constitute evidence of direct Iranian influence. Moreover, the mythic elements of the Hymn of the Child that Böhlig sees as borrowed from the Mithra saga were, in fact, common stock in Late Antiquity.⁹⁸

I shall try to show here that there is no need to appeal to Iranian conceptions in order to understand the periodization of history in *Apoc. Adam* and in other Gnostic texts; rather, it probably stemmed directly from the Jewish background of Gnosticism.

Properly speaking there is no tripartite division of history in *Apoc. Adam*. Instead, the text describes three major events in world history. To these correspond the three advents of the illuminator of knowledge, who came to save his seed and who, each time, ushered in a new period. It is somewhat misleading to state that the illuminator came during the third period, since he came to seal it and to inaugurate the fourth, lasting period; the reign of his race, liberated at last from the threats of the demiurge. The periodization of history, therefore, was *fourfold*. Such a conception is specifically stated in the Gnostic texts. *Orig. World*, for instance, mentions the existence of four races. While three "belong to the kings of the eighth heaven, the fourth race is kingless and perfect, one that is above all of them" (125:3–7). This quadripartite division of humanity is clearly transformed into a quadripartite division of history in *Hyp. Arch.* 96:28–97:4:

"Instead, *after* three generations it will come to be known, and free them from the bondage of the powers' error"—Then I said, "Sir, how

⁹⁶F. Cumont, "La fin du monde selon les mages occidentaux," *RHR* 103, 29–96. Cumont points out that the belief that the present world would last 6000 years until the final catastrophe was very widespread in the Roman Empire (p. 57). According to Cumont's analysis, the *Apocalypse of Hystaspes* presents a division of the six millenia of the present world and the golden age of the sun in which Ahriman will be defeated (pp. 93–94).

⁹⁷"Jüdisches und iranisches," 161. See Perkins's analysis of instances of a tripartite periodization of history in Jewish texts ("Apocalypse of Adam," 387–389). For the theory of the "three times" in Manichaeism, see H.-C. Puech, *Le Manichéisme, son fondateur, sa doctrine* (Musée Guimet, Bibliothèque de diffusion 56; Paris: Civilisations du Sud, 1949), 74–85 and notes.

⁹⁸For an Iranist's critical analysis of the evidence claimed by Böhlig, see M. Schwartz's Appendix to Wuellner, ed., *Jewish Gnostic Nag Hammadi Texts*. Schwartz concludes that the parallels cited by Böhlig were common stock in the Hellenistic world and therefore do not necessarily point to an Iranian origin of *Apoc. Adam*.

much longer?"—He said to me: "Until the moment when the True man, within a modelled form, reveals the existence of the [Spirit of] Truth, which the Father has sent. *Then* he will teach them about every thing: And he will anoint them with the unction of Life eternal, given him from the kingless race."⁹⁹

To this division of history corresponds, in some of the Gnostic texts, a fourfold division of the cosmic ages of the universe. Such speculation was built around the four lights (*φωστήρες*), the powers of understanding, grace, perception, and prudence. These four lights, placed on the four aeons, were named Harmozel, Oroiael, Daveithe, and Eleleth; they were said to have stood by the divine Autogenes (*Ap. John* 7:30–8:28).¹⁰⁰ It should be stressed that the quadripartite division bears no similarity to the "four empires" speculation, which was widespread in the Hellenistic Near East since the early 2nd century B.C.E. It was as a tool of political ideology, viz., anti-Hellenistic propaganda, that the pseudo-historical concept of the four world empires functioned.¹⁰¹ Macedonia was said to have succeeded Assyria, Media, and Persia as the fourth *evil* kingdom. This fourth kingdom, therefore, would be followed by a fifth, lasting kingdom (see *Dan* 2:44).¹⁰²

In "Sethian and Zoroastrian Ages of the World," Carsten Colpe attempts to integrate Böhlig's Iranian hypothesis about the "tripartition of time" with Schenke's analysis of the "Sethian system" as evolving around the four great aeons.¹⁰³ Colpe analyzes the evidence of cosmological, historical, and eschatological partitions of time in both Gnostic and Zoroastrian texts and observes that the Gnostic ("Sethian") and the Iranian texts show strikingly parallel patterns of both three- and four-part divisions. More precisely, a similar formal "fusion" of the two different patterns can be found in both contexts. However, since "the substantive difference between the two doctrines of time or ages is great enough to exclude direct influence in either direction," Colpe concludes that the

⁹⁹There is here no need to explain, as Tardieu does (*Trois Mythes*, 81, n. 236), the fourth position given to the kingless race by the properties of the *tetractys* in Pythagorean literature. As we shall see, this can be understood from the internal logic of Gnostic *Heilsgeschichte*. The three *kairoi* of archontic rule are again referred to in *Hyp. Arch.* 97:10–13: "Then the Authorities will relinquish their ages." See Layton's commentary, 80, n. 202; see further the dialogue about the completion of the three periods in *Pistis Sophia* II.76 (168–169 Schmidt-MacDermot).

¹⁰⁰Cf. *Gos. Eg.* III, 51:14–53:12; *Zost.* 29:1–20; 127:15–128:7; *Trim. Prot.* 38:30–39:27. The structure and function of the four *phostēres* speculation has been analyzed by Schenke, "Das sethianische System," and by Poirier and Tardieu, "Catégories du temps dans les écrits gnostiques non valentiniens," 3–13.

¹⁰¹Such a similarity was suggested by Colpe in his paper discussed below (see n. 103). On the four empires speculation, see D. Flusser, "The Four Empires in the Fourth Sibyl and in the Book of Daniel," *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972), 148–175, esp. 153.

¹⁰²J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel* (Harvard Semitic Monographs 16; Missoula: Scholars, 1977), 42.

¹⁰³In Layton, ed., *Rediscovery*, II, 540–552. Actually, only one part of Colpe's argument is developed in this paper.

Sethians received "the Iranian principle of time fusion" and filled it with their own genuinely Jewish or Jewish-Christian periodization of history.¹⁰⁴ In the following pages, I will not assess the relevance of the Iranian texts or refute Colpe's argument directly. Instead, I shall attempt to understand the inner logic of the Gnostic four-part periodization of history and to show that it could have developed from Jewish conceptions alone.

Apoc. Adam explicitly describes the dangers from which the illuminator rescued the Gnostics in his first two advents: the flood in the days of Noah, and the fire, sulphur, and asphalt that the powers of the demiurge threw upon them in their land (obviously Sodom and Gomorrah, see *Gos. Eg.* III, 60:9–18). However, the text does not describe the cataclysm sent by the demiurge the third time before the parousia of the illuminator of knowledge. Only *after* mentioning this third coming does the text reveal the purpose of his salvatory advent: "And he will redeem their souls from the day of death. For the whole creation that came from the dead earth will be under the authority of death" (*Apoc. Adam* 76:15–20). The "day of death" is a clear reference to the end of time. Through the third coming of the illuminator, it is connected with the flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Such an association of the three events is not original here, but is already found in apocryphal and New Testamental literature on the ethical depravity of mankind at each of these times.¹⁰⁵

The parallelism between the Genesis flood and the punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah could not have come directly from the biblical tradition, since the Bible in no way presents the latter event as being of world-wide dimensions. But we know from other Jewish sources of a tradition about two catastrophes that were to befall the world, one involving water and the other fire. Philo retains the clearest evidence for these traditions. In *De Vita Mosis*, he noted that some sinners, in rejecting virtue, not only became enemies of mankind but also broke cosmic harmony.¹⁰⁶ God therefore punished them on a cosmic scale both times. Indeed Philo mentioned the two catastrophes together—"For the most forceful elements of the universe, fire and water, fell upon them, so that, as the times revolved, some perished by deluge, others were consumed by conflagration"¹⁰⁷ and identified them with the biblical flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

These two catastrophes were also foretold in *Adam and Eve*. Before her death, Eve gathered together Seth and his brothers and sisters to report to them what the archangel Michael had told her and her late husband:

On account of your transgression, our Lord will bring upon your race the anger of his judgement, first by water, the second time by fire; by

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 541–542.

¹⁰⁵ As P. Perkins has pointed out ("Apocalypse of Adam," 387 and n. 20). She cites *T. Naph.* 3:4–5; *Jub.* 36:10; *I Enoch* 67; Luke 17:26–30; and 2 Pet 2:4–9.

¹⁰⁶ *De Vita Mosis* II, 53–58. See also *ibid.*, 263 and *De Abrahamo* 1 (VI, 474–476, 580 and 4 LCL). Cf. Klijn, *Seth*, Appendix I: "Water and Fire," 121–124.

¹⁰⁷ *De Vita Mosis* II, 53 *in finem* (VI, 474–475 LCL).

these two, will the Lord judge the whole human race.
(*Adam and Eve* 49)

Eve then asked her children to inscribe her deeds and Adam's on tablets of stone and clay,¹⁰⁸ so that one of them would remain undestroyed after the first catastrophe: if fire, the tablets of clay would be baked, while the stone would break up; and if the flood, stone would survive.¹⁰⁹

Josephus reported a similar tale (*Ant.* 1.70–71). According to him, when Adam predicted the twofold destruction of mankind, the sons of Seth erected the two steles, one of brick and one of stone, to preserve not Adam's and Eve's deeds, but rather their own discovery of "the science of the heavenly bodies and their orderly array."¹¹⁰ Josephus added that the stele of stone was still erect in his days (*Ant.* 1.71). This implies that the stele of brick was destroyed in the flood, and that the fire, which would have destroyed the stele of stone, never came. Josephus, therefore, appears to be inconsistent: after having mentioned the prediction of two destructions of mankind, his words imply that only one occurred. This contradiction arises from the biblical text itself: after the flood, God promised not to curse the earth and smite the living any more (Gen 8:21). The tradition of the two upheavals had to be reconciled with another tradition, which emphasized that only one cataclysm had occurred. Of course, Josephus was unable to successfully harmonize these opposing traditions. Indeed, in the numerous later Jewish *midrashim* and Christian chronicles which variously relate the same myth of the early destruction of mankind, only one catastrophe was involved, either the flood or a fire.¹¹¹

Another mythic motif, related to the two tablets of *Adam and Eve* and the two steles of Josephus, appears twice in early Jewish texts. In *Jub.* 8:3 it is said that Cainan (son of Arpachshad in the LXX)¹¹² found an

¹⁰⁸This tradition about stone and clay passed into Islamic legends; there, however, Seth is not said to have erected steles, but to have built the *ka'ba* (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ*, I, 164). The legend is common and repeated by other historiographers, such as Mas'ūdī or Ibn Sa'd, as well as by the story tellers al-ḥabī and Ibn Kathīr. See Gluck, *Seth*, 16–17; further "Shīth," *Short Encycl. Islam*, 544.

¹⁰⁹*Adam and Eve* 49–50. In *b. Sanh.* 108b, Rabba teaches that for Noah's contemporaries, the flood he announced could be either of water or of fire (מבול של אש).

¹¹⁰The tradition about Seth as the inventor of astronomy remained current in Byzantium; see the *Suda* (ed. A. Adler; Stuttgart: Teubner, 1935), IV, 348, s.v. Seth. See the texts cited by J. A. Fabricius, *Codex Pseudepigraphus Veteris Testamenti* (Hamburg: Felginer, 1722), 147–152.

¹¹¹To my knowledge only one of these texts, the *Midrash of Jerahmeel* 5,24.7, mentions two catastrophes, a flood and "a dispersion and a fire"; the latter combination, however, clearly refers to the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and the (second) exile (see Gaster's trans.). See also *Alphabet of R. Aqiva*, in A. Wertheimer, ed., *Batei Midrashot*, II (Jerusalem: Mossad haRav Cook, 1955), 356–357.

¹¹²In the later revised Masoretic text, Cainan is the son of Enosh, son of Seth (Gen 5:9), while the son of Arpachshad, son of Shem, is Shelah (Gen 10:24). The medieval midrashic work *Sefer haYashar* (repr. Tel Aviv: Altar Bergmann, n.d., 9) makes the expected correction and states that the steles (of stone) were written by Cainan son of Enosh, who was then the wise and knowledgeable king ruling over mankind. But both Syncellus (*Chronographia* 150) and Pseudo-Malalas (*Anonymi Chronologica* 6) take over "Cainan, son of Arpachshad,"

inscription, carved on rock, transcribing the astronomical/astrological knowledge of the Watchers. For the author of *Jub.*, of course, the writing accounted for the survival of *evil* knowledge.¹¹³

Additional evidence comes from two fragments of an Aramaic *Book of Enoch* found at Qumrān.¹¹⁴ In one fragment, Enoch is said to have sent two tablets (תרי לוחיא, probably two letters) from his dwelling in paradise to Mahawai, the Watchers' intermediary. The contents of the first tablet are unknown, but the second fragment is a copy of Enoch's second tablet. It announces the coming of Raphael, who will destroy mankind and animals in response to both the Watchers' prostitution and the evil works of their children. Here, too, the transmission of antediluvian knowledge or wisdom to later generations—the purpose of the pervasive mythologoumenon of the writing on tablets or on rocks—seems to be connected with either the Watchers or Enoch.¹¹⁵ As in later Jewish and Christian traditions, only one catastrophe, the flood, is mentioned.

Since the negative attitude to astronomy recorded in *Jub.* is not maintained in later traditions, the authorship of the steles is not attributed elsewhere to the Watchers. The early tradition about Enoch as a writer of letters, or steles, appears in only one other text, the Byzantine "midrashic" work *Palaea Historica*, where Enoch inscribes God's "great deeds" (μεγαλουργεῖα) on steles of marble and of stone.¹¹⁶ Otherwise,

from the LXX and *Jub.* Syncellus says that Cainan found the writing of the giants while walking in a field and kept it hidden. I quote from both from the respective editions of W. and L. Dindorf (CSHB 6 and 8; Bonn: Weber, 1829 and 1831). Unlike the Gnostic descriptions *in malam partem* of the archons as kings, the Christian heresiographers retained the traditions about Adam, Seth, and their early offspring as kings. See Syncellus, 19: Σὺν ἡγεμόνευσεν μετὰ τὸν Ἀδὰμ τῶν τηρικαῦτα ἀνθρώπων, as well as Michael the Syrian (the Jacobite patriarch of Antioch, 12th century) in his *Chronique* (J.-B. Chabot, ed.; Brussels: Culture et civilisation, 1963 [repr. of Paris, 1899]), I, 2 (Syriac) and IV, 5 (French trans.): "The first king was Adam, and after him Seth."

¹¹³Martin Hengel (*Judaism and Hellenism*, II [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974], 242ff.) considers this passage to be a polemic against the wicked science of the Chaldeans, and takes this xenophobia as evidence of the "Essene" character of the work. See also W. Adler, *Notes to the Text of George Syncellus and Pseudo-Malalas (on Seth)* (University of Pennsylvania: Department of Religious Studies, 1977).

¹¹⁴4Q *En Giants*^a 7.II (Plate 31) and 4Q *En Giants*^a 8 (Plate 32) ed. and trans. by Milik (*Enoch*, 314–316).

¹¹⁵See 2 *Enoch* XI (35 Vaillant), where God announces to Enoch that the writings of his forefathers Adam and Seth, as well as his own writings, will not disappear in the flood. For an extensive list of parallels, see Festugière, *Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, I, 319–323, including his important notes and references, as well as R. Reitzenstein, *Pointandres* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1904), 139, 183. Closer to the subject at hand, see L. Ginzberg, "Flood of Fire," *HaGoren* 8 (n.d.), 35–51 (Hebrew). Ginzberg argues that the Jewish legend evolved from the combination of a Babylonian and an Egyptian myth, which respectively mentioned steles of brick and of stone. His ingenious analysis of the later developments of the legend remains hypothetical. For the Babylonian origins of the myth, see W. Bousset, "Die Beziehungen der ältesten jüdischen Sibylle zur chaldäischen Sibylle und einige weitere Beobachtungen über den synkretistischen Charakter der spätjüdischen Literatur," *ZNW* 3 (1902), 42–49. On Enoch as both the initiator of civilization and the transmitter of antediluvian wisdom, see Grelot, "La légende d'Enoch."

¹¹⁶This popular Byzantine paraphrase on biblical history, written after the 9th century, was

beginning with the testimony of Josephus and *Adam and Eve*, Seth assumed this particular role of Enoch, with the consequence that both science and the knowledge of future events were attributed to him.

Far from being limited to Jewish literature, the notion of the destruction of humanity by water and by fire was common stock in Antiquity. Already in Plato's *Timaeus*, the old Egyptian priest scolded Solon for his (typically Greek) childish forgetfulness: "You people remember only one deluge, though there were many earlier." The priest had just told Solon: "There have been, and will be hereafter, many and diverse destructions of mankind, the greatest by fire and water, though other lesser ones are due to countless other causes," and explained why Egypt's geography made it the only place on earth immune from such calamities, and ergo the place where the traditions preserved "are the oldest on record."¹¹⁷ Although the *Timaeus* was very widely known in Late Antiquity, it probably should not be seen as the source of the idea of the two catastrophes that appears in Philo, *Adam and Eve*, and Josephus.¹¹⁸ What is certain, however, is that this tradition was widespread in the Hellenistic world, where it was sometimes related to the Stoic global conflagration (*apokatastasis*) and borrowed by some Jewish traditions. Once the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was seen as parallel to the flood, a "need" for symmetry could account for the association of each of the two writings present in an earlier Jewish form of the myth with each of the two cataclysms.

As noted, however, the tradition about a second upheaval after the flood ran counter to God's promise in the Bible. In even later Jewish and Christian traditions, therefore, the second event became identified not with the punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah, but with the "day of death" associated with the advent of the savior at the end of time. Thus Syncellus could write:

In Adam's 270th year Seth, snatched up by angels (ἀρπαγείς ὑπὸ ἀγγέλων), was taught about the transgression which the watchers were going to commit and the coming cataclysm by water and the advent of the Savior.¹¹⁹

edited by A. Vassiliev in *Anecdota Graeco-Byzantina* (Moscow: Imperial University, 1893), 188ff., esp. 197. On the work, see D. Flusser, "Palaea Historica, an Unknown Source of Biblical Legends," in J. Heinemann and D. Noy, eds., *Studies in Aggadah and Folk Literature* (*Scripta Hierosolymitana* 22; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1971), 48–79. Note in particular Flusser's suggestion that the Jewish roots of Gnosticism might go back much earlier than is usually thought (*ibid.*, 52).

¹¹⁷*Timaeus* 22B–23B; I quote F. M. Cornford's translation in his *Plato's Cosmology* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1937). See also Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I, 253–261 (I, 20 LCL), where Jupiter, who had first intended to burn the world, changed his mind and decided to send a flood; I owe this reference to Prof. D. Flusser.

¹¹⁸See for instance the "Song of the Magi" quoted by Dio of Prusa; A. D. Noch, *Conversion* (Oxford, 1933), 43. In an appendix ("Water and Fire," pp. 121–124) to his book *Seth*, Klijn points out that the idea of a periodic disaster "clearly originally belonged to astrology as practiced in the East" and was introduced into the West "obviously by the writings of Berosus (cf. Seneca, *Nat. Hist.* III.29).

¹¹⁹*Chronographia* 16–17. Syncellus also noted (17–18) that according to Africanus, since

It must be emphasized that in the tradition recorded by Syncellus, Seth clearly took the place accorded to Enoch in the earliest traditions. Like Enoch, Seth was "snatched up" (see Gen 5:24)¹²⁰ and, like him, was taught about the transgression of the Watchers and the subsequent coming of the flood.

It therefore appears that these differing traditions about the two cataclysms, the steles transmitting the wisdom or science of early mankind, and the coming of the savior had been conflated and transformed in various ways in Jewish texts. That these traditions reached Gnostic circles is clear from their appearance in the Gnostic sources; it is my contention that they reached Gnostic circles *directly* from Jewish sources, without the mediation of Christian literature and traditions. A passage of *Pistis Sophia*, hitherto unnoticed in this context, provides a striking analogy to the tradition about Enoch's two writings against the Watchers (in the fragments from 4Q). Here Enoch is said to have written the *two* books of Yeu in paradise at Jesus's command; they were then deposited upon the rock of Ararat in order to be protected from the flood and the archons until Jesus would reveal their mysteries to the righteous.¹²¹ In the same vein, the *Cologne Mani Codex* mentions an *Apocalypse of Sethel*, in which Sethel (son of Adam) received from great angels the revelation of the secret knowledge contained in books (ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς, 52:1–2). The same work cites an *Apocalypse of Enoch* in which an angel ordered the hero to inscribe the secrets told to him on copper tablets (ἐπὶ πτύχας χαλκᾶς) and to hide them in the desert (54:11–15). *Gos. Eg.* is presented as written by the Great Seth and placed upon a mountain (III, 68:1–13), while according to *Apoc. Adam*, the holy words were not committed to a book, but were engraved "on a high mountain, upon a rock of truth" (85:3–11).

As Gnostic circles developed an antinomian reading of Genesis, they came to see both the flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (the two cataclysms predicted by Seth) as sent by the demiurge in order to annihilate them, the righteous seed of Seth. On each of these occasions, Seth (or the Illuminator) was made to come and save his offspring, a coming similar to the advent of the savior at the end of time ("the day of death" of *Apoc. Adam* 76:16–17). The Gnostics thus spoke about *three* advents of the illuminator.

Enosh (Seth's son) means "man" in Hebrew, the savior, being called "son of Man," was also son of Enosh ("the real man," who had been "the first to hope to call on the name of the Lord God," Gen 4:26). Jesus was thus the perfect offspring of Seth. See Pseudo-Malalas 9: "Enoch was (of the line of) the righteous Seth, from whom Christ is descended, whose genealogy the holy and pious Luke traces back to Seth and Adam and God." See Luke 3:38.

¹²⁰See also CMC 50:8–52:7. According to the *Apocalypse of Sethel* cited in CMC, Adam's son received secret revelations from angels during his ecstatic trip. He himself was "like one of the great angels." The parallelism of the flood and the fire is recorded in *MPs* 171:20–22.

¹²¹*Pistis Sophia* III.134 (349 Schmidt-MacDermot).

He [= the Great Seth] passed through the three parousias which I mentioned before: the flood, and the conflagration, and the judgment of the archons and the powers and the authorities. (*Gos. Eg. III*, 63:4–8)

Various echoes of the same threefold pattern may be detected in some rather diverse Gnostic contexts. In the highly idiosyncratic system of the Simonian *Apophasis Megalē*, the Hestōs (he who stands) represents God's creative activity in cosmic evolution. He is said to appear three times, in three successive phases or "aeons" (past, present, and future).¹²²

In its new mythological framework, Mandaean theology carried the logic of the third catastrophe a step further by giving a specific name to this event. Three catastrophes befell the Adamites in three periods or generations: first the sword, then the fire, and finally the water. The Uthras (heavenly entities), Hibil, Šitil, and Anoš, presented as prototypes of the righteous Mandaeans, were said to have been saved from these catastrophes.¹²³

The same conception of three advents of a heavenly figure also occurs in an interesting Isma'īlī text. According to the *Kalām-i-Pīr*,¹²⁴ the Divinity (Maulānā, "Our Lord") manifested itself in each generation in the most perfect human form. During the first three generations of mankind, Maulānā appeared under three different names which are, in fact, variations upon Melchizedek's name or title (*melekh šalem*, King of Salem, Gen 14:18). The people of the first prophet, Adam, were the Sabaeans. They identified Melchizedek with Seth and said that at the resurrection he would appear as a judge and as a revealer of the teachings kept secret during history. Melchizedek appeared again during the generations of Noah and Abraham, i.e., at the time of the flood and of Sodom's punishment.¹²⁵

¹²²Hippolytus, *Elenchos* 6:17.1–2 (142–143 Wendland); see J. M. A. Salles-Dabadie, *Recherches sur Simon le Mage*, I, 55.

¹²³See E. Segelberg, "Old and New Testament Figures in Mandaean Version," in S. S. Hartman, ed., *Syncretism* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1969), 228–239, esp. 230. The mention of the sword, which appears also in Gnostic texts (e.g., in the apocalypse at the end of *Orig. World* 126:5–6) is probably ultimately related to the description of the giants' demise in Jewish apocryphal literature (for instance, *I Enoch* 14:6, although this may equally be a reference to Cain's murder of Abel). See the texts quoted by K. Rudolph, *Theogonie*, 299–300. In various parts of this work, Rudolph emphasizes the importance of *Apoc. Adam* for a better understanding of Mandaean origins.

¹²⁴Ed. and trans. by V. Ivanov, *Islamic Research Association*, 4 (Bombay, 1934). It is an Isma'īlī compilation from the 15th century but preserves much older material.

¹²⁵This text (or rather its source) was carefully analyzed by G. Vajda, "Melchisédec dans la mythologie ismaélienne," *JA* 234 (1943–45), 173–183. From the plays on the name of Melchizedek, Vajda was able to show that the presumably Fatimid author of this source knew the biblical text in either Hebrew or Syriac. See further the discussion of "Melchizedek as imām and Qā'im" in Isma'īlī thought, in M. G. S. Hodgson, *The Order of the Assassins* (Gravenhage: Mouton, 1955), 169–172. Vajda, however, had to leave what he considered to be "the most important question" unanswered: Why the threefold incarnation of the Divinity in Melchizedek? It seems to me that the answer lies in those early Gnostic trends which, we now know, integrated the Jewish speculation on Melchizedek as a redeemer figure (e.g., the thirteen Qumrān fragments, 11QMelch) into a clearly Gnostic theology

Once a pattern of three events linked to three advents of the Great Seth had been firmly established, it was easy to add a third stele to the two known previously. Just as two steles were associated with the first two events, so a stele came to be associated with the third event. Here again, the "need" for mythological symmetry probably accounts for the mention, in one of the Gnostic sources, of "the three steles" on which the secret knowledge of the Gnostics was preserved. This is how we should understand the title of CG VII, 5, "The Three Steles of Seth," which Dositheos supposedly discovered, read, understood, remembered, and finally transmitted to the elect ones (118:10–19).¹²⁶ Dositheos here plays a role parallel to that attributed to Cainan in *Jub.* The suggestion that he had to decipher them before they could be understood by others is a *topos* of the "discovered steles" literature in the Hellenistic world.¹²⁷ According to CG VIII, 1, the three tablets were written by Zostrianos, the bearer of the revelation, who "saw the perfect Child" (*Zost.* 2:9). He said, "I wrote three tablets and left them as knowledge for those who come after me, the living elect" (130:1–4), i.e., "the holy seed of Seth" (130:16–17).

James M. Robinson has suggested that "if the pair of disasters could lead to the concept of two steles, the triad in the nature of God in Neoplatonic theology led to the concept of three steles."¹²⁸ Although the

(e.g., *Melch.* CG IX, 1; 5:11–6:10). For, as we have seen, the three advents of the redeemer-revealer figure are central to Gnostic *Heilsgeschichte*. See B. Pearson, "The Figure of Melchizedek in the first tractate of the unpublished Coptic-Gnostic Codex IX from Nag Hammadi," *Proceedings of the XIIth International Congress of the International Association for the History of Religion* (eds. C. T. Bleeker, G. Widengren, E. T. Shape; Suppl. to *Numen* 31; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 200–208; to Pearson's bibliography, add P. Alfarié, *Les Ecritures Manichéennes*, II (Paris: Welter, 1919), 156–157. Alfarié mentions the important role played by Melchizedek as an incarnation of the Divine Spirit, according to the Manichaeans and the Athinganoi. See further Pearson's introduction to his edition of *Melch.* in Pearson, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codices IX and X* (NHS 16; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 19–40, and H.-M. Schenke, "Die jüdische Melchisedek-Gestalt als Thema der Gnosis," in K.-W. Tröger, ed., *Altes Testament—Frühjudentum—Gnosis; Neue Studien zu "Gnosis und Bibel"* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1980), 111–136. On Melchizedek in Jewish and Christian legends and his identification with Sem, see esp. Ginzberg, *Legends*, V, 225, n. 102. Note that in 2 *Enoch* 23, Melchizedek son of Nir (i.e., Noah's nephew) would be at the head of the "other race" that would live after the destruction of the whole human race in the flood (82–83 Vaillant).

¹²⁶And also the three tablets written by Zostrianos and "left by him as a knowledge for . . . the living elect" (*Zost.* 130:1–4).

¹²⁷See, for instance, the text of the Hermetic *Kyrianids*, trans. by Festugière, *Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, I, 322–323, where the writing "in foreign letters" (actually Syriac) had to be translated into Greek (*aeolica voce*) by an old man so that Harpokration could understand it. Another Hermetic text, also cited by Festugière, describes how secret Egyptian writings were translated into Greek—but in hieroglyphic characters! Steles written in hieroglyphic characters are mentioned in one of the Hermetic tractates found at Nag Hammadi (*On 8th and 9th* 61:26–31). The hieroglyphs reflect the ambiguity of the mystery, which had to be both disclosed and concealed. On this *topos*, see also M. Tardieu, "Les trois Stèles de Seth, un écrit gnostique retrouvé à Nag Hammadi," *RSPT* 57 (1973), 553.

¹²⁸"The Three Steles of Seth and the Gnostics of Plotinus," in Widengren, ed., *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Gnosticism*, 132–142. See also his introduction to *Steles Seth* in *The Nag Hammadi Library*, 362.

conception of the three steles could have fitted a “triadic” theology in later, Neoplatonizing trends, it is basically mythological, not philosophical, and probably first occurred and developed in Gnostic circles before they came under the strong influence of Neoplatonism. In the light of the preceding argument, Robinson’s view would seem to be mistaken, for the mythologoumenon of the three steles was apparently associated with the major divisions of early Gnostic *Heilsgeschichte*.

CHAPTER FIVE

SACRED GEOGRAPHY

Seiris

Can we attempt to identify the place where these secret and holy writings—whether steles or book(s)—were deposited and found? According to Josephus (*Ant.* 1.71) the stele of stone erected by the early Sethites “still exists to this day in the land of Seiris.”¹ The obvious implication is that this Seiris was the land of the early Sethites, the place where they had once lived “without dissension and in prosperity” and where, in all probability, they had originally erected the steles. It is this same land that Noah (a Sethite) was later said to have left (*Ant.* 1.76).

The land of Seiris does not appear as such in any of the Gnostic texts, where the place where the secret writings were kept is always a high mountain: “And you will leave this book upon a mountain and you will adjure the guardian ‘Come, O Dreadful One’” (*Allogenes* 68:20–23). Similarly, the Great Seth is said to have placed the divinely authored secret holy book which he had written

in the mountain that is called Charaxio, in order that, at the end of the times and the eras . . . it may come forth and reveal this incorruptible, holy race of the great savior. (*Gos. Eg.* III, 68:10–22)

A learned attempt has even been made to locate the mysterious mountain where the writings of Seth were hidden (according to non-Gnostic Christian texts), but the results remain highly hypothetical.² The name of the mountain, Charaxio, unfortunately occurs only in *Gos. Eg.* and is of no further help in identifying the mountain, since “Charax” was apparently a fairly common toponym in Antiquity.³ Charaxio is described in *Gos. Eg.*

¹μένει δ' ἄρχι δεῦρο κατὰ γῆν τὴν Σερίδα. Thackeray notes (IV, 32–33 LCL) that Seiris remains unidentified, despite a suggestion to see it as the Seirah of Jud 3:26: “Ehud escaped while they delayed, and passed beyond the sculptured stones (הַמַּסִּילִים) and escaped to Seirah (הַשְּׂעִירָה).” R. Reitzenstein has argued that Seiris should be located in Egypt; see his *Poimandres: Studien zur griechisch-ägyptischen und frühchristlichen Literatur* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1904; repr. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1966), 183–184. Cf. B. Pearson, “Seth in Gnostic Literature,” in Layton, ed., *Rediscovery*, II, 493 and nn. 70–71.

²V. Monneret de Villard, *Le leggende orientali sui magi evangelici* (Studi i testi 163; Città del Vaticano, 1952), 3–156. On these texts, see chap. VI *infra*.

³A Charax may be found in Moab (Charakmoba) and another one in Syria; see PW, III, 2121–2124 s.v. Charax, and III, 2120, s.v. Charakmoba. See also p. 351, n. 152 of Doresse’s commentary on *Gos. Eg.*; he mentions a town of south Susiana, named Charax-Spasino (modern Muhammarah in Iran), where Mandaean groups are still found. Referring to versions of the Alexander romances and various allusions in *Gilgamesh* and in Greek literature

68:1–5 as one of the “high mountains on which the sun has not risen, nor is it possible.” Doresse has proposed connecting the last detail with the dark regions mentioned in *1 Enoch* 78:3.⁴ I would also refer to the passage of *Pistis Sophia* quoted above, according to which Enoch himself wrote the two *Books of Yeu* and kept them on Mount Ararat (thus protecting them from the flood).⁵

The link between Seiris (the land of the sons of Seth and the place of the Steles) and Mount Ararat finds expression in *Hyp. Arch.* 92:8–14, where Noah is asked by the demiurge to set the ark upon Mount Sir!⁶ This conflation of traditions is not completely unexpected: the obvious place where the writings would be safe from the flood was Mount Ararat. In some milieus, the mountain could have been given the name of the land in which the books were written, Σεῖρ(ις). This tradition presupposes, of course, Noah as a transmitter of Seth’s knowledge. Such a link between the books of Seth and Noah is not found explicitly in Gnostic texts, but occurs in a text of the Islamic theologian and heresiographer ‘Abd al-Jabbār (11th century):

There are among them, in addition to the people of Harrān, another group. . . . They claim to follow Seth’s religion. They say that he was sent to them, and they possess his book, which God had descended upon him. Seth was already dead in the days of the flood, but Noah brought them this book—in the sense that he preserved it, not that God brought it down upon him.⁷

(see also Pearson, “Seth in Gnostic Literature,” 493 and n. 72), he sums up: “Sans doute s’agit-il là d’un thème conventionnel. En effet, nulle Charax ne paraît s’être jamais située dans ces régions lointaines.” Etymologically, χάραξ, which means “pointed stake,” comes from the verb χαράττω, “to make pointed” or “to sharpen,” but also “to inscribe, write, engrave” (perhaps a Semitic loanword? Cf. Heb. חָרַת, “engrave”); LSJ, 1977b–1978a. Charax, therefore, is either the high mountain itself or the rock upon which the writings are engraved. Pearson’s suggestion (*ibid.*, 495, n. 79), to derive the name from Hebrew חָר and Greek ἄξιος (i.e., “mountain of the worthy”) is unconvincing.

⁴In his commentary on *Gos. Eg.*, 351, n. 152.

⁵According to *2 Enoch* 33 (chap. XI, 32–37 Vaillant), Enoch wrote books and received those of his forefathers Adam and Seth. These books would be preserved from the flood by the angels Arioch and Marioch and would be transmitted to the new race of Melchizedek. Surprisingly, the figure of Enoch occurs infrequently in the Gnostic texts. In *Melch.* 12:4–11, a list of the early prophets of mankind seems to have included (the text is very corrupt) at least Adam, Abel, Noah, Enoch, and Melchizedek. For similar lists in Manichaean texts, see *Keph.* 12:12; *Hom.* 68:18 and *MPs* 142:9, where Enoch is called “the sage” (σόφος).

⁶ΣΕΙΡΑ ΠΤΟΥ Ν CIP; see Layton’s commentary 63, n. 101, and Pearson, “Seth in Gnostic Literature,” 493.

⁷*Mughnī*, V, 152–153 (Cairo: Ministry of Culture, 1965). This text is translated by G. Monnot, *Penseurs musulmans et religions iraniennes, Abd al Jabbar et ses devanciers* (Etudes musulmanes 16; Paris: Vrin; Cairo–Beirut: Institut dominicain d’études orientales, 1974), 126. The group mentioned by ‘Abd al-Jabbār were apparently a branch of Harranian Sabaeans (and not latter-day Gnostics!), since they upheld the doctrine of the eternity of the world. Al-Shahrāzūrī, however, says: “The Sabians have books on *aḥkām* [“laws” or “astrological predictions”] some of them attributed to Seth and others to Yaḥyā b. Zakarīyā.” Gluck, *The Arabic Legend of Seth*, 47, who quotes this text from a ms. of the Brit-

It must be added, however, that this tradition was already vestigial in *Hyp. Arch.*, where Noah was not considered to be a pure Sethite and the Sir tradition had, therefore, lost its function.⁸

Now both the land of Seiris, or Sir, and its mountain appear in various later (Christian) sources. In one of the main links in the tradition, the Syriac *Chronicle of Zuqnin* (also called *Chronicle of Pseudo-Dionysius*), written in 774–75, a “Mount of Victories” (*tur neṣḥanē*) was located in the oriental land of Shir.⁹ The Magi climbed this mountain—upon which “books of Seth” were hidden—once a month, and it was there that they first saw the star that would guide them to Bethlehem. The same story is told in Pseudo-Chrysostom, *Opus Imperfectum in Matthaeum*, which also speaks of a *mons victorialis*,¹⁰ the site of the “Cave of Treasures” in which, after the flood, Noah deposited the holy books dictated by Adam to Seth. Originally, this cave had been the refuge of Adam and Eve when they were expelled from (the mountain of) paradise. They were subsequently buried in this cave, as were Seth and his offspring, since the children of Seth used to live on that mountain (while the sons of Cain were living in the valley). The same legends about the cave, as well as the “Mount of Victories”—but not the name Sir—are also found in the *Cave of Treasures* (5th century?).¹¹ According to this tradition, therefore, Mount Ararat is the Mount of Victories, which was also the original dwelling place of the Sethite Noah.

Among the Greek historiographers, only Cedrenus identified the place where the steles were erected as a mountain, τὸ Σίριδον ὄρος,¹² while Syncellus more simply recalled that the Sethites used to live in an elevated land of Eden, near paradise.¹³

ish Library (Or. add. 25 738 fol 15 b), remarks that the reference to John (the Baptist) points to Mandaeans. On the various kinds of Sabaeans, see J. Pedersen, “The Sabians,” in *Oriental Studies in Honour of Edward G. Browne* (Cambridge: University Press, 1922), 383–391, and J. Hjärpe, *Analyse critique des traditions arabes sur les sabéens harraniens* (Uppsala: Skriv, 1972); *non vidi*.

⁸Doresse (*Secret Books*, 256) points out that the “Mandaeans, to this day, regard the White Mountain (Ardavân) of *Syr*, at the northern extremity of the inhabited world, as the most sacred spot on earth, and describe it as a mysterious place held by certain Guardians.” On these guardians, see *Gos. Eg.* 61:9; 62:12–13; cf. *Allogenes* 68:20–23 and 45:9. In opposition to this White Mountain stands the Dark Mountain, the place to which the powers of darkness are banished and hence the dwelling of the demons. See T. Sävje-Söderbergh, *Studies in the Coptic Manichaean Psalm Book* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1949), 127–128, who argues for the Mandaean origin of the similar Manichaean imagery.

⁹Ed. J. B. Chabot (CSCO, Script. Syr. series tertia, 1–2; Paris, 1927), 59; Latin trans. (CSCO 121; Louvain, 1949), 46.

¹⁰PG 56, 637–638. This text speaks of only *one* book attributed to Seth (*quaedam scriptura inscripta nomine Seth*) and locates the mountain in the area later evangelized by the apostle Thomas. See Klijn, *Seth*, 58.

¹¹C. Bezold, *Die Schatzhöhle* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1883, 1888), 17, 29ff. (Syriac and Arabic); 72, 76ff. (German trans.).

¹²*Historiarum Compendium*, I, Bekker, ed. (CSHB 33; Bonn: Weber, 1838), I.16.

¹³*Chronographia*, 16. Another land, the name of which sounds very close to our Sir, is mentioned by Syncellus (72–73 Dindorf): it is the Σηριαδική γῆ, where Thoth, “the first Hermes,” deposited steles engraved with a holy text (in hieroglyphic characters). An

Now a land of Sir, connected with neither the first generations of mankind nor with the Sethians, is also known. Most notably, Bardaisan mentioned it, together with its people the Sirians (*sirayē*), who lived in perfect justice and happiness in their land in the Far East.¹⁴ Again, according to Hippolytus, the book of revelation of the Elxaites, which a certain Alcibiades brought to Rome in the 2nd century, originated "from the Seres of Parthia."¹⁵ Because of the location of Sir in the East, and of the legendary traditions about its people and their perfect laws and way of life, some scholars have suggested that the various forms of the mysterious name of the land all refer to China.¹⁶ Indeed, since the Chinese were identified as the makers and exporters of silk, China was known as Seres in Antiquity, through the Old Chinese word for silk, *sjg*, which gave rise to the Greek *σήρ*, *σηρικός*, Latin *sericum*, Aramaic *שִׁירָה*, and Syriac *šī'ra*.¹⁷ *Prima facie* it is indeed tempting to connect these legends about the mysterious land or mountain in the East with the unknown land of the silk-makers, which directly appealed to imagination in the Mediterranean world. And it is highly plausible that later contaminations between Seiris and the land of the Seres did occur.¹⁸

But the early tradition reported by Josephus cannot yet refer to China. Josephus spoke about Seiris in connection with "sons of Seth," who are actually mentioned once in the Bible, in Balaam's prophecy (Num 24:17-18):¹⁹

inscription identifies the *Σειριάς γῆ* with the homeland of Isis, the Nilotic goddess. The Nile is also called *Σείριος*. See W. G. Waldell, ed. and trans., *Manetho* (LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University, 1940), 208, n. 1. On these grounds, Reitzenstein (*Poimandres*, 189, 183-184) locates the land mentioned by Josephus in Egypt (or in Ethiopia) and suggests possible contacts between the Egyptian god Seth and the biblical Seth. Reitzenstein (p. 183, n. 2) quotes an astrological manuscript (Paris. Graec. 2419) according to which Seth had built two towers. See also a Hermetic tradition, related by Zosimus, about secret revelations on steles hidden in tombs; according to Zosimus, the Jews later imitated this practice (Festugière, *Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, I, 278 and n. 3, noting, "Le thème des révélations secrètes gravées sur des stèles est tout à fait commun").

¹⁴*Book of the Laws of the Countries*; see text in PS 2 (Nau ed.) or in the new edition of H. J. W. Drijvers (Semitic Texts with Translation 3; Assen, 1965), 40.

¹⁵*ἀπὸ Σηρῶν τῆς παρθίας*, *Elenchos* 9.13.1 (251 Wendland).

¹⁶Most recently Flusser, "Palaea Historica," 51, n. 13, and especially G. T. Reinink, who has devoted an article to the topic, "'Seiris' (Šir) und das Volk der Serer," *JSJ* 6 (1975), 72-85.

¹⁷For references, see *ibid.*, 78.

¹⁸Thus for example in his *Murūj al-dhahab*, the Arabic historian Mas'ūdī reported that a Sabian temple of cosmic dimensions was to be found on the borders of China. In this temple, a bottomless well led to the "Treasure of the Books," which contained the totality of knowledge. This temple was built upon a rock which appeared to be a high mountain. See Barbier de Maynard, ed. and trans., *Les Praires d'or* (Paris, 1914), IV, 69ff. H. Corbin, who quotes this text ("Rituel sabéen et exégèse ismaélienne du rituel," *ErJb* 19 [1950], 181-246), remarks (p. 182), "dans les textes arabes de gnose mystique, la mention de la Chine équivaut à signifier la limite du monde humain, du monde qui peut être exploré par l'homme dans les conditions de la conscience commune."

¹⁹These "sons of Seth" (*RSV* renders "sons of Sheth") are puzzling. W. F. Albright has identified *st* as an archaic tribal name (referring to the early tribe *sūtu*). According to him the name "was changed to a common noun of similar appearance by a later poet who no

a star shall come forth out of Jacob
 and a scepter shall rise out of Israel;
 it shall crush the forehead of Moab
 and break down all the sons of Seth
 Edom shall be dispossessed
 Seir also, his enemies, shall be dispossessed
 while Israel does valiantly.

According to the rules of symmetry of Hebrew poetry, "all the sons of Seth" must be read in parallel to both Moab and Seir.²⁰ Since the redactor of Numbers had related the "sons of Seth" to the peoples who lived in Moab, Edom, or Seir, i.e., in Transjordan, it can be assumed that later traditions associated them even more specifically with the land of Seir.²¹ It stands to reason, therefore, that when Josephus spoke of Seiris as the land of the Sethites, he referred to traditions stemming from Num 24:17–18, which associated the nation of the "sons of Seth" with Seir.²²

A puzzling echo of the Jewish traditions on the mysterious Mount Seir is found in a letter attributed to Ḥasdai ibn Shaprut (10th century). According to this letter, certain faithless Jews in a former generation, who sought to escape the wrath of the Chaldeans, hid the books of the Torah and the other holy scriptures in a cave located on Mount Seir.²³

The Promised Land

In the words of *Apoc. Adam*, the Great Seth would "bring [his seed] into their proper land and build them a holy dwelling place."²⁴ This "holy land" or "place" of the Gnostics,²⁵ presumably the location of Šir or Charaxio, was no longer associated with the land of Seir but had become a purely mythical notion. In a sense, this holy land can be described as an "inverted" land of Israel. Biblical references to the Holy Land were part of Gnostic imagery: according to the Naassenes, milk and honey flowed in

longer understood the allusion" ("The Oracles of Balaam," *JBL* 63 [1944], 220, n. 89).

²⁰In the LXX, Esau has replaced Seir, probably in order to further the parallelism between two countries (Moab and Edom) and two peoples.

²¹For an investigation of the relationships of Seir, Edom, and Esau to one another, see J. R. Bartlett, "The Land of Seir and the Brotherhood of Edom," *JTS* 20 (1969), 1–20.

²²Reinink, who raises the possibility of Seiris-Sir being שַׁעִיר, rejects it rather abruptly, considering it "unglaublich und aus linguistischen Gründen schwerlich aufrechtzuerhalten, denn Seiris setzt vielmehr hebräisch oder aramäisch שִׁיר bzw. שִׁירָה voraus" ("Seiris," 72–73). See the same rejection of Seir, without any real grounds, in Doresse, *Livres Secrets*, 267, n. 24. These two verses are quoted several times in the Qumrān scrolls as well as in the *Damascus Document* (7:20); Y. Yadin, ed., *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness* (Oxford: University Press, 1962), 61:6 and Yadin's commentary, 310–311 (however, no particular significance can be discerned in these citations).

²³See the translation of N. Golb, "Who Were the Magāriya?" *JAOS* 80 (1960), 350–351; for further details on the text, see p. 350, n. 2.

²⁴*Apoc. Adam* 72:3–4; see *Setheus* 61:2–3.

²⁵*Setheus* 34:10; 42:12–17; *Allogenes* 58:31 *et passim*.

this land,²⁶ which was elsewhere identified with "Zion and the cities of Judah,"²⁷ or Jerusalem on high, the city "made by the Father."²⁸

This imagery, needless to say, was only metaphysical. The Gnostics' rejection of the created world implied that this land of theirs was otherworldly. As Plotinus reported in his polemical tractate against them, the Gnostics "do not honour this creation or this earth, but say that a new earth has come into existence for them, to which, say they, they will go away from this one: and that is the rational form of universe."²⁹ The same insistence upon the new also occurs in Marcion's *kerygma*, where it is pivotal.³⁰ Indeed, *kainos* comes very close to *xenos* or *allotrios* in Gnostic language.³¹ The concept of a "new earth," moreover, was also taken up in Manichaean theology, where it was very close to the concept of "the new aeon."³²

Depending upon the various tendencies of the texts, the Gnostics reached this land collectively or individually, either through the help of the illuminator or through their own attainment of Gnosis. In this "other land," they would live with "angels of the great light."³³ This new land, this holy mountain, did not belong to the earth, where darkness and death prevailed and where the Gnostics considered themselves to be "strangers," exiled in the kingdom of Sakla, "the prince of darkness." It is sometimes called an ethereal or "airy" earth (*ἀερόδιος γῆ*),³⁴ where

²⁶Hippolytus, *Elenchos* 5.8.30 (94 Wendland).

²⁷*Pistis Sophia* 1.33.35 (56 Schmidt-MacDermot); see 1.32.35 (52 Schmidt-MacDermot).

²⁸*Setheus* 12 (249 Schmidt-MacDermot); see 21 (266 Schmidt-MacDermot). In Valentinian imagery, Jerusalem was one of Sophia's names; see Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.5.3 (1, 46 Harvey). The earthly Jerusalem, on the other hand, was an evil place, built by Solomon "by means of the demons" (*Testim. Truth* 70:6–8). Elsewhere, James was advised by Jesus to leave Jerusalem, "a dwelling place of a great number of demons" (*1 Apoc. Jas.* 25:18–19). In Mandaean texts, the destruction of Jerusalem came as a punishment for the persecution of the community by the Jews, under the leadership of Adonai, Ruha, and their seven sons; see Rudolph, "Le Mandéisme," in Puech, ed., *Histoire des Religions*, II (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), 517. On the ambivalence of Jerusalem in early Christian consciousness, see my remarks, "Which Jerusalem?" *Cathedra* 11 (1979), 119–124 (Hebrew).

²⁹*Enn.* 11.9.5.24–27: *καὶ τῶν αὐτοῖς γῆν φασὶ γεγοῦναι*.

³⁰"Novum deum proferant," said Tertullian (*Adv. Marc.* 1.18; 1, 20 Evans), sneering, "Novus nove venire voluit" (*ibid.*, 3.4; 1, 176 Evans).

³¹Puech, *En quête de la gnose*, I, 90, 108.

³²I.e., *ar'ā ḥadīā*, in Theodore bar Khonai's account (*Liber Scholiorum* XI; 310 Scher). H.-J. Polotsky rejects this testimony, stating that Mani must have used *almā* rather than *ar'ā*; see his "Manichäische Studien," *Muséon* 46 (1933), 260 and n. 12, repr. in his *Collected Papers* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1971), 661. Mani could well speak about a "new aeon" (see Polotsky, *ibid.*, n. 12 for references) without ignoring the imagery of the "new earth."

³³*Apoc. Adam* 73:17 and 72:10–11; cf. "another place," *Steles Seth* 120:2ff.

³⁴*Zost.* 8:10–12; 9:2–4 *et passim*; see also *Setheus* 20 (263 Schmidt-MacDermot). See phenomenological parallels in H. Corbin, "Terre céleste et corps de résurrection d'après quelques traditions iraniennes," *ErJb* 22 (1953), 97–194. Although there does not seem to be any direct literary connection between the ancient Iranian and the Gnostic themes, further research might discover paths leading from the Gnostic concept to those of Shi'ite Sufism and Ishrāqiyya (theosophy), which speak about the mystical land of Ḥūrqulyā, in the "eighth climate," a land where cities are of emerald. It is not impossible that the name Ḥūrqulyā itself is derived from Charax (in Arabic, the first three consonants of both

“the holy men of the great light” “receive shape” (*Gos. Eg.* III, 50:10–13). It was from this “foreign air” (ἀήρ) that the illuminator is said to have come, according to *Apoc. Adam* (82:26). This glorious land of light³⁵ was a place of truth where the Holy Spirit dwelt (*Apoc. Adam* 69:23–25). In contrast to their tribulations in this world of error and fate, the elect would be able to rest³⁶ in this permanent “place of pasture” of Seth.³⁷

From its heritage of Jewish eschatology and the Jewish historical concept of salvation, Gnostic mythology retained, although dimly, some ambiguity as to the temporal existence of this new Holy Land; it did not belong only to the timeless Pleroma. Since it was a place of salvation,³⁸ the Gnostics in some sense belonged there already, *hic et nunc*. The illuminator could take them there in the event of a direct threat from the demiurge and his powers (see *Apoc. Adam*). In the course of history, it functioned as a refuge where the Gnostics could hide—as did Noah and many others according to *Ap. John* 29:8ff. The status of this land would change in the *Endzeit*, however, when the kingdom of the powers of darkness would come to its end. Then the Gnostics would no longer be exiled in the world but would reign at last (though not in the manner of earthly kings) in this holy place where “Setheus dwells as a king and as God.”³⁹ There would be no more confusion between good and evil: the Gnostics would be saved and achieve everlasting repose, while the servants of the evil powers would be doomed at last. Even in a Neoplatonizing Gnostic treatise like *Setheus*, the end of days was clearly indicated: boundaries and guardians would hermetically separate the “Place (χώρα) of the right,” light, and rest from the “Place of the Left,” darkness, toil and death (58:3–17).⁴⁰

In various cultural contexts, mountains are the *locus classicus* of divine epiphanies, as phenomenologists of religion rightly insist.⁴¹ For Gnostics, the place where the books or tablets with secret knowledge were concealed and/or revealed was usually identified as a mountain.⁴² Moreover, the

names—*hrg*—are identical).

³⁵ *MPs* 143:29, 199:15, *et passim*; cf. *Pistis Sophia* II.83–84, *et passim*.

³⁶ *Ap. John* 22:2; *Zost.* 3:21; *Thund.* 21:28; *Testim. Truth* 35:28–36:2 *et passim*.

³⁷ *Gos. Eg.* III, 60:13; cf. *Great Pow.* 39:13. See also *Dial. Sav.* 123:9; *Gos. Thom.*, log. 50. The Manichaeans, too, speak of the land (χώρα) of peace, honor, grace, joy, and no jealousy (*Keph.* 111:1–6).

³⁸ *Testim. Truth* 55:3; *Marsanes* 10, *passim*.

³⁹ *Setheus* 7 (238 Schmidt-MacDermot; cf. p. 235).

⁴⁰ *Setheus* 19 (260–261 Schmidt-MacDermot); cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I.30.2 (I, 227 Harvey). See also “the place of the pit” (*Dial. Sav.* 135:6), “the place where there is no repentance” (*Ap. John* 27:27), or the “insignificant place” (*Paraph. Shem* 43:1). “Right” and “left” as respective representatives of good and evil are ubiquitous in religious symbolism; in Mandaean texts, they achieve central importance.

⁴¹ On the mountain as a traditional sacred place, see M. Eliade, *Traité d'Histoire des Religions* (Paris: Payot, 19642), § 143: “Le centre du monde,” 316–319.

⁴² *Gos. Eg.* 68:2–3; *Allogenes* 68:21; cf. the *Apocalypse of Shem* cited in CMC 55:15–22. Note also, in different contexts, the Mount of Olives, which is the setting of Jesus's discourses in *Pistis Sophia*; “the mountain of Jericho” where Paul receives Gnosis in *Apoc.*

mountain was also the proper place of the Gnostics and was connected with their eschatological triumph: "For they shall be on a high mountain, upon a rock of truth" (*Apoc. Adam* 85:9–11).⁴³

On the map of Gnostic consciousness, the location of water was ambiguous, since it was connected with both the "dead" earth and the "new" earth, with lust and damnation, as well as with purity and salvation. The Hymn of the Child, with its thirteen repetitions of "and thus he came over the water," is a typical example of this ambiguity, which was central to Gnostic mythology.⁴⁴ According to Justin's *Baruch*, there were two kinds of waters.⁴⁵ To the material waters below (*Treat. Seth* 50:16) correspond the spiritual waters above (*Melch.* 8:1; *Zost.* 18:6–9), which were the "living waters" (*Setheus* 61:15–22), those of the true baptism.⁴⁶ Water, indeed, was profoundly ambivalent: while Protennoia said, "I am hidden in the [radiant] water," the father of the flesh was also identified with the water (*Great Pow.* 38:20). More precisely, water was associated with evil sexuality (*Paraph. Shem* 4:30). We have seen in chapter II how the acts of lust at the origin of anthropogony were described as the fall of a drop of light on the water (*Orig. World* 113:23).

Gnostic water imagery also made use of biblical themes: "The water of the Jordan is the desire for sexual intercourse" (*Testim. Truth* 31:1–3). Here, again, the savior would radically reverse the trend, the stream of matter, and transform the water of lust into the water of life. *Testim. Truth* 30:20–23 describes how "the Son of Man came to the world by the Jordan river, and immediately the Jordan turned back." Hippolytus, in his report about the Naassenes, related the same tradition about the Jordan flowing backwards (τοῦ ἐπὶ τὰ ἄνω ρέυσαντος Ἰορδάνου). This reversal of the Jordan was considered by the Naassenes to be one of "the three great mysteries."⁴⁷ In their imagery, "the Jordan flowing back" (i.e., "up," ἄνω) should be seen as the counterpart of the tides of the ocean, that gave birth to gods, according to ancient Greek mythology: ὅταν δὲ ἄνω . . . γένεσις ἐστὶ θεῶν.⁴⁸ Hippolytus further noted that the Jordan, flowing forth or "down," (ὃν κάτω ρέοντα),⁴⁹ prevented the Israelites

Paul (19:11–13); and the mountain "Gaugelan" in *1 Apoc. Jas.* 30:18–21. More generally, on the *topos* of the mountain setting for revelatory discourses in early Christian literature, see H. Koester, "One Jesus and Four Primitive Gospels," *HTR* 61 (1968), 237 (repr. in J. M. Robinson and H. Koester, *Trajectories through Early Christianity* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971], 194).

⁴³See also *Dial. Sav.* 122:24–123:3.

⁴⁴As we have seen, the phenomenon is to be related to the *Sitz im Leben* of factional and ascetical baptist movements; see especially Koenen, "From Baptism to Gnosis."

⁴⁵Hippolytus, *Elenchos* 5.27.3.

⁴⁶*Apoc. Adam* 75:29; 84:5–8; *Zost.* 15:4; 18:2–3. In *Orig. World* 108:31–32, the water is purified "by the likeness of Pistis Sophia" (it is linked to the anthropogonical process).

⁴⁷Hippolytus, *Elenchos* 5.8.3–4 (89 Wendland).

⁴⁸Hippolytus, *Elenchos* 5.7.38–41 (88–89 Wendland), which refers to *Odyssey* 24.9ff. and *Iliad* 14.201, 246: γένεσις τε θεῶν, γένεσις τ' ἀνθρώπων. But this imagery finds its direct roots in Ps 114:3, 6.

⁴⁹Cf. the traditional etymology preserved by Origen according to which Jordan means descent (from the Hebrew root *yrd*); *In Joh.* VI, 42 (25) (IV, 151 Preuschen). Cf. *On Bap. A*

from leaving Egypt, which is a prototype of *mixis*. Only when Joshua (a *typos* for Jesus) would make it flow back (or “up”; cf. Josh 3:7–17) could the Israelites (i.e., the Gnostics) enter the celestial Jerusalem, which was the “mother of the living.”

CHAPTER SIX

SONS OF GOD OR SONS OF SETH?

In its Gnostic reinterpretation, the lustful behavior of the Sons of God (or evil angels, archons) in Gen 6:1–4 was at the core of the new mythology. In Jewish and, later, Christian exegesis, these very Sons of God were often identified with the “sons of Seth,” as we shall see below. This striking identification raises the question of whether there is any connection between this exegesis and the existence of those Gnostics who considered themselves to be the offspring of Seth. Despite some recent studies on the exegetical problem, this question has yet to be clearly formulated, let alone answered.

Before trying to tackle the issue, it might be useful to summarize briefly the Gnostic description of the seed of Seth, “undoubtedly the fixed point of what may be called Sethian Gnosticism.”¹ Various epithets are attributed to this seed,² this “other race” (*Steles Seth* 120:1ff.), which is opposed to “the material race” (*Tri. Trac.* 119:8–10), or to the races that will destroy themselves through “allelophagy” at the end of time (*Paraph. Shem* 44:25–26). It is immovable and incorruptible (ἄφθαρτον; *Gos. Eg.* III, 51:8–9), called “the living and immovable race,”³ and characterized as “great” or “male.”⁴ Whenever the father of this race is mentioned, he is either “the perfect man”⁵ or the heavenly, or Great Seth.⁶ The evidence suggests that the very idea of a Gnostic *race*—and of its various designations, such as “immovable”—stems from the earliest stages of

¹MacRae, “Seth in Gnostic Texts and Traditions,” 21.

²Schottroff has pointed out that in *Apoc. Adam* (e.g., 83:4), the term σπόρα is always used positively and refers to the offspring of the illuminator; σπέρμα, on the other hand, is connected with ἐπιθυμία; see “Animae naturaliter salvandae,” 79. See also the σπόρα of the Great Seth in *Gos. Eg.* (e.g., III, 60:9–10).

³†ΓΕΝΕΑ ΕΤΟΝΕ ΔΥΩ ΝΑΤΚΙΜ (*Steles Seth* 118:12–13), which Tardieu translates, “la génération vivante et inébranlable” (“*Les Trois Stèles de Seth*,” 567). He explains the latter term in the following way: “c’est à dire fixe et immuable, opposée à la race errante, livrée à la πλάνη des fils de Cain,” and refers to Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 109a, who gives ἀμετακινήτος for ΔΤΚΙΜ. While Tardieu correctly understands the meaning of the expression, ΔΤΚΙΜ probably renders ἀσάλευτος; the Greek term is retained, for instance, in *Ap. John* 33:3. Layton, in his commentary on *Hyp. Arch.* 51–52 (n. 46), points out that γῆ ἀδαναντή (*Hyp. Arch.* 88:15–16) has a similar meaning, “of those who are unyielding,” and recognizes in it an epithet of the Gnostic race, “the unwavering generation.” Cf. the γένος τὸ ἀθάνατον mentioned in *CMC* 67:6 or the “imperishable seed” in *Marsanes* 26:14. On the Gnostic γενεά, see p. 100 *supra*.

⁴*Apoc. Adam* 65:6–7; *Gos. Eg.* III, 44:19 *et passim* (in the plural); cf. the “maleness” of Seth in *Steles Seth* 120, *passim*.

⁵*Ap. John* 2:24–25; cf. “the perfect race,” *ibid.*, 28:3–4.

⁶*Gos. Eg.* III, 59:13–15; *Apoc. Adam* 65:7–8; *Zost.* 6:27.

Gnostic mythology, which evolved from and around the pure seed transmitted by Seth to his offspring.

The idea of a Gnostic race is also found in "Christian" Gnostic text. In *Apoc. Adam* 78:3–5, for instance, the Gnostics are called "the race of the immortal soul." Valentinianism knew of the three races of Cain, Abel, and Seth (*Exc. Theod.* 54–57), but the terminology does not appear to be original here. The inversion of Jewish concepts reached a peak in *Gos. Phil.*, where the Gnostics, "the seed of the son of man" (i.e., Jesus) are said to be the offspring not of the Jews, but of "another," "chose people" (75:31–76:5).

In contrast to the self-laudatory descriptions of their race by the Gnostics, both Jewish and Christian exegetes depicted the offspring of Seth in darker colors. The father of Byzantine historiography, Julius Africanus (*floruit* in 3rd century at Edessa)⁷ wrote in a fragment from his *Chronography* preserved by Syncellus:⁸

When mankind became numerous upon the earth the angels of heaven came together (*συνῆλθον*) with the daughters of men. In some versions, I found the "sons of God." Now it is recounted, as I believe, about Seth (that his descendants) are called sons of God by the spirit [i.e., the Bible],⁹ since the genealogies of the righteous and the patriarchs up until the Savior are traced from him. But the descendants of Cain it designates as human seed, having nothing divine on account of the wickedness of their race and the dissimilarity of their nature. So that when they intermingled [i.e., the descendants of Seth with those of Cain],¹⁰ they [i.e., the descendants of Seth] caused God vexation.¹¹ But if we take this to mean "angels," we would conclude that it refers to those who transmitted knowledge about magic and sorcery, as well as motion of numbers¹² and astronomical phenomena, to women, from whom they produced the giants; because of their wickedness came into being and God decided to obliterate the whole faithless race of living beings in the deluge.

⁷The only thorough study of Africanus remains that of H. Gelzer, *Sextus Julius Africanus und die byzantinische Chronographie* (Leipzig, 1898); see esp. 62–65, 68, 83–84. Cf. also C. Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*, II (Freiburg: Herder, 1903), 221–223.

⁸*Chronographia* (ed. W. Dindorf; CSHB; Bonn: Weber, 1829), 34–35. See the translation edited by W. Adler (Department of Religious Studies, University of Pennsylvania, 1977).

⁹*μυθεύεται δέ, ὡς οἶμαι, ἀπὸ τοῦ Σήθ, ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος οἱ υἱοὶ θεοῦ προσαγορεύονται.*

¹⁰*ἐπιμιχθέντων αὐτῶν.* For Klijn (*Seth*, 62), these words refer to the Cainites alone. Since it does not make sense to say that the wicked Cainites "intermingled" among themselves, Klijn concludes that "Syncellus incorrectly rendered Julius Africanus' words." A easier solution lies in a simple change of punctuation: we may begin a new sentence with *ἐπιμιχθέντων αὐτῶν.*

¹¹Only the sons of Seth could vex God, for the sons of Cain were already evil before their intermingling.

¹²*ἔτι δὲ ἀριθμῶν κινήσεως.* Is this a reference to planets?

This text deserves a brief commentary. Traditional editions of the LXX translate *beni elohim* as οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ in Gen 6:2 and as οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ in Gen 6:4.¹³ But important variants, as well as the fact that the main manuscript support for ἄγγελοι in v. 2 has the reading over an erasure, indicate that the original reading probably was οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ—a literal translation of the Hebrew—in both places.¹⁴ This is indeed the reading of the new Göttingen edition.¹⁵ The emendation to ἄγγελοι reflects the traditional interpretation, describing the fall and sin of the Watchers. From Africanus's own testimony, it appears that ἄγγελοι had already supplanted υἱοὶ in most versions of the LXX, though it had not completely eradicated the original reading. As a matter of fact, Africanus gave not one, but two interpretations of the passage. It is not even clear whether he preferred one over the other.¹⁶ On the one hand, he accepted the ἄγγελοι reading of the LXX; on the other, he not only did not reject the alternate reading υἱοὶ, but he explicitly endorsed the exegesis which saw in them "sons of Seth."

In one way or another, numerous early Christian writers have dealt with this biblical passage. After Dexinger,¹⁷ both Wickham¹⁸ and Klijn¹⁹ have cited and analyzed the evidence. These scholars reach three similar conclusions: Africanus was the first writer to mention the "Sethite" interpretation;²⁰ the two conflicting interpretations coexisted in later Christian literature; and from the 4th century on, the "Sethite" interpretation tended to predominate, until it eventually became the commonly accepted interpretation. Alexander reaches the same conclusion: "The earliest criticism [of the 'angelic' interpretation] which we can date comes from the hand of Julius Africanus."²¹ He adds,

This interpretation is first explicitly applied to Gen. 6 by Christian exegetes. Only much later does it appear in Jewish writings, a fact which may indicate that it entered Jewish thought from the Christian tradition.²²

¹³See the larger Cambridge LXX (ed. Brooke-McLean).

¹⁴As shown by Alexander, "The Targumim and Early Exegesis of 'Sons of God,'" 63–64.

¹⁵Ed. J. W. Wevers; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974.

¹⁶But see Klijn, who states (*Seth*, 62), about Africanus's identification of the Sethites with the Sons of God, "it is clear that this explanation is not favored by him."

¹⁷*Sturz der Göttersöhne*, esp. 97–122.

¹⁸In "Genesis VI, 2 in Early Christian Literature," 147, Wickham reaches the conclusion that the anti-angelological interpretation eventually prevailed since it buttressed the orthodox claim about Jesus's sonship. One may doubt that this passage, which is not very flattering for the "Sons of God," was used in Christological context. Indeed Gen 6:1–4 is not found in the traditional *catenae* or *testimonia* (lists of verses) used to prove Jesus's sonship.

¹⁹*Seth*, 60–77.

²⁰Dexinger, *Sturz der Göttersöhne*, pt. II, 107: "Bei Julius Africanus (nach 240) . . . finden wir zum ersten Mal die Sethitendeutung." Klijn, *Seth*, 61: "he [Africanus] was, as far as we know, the first to identify the sons of God mentioned in Gen. 6:1 [*sic*] with the Sethites."

²¹"The Targumim and Early Exegesis of 'Sons of God,'" 63.

²²*Ibid.*, 66. For later Jewish material, Alexander refers to Ginzberg, *Legends*, V, 172,

Although Klijn mentions the fact that strong rabbinic influences exerted themselves on Syriac exegesis,²³ he notes:

The origin of this idea [viz., the intercourse between the Sethites and the Cainites] must be sought in a Semitic-speaking environment. It was introduced into the Greek-speaking world by Julius Africanus. It is not quite clear whether Julius Africanus learnt about this explanation from Jewish or from Christian sources. It is hardly possible for it to have originated among the Jews, since it is mentioned in Jewish sources of a very late date only.²⁴

Klijn's mention of "a Semitic-speaking environment" refers to the fact that this exegesis appeared in the early Syriac Fathers and in the oriental Christian chronicles. In the 4th century, Aphrahat, the first Syriac Father, adopted the "Sethite" interpretation of our passage.²⁵ Ephrem, too, dwelt on it, strongly rejecting the idea that the Sons of God were angels, an idea which, he said, was favored by the Manichaeans. According to him, the children of Seth, called Sons of God, lived a pure and continent life on a mountain in the land beside the fence of paradise until they climbed down from it in order to unite with the Cainite women.²⁶

The *Cave of Treasures* is the most famous—and probably the oldest—oriental Christian legendary history.²⁷ It goes into great detail in describing how in Jared's generation, the offspring of Seth (except for Methuselah and Noah),²⁸ seduced by the music played on Tubal-Cain's instruments and by the "sex-appeal" of the Cainite women, climbed down from the Mount of Victories where they had until then led a pure life. They did not heed the words of Enoch, who attempted to remind them of Jared's order not to climb down from the mountain and mingle with Cainites, thereby prompting the flood which God sent over them. The text adds²⁹ that it was out of this forbidden union that the giants were born, and mentions that "previous commentators" erred when they stated that the angels had fallen from heaven and united with women. For, the author observed, demons have no sex; thus there are no male or female demons.³⁰ Moreover, if they could have united with women, not a single

n. 14. The same view is held by Bamberger, *Fallen Angels*, 150.

²³*Seth*, 77. On this problem, see R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (Cambridge: University Press, 1976), pt. II. Cf. my review of the book in *RB* 83 (1976), 442–444.

²⁴*Seth*, 79.

²⁵*Demonstrationes*, 13.5 and 18.9 (PS 1.1, 549 and 837).

²⁶See for instance *In Gen.* 6:3 and 5 (CSCO 152; Script. Syr. 71, pp. 56–57). Other references in Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 221 and Klijn, *Seth*, 74, n. 132.

²⁷This work, traditionally ascribed to Mar Ephrem, was probably not redacted before the 5th or 6th century, but it embodies very early traditions. Our passage is found on pp. 58–72 in Bezold's edition (German trans. 14–17).

²⁸In one instance Lamech is mentioned in the same context.

²⁹78 Bezold; trans. 18.

³⁰For a 5th-century author calling the "Sons of God" demons, see a letter of Cyril of Alexandria, quoted by Wickham ("Genesis VI 2 in Early Christian Literature," 135).

virgin would have remained in the whole human race! When the flood came, the sinful Sethites unsuccessfully tried to climb up the holy mountain again to beg Noah to let them into the ark—but in vain. In the words of David (Ps 82:6–7), those who had once been called Sons of God perished on account of their sin.³¹

Both Alexander and Klijn reject the possibility of a Jewish origin for this exegetical trend because only later rabbinic texts made mention of it. But any argument based upon the lateness of rabbinic sources should be made very cautiously, since very early traditions were often transmitted among the Jews orally, over a long period of time, before they were committed to writing. Yet the crux of the matter lies elsewhere: Is it indeed true that there is no record before the time of Africanus of an identification of the Sons of God with the sinful Sethites among the Jews?

Alexander seeks to show that at an early date the identity of the Sons of God and of their sons (the Nephilim) was already felt to be problematic in Judaism. The Targumim, for instance, translate *benei elohim* as “the sons of the nobles” (בְּנֵי רַבְרֵיָא) in Onqelos and Pseudo-Jonathan) or as “the sons of the judges” (בְּנֵי דִינָא, in Neofiti).³² For Alexander, the first datable rejection of the identification of the Sons of God with the Fallen Angels appeared in the mouth of R. Simeon b. Yohai, who flourished in Palestine in the mid-2nd century C.E.: “R. Simeon b. Yohai called them [the *benei elohim*] the sons of the nobles; R. Simeon b. Yohai cursed all who called them sons of God.”³³

³¹196 Bezold; trans. 23. The same story is found in the *Chronicle* of Pseudo-Dionysius (10 Chabot; trans. 7). For later Syriac works (mainly commentaries on the scriptures) that accept the same exegesis, as well as for parallel passages in the Byzantine historiographers (who ultimately draw upon Africanus), see Dexinger's and Klijn's monographs cited *supra*. Another important source is the *Palaea Historica*, which describes how the sons of Seth, seeing that the daughters of Cain were beautiful, married them and learned through them to abandon God (196 Vasiliev; cf. 108, n. 116 *supra*). The Greek authors were able to find another scriptural justification for the “new” exegesis. If the Sethites were called “Sons of God,” it followed that Seth, their father, was called God. (This idea does not appear in the *Cave of Treasures*, *contra* Klijn, *Seth*, 40, n. 44.) And indeed, they could read LXX Gen 4:26b in this light: οὗτος ἠλπίσεν ἐπικαλεῖσθαι τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ. Taking the middle form for a passive and making Seth, rather than Enosh, its subject, they could understand that Seth “hoped to be called by the name of the Lord.” See, for instance, Theodoret, *Quaest. in Gen.* 47 (PG 80, 147 C). Confusing names, Cassian (4th century) said that the quest for God began with Enoch, one of the “Sons of God” (*Conferences* VII, 21–22 on Gen 6:2, cited by L. Cirillo, “Les vrais Pharisiens,” *RHR* 191 [1977], 124). Once Seth was considered to have been called God, justifications were sought. Anastasius Sinaita referred to the fact that he was in the image of Adam, i.e., ultimately in the image of God (cited by Grünbaum, *Beiträge*, 247), while Cedrenus referred to the brilliance of his face (16 Bekker). In any case, it should be noted that applying the name “God” to Seth must follow the identification of his offspring with the Sons of God and not vice versa (*contra* Klijn, *Seth*, 40).

³²See references in “The Targumim and Early Exegesis of ‘Sons of God,’” 60. In other verses in the Bible, *elohim* was understood as meaning “judges.” On the ambiguity of this word, see Jerome's commentary on Gen 6:2, *Quaest. Hebr. in Gen.* CChr 72, 9.

³³*Gen. Rab.* 26:5,2 (247 Theodor). This passage is important because of Simeon b. Yohai's links with angelological tradition. See Alexander, “The Targumim and Early Exegesis of ‘Sons of God,’” 61 and n. 6.

Alexander also cites contemporaneous evidence from Justin Martyr's *Dialogue* (79.1), where Trypho (the Rabbi) criticizes Justin for thinking that angels could have defiled the women (cf. *1 Apology* 5.2) in these terms:³⁴

The words of God are indeed holy, but your interpretations are contrived, as is evident from those which you have given—nay more, they are blasphemous, for you affirm that angels have sinned and rebelled against God.

What Alexander has shown is that from the 2nd century on, the "angel" interpretation was more and more strongly rejected by Palestinian Rabbis, who were "engaged in a polemic against angelology."³⁵ That interpretation clearly referred to the angelology developed in *1 Enoch* 6ff. Indeed, *Tg.Ps.-J.* still renders "the Nephilim" as "Shemhazai and Azael, those who fell from heaven" (although the "sons of God" had already become for him "sons of the nobles"!). Alexander thinks that the new exegesis "originated with the rabbis shortly after the Second Jewish War," as a reaction against those Tannaim who taught and transmitted "esoteric, Gnostic doctrine," of which the "glorification" of angels was only a part.³⁶

But a passage from Philo shows that this trend existed as early as the 1st century. We have already seen that Philo was the bearer of Hebrew traditions which he did not always completely assimilate, or to which he gave a new meaning. Concerning the birth of the giants and their fathers' identity he said rather confusedly:

But sometimes he calls the angels "sons of God" because they are made incorporeal through no mortal man but are spirits without body. But rather does the exhorter, Moses, give to good and excellent men the name of "sons of God," while wicked and evil men (he calls) "bodies."³⁷

Philo's hesitation is strikingly similar to that of Africanus. It shows that already in 1st century Judaism there existed, side by side, at least two conflicting interpretations of the Sons of God. While some understood this term as referring to angels, others rejected such an interpretation and took 'Sons of God' to be an epithet for certain righteous men, as opposed

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 62.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 68.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 71, 69. On the use of "Gnosticism" in reference to early esoteric trends in Judaism, see Flusser, "Scholem's Recent Book on Merkabah Literature," 64–65.

³⁷ "Why were the giants born from angels and women?" (*Quaest. in Gen.* 1.92; Suppl. I, 60–61 LCL). On the basis of *Quaest. in Gen.* 2.79 (170 LCL), which refers to σπέρμα ἑτέρον, Klijn (*Seth*, 26–27) argues that Philo was "the first Jewish author to take as his point of departure the idea that Seth was 'another seed.'" These words are explained as referring to another "race," namely, the race which began with Seth and led up to Abraham and Moses.

to wicked men. While all the Jewish texts analyzed by Alexander rejected the angelological interpretation of the biblical verses, none of them explicitly identified the Sons of God with Sethites.

However, another source does seem to imply such an identification. In *Ant.* 1. 69–71, Josephus described the pure life of the offspring of Seth in their country, asserting that one of the two steles which they had erected was still visible in the land of Seiris (i.e., in the same country). He added:

For seven generations these people [the progeny of Seth] continued to believe in God as Lord of the universe and in everything to take virtue for their guide; then, in course of time, they abandoned the customs of their fathers for a life of depravity. They no longer rendered to God His due honors, nor took account of justice towards men, but displayed by their actions a zeal for vice twofold greater than they had formerly shown for virtue, and thereby drew upon themselves the enmity of God. For (γάρ) many angels of God now consorted with women and begot sons who were overbearing and disdainful of every virtue. . . .³⁸

Then Noah, having in vain urged the Sethites to amend their ways, left the country (i.e., the land of Seiris) with his family. In Josephus's text the γάρ explicitly links the paraphrasis of Gen 6:1–4 with the preceding sentences. It appears quite clearly, therefore, that the "life of depravity" of the Sethites was explained by the union with the women. It follows that the only way to make sense of Josephus's statement is to assume that he identified the "angels of God"³⁹ with the evil Sethites of the seventh generation, and that by "women" he implied *Cainite* women, even though he used the term ἄγγελοι, which stems from the other exegetical tradition.⁴⁰ Moreover, it was because of the sinful ways of the Sethites, not the angels that Noah, the pure Sethite, left his country. So when the Gnostics described Noah as wicked in contrast to the "Sethians," they simply inverted the tradition preserved by Josephus.

Since the identification of the Sons of God with the sons of Seth was known already in the 1st century C.E., it must be Jewish, not Christian in origin; moreover, it probably did not stem from a reaction to Gnosticism, but resulted from internal Jewish theological developments.

We may attempt to trace these developments back, bearing in mind that any reconstruction must remain hypothetical. In a symbolic description of human history, which is usually referred to as "the second dream-vision" of Enoch (*1 Enoch* 85–90), the angels who fell from heaven are depicted

³⁸ *Ant.* 1. 72–74; quoted according to Thackeray's translation (IV, 33–35 LCL).

³⁹ οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ is a rendering of *benei elohim* intermediate between the more thoroughly exegetical οἱ ἄγγελοι and the more literal οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ.

⁴⁰ Another reading would be that the Sethite women united with the angels. This is doubtful, however, since Josephus seems to put the guilt on the "angels," not on the women.

as stars and human beings as cattle. The stars covered only the cows of the black oxen (i.e., the daughters of Cain; 86:4). What happened to the white oxen (i.e., the Sethites), however, is not clearly stated. Three oxen (i.e., Ham, Shem, and Japheth) remained with "that white ox" (i.e., Noah; 89:1) and escaped the flood in the ark. In 89:10, Israel is depicted as a white ox in the midst of other animals, while in 90:37–38, a white ox was born who transformed all the other animals into white oxen, "and the first among them became a lamb." Klijn, who studied this text, concludes:

This means that the generation of Seth, the white bulls, as represented by Noah, was saved from the flood and that the people of god came from Seth. Finally the Messiah will be born, again a white bull. . . .⁴¹

This early text undoubtedly gives a Sethite version of *Heilsgeschichte*. But while it is clearly stated that the angels united with the Cainite women, there is no mention of the fate of the Sethite people, the "many" white oxen. The text does state, however, that Noah escaped with only his three sons, of which one alone (Shem) was a white ox (89:9). This text thus reflects an attempt to build a theology quite different from that expressed in *1 Enoch* 6–11, where the Fallen Angels sinned with all the women, without distinction. This attempt is similar to the description of the pure birth of Noah as it appears in *1 Enoch* 106 or *1QapGen*. The insistence upon the fact that Noah belonged to the offspring of Seth was indeed natural and consistent with the Genesis account. But there was a problem at the next stage of the fashioning of this "Sethite theology." According to the biblical text, only Noah and his family escaped the flood: all the rest of mankind perished. Thus there should have been some Sethites, and not only Cainites, among the victims. The simplest theodicy required that they, too, had been sinners together with the Cainites. We may thus presume that in some Jewish milieus (probably before the 1st century C.E.), a theology was developed according to which at the time of Jared and Enoch, most of the offspring of Seth, who had until then led a pure life, left their isolation and intermingled with the offspring of Cain.⁴² Noah alone preserved the "whiteness," the purity, of the seed of Seth at the time of the flood; his son Shem inherited and then transmitted this quality to later generations. It is this view which Josephus echoed when he described Noah's opposition to his own kinsmen, the Sethites.

⁴¹*Seth*, 22. Referring to this same passage, Widengren writes ("Iran and Israel in Parthian Times," 116), "By means of this symbolism Adam-Seth (and his descendants)-Messiah are linked up together. . . . This reminds us of the Adam-Seth-Messiah (Christ)-speculation in early Gnosticism. This Gnosticism of Jewish origin, invokes Seth as a source of revelation." See also *Gen. Rab.* 23.4 on Gen 4:25, which identifies "another seed" as the seed of the Messiah.

⁴²Since the women who had united with the angels were in some milieus considered guilty of lustful conduct (e.g., *T. Reub.* 5:7), they could easily become identified as Cainites.

Such traditions about the evil deeds of the Sethites were probably fostered by Num 24:17–18, according to which the sons of Seth were related to the wicked Moabites and Edomites (as implied in the “Seir” tradition reported by Josephus). The sons of Seth, therefore, came to be considered responsible for the moral depravity which led to the flood.

The flood in Noah’s time and the conflagration in Lot’s generation were sometimes considered to be parallel events. Since the ancestors of the wicked sons of Seth had erected the two steles in foreknowledge of these two events, it is plausible that legends developed among the Jews which related the sons of Seth not only to the flood, but also to Sodom and Gomorrah. While this suggestion cannot be proved, since no text has left us a clear testimony, it does provide a lead towards the understanding of an important aspect of Gnostic self-description: their identification with the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.⁴³ The Gnostics did not create the mythologoumenon of Noah’s opposition to the Sethites, they merely inverted it. Similarly, it is entirely possible that their identification of the Sodomites as sons of Seth was not original, but was the exact inversion of a Jewish tradition they had received. This would explain how the Gnostics could say:

Then the great Seth came and brought his seed. And it was sown in the aeons which had been brought forth, their number being the amount of Sodom. Some say that Sodom is the place of pasture of the great Seth, which is Gomorrah. But others (say) that the great Seth took his plant out of Gomorrah and planted it in the second place to which he gave the name Sodom.⁴⁴

In his reconstruction of Sethian theology,⁴⁵ Schenke dwells upon the fact that in *Gos. Eg.* there appears to be a difference between the original seed of Seth (in Sodom and Gomorrah) and the contemporary Sethians. The former, according to III, 56:4–22, were placed by the Great Seth “in the fourth aeon, in the third Phoster Daveithe.” For Schenke, this seed of Seth was “eine Art Ur-Sethianer, ein gnostisch gedachtes Helldengeschlecht der Vorzeit.”⁴⁶ The chasm detected by Schenke between the first sons of Seth and the contemporaneous Gnostics in some of the Gnostic texts and traditions seems to be significant. The following hypothesis, which integrates the evidence discussed so far, would account

⁴³Schenke (“Die jüdische Melchisedek-Gestalt als Thema der Gnosis,” 134) suggests that an identification of Salem and Sodom took place in “Sethian revolutionary exegesis.”

⁴⁴*Gos. Eg.* III, 60:9–18; see 56:9–13. Similarly, in *Paraph. Shem* 28:34–29:33, the Sodomites are “the members” of Shem. To them he revealed his universal doctrine, “They will rest with a pure conscience in the place of their repose, which is the unbegotten spirit”; Sodom would be burned unjustly. Marcion, too, referred to the Sodomites in his inversion of the biblical text: “Cain et eos qui similes sunt ei, et Sodomitas, et Aegyptios, et similes eis, et omnes omnino gentes, quae in omni permixione malignitatis ambulaverunt, salvatas esse a Domino . . .” (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.27.2; I, 218 Harvey).

⁴⁵“Das sethianische System,” 171–172.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 168.

as stars and human beings as cattle. The stars covered only the cows of the black oxen (i.e., the daughters of Cain; 86:4). What happened to the white oxen (i.e., the Sethites), however, is not clearly stated. Three oxen (i.e., Ham, Shem, and Japheth) remained with "that white ox" (i.e., Noah; 89:1) and escaped the flood in the ark. In 89:10, Israel is depicted as a white ox in the midst of other animals, while in 90:37–38, a white ox was born who transformed all the other animals into white oxen, "and the first among them became a lamb." Klijn, who studied this text, concludes:

This means that the generation of Seth, the white bulls, as represented by Noah, was saved from the flood and that the people of god came from Seth. Finally the Messiah will be born, again a white bull. . . .⁴¹

This early text undoubtedly gives a Sethite version of *Heilsgeschichte*. But while it is clearly stated that the angels united with the Cainite women, there is no mention of the fate of the Sethite people, the "many" white oxen. The text does state, however, that Noah escaped with only his three sons, of which one alone (Shem) was a white ox (89:9). This text thus reflects an attempt to build a theology quite different from that expressed in *1 Enoch* 6–11, where the Fallen Angels sinned with all the women, without distinction. This attempt is similar to the description of the pure birth of Noah as it appears in *1 Enoch* 106 or *1QapGen*. The insistence upon the fact that Noah belonged to the offspring of Seth was indeed natural and consistent with the Genesis account. But there was a problem at the next stage of the fashioning of this "Sethite theology." According to the biblical text, only Noah and his family escaped the flood: all the rest of mankind perished. Thus there should have been some Sethites, and not only Cainites, among the victims. The simplest theodicy required that they, too, had been sinners together with the Cainites. We may thus presume that in some Jewish milieus (probably before the 1st century C.E.), a theology was developed according to which at the time of Jared and Enoch, most of the offspring of Seth, who had until then led a pure life, left their isolation and intermingled with the offspring of Cain.⁴² Noah alone preserved the "whiteness," the purity, of the seed of Seth at the time of the flood; his son Shem inherited and then transmitted this quality to later generations. It is this view which Josephus echoed when he described Noah's opposition to his own kinsmen, the Sethites.

⁴¹*Seth*, 22. Referring to this same passage, Widengren writes ("Iran and Israel in Parthian Times," 116), "By means of this symbolism Adam-Seth (and his descendants)-Messiah are linked up together. . . . This reminds us of the Adam-Seth-Messiah (Christ)-speculation in early Gnosticism. This Gnosticism of Jewish origin, invokes Seth as a source of revelation." See also *Gen. Rab.* 23.4 on Gen 4:25, which identifies "another seed" as the seed of the Messiah.

⁴²Since the women who had united with the angels were in some milieus considered guilty of lustful conduct (e.g., *T. Reub.* 5:7), they could easily become identified as Cainites.

Such traditions about the evil deeds of the Sethites were probably fostered by Num 24:17–18, according to which the sons of Seth were related to the wicked Moabites and Edomites (as implied in the “Seir” tradition reported by Josephus). The sons of Seth, therefore, came to be considered responsible for the moral depravity which led to the flood.

The flood in Noah’s time and the conflagration in Lot’s generation were sometimes considered to be parallel events. Since the ancestors of the wicked sons of Seth had erected the two steles in foreknowledge of these two events, it is plausible that legends developed among the Jews which related the sons of Seth not only to the flood, but also to Sodom and Gomorrah. While this suggestion cannot be proved, since no text has left us a clear testimony, it does provide a lead towards the understanding of an important aspect of Gnostic self-description: their identification with the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.⁴³ The Gnostics did not create the mythologoumenon of Noah’s opposition to the Sethites, they merely inverted it. Similarly, it is entirely possible that their identification of the Sodomites as sons of Seth was not original, but was the exact inversion of a Jewish tradition they had received. This would explain how the Gnostics could say:

Then the great Seth came and brought his seed. And it was sown in the aeons which had been brought forth, their number being the amount of Sodom. Some say that Sodom is the place of pasture of the great Seth, which is Gomorrah. But others (say) that the great Seth took his plant out of Gomorrah and planted it in the second place to which he gave the name Sodom.⁴⁴

In his reconstruction of Sethian theology,⁴⁵ Schenke dwells upon the fact that in *Gos. Eg.* there appears to be a difference between the original seed of Seth (in Sodom and Gomorrah) and the contemporary Sethians. The former, according to III, 56:4–22, were placed by the Great Seth “in the fourth aeon, in the third Phoster Daveithe.” For Schenke, this seed of Seth was “eine Art Ur-Sethianer, ein gnostisch gedachtes Hergeschlecht der Vorzeit.”⁴⁶ The chasm detected by Schenke between the first sons of Seth and the contemporaneous Gnostics in some of the Gnostic texts and traditions seems to be significant. The following hypothesis, which integrates the evidence discussed so far, would account

⁴³Schenke (“Die jüdische Melchisedek-Gestalt als Thema der Gnosis,” 134) suggests that an identification of Salem and Sodom took place in “Sethian revolutionary exegesis.”

⁴⁴*Gos. Eg.* III, 60:9–18; see 56:9–13. Similarly, in *Paraph. Shem* 28:34–29:33, the Sodomites are “the members” of Shem. To them he revealed his universal doctrine, “They will rest with a pure conscience in the place of their repose, which is the unbegotten spirit”; Sodom would be burned unjustly. Marcion, too, referred to the Sodomites in his inversion of the biblical text: “Cain et eos qui similes sunt ei, et Sodomitas, et Aegyptios, et similes eis, et omnes omnino gentes, quae in omni permixione malignitatis ambulaverunt, salvatas esse a Domino . . .” (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I.27.2; I, 218 Harvey).

⁴⁵“Das sethianische System,” 171–172.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 168.

for this: The first Gnostics knew the “angelological” exegesis of the Sons of God in Genesis 6 and considered the sin of the wicked angels (in its different versions) to be the source of evil. Yet these Gnostics, who considered themselves to be the pure offspring of Seth, also knew the legends built around the wicked Sethites of early times. Apparently in reaction to these trends in Jewish exegesis, they developed a theology and a *Heilsgeschichte* that was the systematic inverse of the salvation-history of Israel. This inversion occurred only gradually; the vilification of Noah and vindication of Sodom probably do not belong to the earliest strata of Gnosticism.

Part III

ECHOES AND REPERCUSSIONS

In the first two parts of this work, I have sought to analyze two central and complementary Gnostic myths. Part I focused on the Fallen Angels, who became wicked and lustful archons, and traced the evolution of various exegetical traditions (and their combinations) through which the Gnostics explained the overwhelming presence of evil in the world. According to the mythological trends examined here, however, the Gnostics considered themselves to be the heirs of the untainted pure seed transmitted by Seth to his offspring. Through the eschatological advent of their father/savior and the concomitant destruction of the forces of evil, the sons of Seth would ultimately be victorious; the main steps of this Gnostic salvation-history were studied in Part II. The identification and analysis of these two major myths and their components provide criteria for delimiting the Gnostic phenomenon and for checking possible Gnostic influences on other religious currents of Late Antiquity. Part III, therefore, will be an attempted analysis of those Hermetic and Manichaean texts that exhibit close parallels to the aspects of Gnostic mythology dealt with in Parts I and II.

CHAPTER SEVEN

GNOSTIC ELEMENTS IN HERMETIC TRADITIONS

Islamic historiographers relate that the Sabaeans of Harran identified Enoch with Hermes, and Seth with Agathodemon, Hermes's teacher: "These are the ancient Sabians who believe in Adimūn and Hermes, who are Seth and Idris."¹ According to al-Bīrūnī, however, the real Sabaeans, who were *not* the Harranians, "pretend to be the offspring of Enoch, the son of Seth."² Yet the links between Seth, Enoch, and Hermes did not originate in 8th- or 9th-century Harran; they can be detected much earlier, in the original Hermetic literature of Egypt.

Syncellus, quoting the ancient historian Manetho the Sebennyte, mentioned steles inscribed (in hieroglyphs) by Thoth, "the first Hermes." These steles, of unspecified number, were to be found in Egypt in the "Seriadic land" (ἐν τῇ γῇ Σηριαδικῇ). Syncellus added that after the flood, these inscriptions were translated into Greek and recorded in books by Agathodemon, "the son of the second Hermes."³ For the tradition reported by Syncellus, therefore, the relationship between Agathodemon and Hermes was different from the one affirmed by the Islamic historiographers. Agathodemon came after Hermes (whether "the first" or "the second") and *after the flood*. He preserved the steles and revealed their contents—just as Cainan did in the "biblical" versions of the myth—but did not actually write them. For the Byzantine chroniclers, Hermes was indeed connected with Seth; Tzetzes related that Hermes Trismegistus had discovered the Egyptian alphabet but that according to

¹Shahrastānī, *Kitāb al-Milāl wal-Niḥāl*, II (ed. Th. Haarbrucker; London, 1842), 202, 241; see Haarbrucker's translation, *Schahrastani, Religionspartheien und Philosophen-Schulen*, II (Halle, 1850), 61. Mas'ūdī, *Les Prairies d'Or*, 1.73; Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography* (ed. E. A. Wallis Budge; Paris, 1898), 5. On these texts, see L. Massignon's appendix on Hermetic Arabic Texts *apud* Festugière, *Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, I, 390; Massignon also cites the 12th century theosophist Suhrawardī of Aleppo, *ibid.*, 334, n. 6. Cf. Milik, *Enoch*, 117–118. In some texts, the figure of Zaratas is also related to Seth, Hermes, and Agathodemon; R. Eisler, *Weltmantel und Himmelszelt*, II (Munich: Beck, 1910), 574. On Islamic conceptions of antediluvian history, see E. Kohlberg, "Some Shī'ī Views of the Antediluvian World," *Studia Islamica* 52 (1980), 41–66.

²*Chronology* 8 (188 Sachau; see also chap. 18, p. 314). See also the text analyzed by G. Monnot, "Sabéens et idôlatres selon 'Abd al-Jabbar," *Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Etudes Orientales* 12 (1974), 30.

³*Chronography* (72–73 Dindorf). See Reitzenstein, *Poimandres*, 139, and Festugière, *Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, I, 74–76. Dr. W. Adler kindly calls my attention to the fact that the letter ascribed to Manetho by Syncellus is clearly pseudepigraphic; there is much evidence to suggest that the work is either Jewish or Christian.

the Hebrews, it was Seth who had discovered the letters.⁴

The relationship between Seth and Hermes, however, goes beyond the identification of their names or the similarity of certain themes. Scholars have tried to locate the Egyptian "Seriadic Land" mentioned by Syncellus's source. But once it is clear that Josephus's Seiris stemmed from a Jewish Palestinian tradition, it follows that the land of Hermes's steles was simply the translation into an Egyptian context of the Sethites' land: Seth became Hermes and Seir(is), Seirias. Here again, we must remember that traces of the Seth saga do not necessarily imply traces of "Sethian" Gnosticism. Yet the question of the possible relationships between aspects of Gnostic mythology and some Hermetic conceptions is a legitimate one. The closeness of what can be called the "pessimistic," or dualistic, trend in the Hermetic Corpus to Gnosticism is quite obvious, and has often been emphasized. This question, moreover, has become directly relevant to current research since the Nag Hammadi discovery; at least three of the texts found in what was originally described as a "Sethian library" are clearly Hermetic works (CG VI,6, 7, and 8).

Jean Doresse was the first to point out some of the literary exchanges between "Sethian" Gnosticism and Hermetism.⁵ He noted, for instance, that the way in which elements from Genesis were used in Hermetic myths was very similar to their reinterpretation in Gnostic mythology.⁶ Doresse's pioneer work, however, was done at a time when most Nag Hammadi texts—including the Hermetic works—were still unpublished. Doresse could thus regard *Steles Seth*, although nominally "Sethian," as Hermetic in content and consider the work to be "an example of the transition" between the two movements.⁷ The Hermetic texts from Nag Hammadi have subsequently been carefully edited, and their place within the codices of the library has been analyzed in a series of studies.⁸ But certain

⁴*Chiliades*, 5 (ed. T. Kissling; Leipzig, 1826), 187. For a different early identification of the two figures discovering, then rediscovering and transmitting the science before and after the flood, see the fragments of Pseudo-Eupolemus (in Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* IX.17:

And Abraham lived with the Egyptian priests in Hieropolis, teaching them many things. And he introduced astrology and other sciences to them, saying that the Babylonians and he himself discovered them, but he traced the discovery to Enoch. And he [Enoch] was the first to discover astrology, not the Egyptians. . . . The Greeks say that Atlas discovered astrology, Atlas being the same as Enoch.

I quote the translation of B. Z. Wachholder, *Eupolemus: A Study of Judaeo-Greek Literature* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1974), 313–314.

⁵"Hermès et la Gnose: A propos de l'Asclépius copte," *NovT* 1 (1956), 54–69. In *Secret Books*, 278, Doresse speaks about the conjunction between Hermetic and Gnostic writings as a "general practice around the fourth century." One must take exception to Doresse's notion of "Hermetism" as different from, and comparable to, Gnosticism.

⁶See B. Pearson, "Jewish Elements in *Corpus Hermeticum* I (*Poimandres*)," in van den Broek and Vermaseren, eds., *Studies in Gnosticism*, 336–348.

⁷"Hermès et la Gnose," 68.

⁸For a clear and complete review of the *status quaestionis* on the relationships between Hermetic and Gnostic texts, with a complete bibliography, see J.-P. Mahé, *Hermès en Haute-*

links between Hermetic and Gnostic myths have hitherto not been noticed. I shall focus upon the *Commentary on the Letter Omega*, attributed to the 4th-century Alexandrian alchemist Zosimus,⁹ a work which Reitzenstein has already compared to Naassene doctrine as described in Hippolytus's *Elenchos*.¹⁰

In a passage of this book Zosimus referred to a certain Nicotheus, "the hidden one."¹¹ Nicotheus also appeared in *Setheus* and was mentioned by Porphyry as one of the bearers of apocalypses read by Plotinus's Gnostic opponents.¹² Since both *Setheus* and Plotinus's opponents apparently belonged to a strongly Neoplatonized trend of non-Valentinian Gnosticism, the appearance of Nicotheus (as bearer of secret knowledge) in Zosimus suggests the possibility of Gnostic influence on some Hermetic trends.

In another of his works, Book IX of the *Imouth*, dedicated to his sister Theosebeia, Zosimus wrote:¹³

The holy scriptures, that is, the Bible, say, O woman, that there is a race of demons which becomes involved with women. And Hermes mentioned this in his *Physica*, and almost every treatise, either exoteric or esoteric, made mention of this.¹⁴ Thus, the ancient and divine scriptures said this, that certain angels lusted after women, and having descended, taught them all the works of nature. Having stumbled on

Egypte, I (BCNH, textes, 3; Québec: Univ. Laval, 1978), 1–28.

⁹Born in Panopolis, Egypt, around the end of the 3rd century, Zosimus flourished in Alexandria. See W. Gundel, *RAC*, I, 246–247, 252–253, s.v. Alchemie. The extant works of Zosimus were edited by Berthelot and Ruelle, *Collection des anciens alchimistes grecs*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1887–1888). The *Commentary on the Letter Omega* was also edited and commented on by Scott (W. Scott and A. S. Fergusson, *Hermetica*, IV: *Testimonia* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1936], 104–110). Festugière has offered both an edition and a commentary of this text in his *Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, I, 263–273. The most recent edition and translation of the work is that of H. M. Jackson, *Zosimus of Panopolis: On the Letter Omega* (SBLTT 14; Missoula: Scholars, 1978). See also J. Ruska, *Tabula Smaragdina: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der hermetischen Literatur* (Heidelberger Akten der von-Portheim-Stiftung 16; Arbeiten aus dem Institut für Geschichte der Naturwissenschaft IV; Heidelberg: Winter, 1926), 23–32.

¹⁰*Poimandres*, 104.

¹¹<ὁ> κεκρυμμένος (104 Scott; cf. ὁ ἀνεύρετος <γεγόμενος>, 107).

¹²*Life of Plotinus*, 16. See C. Baynes, *A Coptic Gnostic Treatise*, 84, 85, n. 7. Scott points out that Marsanes, mentioned in close contact with Nicotheus in *Setheus* is also mentioned by Epiphanius (under the name Marsianos) in his description of the Archontics (*Pan.* 40.7), who are closely related to the Sethians (*Hermetica*, IV, 124). *Marsanes* is the title of CG X, I. Nicotheus is also mentioned as a prophet (together with Shem, Sem [sic] and Enoch) in a Middle Persian Manichaean fragment (M.299a). See W. Henning, "Ein manichäisches Henochbuch," *SPAW* (1934), 28 (= *Selected Papers* I, 342).

¹³The passage is preserved in Syncellus, *Chronography* (20 Dindorf).

¹⁴ἐμνημόνευσε δὲ καὶ Ἑρμῆς ἐν τοῖς φυσικοῖς, καὶ σχεδὸν ἅπας λόγος φανερός καὶ ἀπόκρυφος τοῦτο ἐμνημόνευσε. Adler translates: "And Hermes mentioned this in his discussions on nature, and virtually every treatise, whether available or apocryphal, made mention of this." Festugière's translation is less accurate: "Hermès en fait mention dans ses *Physika* (au vrai presque tout l'ouvrage, ouvertement ou en secret, en fait mention)" (*Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, I, 256).

account of these women, he says, they remained outside of heaven, so that they taught mankind everything wicked and nothing benefitting the soul. The same scriptures say that from them the giants were born.

Festugière quotes this text in his study and concludes that Zosimus knew both *I Enoch*, "since one does not see to which other writing 'the holy scriptures' could refer," and a Hermetic work where the legend of the angels and the women was mentioned; moreover, the author of this Hermetic work also knew *I Enoch*, and since a short work addressed by Isis to her son Horus is the only Hermetic writing where the legend appears, it probably belonged to the *Physica*.¹⁵ These conclusions, however, are somewhat misleading, since according to the correct reading of the text, Zosimus knew *many* works which mentioned the myth of the Fallen Angels and their union with the women. Nor does the short Hermetic treatise *To Horus*, also translated by Festugière,¹⁶ quite tell the story of *I Enoch* 6–8. In this work, Isis revealed to her son that "one of the angels who dwell in the first heaven, when he saw me from above, desired to unite with me in a union of love." Isis rejected his demands, asking him to reveal to her "the preparation of gold and silver." Amnael, a higher angel, was then sent to Isis; she again refused to give herself to the angel and asked him to reveal the sign which he bore on his head.¹⁷ Amnael finally did so and revealed the mysteries to Isis, who transmitted them to her son Horus. (The reader's curiosity as to whether Isis then accepted Amnael's advances or escaped remains unsatisfied.)

No comparable story is told in *I Enoch* or, for that matter, in any of the extant apocryphal works, where the name Amnael does not occur. But we have noted (chap. II) that there is another Jewish text which told a very similar myth. In the *Midrash of Shemhazai and Azael*, the pure woman Esterah escaped the lust of the angel Shemhazai by having him reveal to her the Tetragrammaton; when she pronounced it, she escaped to heaven and became a star. It thus seems that the story about Isis and Amnael is not original; the fact that the angel's name is Hebraic also suggests a Jewish (or pseudo-Jewish, i.e., Gnostic) source for the myth.¹⁸ *Shemhazai and Azael* is valuable evidence for the existence of this myth in Jewish contexts and I shall return to it in chapter VIII. However, since it is preserved only in the medieval *Chronicles of Jerahmeel* and dependent texts, it is impossible to claim with certainty that it represents a later version of the early model used by the Hermetic author. What is certain is that besides *I Enoch*, Hermetic authors knew other sources that related myths about the women and the angels. Whether these sources were

¹⁵ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 256–260.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 257, n. 2, referring to cultic practices of the Isiac priests. I would add the following suggestion: In the postulated Jewish version of the story, the sign could refer to the inscription of the Tetragrammaton which Aharon bore on his forehead (Lev 28:36–38).

¹⁸ Many such examples of angelic *nomina barbara* occur in the Greek Magical Papyri.

Jewish or already gnosticized versions of the early myth is of course, less clear. In any case, there is a similar transformation of the myth in Gnostic mythology: the pure woman (the First Eve, Norea) escaped from the clutches of the lustful archons.

In the *Commentary on the Letter Omega 5*, Zosimus described the elect ones as follows:

But Hermes and Zoroaster have said that the race of the philosophers [i.e., alchemists] is above Fate . . . for they dominate pleasures . . . for they spend all their life in immateriality.¹⁹

All these characterizations were very widespread in Late Antiquity and do not in themselves indicate any specific original milieu. Later on, however, the text relates *how* these “philosophers” escaped materiality, with Zosimus quoting traditions “found only with the Hebrews and in the secret books of Hermes.”²⁰ According to Zosimus (or rather, his sources), the spiritual men were similar to “the man who is inside Adam [i.e.,] the spiritual man.” Following a rather common notion, Zosimus attributed both an exoteric and an esoteric name to this Spiritual Adam.²¹ His common name was Phōs (φῶς), while his proper name (κύριον ὄνομα) remained secret—only Nicotheus knew it.²² When Phōs was in paradise, the archons(?) convinced him to wear Adam’s body, fabricated by them from the four elements, and thereby enslaved him; they then sent him another “fetter” in the person of Eve. But, continued Zosimus, the Son of God

from now on until the end of the world, in secret and openly, comes to those who are his [i.e., the “philosophers”] and communicates with them, recommending to them, in secret and through their intellect, to separate themselves from their Adam, who blinds them and is jealous of the spiritual and luminous man.²³

¹⁹Scott, 105; trans. 266 Festugière; 22–23 Jackson.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 18 (109 Scott; trans. 271 Festugière; 36–37 Jackson). In this pagan context, “Hebrews” does not necessarily mean “Jews”; see Festugière, 271, n. 10: “Les Hébreux, c’est-à-dire d’une part les exégèses allégoriques du récit de la Genèse (Adam), d’autre part des écrits gnostiques pseudo-chrétiens (Nicothéos).” For the respect devoted to “Hebrew wisdom” in Hermetism, see the beginning of *Sophē*, a book which may have been written by Zosimus: “The true book of Sophē the Egyptian and of the Hebrews’ God, Lord of the Hosts, Sabaōth—since there are two sciences and two wisdoms, that of the Egyptians and that of the Hebrews.” Text and trans. in Festugière, *ibid.*, 261 and n. 2; cf. 261, n. 1.

²¹E.g., *Gos. Phil.* 56:4–5: “‘Jesus’ is a hidden name; ‘Christ’ is a revealed name.” Cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I.15.2 (I, 145–146 Harvey) on Markos. On this and related passages in *Gos. Phil.* see my “Form(s) of God: Some Notes on Metatron and Christ,” *HTR* 76 (1983), 269–288.

²²*Commentary on Omega*, 13; 107 Scott; trans. 269–270 Festugière; 32–33 Jackson. The play on φῶς (light) and φῶς (man) is common in Antiquity; see Reitzenstein, *Die Vorgeschichte der christlichen Taufe* (Leipzig–Berlin: Teubner, 1929), 131. On the “man of light” in Gnosticism, see Puech, *En quête de la gnose*, II, 182–200. See also his note in the *editio princeps* of the *Jung Codex, Epistula Jacobi Apocrypha*, 104. On the “proper name,” see *Gos. Truth* 40:14.

The text then mentions the coming of "the demon who mimics" (ὁ ἀντίμιμος δαίμων),²⁴

who is jealous of them and who wants, *as previously*, to lead them astray (καὶ θέλων ὡς τὸ πρῶτον πλανῆσαι), pretending to be Son of God, although he is hideous (ἄμορφος) in his soul and in his body. But they, having become wiser since they received in them him who truly is Son of God, abandon to him their own Adam, in order for him to kill it, while they save their luminous spirits (and escape) to their own country, where they already were before the world.²⁵

This peculiar myth deserves some comment. The theme of the escape from the material world and from the body is common to many, if not most, religious trends of Late Antiquity. This theme, therefore, is of no help in the search for the myth's origin. Nowhere else in Hermetic context, however, are we told about this "demon who mimics."²⁶ Commentators have recognized a "Gnostic" (meaning non-Hermetic) origin of the myth, but hitherto this origin has not been specified more precisely. The "demon who mimics" claimed to be the Son of God. Since a gloss in the text identifies the "true" Son of God as Jesus Christ, Scott takes the *antimimos daimōn* to be "the Antichrist of Christian eschatology."²⁷ However, since this gloss is probably a later interpolation, as both Festugière²⁸ and Reitzenstein surmise, Scott's identification has no real basis.

Although such an ἀντίμιμος δαίμων is not known elsewhere, the Coptic Gnostic texts do mention an ἀντίμιμον πνεῦμα.²⁹ In his study of the term, Böhlig points out that it often refers to Satan,³⁰ and that the *antimimon pneuma* exemplifies the Gnostic transformation of earlier material.³¹ Similarly, we should note that in Gnostic contexts, the epithet ἄμορφος is applied to Sophia's offspring, i.e., Yaldabaoth (*Ap. John* 10:1–7). Both

²³*Commentary on Omega*, 13 (107–108 Scott; trans. 270–271 Festugière; 32–33 Jackson).

²⁴Festugière translates: "le démon faux-imitateur." Cf. Jackson (53, n. 67), who relates this notion to the Jewish "evil inclination" (יצר הרע).

²⁵*Commentary on Omega*, 14 (108–109 Scott; trans. 271 Festugière; 34–35 Jackson).

²⁶Festugière comments (271, n. 3): "L'expression, à ma connaissance, ne revient pas ailleurs."

²⁷*Hermetica* IV, 130. On the Antichrist and Satan, see N. A. Dahl, "Der Erstgeborene Satans und der Vater des Teufels (Polyk. 7:1 und Joh. 8:44)," in *Apophoreta: Festschrift für Ernst Haenchen* (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1964), 70–84. Dahl's study contains much material relevant to our general topic. His interpretation of the *midrashim* and the exegetical techniques related to Satan's son is similar to my analysis in chap. 1; his understanding of the possible origins of Cainism, however, is different from mine.

²⁸*Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, I, 270, n. 10. In Late Antiquity, "Son of God" often appeared in non-Christian contexts. See (despite his main argument) the material collected by M. Hengel, *The Son of God: The Origin of Christology and the History of Jewish-Hellenistic Religion* (Eng. trans.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976).

²⁹Mainly in *Ap. John* and *Pistis Sophia*; see p. 37, n. 8 *supra*.

³⁰"Zum Antimimon Pneuma," 163. See also G. Verbeke, *L'évolution de la doctrine du Pneuma* (Paris: de Brouwer, 1945), 304–305, and Bousset, "Zum Dämonologie der späteren Antike," *ARW* 18 (1913), 148ff.

³¹"Zum Antimimon Pneuma," 174.

the demon and the spirit who "mimic" are probably the same figure: Yaldabaoth-Sakla, the leader of the archons. Furthermore, the idea of imitation is also associated with the King of Darkness and with Sakla in Manichaean contexts.³² This identification of the *antimimos daimōn* with the leader of the Gnostic archons is buttressed by the description of his deeds: he tried to seize the pure men, but could catch only their bodies, which "he kills." This is very similar to the description of the archons' foiled assault on the heavenly Eve, who left them "her shadowy reflection resembling herself," which they defiled (*Hyp. Arch.* 89:17–30). If so, the "previous" attempt of the *antimimos daimōn* must refer not to Satan's seduction of Eve (so Scott and Festugière), but to the *foiled attempt* of the archons' leader to seduce the pure Eve.

It seems that Zosimus's text provides a clue to the meaning of *antimimon* in Gnostic contexts. The term may imply the idea of rivalry³³ or, more simply, of opposition; in that sense man, a microcosm, can be called ἀντίμιμος τῆς οὐρανίου τάξεως.³⁴ Our passage, however, is much more specific: the demon "mimics" *because he claims to be the Son of God*. Since we have seen that myths about the Sons of God and the women were accorded considerable importance in Hermetic (as well as in Gnostic) traditions, I suggest that Zosimus's text reflects a transformation of the leader of the Sons of God into *the false Son of God par excellence*. It seems to me that this hypothesis is highly plausible once the Gnostic origin of the myth preserved by Zosimus is recognized; it also helps considerably in understanding the text.

Nonetheless, one question remains unresolved: Through which channels did the Gnostic myth (and Jewish traditions?) reach Hermetic milieus? It does seem probable that the syncretism evidenced by the Nag Hammadi library is not a phenomenon of the 4th century (the dating of the library) but one that goes back at least to the 3rd century; more than this cannot be claimed.

³²"Quand le démon de la convoitise eut vu ces choses, dans son coeur empoisonné il conçut de nouveau un méchant projet; il ordonna donc à Lou-Yi et à Ye-lo-yang d'imiter Tsing-fong (Vent pur) et Chan-mou (Mère excellente). Dans ce (macrocosme), par transformation ils constituèrent le corps de l'homme et y emprisonnèrent les natures lumineuses *afin d'imiter le grand monde*"; *Traité Chavannes-Pelliot*, *JA* 18 (1911), 523–526. According to the table of equivalences drawn up by the editors of the Chinese text, the demon of coveting is the King of Darkness, Lou-Yi is Sakla, and Ye-lo-yang is Nabroel (525, nn. 1, 2).

³³Lampe, *Patristic Lexicon*, 155b.

³⁴Böhlig, "Zum Antimimon Pneuma," 163.

CHAPTER EIGHT

GNOSTIC MYTHS IN MANICHAEAN GARB

At various points, the echo of some of the Gnostic myths—especially the one called “the seduction of the archons”—has been heard in Manichaean texts and traditions. The following pages will seek to describe more closely the Manichaean avatars of the mythical figures encountered in the Jewish and Gnostic traditions: Seth, Norea, Sakla and the archons, the abortions, and the giants.

The Figure of Seth

This investigation begins with an analysis of the evidence on the figure and role of Seth in the “religion of light.” Soon after the Nag Hammadi discovery, H.-C. Puech had pointed out some interesting features of the Manichaean Seth;¹ yet, his insightful remarks do not seem to have been pursued further. Indeed, the lack of any reference to the Manichaean mythic-dogmatic and hymnic texts in which Seth played a significant role was one of the main shortcomings of the “Sethian Seminar” at the Yale International Conference.²

M. Tardieu has drawn attention to the probable existence of relationships between the Gnostic Seth and the Manichaean Sethel,³ and in particular to the literary genre of prayer or incantation (ϣληλ; ἐπαοιδαί) represented by *Steles Seth* and mentioned in the title of *Kephalaion X*: “On the significance of the fourteen [great] Aeons about which Sethel has spoken in his prayer.”⁴ This title, states Tardieu, could well be a trace of a Sethian “penetration” into Egyptian Manichaeism. It could also be, he adds, the sign of a “volonté de récupération” by Manichaean missionaries among the Gnostic circles in the Nile valley.⁵ Both suggestions are improbable. The fact that the two texts to which Tardieu refers were found in Egypt in a Coptic translation by no means implies that they were originally written in Egypt. In fact, there is every reason to believe that the *Kephalaia* were written in Mani’s inner circle of disciples. To be sure,

¹“Nouveaux écrits gnostiques,” 127 and n. 3.

²See Tardieu, “Le Congrès de Yale sur le Gnosticisme,” *REAug* 24 (1978), 195.

³“Trois Stèles,” 556. Sethel was, indeed, the Manichaean form of the biblical Seth. See Schmidt-Polotsky, “Mani-Fund,” 22, n. 1. The fact that in Coptic Sethel is spelled with a ϣ rather than with a ω points to a Greek intermediary between the original Semitic šṭl and the Coptic ϣϥϥλ: ϣ and ι, in *koinè* Greek, have the same quantity (ittacization). See for instance *the Apocalypse of Sethel* (σηθηλ) cited in CMC 50:8ff.

⁴*Keph.* 42:25–26. On the number 14 see p. 94, n. 51 *supra*.

⁵“Trois Stèles,” 557.

the Manichaeans were zealous proselytizers, and their ability to translate or adapt their message into the conceptual or mythological framework of various religions is well known.⁶ It is also no secret that the Manichaeans used to translate even the names of the heroes of their mythology in order for them to appear as deities familiar to the peoples they were addressing.⁷ But the presence of Seth in Manichaean texts is so central that his figure was probably part and parcel of Mani's own theological *Bildung* and not a later adoption for missionary purposes.

The recently published *Cologne Mani Codex*, an official biography of the Paraclete, tells us that in addition to the Apocalypses attributed to the Genesis figures Adam, Enoch, and Shem, Mani also knew an Apocalypse written by Sethel, Adam's son.⁸ These works, which he probably first read while still living among the Elchasaites, are mentioned in the context of ecstatic heavenly ascensions of the prophets. The passages cited describe the encounter of the prophets with angels, and the secret teachings transmitted by the latter to the former. According to the portion quoted from this "Apocalypse of Seth," Seth was taken out of the world by the "Great Angels." Elsewhere, a shining figure appeared to Sethel and brought him to another place on high. Seth is said to have described, in his other books, just how "the great mysteries of [divine] greatness" were revealed to him.⁹ None of these four Apocalypses can be identified with any extant work, and it is difficult to fully appreciate their nature from the fragmentary remaining citations. In any case, these contain no unmistakably Gnostic elements and could well belong to lost Jewish apocryphal works.¹⁰

The importance of the figure of Seth in Manichaean teachings is underlined by the fact that the only Old Testament figures who appear in *all* the reports of the Muslim heresiographers about the Manichaeans are Adam, Noah, and Seth.¹¹ Augustine's testimony reveals that the Manichaeans believed Seth to have been the first righteous one snatched up by angels

⁶For instance, the Chinese treatise edited by E. Chavannes and P. Pelliot (*JA* 18 [1911], 499–617) was written in the literary genre of a Buddhist sutra.

⁷W. B. Henning, "The Book of the Giants," *BSOAS* 11 (1943), 52–53, repr. in his *Selected Papers*, II, 115–137.

⁸CMC 50:8–52:7; see A. Henrichs, "Mani and the Babylonian Baptists," *HSCP*, 77 (1973), 39, n. 29. On the literary genre of ἀποκαλύψεις in Gnosticism, see Nock, "Gnosticism," 200, n. 11. On books written by Patriarchs, see *Hom.* 14:29–31. To these Old Testament prophetic figures, Mani added Buddha, Zoroaster, Jesus (the Messiah Logos of God), and Paul. Mani himself (or his twin of light) was the Paraclete; *Keph.* 14:14ff.; see *MPs.* 42:22. He also called himself the "seal of the prophets" or, in the Pauline fashion, the apostle of Jesus Christ (CMC 46:1–3). These conceptions were based on the belief (accepted by the Elchasaites) in various incarnations of Jesus. See p. 75, n. 39, of Henrichs and Koenen's edition of CMC (*ZPE* 19 [1975]) and CMC 70:20–23. Cf. pp. 96–97 *supra*.

⁹μέγιστα μυστήρια τῆς μεγαλωσνῆς (CMC 52:5–7).

¹⁰See I. Gruenwald, "Manichaeism and Judaism in Light of the Cologne Mani Codex," *ZPE* 50 (1983), 29–45.

¹¹Henning, "Henochbuch," 27. According to Shahrastānī, the Manichaean line of biblical prophets included Adam, Seth, Noah, and Abraham, while al-Murṭadā mentioned only Adam, Seth, and Noah.

to heaven, like Enoch.¹² In other Manichaean texts, Seth is mentioned as the first in such lists of prophets, together with Enosh, Enoch, and Shem.¹³

One of the Manichaean psalms lists the addressees of prayers by various categories of believers:

The cry of a Virgin (*παρθένος*) to Sethel, Amen.

The cry of a Continent One (*ἐγκρατής*) to Adam, Amen.

The cry of a Married One (*ἐγγαμος*) to Eve, Amen.¹⁴

Allberry notes in his edition that *παρθένος* and *ἐγκρατής* “seem to correspond to the Elect and the Auditores. The *ἐγγαμος* is the non-Manichaean. . . .”¹⁵ “Virgin” and “Continent One” also probably refer to the two stages of sexual purity known in Syriac Christianity as *bethūlūthā* and *qedūshathā*,¹⁶ for it is known that early Manichaeism developed in close contact (and tension) with ascetic trends in Syriac Christianity, to which the baptist sects belonged.¹⁷ It is most significant that in this psalm, Seth is more highly regarded than his father. This fact no doubt reflects the Gnostic (in contrast to the Jewish) figure of Seth; according to *Apoc. Adam* (64:24–65:13), Seth was the recipient of the glory which *had left* his parents. This conception of Seth as higher than Adam was buttressed by the correlate theological development according to which the Primordial Man preceded the earthly Adam.¹⁸ In some sense, Seth was also superior to the apostles of all later generations. In the psalm quoted above, the cry (presumably a call for help) was not only addressed to Seth, Adam, or Eve, but also to other entities, which correspond, at various levels, to these three figures. The context reveals the extent to which Eve, the source of lust in humanity, was denigrated by Manichaean encratism. While “the cry of a Virgin” was also addressed to the Land of Light, the Father, or the spirit, and “the cry of a Continent One” to the New Aeon, emanations, the moon, or the soul, that of a “Married One” was addressed to the world, the Archon, the stars, or the body.

In the *Homilies*, Seth is described as crowned,¹⁹ and in another psalm, the community is asked “to sing together to Sethel,” who is “our

¹²*Contra Faustum* 19.3 (498 Zycha) “olim promulgata per Enoch et Seth et ceteros eorum similes iustos, quibus eadem illustres tradiderunt angeli.”

¹³*Keph.* 12:10ff.; see *Hom.* 68:15ff.; also 14:30. See also Turfan fragment M 299a (Henning, “Henochbuch,” 28).

¹⁴*MPs.* 179:22–24.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 179, n. on ll. 8ff.

¹⁶A. Vööbus, *Celibacy, a Requirement for Admission in the Early Syrian Church* (Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile I; Stockholm, 1951), esp. 21ff.

¹⁷For a fresh examination of the evidence, see P. Nagel, *Die Thomaspsalmen des koptisch-manichäischen Psalmenbuches* (Quellen, N.F. 1; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1980), 19–27.

¹⁸*MPs.* 142:3–4: “The Second Man, Adam, fell into. . . Sethel also, his son. . . .” Note that neither Cain nor Abel is mentioned.

¹⁹*Hom.* 61:14–23.

Saviour," the "apostle of Electship," the "giver of life" (?) to souls.²⁰ In a different context, both Seth and Adam and their generations are contrasted to later humankind. In the Golden Age of the first two generations, life spans were long, but later on, "the Powers which rule over the years" made months and years shorter, so that man now had a shorter life expectancy.²¹

Seth also appears in some Middle Iranian fragments found at Turfan at the beginning of this century. These fragments provide important parallels to aspects of Manichaean anthropogony previously known only through the reports of Theodore bar Khonai and Ibn al-Nadīm. In one of these fragments, Adam asked Šaqlōn (Sakla)²² to order the unwilling Eve to nurse the newborn child.²³ In response, Šaqlōn tried to take Adam away from religion. Adam then drew seven white circles on the ground, around the child, and prayed to the gods. There the fragment breaks off. Despite its brevity, however, this passage helps reconstruct the Manichaean story of Seth's birth.

Other fragments, unfortunately very corrupt, were recently edited by Werner Sundermann, who has noted that they belonged to a *longa fabula* about the protoplasts and their child.²⁴ Adam and Eve are here called Gehmurd and Murdyānag, while the demiurge is the demon Saklōn, who inspired lust in Murdyānag.²⁵ She thus was able to seduce Gehmurd through her nakedness, despite his attempt to remain chaste. When the child was born, the demons tried to suppress him, but his father saved him by drawing seven magical circles around him and reciting a prayer. Then Saklōn unsuccessfully tried to poison the child. The fragments add that after the child's birth, Gehmurd did not know his wife for 80 years;

²⁰ *MPs.* 144:1–7; 146:12–13.

²¹ *Keph.* LVII, 145:23–31. Cf. Gen 6:3. This opposition of the Golden Age in the times of Adam and Seth (and under their rule) to the moral decadence (accompanied by tyranny) in later generations is not unique. A similar pattern also appears in the *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian (chap. 4, p. 2 Syriac; 5 trans.).

²² In some Middle Iranian fragments, the name "Sammael" occurs; e.g., in Andreas-Henning, *Mir. Man.* III, 881–883 (repr. in Henning, *Selected Papers*, I, 308–310). Henning notes that "Sammael," as a name of the devil, also occurs in Mandaean literature (882, n. 1). The Manichaean fragment is also translated by J. P. Asmussen, *Manichaean Literature* (Persian Heritage Series 22; Delmar, NY: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1975), 106.

²³ W. Henning, "Ein manichäisches Bet- und Beichtbuch," *SPAW* (1936), 48, fragment 11R, 15–26. The child (*gnck*, see note on *e* 22, p. 101) is not explicitly named in the text. On the figure of the Child in Manichaean mythology, see Henrichs-Koenen, *ZPE* 5 (1970), 183ff.; cf. *Keph.* 35:27–28.

²⁴ *Mittelpersische und partische kosmogonische und Parabeltexte der Manichäer* (Schriften zur Geschichte und Kultur des alten Orients 8; Berliner Turfantexte IV; Berlin: Akademie, 1973), 70–75. The Fragments are M 4500 (= 18.1); M 5566 and M 4501 (= 18.2); M 5567 (= 18.3); M 4502 (= 18.4).

²⁵ The same theme already occurred in the *Acta Archelai*, the first extant Christian anti-Manichaean polemic; see Hegemonius, *Acta Archelai* (ed. C. H. Beeson; GCS; Leipzig: Henrichs, 1906), 20.5–6. See also *Mir. Man.* I, 191–197 (= Henning, *Selected Papers*, I, 17–23; trans. also in Asmussen, *Manichaean Literature*, 127–129).

Gehmurd and his son went to the East. The name of the child, Sital, appears only in another, extremely corrupt, fragment.²⁶

The demon Saklōn (or Šaqlōn) should be identified with the Ashaqlūn of Theodore bar Khonai's notice.²⁷ In the *Liber Scholiorum*, Ashaqlūn was the son of the King of Darkness, and both Adam and Eve were born from his union with his consort Namrael, or Nabroel, a mythological figure also present in a Gnostic text, *Gos. Eg.*, as a "great demon," Sakla's consort who begot "assisting (παραστατεῖν) angels" with him.²⁸

In the chapter of his *Fihrist* entitled "Beginning of generation according to the doctrine of Mani," Ibn al-Nadīm recorded a shorter version of the same myth.²⁹ Here, the leader of the archons was a figure named al-Šindīd. Flügel gives to the name a connotation of military command or physical strength, mentioning that it also appears as a byname of Goliath. Dodge, similarly, renders Šindīd as "Valiant Captain." But this is not the only possible translation of the word. Lane's *Lexicon*, while giving meanings of the word which do carry military overtones, also notes that it may emphasize political power,³⁰ "a noble man . . . one who presides over a people and their affairs of importance and things in general; a lord." Since "ruler" is the primary meaning of ἀρχών, there is no reason not to

²⁶M 1859 (= 21; 77 Sundermann), where only three words can be deciphered: Šaklon, Ši-til, and religion (*dyn*).

²⁷This central text, first edited and translated by H. Pognon (*Inscriptions mandaites des coupes de Khouabir*, II [Paris: Welter, 1899], text 127–131, trans. 184–187) has subsequently been translated and studied by M. A. Kugener and F. Cumont, in Cumont, *Recherches sur le Manichéisme*, I, *La Cosmogonie Manichéenne d'après Théodore bar Khōni* (Brussels: Lamertin, 1908), 7–42; H. H. Schaefer, in Schaefer and R. Reitzenstein's *Studien zum antiken Synkretismus aus Iran und Griechenland* (Studien der Bibliothek Warburg 7; Leipzig: Teubner, 1926), 342–347; and A. Yohannan and A. V. W. Jackson, in Jackson, *Researches in Manichaeism* (New York: Columbia, 1932), 221–254.

²⁸CG III, 57:18–22; IV, 69:2–3. On Nabroel see Cumont, *Recherches*, 42, n. 3, and 160, n. 79 *infra*; Jackson, *Researches*, 249, n. 118. As Cumont remarks (p. 74) the name comes from the biblical Nimrod (Νεβρώδ). In the Byzantine Formula of Abjuration, Sakla, mentioned together with Nebrod, was called "the prince of fornication" (ὕπὸ τοῦ Σακλᾶ τοῦ τῆς πορνείας ἄρχοντος καὶ τῆς Νεβρώδ; PG I, 1464 B). In other Turfan fragments (M 309 and M 4) Ašaqlūn's consort is lštar. Cf. A. Christensen, *Les types du premier homme et du premier roi dans l'histoire légendaire des Iraniens* (Archives d'études orientales 14; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1917), 103. Priscillian mentions Nebrod in a list of Manichaean demons; see H. Chadwick, *Priscillian of Avila: the Occult and the Charismatic in the Early Church* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 94–95. In Mandaean mythology, Nebroel was identified with Namrus, the world-mother of *Ginza* VI; see Rudolph, *Die Mandäer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), 184, n. 5, and Bousset, *Hauptprobleme*, 28. In the exegesis of the Patae, Nebroel is a positive figure, as are Esau and the serpent.

²⁹Flügel, text 58–61, trans. 90–93, nn. 242–271. See Dodge's translation, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, II, 783–786.

³⁰Lane, *Arabic English Lexicon*, IV, 1731–1732. On the other hand, Payne Smith's *Thesaurus* (I, 385) also gives a military meaning for *arkūn*: *dux*, found in Mandaean (although Macuch-Drower, *A Mandaic Dictionary*, does not list the word). The two meanings might have been present in Mani's own language, an Aramaic dialect admittedly close to Mandaean. See F. Rosenthal, "Die Sprache Mānī's," in *Die aramäische Forschung seit Th. Nöldeke's Veröffentlichungen* (Leiden: Brill, 1939), 207–211. Since al-Nadīm's source seems to have been Persian, it is hard to guess through which channels al-Šindīd came.

recognize in al-Šindīd, simply *the* archon, i.e., Saklas, Saklōn, Ashaqlūn,³¹ the leader of the archons. Clear textual indications also support this identification. Al-Šindīd first appeared in the text only after Abel's death (60 Flügel) and taught Eve the magic practices that enabled her to seduce Adam. But the text refers to "those archons and *that* Šindīd"³² as if they had already been mentioned. In fact, only *the archon* (*al-arkūn*) had appeared previously (59 Flügel), in a passage where his incestuous relations with his daughter Eve were mentioned. Later on, al-Šindīd persuaded Eve to join him against Adam and the newborn who is "not from us, but a stranger" (*gharīb*); the leader of the archons recognized immediately that Adam's son was not under his sway, but rather an ἀλλογενής to his power.³³ Finally, al-Šindīd is said to have become an opponent of "Adam and later generations" (61 Flügel). Cain, "the ruddy man,"³⁴ was born from the union of Eve with al-Šindīd, exactly as in the Gnostic texts he had been born from her union with the demiurge. As noted, the Gnostic ambivalence toward Eve disappeared in Manichaean contexts. Also specifically Manichaean is the idea of the incestuous intercourse between Cain and his mother Eve, which does not appear in the earlier Gnostic sources.

In Mandaean mythology, however, Šitil is said to have been born from Hibil's sexual relations with Hawwa. Hibil himself was not Adam's son, for he "was not sown from the seed of man" (*Ginza R.* X, 242; 243 Lidzbarski). Hibil actually appears to have inherited some of the features elsewhere associated with Seth. He was called, for instance, a "youth."³⁵

Ibn al-Nadīm further reports that Eve bore to Cain a son, Abel, and two daughters, Wise-of-Ages (*ḥikmat al-dahr*)³⁶ and Daughter-of-

³¹Al-Jāḥiẓ gives the form Šaqlun (K. Kessler, *Mani: Forschungen über die Manichäische Religion* [Berlin: Reimer, 1889], 361, 368), while the demiurge appears under the name Lou-Yi in *Traité Chavannes-Pelliot* (525, n. 1).

³²Dodge (II, 785, n. 200) states: "The name [al Šindīd] probably refers to the Angel who raped Wise of Ages." This is not at all certain, at least if one recognizes in the story told by al-Nadīm a version of the myth previously told in *Hyp. Arch.* If al-Šindīd is Sakla, he did not succeed in raping Norea, Eve's pure daughter. In any case, it would be surprising if the two pure maidens, Faryād and Barfaryād (or Purfaryād) would be born from the rape of Wise-of-Ages by the lustful archon. Despite the fact that the details of the myth are far from clear in this version, it is not likely that the pure maidens were daughters of Sakla.

³³One can safely suppose that the Aramaic (Syriac?) *Vorlage* (of the Persian) had here *nukrayā*, i.e., ἀλλογενής. On Seth being called the ἀλλογενής in Gnostic traditions, see Puech, "Les nouveaux écrits gnostiques," 126–134; cf. my "Aḥer: a Gnostic," in Layton, ed., *Rediscovery*, II, 808–818.

³⁴*Al-rajul al-aṣṣqar*. I do not recall any other place where Cain is called "ruddy," but this epithet brings to mind the biblical etymology for Esau's name, Edom, from *adom*, "red" (Gen 25:30). By way of contrast, Abel, the pure one, is named "the white man" (*al-rajul al-abyaḍ*) in Ibn al-Nadīm's account. On Cain as son of Eve and the demiurge, see chap. II *supra*.

³⁵Segelberg, "Old and New Testament Figures in Mandaean Version," 232. The Mandaean versions of the myths appear to be later developments.

³⁶According to the *Škand Gumānīk Vičār*, a Zoroastrian polemical treatise of the 9th century, the myth of the seduction of the archons involved the "daughters of Time." They were sent by the twelve glorious ones (=the twelve glorious virgins evoked by the

Corruption (*ibnat al-ḥirṣ*).³⁷ Cain took Daughter-of-Corruption for a wife, while he gave Wise-of-Ages to Abel. But Wise-of-Ages was seduced by a good angel and gave birth, as the angel promised, to two girls whom she named Raufaryād and Barfaryād.³⁸ Faryād is a Persian word, the basic meaning of which is "help," "cry for help."³⁹ In this female pair, I propose to recognize the Manichaean transformation of the Gnostic Norea, Eve's pure daughter. Norea, indeed, was characterized by the cry, "Rescue me!" which she raised to the heavenly powers when the demiurge tried to seduce her:

But Norea turned, with the might of [. . .] and in a loud voice [she] cried out [up to] the Holy One, the God of the Entirety, "Rescue [βοηθεῖν] me from the Archons of Unrighteousness and save me from their clutches—forthwith!"⁴⁰

As for Adam and Eve's child, a handsome male with a comely visage, he remained nameless at the beginning of his life. When al-Ṣindīd convinced Eve not to nurse him, Adam said that he would feed the child on cows' milk and fruit from trees.⁴¹ Then al-Ṣindīd made all cows and fruit trees disappear, and Adam drew three magic circles around the child. On them he wrote the names of the king of paradise, the Primordial Man, and the Spirit of Life, and prayed to God to feed the child. This prayer was answered, and near the child grew a lotus tree, out of which milk flowed. Adam fed the child (*al-ṣabī*) with the milk, and called him "by its name [i.e., the name of the tree]. Then he called him Shāthil."⁴² Later

Messenger in Theodore bar Khonai's version) to arouse the male demons' lust. See Cumont, *Recherches*, I, 60. See p. 155, n. 58 *infra*.

³⁷Corruption, *al-ḥirṣ*, appeared already in al-Nadīm's report as one of the five mates of the male demon involved in the creation of Adam.

³⁸Flügel's Arabic text (60) has *faryād* and *barfaryād*, which he translates "komm zur Hilfe" and "bringe Hilfe"; Dodge reads *faryād* and *purfaryād*, which he translates "Lamentation" and "Laden with Lamentation."

³⁹See F. Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary* (Beirut, 1970 [1892]), 126. The presence of this Persian name makes it clear that al-Nadīm's Manichaean source was either Persian or an Arabic translation from the Persian. For other instances of doubling of figures in Manichaeism, see Bousset, *Hauptprobleme*, 77.

⁴⁰*Hyp. Arch.* 92:32–93:2. The great angel Eleleth (Sagacity) then came to Norea's help (*Hyp. Arch.* 93:8–10). But Norea herself inherited from her mother the role of helper (βοήθεια) of Gnostic mankind (*Hyp. Arch.* 91:34–92:3). Help is a central concept of Manichaean as well as Gnostic theology; Mani's helper and protector was his twin: ἐγὼ δὲ ἐπικούρως σου καὶ φύλαξ ἔσσωμαι κατὰ πάντα καιρόν (CMC 33:2–6). On the use of βοηθός, see CMC 32:2. In *MPs.* 209:24–30 and 210:1–16, Adamas of Light succored (βοηθεῖν) the youth (παιδοῦ) beneath the pit at the bottom of Hades and then fettered the demons. Cf. *MPs.* 206:10ff.

⁴¹This association of milk and trees is reminiscent of the Iranian legends about Zarathustra's birth and early education. See, for instance, *Denkart*, VII, chap. 2, 19–42, trans. M. Molé, *La Légende de Zoroastre selon les textes pehlevi* (Travaux de l'institut d'études iraniennes de l'Université de Paris 3; Paris: Klincksieck, 1967). I owe this reference to Dr. William Darrow.

⁴²On the etymology of this name, see chap. III *supra*. In the *Fihrist*, the child's name appears only when its etymology can be accounted for.

on, Shāthil convinced his father Adam to free himself from the bonds of lust, to leave Eve and go with him to the East, to the light of God's wisdom (i.e., to paradise, where Adam died). The story ended with the note that Shāthil, (Rau)faryād, Barfaryād, and Wise-of-Ages managed their affairs in *ṣadīqūt*,⁴³ while Eve, Cain, and Daughter-of-Corruption went to hell.

In summary, we have seen that Seth was a central figure of Manichaean mythology, and that in this mythology, the description of mankind's first generations appears to be a later, more developed, baroque version of the Gnostic myths studied in Part I of this work. Indeed, it is based on the rape of Eve (which is also found in Hebrew *midrashim*), but also keeps trace of the figure of Gnostic Norea.

The Seduction of the Archons

The myth of "the seduction of the archons" is a good illustration of Mani's well-known propensity for borrowing from different cultural and religious milieus. One version of the myth, indeed, is reported in Zoroastrian texts. The *Bundahishn* (a text redacted only in the centuries following the Arab conquest, but which retains much earlier traditions) recalls how in the *Urzeit* Ahriman sent the god Narsai in the shape of a naked fifteen-year-old lad (an age symbolic of early manhood in Zoroastrianism) to Tahī the prostitute, and how the latter was filled with desire for him.⁴⁴

Based on yet another Mazdaean version of the same myth reported by Theodore bar Khonai, Cumont, followed by Widengren,⁴⁵ concludes that it is this myth which lies directly at the origin of the Manichaean seduction myth. This argument, however, fails to convince because it does not take into account the existence of the myth in Gnostic contexts that were in no way under direct Iranian influence. There is no denying the fact that the seduction myth, which appeared in various forms, may well have been the survival of some ancient nature myth, as F. C. Burkitt pointed out;⁴⁶ but it is far from certain that Mani borrowed the myth directly from an Iranian source (although it does appear more clearly in Manichaean traditions than in Gnostic versions). By now it is apparent that Mani borrowed relatively little from Iranian mythology.⁴⁷ The exact means of transmission through which the seduction myth reached Mani remains a matter for speculation (according to Ephrem, Mani received the myth

⁴³Flügel translates, "folgten mit der Ṣiddīkūt (der Gemeinde der Wahrhaftigen)," giving to *al ṣadīqūt* the meaning of the Arabic root *ṣdq* (trust). The word itself, however, is not Arabic, but must come from Syriac *zadiqūthā*, "righteousness." This basic meaning should be preferred here.

⁴⁴*Bundahishn* IV.1–8; I follow the edition and translation of B. T. Anklesaria, *Zand-Akāsīh, Iranian or Greater Bundahishn* (Bombay: 1956), 46–47.

⁴⁵Cumont, *Recherches*, I, 61–62; G. Widengren, *Mani und der Manichäismus* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1961), also 61–62.

⁴⁶*The Religion of the Manichees* (Cambridge: University Press, 1925), 29.

⁴⁷See for instance Henning, "Giants," 52, as well as the overall evidence of CMC.

from Bardaisan),⁴⁸ but there is little doubt that the major role was played by Jewish traditions, probably mediated by Gnostic or gnosticizing reinterpretations and developments.

Far from being limited to the story of Seth, Gnostic influence upon Manichaeism is also reflected in the myths about the archons and their seduction. In Judaism the fall of the angels was seen as a single event, a turning-point in the course of history; in its Gnostic reinterpretation the myth became a pattern inherent in history, under the sway of lustful archons. Nevertheless, the evil-doings of Sakla and his acolytes were kept within the framework of the Genesis story in the Gnostic works, which claimed to give the true exegesis of the biblical text. Manichaeism, a fuller, even baroque, development of Gnostic trends, brought the blossoming Gnostic mythology to its logical conclusion: the severing of its links with the Hebrew Bible. Manichaean mythology, this "simulation of reason" (in Paul Ricoeur's words), had not only etiological, but also scientific pretensions. It did not simply attempt to account for human history, or even for human nature—it aimed at no less than a comprehensive analysis of the cosmos, its phenomena, and its very creation.

Every theologoumenon used by Mani was totally reinterpreted and integrated into a new mythological framework. Manichaeism carried to the extreme the process, begun with Gnosticism, of shifting myths back to earlier stages in the *Vorzeit* and to "higher" levels of reality. Thus, in Manichaean contexts, some of the central elements of the seduction myth are found in cosmological accounts. The lustful archons of Gnosticism appear in Manichaean traditions as the sons and daughters of Darkness, or else as demons crucified on the vault of the heavens (or from whose skins the heavens were made). According to Theodore bar Khonai's testimony,

Thereupon the Living Spirit gave command to his three sons, the one to kill and the other to flay the Archons, the Sons of Darkness, and that they should deliver them to the Mother of Life. The Mother of Life spread out the heaven with their skins and made ten heavens, and they threw the body of these to the Earth of Darkness, and they made eight earths.⁴⁹

Henning has pointed out that these demons are a transformation of the Watchers of *I Enoch*.⁵⁰ Actually, one of the Middle Persian texts edited by Henning (M 625 C) knows the original Aramaic name of the Watchers, *ʿyr*.⁵¹ For Henning, however, the Manichaean myth came directly from *I Enoch*. He does not mention the significance of these demons for

⁴⁸See his *Fourth Dialogue with Hypatius*, in C. W. Mitchell, ed. and trans., *S. Ephraim's Prose Refutations of Mani, Marcion and Bardaisan*, I (London, 1912), 122–124.

⁴⁹*Liber Scholiorum* XI, p. 128, trans. 188 Pognon; cf. Cumont, *Recherches*, 27; Jackson, *Researches*, 233–235. I usually quote according to Yohannan's translation (in Jackson), but sometimes depart from it. The text has eleven heavens, but the correct number is ten. See the parallels given by Jackson, *Researches*, 234, n. 48.

⁵⁰"Giants," 53 (= *Selected Papers*, II, 116).

⁵¹"Henochbuch," 29 (= *Selected Papers*, I, 341).

Mani's *Gnostic* consciousness. The very fact that the myth was transferred to the realm of cosmogony indicates a *major* shift from the myth of *I Enoch*. Like *I Enoch*, Manichaean mythology presented the Watchers' binding as a punishment for their sin; but it was only after they had swallowed the Primordial Man and his five sons that the Living Spirit captured and crucified (or bound) them.⁵²

Keph. LXX tells us that when the Watchers (ἐγρήγοροι) came down from heaven, during the vigil of the great King of Honor (i.e., one of the cosmic periods which preceded the creation of the earth), they brought with them earthquakes and malice (171:16–19). *Keph.* LXX adds that with them "rebellion and ruin came about on the earth" (92:31), and that

on their account the four angels⁵³ received their orders: they bound the Egrēgoroi with eternal fetters in the prison of the dark (?); their sons were destroyed upon the earth. (93:25–28; cf. 117:1–9)

According to Henning, however, the heavenly origin of the Watchers "did not square with Mani's conviction that no evil could come from good," and he therefore "transformed them into 'demons,' namely those demons who had been imprisoned in the skies, under the supervision of the *Rex Honoris*" when the world was created.⁵⁴

In chap. II we saw how the foiled attempt of the archons to rape the pure women was transformed, in some Gnostic traditions, into a voluntary seduction of the archons by these women. In Manichaeism, the seduction of the archons became a complex myth, central to the cosmic "economy of salvation." The texts give us various account of this myth. While the myth itself has been studied, the functional differences between its versions have not hitherto been satisfactorily analyzed, not even by Cumont, who has offered a thorough study of the topic. For instance, when he notes that the same expression ("he revealed his forms") was used in conjunction with both the Living Spirit and the Messenger, he simply states: "Cette identité . . . semble indiquer que l'Esprit-Vivant a eu recours au même artifice que le Messager."⁵⁵ It is my opinion, however,

⁵²*Liber Schol.* XI, p. 127, trans. 186 Pognon; Jackson, *Researches*, 225–226; Cumont, *Recherches*, 54. In *Gos. Eg.*, similarly, the Great Seth recognized the devil's scheme, and Jesus "the living one," "whom he had put on," nailed the powers of the thirteen archons; CG III, 64:1–4.

⁵³The four angels are Raphael, Michael, Gabriel, and Israel in *I Enoch* 10:1. Henning ("Giants," 54) mentions that "they are frequently invoked by name in Manichaean prayers (e.g., M 4 d 19, f 6; M 20) as *Rwp'yl*, *Myx'yl*, *Gbr'yl* and *Sr'yl* (Israel)." These should be identified with the "four helpers" of *Norea*. Syncellus (*Chronography*, 22 Dindorf), quoting from "the first book of Enoch on the Watchers," has Michael, Ouriel, Raphael, and Gabriel, as in *I Enoch* 9:1.

⁵⁴The same idea is in Asmussen, *Manichaean Literature*, 103.

⁵⁵*Recherches*, 30, n. 5; see esp. Appendix I, 54–68; "La Séduction des Archontes." Cf. Widengren, *Mani*, 60–62; *idem*, ed., *Der Manichäismus* (Wege der Forschung 168; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977), XXVIII and XXIX, n. 50. See also Puech, *Manichéisme*, 80 and 172, n. 324, which adds new texts to Cumont's documentation, and the texts translated by Asmussen, *Manichaean Literature*, 130–131. Cf. E. Bénévise's

that these accounts should be seen as referring to three different versions of the etiological myth, which were meant, in Manichaean "science," to explain the various phenomena of cosmogony, life, and death.

I. The first version, the cosmogonical, was described by Theodore bar Khonai as follows:⁵⁶

The Living Spirit (*rūḥā ḥayā*) revealed his forms (*galē šūrateh*) to the sons of Darkness; and from the Light which had been swallowed by them from these Five Luminous Gods he purified the light and made the Sun, the Moon and more than a thousand stars.⁵⁷

While the text is rather elliptic, it should be understood that the light from which the cosmos was created came out in the semen of the sons of Darkness when they were sexually aroused by the body ("the forms") of the Living Spirit. (The word for "spirit," *rūḥā*, is masculine but can refer to a feminine entity.) This first version is thus part of the cosmogonical process.

II. The Messenger (*izgadā*) is the main character of the second version of the seduction of the archons. After evoking the twelve virgins "with their vestments and with their crowns and with their attributes,"⁵⁸ the Messenger sailed in his vessel of light (the moon) across the heavens, and when he reached the middle of its vault,

he revealed his forms, male and female, and was seen by all the archons, the sons of Darkness, males and females. And at the sight of the Messenger, who was beautiful in his forms, all the archons

remarks in *Le Monde Oriental* 26 (1932–1933), *non vidi*. An Iranian form of the Manichaean myth is found in the *Škand Gumānīk Vičār* (ed. and trans J. de Ménasce; Collectanea Friburgensia 30; Friburg: Librairie de l'Université, 1945), chap. 16. 28–37, trans. pp. 253–255. In this work, the archons are called *māzandarān* (p. 260, n. on 16. 31–33).

⁵⁶129, trans. 189 Pognon; Cumont, *Recherches*, 29; Schaefer, *Studien*, 344 bott.; Jackson, *Researches*, 236–237.

⁵⁷*wenūhrā y' thīr men alphā*. Jackson, *Researches*, 237, has "and the light (of the Stars) more than a thousand." See his long n. 63. Pognon would seem to be correct when he emends it to *nuhrē* (plural) and thus translates "et des lumières au nombre de plus de mille." These "lights" are probably the equivalent of the Greek *φωστῆρες* and refer to lights other than the sun and the moon, i.e., the stars.

⁵⁸129 Pognon; Jackson, *Researches*, 241. The twelve virgins were also called the twelve great Majesties, or again the twelve daughters (*Traité Chavannes-Pelliot*, 567, 568 n. 3). See Jackson, *Researches*, 241, n. 78, and Nöldeke's remark in Cumont, *Recherches*, 35, n. 2, about the identity of Persian (from Turfan) and Syriac names. These twelve virgins might be identified with the twelve pilots who sailed in the "small vessel" with the emanations, Jesus, the Mother of Life, and the Virgin of Light, while the third Messenger sailed in the big vessel (*Acta Archelai* 13.2 [21 Beeson]). In the *Škand-Gumānīk Vičār*, the twelve virgins were called "the twelve Glorious Daughters of Zurvān." On the Virgin of Light, see Bousset, *Hauptprobleme*, 62, for whom she is a duplication of the figure of Barbelo. This Virgin of Light also appeared in *Pistis Sophia*, where she stood above the thirteenth aeon (see *Hauptprobleme*, 61–63, 76–77). See also Böhlig, "Zur Vorstellung vom Lichtkreuz in Gnostizismus und Manichäismus," in B. Aland, ed., *Gnosis, Festschrift für Hans Jonas*, 473–491.

became filled with lust for him, the males for the form of the female, and the females for the form of the male.⁵⁹

The myth here is two-fold, for the sexual arousal of the male and female archons would have divergent consequences: the establishment of *life*, both vegetal and animal, upon the earth.

As in the first version of the seduction, the male archons emitted some of the light they had swallowed from the semen ("that sin which was shut up in them") of the five Luminous Gods. After the archons rejected it in disgust, this "sin" fell upon the earth, partly on the sea ("the moist part") and partly on the earth itself ("the dry"). In the sea, it became "a hateful beast in the likeness of the King of Darkness," against which Adamas of Light⁶⁰ was sent to fight and which he killed.⁶¹ The function of this beast in the organization of the world remains unclear in Theodore bar Khonai's description. On the other hand, from the "sin" which fell on the dry earth, five trees sprang up; they represent vegetal life in Manichaean symbolism.⁶²

Animal life, on the other hand, was created as a result of the female archons' lust. Theodore, quoting Mani again, relates that

these Daughters of Darkness were previously pregnant of their own nature, and on seeing the beauty of the forms of the Messenger their

⁵⁹129 Pognon.

⁶⁰On Adamas of Light, see F. Cumont, "Adamas, génie manichéen," in *Mélanges Louis Havet* (Paris, 1909), 79–82; Jackson, *Researches*, 296–313. See further Puech, *Manichéisme*, 173, n. 325.

⁶¹This "hateful beast" should be connected with the "Giant of the Sea" of *Keph.* XLV (114–115); ΠΡΙΓΔC ΝΘΑΛΔC CΑ was created and designed (ζωγραφεῖν) through the power of lust (ἐπιθυμία) in him (115:1–2). See also *Keph.* LV (136:20–137:11), where the Giant of the Sea was one of *three* (not two) entities engendered through an abnormal coitus (συνουσία). He is said to have been the expulsion (πρωζρε) from the σφαῖρα thrown into the sea by the Father of Light. He in turn fashioned a creation (πλάσμα) out of his own fire and his own ἐνθύμησις (idea, conception). The second creation was the entity (φύσις) that fell upon the earth, was drawn into the sea, and became the source of death; against it Adamas of Light was sent to fight. The third one was the entity that fell upon the dry part of the earth, created "the tree," and remained in it. These beings belonged to the shadow, but were made manifest in the world. Thus the Giant of the Sea apparently belongs to the beings created by the fallen semen and fetuses of the archons and is part of the fuller version of the myth recounted by Theodore (On the Iranian name for γίγας, see Henning, "Giants," 54); cf. Polotsky, "Manichäismus," PWSup, IV, 255; repr. in his *Collected Papers*, 706. In *Acta Archelai* (chap. 36; 51 Beeson), a dragon harassed the Fallen Angels: "alii vero in felicitate hominum filiabus admixti a dracone adflicti, ignis aeterni poenam suscipere meruerunt." Milik tentatively identifies this dragon with the Leviathan "who may have dominated the giants" (*Enoch*, 320). Milik also quotes (p. 336) Judaeo-Aramaic incantations citing Mount Hermon and "the monster Leviathan" or "the Leviathan of the Sea" in the same breath. The Leviathan and the Giant thus seem to have been related to each other.

⁶²130, trans. 190 Pognon; Cumont, *Recherches*, 39–40; Schaeder, *Studien*, 346; Jackson, *Researches*, 246–247, n. 112. For an allusion to these five trees in Manichaeism as typifying plant life on earth see Jackson, "The Doctrine of Metempsychosis in Manichaeism," *JAOS* 45 (1925), 264, n. 70; cf. the "five trees in paradise," *Gos. Thom.* log. 19 (Puech, *En quête de la gnose*, II, 99–105).

fetuses (*ūlayhōn*) dropped⁶³ and fell upon the earth and devoured the buds of the trees.

Henning has remarked that “in Manichaean parlance, ‘abortion’ is synonymous with ‘animal.’”⁶⁴ Augustine, too, mentioned the fall of the fetuses—attributing it to the archons’ inability to endure the beginning of the heavens’ rotation—and added that

these Abortions, both male and female, fallen upon the earth, were able to live, develop, unite and generate. This is, they say, the origin of all flesh—beings moving on earth, in the water, in the air.⁶⁵

The way in which the fall of these abortions is connected to anthropogony will be discussed later on.

III. Yet another version of the seduction is described in the *Acta Archelai*,⁶⁶ and, with some variants, by other Christian heresiographers.⁶⁷ Once again, the function of the sexual arousal of the archons was multiple. Here the myth attempts to account for natural phenomena.

The adorned virgin Horaia⁶⁸ appeared to the archons who had been borne up and crucified on the firmament by the Living Spirit. To the male archons she appeared as a beautiful woman, and to the female archons as a handsome and lustful young man. Ignited by the fire of love, all the archons ran after her, but the virgin disappeared from their sight, and they began to sweat “like men.” This sweat was rain. For his part, the “reaping archon,” frustrated by the disappearance of Horaia, began to “cut the roots” connecting men to heaven, so that “pestilence” would kill them. “This is the cause of death,” concludes the text. This archon’s frustration was also at the origin of earthquakes, which involve Atlas the Omophore.⁶⁹ Hegemonius’s source here depends on the “anthropological” principle according to which human phenomena are explained by referring to cosmic ones, since man is a microcosm.⁷⁰

⁶³Pognon reads *yht*, but Scher has the correct *nh*; see Jackson, *Researches*, 248, n. 114.

⁶⁴“Giants,” 53 (= *Selected Papers*, II, 116).

⁶⁵*Contra Faustum* VI, 8 (296 Zycha); Cumont (*Recherches*, 41, n. 2) quotes parallel texts, to which one should add *Mir. Man.* I, 183 (= Henning, *Selected Papers*, I, 9); trans. also in Asmussen, *Manichaean Literature*, 124–125.

⁶⁶Chap. 9 (13–15 Beeson).

⁶⁷Cumont, *Recherches*, 54, n. 4.

⁶⁸*παρθένος τις Ὡραία κεκοσμημένη*. On Horaia (= Norea) see pp. 53–61 *supra*. Cf. the anti-Priscillian text (probably written in the early 5th century by Paulus Orosius) cited by Puech, in E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, I (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 266.

⁶⁹See also *Acta Archelai* 8.2 (11 Beeson); Cumont, *Recherches*, 28–29, and Appendix 2, 69–75; see further Schmidt-Polotsky, “Mani-Fund,” 67; *Hom.*, 40.

⁷⁰*Acta Archelai* 9; 14 Beeson. On man’s body as a microcosm, see *Traité Chavannes Pelliot*, 526: “ainsi donc le corps charnel avec sa convoitise et sa concupiscence empoisonnées et mauvaises fut, bien qu’en plus petit, l’image fidèle de point en point de l’univers des cieux et des terres.” For Greek, Iranian, and Gnostic parallels to this conception, see R. van den Broek, “The Creation of Adam’s Psychic Body in the Apocryphon of John,” 38–57, esp. 56.

In a final epiphany at the end of time (which is not linked to a “seduction”), the Messenger would again “show his image” (ὅταν προφάνη αὐτοῦ τὴν εἰκόνα), and the Omophore would cast off the earth,⁷¹ which would be destroyed by a great fire. After this final Restitution (ἀποκατάστασις), the archons would remain in their proper place, i.e., below, while the Father alone would be on high.⁷² The process of separating good from evil, of the definitive eradication of *mixis*, would finally be accomplished.

Each of the crucial stages of the development of the cosmos was thus initiated by the semen of the male archons and the aborted fetuses of the female archons. The very appearance of Horaia (= Norea) and the Virgin of Light (= Barbelo-Prunikos) suggests a connection between this myth and the similar early Gnostic myth, obviously pre-Manichaean, which itself was an inverted version of the attempted seduction by the archons of the pure virgin.

The Abortions

The link between the Manichaean and the Gnostic myths becomes even clearer when the presence and role of the abortions in Manichaean mythology are examined. In the *Kephalaia*, the abortions (ἄζογε) appeared in various contexts. In *Keph. XXXVIII*, Mani gave a description of the revolt and guile of the Watchers (92:12–93:32). These Watchers then became prisoners of the *Splenditenens* because they had revolted during the vigil of the King of Honor,⁷³ and aborted “the sin,” mixing it with the light (or the soul) which they released at the sight of the Envoy’s image (ΤΖΙΚΩΝ ΜΠΠΡΕΣΒΕΥΤΗΣ). This sin fell to earth, where it created trees on dry land, while on the sea, “a great rebellion” originated from it (92:14–23).⁷⁴ We recognize here the second version of the seduction myth analyzed above. The fact that the *Kephalaia* referred to the archons of Theodore’s source by their original name, Watchers, is most significant. Indeed, it confirms the main argument of Part I, namely, that the Gnostic archontic figures were genetically related to the Fallen Angels of pseudepigraphic literature. In direct line with the Enochic traditions,

⁷¹According to *Timotheus Presbyter* (PG 86, col. 21), Saklas supported the earth. On the other hand, the *Anathema* of Prosper, written in Latin in the 6th century, mentions that the Manichaeans called Atlas Adam’s father. Cumont has explained the confusion as stemming from the closeness, in Syriac, between *saklā* and *sabalā*, the Porter (*Recherches*, I, 74–75); see Jackson, *Researches*, 296–313.

⁷²*Acta Archelai* 13 (21–22 Beeson); cf. my “Aspects de l’eschatologie manichéenne,” *passim*.

⁷³This mythological figure might have originated in the biblical מַלְאָךְ הַכְבוֹד (see for instance *MPs.* 24).

⁷⁴The great rebellion (ΟΥΝΟΣ ἄβεσσε) in the sea may ultimately derive from the early Near Eastern myth of Yamm’s revolt. Yet, the great sea in which the rebels were subdued was also called the sky (*MPs.* 213:1–8), a fact which probably indicates a connection between this rebellion and that of the Fallen Angels in *1 Enoch*. On the rebellion of the archons against the Living Spirit, see *Keph.* 58:24–25.

these Watchers were accused of having acted with guile and of having revealed the arts to the world and the mysteries of heaven to men (92:29–31). They were also accused of having created Adam and Eve in order to rule the world through them and to do works of lust (ἐπιθυμία) so that “the whole world became full of their lust” (93:2–5).⁷⁵ The indictment went on to mention their persecution of the churches and their killing of the apostles and the righteous “in the Vigil of Adamas of Light—in all times and in all generations” (93:6–8).

The abortions here seem to be the products (or the “sons”) of the Watchers. In Gnostic context the demiurge Sakla and his archons were responsible for both the creation of Adam and Eve and the introduction of lust into the world.⁷⁶ In *Keph.* XXXVIII quoted above, this role was attributed to the Watchers. In *Keph.* LVI, however, Mani explicitly spoke about “all those abortions, to which Saklas belongs, as well as his consort . . . that is these who have made Adam and Eve” according to the Envoy’s image, which they had seen (137:15–22). This imitation of the Envoy’s image took place via the sin of the archons (i.e., matter, ὕλη; 137:23–25). This sin, fallen upon the earth, entered trees and became their “fruit” (καρπός; 137:28–29). The creators of Adam and Eve are here said to have been the abortions. Yet in the same *Kephalaion*, Mani added, “The archons have made Adam and Eve through the force (ἐν-έργεια) of the sin” (138:17–18).⁷⁷ In 138:1–5, the myth is somewhat more detailed; the “archon, their [abortions’] ruler” asked his companions to give him their light so that he could make them an image (εἰκῶν) according to “the image of the above” (ΠΕΙΝΕ ΜΠΕΙ ΧΑΔΕ). A parallel passage has been preserved in Theodore bar Khonai’s *Liber Scholiorum*: when the abortions fell upon the earth,

they took thought together and recollected the form of the Messenger which they had seen, and they said: “Where is that form which we saw?” And Ashaqlūn, Son of the King of Darkness, said to the abortions: “Give me your sons and your daughters and I will make for you a form like that which you have seen.”⁷⁸

He and his consort Namrael devoured the abortions’ children and then united. Namrael conceived twice and gave birth to Adam and Eve.⁷⁹

⁷⁵The abortions, “sons of matter” (*MPs.* 108:24–26) built the edifice of flesh; *Keph.* 171:19–21; see the title of *Keph.* XCVII, 246.

⁷⁶Cf. p. 82 *supra*.

⁷⁷See also *Keph.* LV, where the archons created Adam and Eve through the form of the Envoy. Mani added that the good “God wanted this to happen” (133:15–16). The ambivalence typical of Manichaean anthropology was directly reflected in anthropogony. On Manichaean anthropogony, one may still consult E. Buonaiuti, “La prima coppia umana nel sistema manicheo,” *RSO* 7 (1916), 663–686, repr. in his *Saggi sul cristianesimo primitivo* (Citta di Castello: Il Solco, 1923), 150–171. Add the evidence of the Coptic texts, cited by Puech, *Manichéisme*, 80 and 173, n. 328.

⁷⁸130, trans. 191 Pognon; Cumont, *Recherches*, 40; Schaeder, *Studien*, 346; Jackson, *Researches*, 248–249.

⁷⁹See 149 n. 28 *supra*; also Theodore, *Adv. Haer.* 1, 26: Τὸν ἄνθρωπον πλασθῆναι ὑπὸ

In a final epiphany at the end of time (which is not linked to a “seduction”), the Messenger would again “show his image” (ὅταν προφάνη αὐτοῦ τὴν εἰκόνα), and the Omophore would cast off the earth,⁷¹ which would be destroyed by a great fire. After this final Restitution (ἀποκατάστασις), the archons would remain in their proper place, i.e., below, while the Father alone would be on high.⁷² The process of separating good from evil, of the definitive eradication of *mixis*, would finally be accomplished.

Each of the crucial stages of the development of the cosmos was thus initiated by the semen of the male archons and the aborted fetuses of the female archons. The very appearance of Horaia (= Norea) and the Virgin of Light (= Barbelo-Prunikos) suggests a connection between this myth and the similar early Gnostic myth, obviously pre-Manichaean, which itself was an inverted version of the attempted seduction by the archons of the pure virgin.

The Abortions

The link between the Manichaean and the Gnostic myths becomes even clearer when the presence and role of the abortions in Manichaean mythology are examined. In the *Kephalaia*, the abortions (ἄζοι) appeared in various contexts. In *Keph. XXXVIII*, Mani gave a description of the revolt and guile of the Watchers (92:12–93:32). These Watchers then became prisoners of the *Splenditenens* because they had revolted during the vigil of the King of Honor,⁷³ and aborted “the sin,” mixing it with the light (or the soul) which they released at the sight of the Envoy’s image (ΤΖΙΚΩΝ ΜΠΠΡΕΣΒΕΥΤΗΣ). This sin fell to earth, where it created trees on dry land, while on the sea, “a great rebellion” originated from it (92:14–23).⁷⁴ We recognize here the second version of the seduction myth analyzed above. The fact that the *Kephalaia* referred to the archons of Theodore’s source by their original name, Watchers, is most significant. Indeed, it confirms the main argument of Part I, namely, that the Gnostic archontic figures were genetically related to the Fallen Angels of pseudepigraphic literature. In direct line with the Enochic traditions,

⁷¹According to *Timotheus Presbyter* (PG 86, col. 21), Saklas supported the earth. On the other hand, the *Anathema* of Prosper, written in Latin in the 6th century, mentions that the Manichaeans called Atlas Adam’s father. Cumont has explained the confusion as stemming from the closeness, in Syriac, between *saklā* and *sabalā*, the Porter (*Recherches*, I, 74–75); see Jackson, *Researches*, 296–313.

⁷²*Acta Archelai* 13 (21–22 Beeson); cf. my “Aspects de l’eschatologie manichéenne,” *passim*.

⁷³This mythological figure might have originated in the biblical מַלְךְ הַכְּבוֹד (see for instance *MPs.* 24).

⁷⁴The great rebellion (ΟΥΝΟΣ ἄβεσσε) in the sea may ultimately derive from the early Near Eastern myth of Yamm’s revolt. Yet, the great sea in which the rebels were subdued was also called the sky (*MPs.* 213:1–8), a fact which probably indicates a connection between this rebellion and that of the Fallen Angels in *1 Enoch*. On the rebellion of the archons against the Living Spirit, see *Keph.* 58:24–25.

these Watchers were accused of having acted with guile and of having revealed the arts to the world and the mysteries of heaven to men (92:29–31). They were also accused of having created Adam and Eve in order to rule the world through them and to do works of lust (ἐπιθυμία) so that “the whole world became full of their lust” (93:2–5).⁷⁵ The indictment went on to mention their persecution of the churches and their killing of the apostles and the righteous “in the Vigil of Adamas of Light—in all times and in all generations” (93:6–8).

The abortions here seem to be the products (or the “sons”) of the Watchers. In Gnostic context the demiurge Sakla and his archons were responsible for both the creation of Adam and Eve and the introduction of lust into the world.⁷⁶ In *Keph.* XXXVIII quoted above, this role was attributed to the Watchers. In *Keph.* LVI, however, Mani explicitly spoke about “all those abortions, to which Saklas belongs, as well as his consort . . . that is these who have made Adam and Eve” according to the Envoy’s image, which they had seen (137:15–22). This imitation of the Envoy’s image took place via the sin of the archons (i.e., matter, ὕλη; 137:23–25). This sin, fallen upon the earth, entered trees and became their “fruit” (καρπός; 137:28–29). The creators of Adam and Eve are here said to have been the abortions. Yet in the same *Kephalaion*, Mani added, “The archons have made Adam and Eve through the force (ἐνέργεια) of the sin” (138:17–18).⁷⁷ In 138:1–5, the myth is somewhat more detailed; the “archon, their [abortions’] ruler” asked his companions to give him their light so that he could make them an image (εἰκόν) according to “the image of the above” (ΠΕΙΝΕ ΜΠΕΙ ΧΑCΕ). A parallel passage has been preserved in Theodore bar Khonai’s *Liber Scholiorum*: when the abortions fell upon the earth,

they took thought together and recollected the form of the Messenger which they had seen, and they said: “Where is that form which we saw?” And Ashaqlūn, Son of the King of Darkness, said to the abortions: “Give me your sons and your daughters and I will make for you a form like that which you have seen.”⁷⁸

He and his consort Namrael devoured the abortions’ children and then united. Namrael conceived twice and gave birth to Adam and Eve.⁷⁹

⁷⁵The abortions, “sons of matter” (*MPs.* 108:24–26) built the edifice of flesh; *Keph.* 171:19–21; see the title of *Keph.* XCVII, 246.

⁷⁶Cf. p. 82 *supra*.

⁷⁷See also *Keph.* LV, where the archons created Adam and Eve through the form of the Envoy. Mani added that the good “God wanted this to happen” (133:15–16). The ambivalence typical of Manichaean anthropology was directly reflected in anthropogony. On Manichaean anthropogony, one may still consult E. Buonaiuti, “La prima coppia umana nel sistema manicheo,” *RSO* 7 (1916), 663–686, repr. in his *Saggi sul cristianesimo primitivo* (Citta di Castello: Il Solco, 1923), 150–171. Add the evidence of the Coptic texts, cited by Puech, *Manichéisme*, 80 and 173, n. 328.

⁷⁸130, trans. 191 Pognon; Cumont, *Recherches*, 40; Schaeder, *Studien*, 346; Jackson, *Researches*, 248–249.

⁷⁹See 149 n. 28 *supra*; also Theodoret, *Adv. Haer.* I, 26: Τὸν ἄνθρωπον πλασθῆναι ὑπὸ

As previously noted, the story told of Saqlōn in Middle Persian fragments from Turfan, or of al-Šindīd in the *Fihrist*, is quite close to the anthropogonical myth as described in Gnostic documents. The passages cited above add new parallels between the Gnostic and the Manichaean texts. According to Theodore's report, the abortions "took thought together" (*etħašbū 'im ħadedē*), just as the archons in *Hyp. Arch.* "laid plans" (ΑΝΑΡΧΩΝ ΧΙ ΝΟΥΣΥΜΒΟΛΙΟΝ)⁸⁰ in order to create man. And in their creation, the archons attempted "to capture that image which had appeared to them in the Waters," i.e., the image of incorruptibility, which they could not seize (*Hyp. Arch.* 87:8–20).

The Byzantine Formula of Abjuration also mentions the deeds of the abortions. Theodor Nöldeke has suggested to identify these ἐκτρώματᾶ with the Nephilim of Gen 6:4 by reading *neṗalīm* instead of *neṗilīm*.⁸¹ It is most significant that the Midrash had already suggested deriving *neṗilīm* from *neṗalīm* (*Gen. Rab.* 26.7). This, as already noted,⁸² was obviously the origin of the Gnostic concept of the abortions. Mani, however, went a step further in his mythological development and practically identified the Watchers themselves with the abortions. The copulation of the Sons of God with the daughters of men became the archons' attempt to seduce women (and was then inverted to the myth of the seduction of the archons by the women); the products of this unseemly union in Genesis,

του τῆς ὕλης ἄρχοντος—Σακλᾶν δὲ τοῦτον προσαγορεύουσιν—καὶ τὴν Εὐάν ὡσαύτως ὑπὸ τοῦ Σακλᾶ καὶ τοῦ Νεβρώδ. Sakla was thus the archon of fornication and of matter. For further reference, see Cumont, *Recherches*, I, 73, n. 3. Cumont, who admits that the Manichaeans borrowed the figure of Sakla from the Gnostics (p. 73), thinks that Νεβρώδ or Nemrod was substituted for the demon Nabroel or Namrael when Babylonian Manichaeism tried to adapt itself to the beliefs of the Roman world. But Cumont does not cite any evidence of a "Babylonian" demon Nabroel. On Namrael, see further Furlani's remarks in *Annali dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei* VIII, 2 (1951), 519–531 (*non vidi*). It is probable that the Gnostic Nabroel evolved from legends built around the biblical figure of the evil king Nimrod (see Cumont's own remark, 74, n. 2). In the Bible (Gen 10:8–9), Nimrod is called *gibbōr*, like the sons of the *benei elohīm* and the daughters of men in Gen 6:4b. In Jewish and then in Muslim legends, Nimrod typified the evil tyrant: he is said to have tried to burn Abraham—and even to kill God—by throwing arrows to the sky. In Arabic, *jabbār* has the connotation of revolt against God; see *ShEncycl. Islam*, 437–438 s.v. "Namrūd." Syncellus preserved a tradition according to which Nimrod was considered to be the father of a race of giants: Νεβρώδ, ἐξ οὗ γίγαντες (*Chronography*, 88 Dindorf). In Jewish and Christian legends, Nimrod was also the giant who founded Babylon; he was (like the Watchers!) the inventor of astronomy; it is said that idolatry began with him; see references in Ginzberg, *Legends*, V, 200–201. Nevertheless, the precise relationship between the Manichaean and the Jewish developments of the figure remains unclear.

⁸⁰*Hyp. Arch.* 87:23–24. Cf. *Orig. World* 118:16–17.

⁸¹In his review of Kessler's *Mani*, in *ZDMG* 43 (1889), 535–536, Nöldeke cites a few instances in the LXX where ἐκτρώμα translates לֵבָא (abortion): Job 3:16, Eccl 6:3; he also refers to 1 Cor 15:8 (536, n. 1).

⁸²See pp. 65–70 *supra*.

the Nephilim also became the archons, themselves involved in the anthropogonical process.

Cumont duly recognizes that "Mani certainly did not himself invent from scratch this whole story of the abortions swarming upon the earth."⁸³ He remains unable, however, to identify the source of the Manichaean myth. Referring to Nöldeke's suggestion, Cumont notes the similarity between the Manichaean description of the archons made prisoners by Jesus (in the *Fihrist*'s account) and the binding of the Fallen Angels by Michael in *1 Enoch*. Nevertheless, he concludes:

It seems impossible to admit that the extremely developed Manichaean fable could have originated in this short verse of Genesis, but one wonders whether this verse itself does not sum up an old Semitic legend, which Mani would have known.⁸⁴

It is because he was searching for the roots of Manichaeism only in Mesopotamian soil and in early Iranian religion that Cumont could not find Mani's sources for the myth of the abortions and remained convinced that the seduction myth had been borrowed by both Gnostics and Manichaeans from "that eclectic Mesopotamian religion, in which indigenous elements had long become combined with Iranian doctrines."⁸⁵ Yet Isaac de Beausobre, the founder of Manichaean studies, with whose writings Cumont was familiar, had suggested as early as the 18th century that Manichaean mythology was partly rooted in Enochic literature.⁸⁶

The very use of the term ἐγρήγοροι in the *Kephalaia* (and of ʿyr in a Middle Persian fragment) as a synonym for archons not only proves Beausobre's intuition in a definitive way, it also shows that Mani's Watchers were no longer Jewish, but Gnostic.⁸⁷ Paradoxically, Manichaeism, which carried the Gnostic trend of *Mythologisierung* through to the severing of its links with biblical exegesis, manifests here a clearer, more direct influence from Jewish literature than do the Gnostic texts. This important fact might shed light upon the different channels through which Jewish traditions reached the Egyptian Gnostics and the Manichaeans. In both cases, the original milieu would seem to be the Syrian Jewish-Christian baptist trends to which the Elchasaites belonged. The precise assessment of these channels, however, must await further research.

The Giants and the Book of Giants

The preceding section examined the extent to which Manichaean mythology developed the role of the *nepīlīm/nepālīm* (abortions) and identified

⁸³ *Recherches*, 41.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 41, n. 4; cf. 47, n. 4.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 68, conclusion to Appendix I.

⁸⁶ *Histoire Critique de Manichée et du Manichéisme*, I (Amsterdam, 1734), 429, n. 6. Cf. Henning, "Giants," 52.

⁸⁷ It must be noted, however, that the term ἐγρήγοροι is not found in Gnostic texts.

them with the Watchers/archons, the creators of Adam and Eve. However, according to the traditional Jewish understanding, the *neḫilīm* were considered to be giants. *Keph.* XLV mentions, in the same context, both the *egrēgoroi* and the “sons of the giants”:

Before the *egrēgoroi* rebelled and descended from heaven a prison had been built for them in the depth of the earth beneath the mountains. Before the sons of the giants (ΝΩΗΡΕ ΝΗΓΙΓΑΔ) were born, who knew not righteousness and piety among themselves, thirty-six towns had been prepared and erected, so that the sons of the giants should live in them, that they come to beget [. . .] who live a thousand years. (117:1–9)

In Semitic idiom, the expression “sons of the giants” simply means “giants.” In Num 13:33, for instance, it explicitly refers to the Nephilim: “And there we saw the Nephilim, the sons of Anak [בְּנֵי עַנֶּכַּךְ], who come from the Nephilim,” which the LXX renders simply: καὶ ἐκεῖ ἐωράκαμεν τοὺς γίγαντας. The expression “sons of the giants” in *Keph.* XLV, therefore, probably reflects, directly or indirectly, a literal translation of the Semitic expression and should be understood as “giants,” i.e., referring to the *neḫilīm*, sons of the Watchers.⁸⁸

The transition from the equation “sons of the giants = sons of the Watchers” to an identification of the Watchers with the giants was logical and easy. That such a step was actually taken by the Manichaeans is attested to by a passage of Alexander of Lycopolis’s treatise against the Manichaeans. Disputing their asceticism and continence, he said,

What is told in poetry about the *giants* is mythological. Those who discourse about *these* in allegorical form put forth such things hiding the solemnity of their tale behind the form of the myth. For example, when the history of the Jews speaks of the *angels* who consorted with the daughters of men . . .

In good Platonic fashion, Alexander thought that such stories hinted “at the nurturing faculties of the soul,” while the Manichaeans understood them literally.⁸⁹ What is important here is that for Alexander—and presumably for the Manichaeans—the angels of Genesis 6 were considered to be “giants.”

⁸⁸Böhlig offers a slightly different explanation: “Im 45 Kapitel [of the *Kephalaia*] ist nach den gefallen Engeln von den ‘Söhnen der Giganten’ die Rede, obwohl die Giganten selbst gemeint sind. Hier liegt wohl im griechischen Art des υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου vor, während im Henochbuch [ch. 15] sowie bei Synkellos [21 Dindorf] steht [*Keph.* 154:17]”; “Probleme des manichäischen Lehrvortrages,” in *Mysterion und Wahrheit*, 231.

⁸⁹37 Brinkmann; I quote the translation of van der Horst and Mansfeld, 95. For a different understanding of this text, see Henning, “Giants,” 53, n. 5. For Henning, the fact that Alexander did not mention the *Book of Giants* in one breath with the *History of the Jews* “shows conclusively that he had no knowledge of Mani’s book.” This may well be, but it remains that Alexander knew, and did not object to, the close relationship between the giants and the Fallen Angels.

From the biblical verses, therefore, a fourfold exegetical equation was obtained:

Nephilim =	(1) abortions (נפלים)
	(2) sons of the Watchers (i.e., sons of בני אלהים)
	(3) giants (נפילים)
	(4) sons of giants (בני ענק)

Out of these, and through various combinations, the Manichaeans developed the following identifications:

- (1) Watchers = giants
- (2) giants = abortions
- (3) Watchers = abortions

Since Sakla was identified with the leader of the Fallen Angels, he belonged to the abortions (*Keph.* 137:15). Because Sophia was unknown in Manichaean literature, Sakla (who is never called Yaldabaoth) was not presented as her aborted child. On typological grounds, the Manichaean identification seems to have evolved from simpler (and therefore possibly earlier) stages of Gnosticism, in which a Sophia speculation was not known.

The complex identity of the giants may help us understand the intention and meaning of Mani's *Book of Giants*, which is mentioned by both Christian and Muslim heresiographers as one of the six books written by Mani (but not one of the four written by Scythianus).⁹⁰ According to *Keph.* CXLVIII (still incompletely published), the *Book of Giants* (ΤΓΡΑΦΗ ΝΝΓΙΓΔC), together with the *Book of Mysteries* and the *πραγματεία*, belonged to a trilogy of holy writings sent by Mani's twin of light.⁹¹ Henning was the first after Beausobre (to whom he paid tribute) to try to organize and synthesize all knowledge about this *Book of Giants*, of which there was no direct evidence until the modern discoveries at Turfan and in the Fayūm. In two seminal articles,⁹² Henning accepted and

⁹⁰See for instance al-Nadīm, in Flügel, *Mani*, 73 (*kitāb sifr al-jabābirah*), trans. 103, and 362, n. 320. Cf. Photius, Ἡ γιγαντείος βιβλος. *Bibl.*, Cod. 85 (who ascribes it to Herakleion), and Timotheus: Ἡ τῶν Γιγάντων πραγματεία (*PG* 86, 21). See Alfáric, *Les Ecritures manichéennes*, II, 11, and Schmidt-Polotsky, "Mani-Fund," 40. Both Alexander of Lycopolis (chap. 5; 8–10 Brinkmann) and Titus of Bostra (Galland, *Bibl. Vet. Patrum*, V, 294) speak of a γιγαντομαχία (in Alexander's terms, τῇ τῆς ὕλης κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀνταρσίῳ). Cumont (*Recherches*, I, 3–4; II, 160–162) thinks that this γιγαντομαχία in a Persian mythological garb, related the fights of the monsters against heaven at the origin of the world. Henning shows ("Giants," 53, n. 5) that the word γιγαντομαχία was used by Alexander in a Greek context, but he does not think of the possible amalgamation of the "Enochic" giants and the archons of cosmogony.

⁹¹Cf. Schmidt-Polotsky, "Mani-Fund," 35 and 86, ll. 9–13. To my knowledge, this is the only mention of the *Book of Giants* in a Manichaean text.

⁹²"Henochbuch," and "Giants"; see also "Neue Materialien zur Geschichte des Manichäismus," *ZDMG* 90 (1936), 1–18, esp. 1–4 (= *Selected Papers*, I, 379–396).

sharpened Beausobre's guess that Mani's *Book of Giants* was based upon the *γραφὴ τῶν γιγάντων* which Cainan, a great-grandson of Noah, was said to have discovered lying in a field.⁹³

Since Henning thought that Enochic literature was originally written in Hebrew, he had to assume that Mani had read the Jewish *Book of Giants* in an Aramaic translation.⁹⁴ But Henning could not place this book precisely in the Enochic corpus. The discovery in Qumrān Cave 4 of many Aramaic Enochic fragments has drastically added to our knowledge of this corpus. Although their study has only just begun, it already appears probable that Aramaic was the *original* language of the corpus. Furthermore, Milik claims to have identified some of these fragments as coming from the original *Book of Giants*, the one from which Mani was thought to have borrowed extensively in his own work of the same title.⁹⁵ Unfortunately, Milik has so far published only a few of the relevant fragments, so that any discussion has to remain provisional. According to Milik, this *Book of Giants* dealt mainly with the story of the offspring of the Sons of God, called the Watchers (ערין) or the Holy Watchers (ערין קדישין), and with their wicked deeds. In the original corpus, this book probably followed the *Book of Watchers* (1 Enoch 6–16). Milik assumes that the reason for the censorship applied to the *Book of Giants* by the Christian editors of the corpus may well have been its popularity among the Manichaeans. The fragments published by Henning and those published so far by Milik do not show conclusively that Mani's sole and direct source was the Jewish *Book of Giants*. What they do show is that Mani knew the story told by the *Book of Giants*. To reproduce and discuss the relevant fragments here in detail is beyond the scope of this work. From the evidence presented by Milik, however, it appears that some of the traditions preserved in the Qumrān fragments were known to Mani. These include the names of Šemiḥazah and his sons Ohyā and Ahyā; the names of Baraq'el and his son Mahawai;⁹⁶ and the tree metaphor for the 200 Watchers.⁹⁷ Obviously,

⁹³ *Histoire Critique de Manichée*, I, 429, and n. 6: "Au reste je ne sais si l'*Histoire Apocryphe des Géans*, qui portait le nom d'Enoch, n'est pas le livre dont parle George Syncelle, sur l'an du Monde 2585. Il raconte que Cainan, arrière-petit-Fils de Noé, se promenant dans la Campagne, trouva l'Ecriture des Géans, et la cacha chez lui. Manichée pouvait avoir puisé dans ces mauvaises sources." (See Syncellus, *Chronography*, 150 Dindorf.) See also H.-H. Schaefer's recension of Schmidt-Polotsky, "Mani-Fund," in *Gnomon* 9 (1933), 347.

⁹⁴ "Henochbuch," 29–30; see Milik, *Enoch*, 303.

⁹⁵ 1 Enoch 298–339. For a detailed review of Milik's book, see A.-M. Denis in *Muséon* 90 (1977), 462–469. On Milik's discussion of the *Book of Giants*, Denis writes (p. 467): "Toutes ces hypothèses en cascade sont certes défendables et suscitent une curiosité émerveillée. Mais faut-il recourir à tant d'inconnues . . . ?" Some of Milik's hypotheses and conclusions have been critically examined by J. Greenfield and M. E. Stone, "The Book of Enoch and the Traditions of Enoch," *Numen* 26 (1979), 89–103. On the relationships between the Qumrān fragments and Mani's *Book of Giants*, see H.-J. Klimkeit, "Der Buddha Henoch: Qumran und Turfan," *ZRGG* 32 (1980), 367–375, esp. 368–369.

⁹⁶ See Middle Persian fragments c and l, Uygur fragment, and Parthian fragment (Henning, "Giants," 60, 61, 65, 72); cf. 6Q 8.1 (Milik, *Enoch*, 300–301). See also Henning, "Giants," 52–53, and "Neue Materialien," 4, where he shows that some Iranian names are "translations" of Hebrew ones, e.g., Virogdad for Baraq'el.

these bits of evidence are insufficient to support any argument about a direct literary relationship between the two works entitled *Book of Giants*.

In any case, there remains the question of why Mani was so interested in this body of literature that he himself contributed to it and publicized it among his followers (according to Henning, "The *Book of Giants* was published in no less than six or seven languages")?⁹⁸ Henning thinks that Mani was led to Enochic literature by his so "strongly pronounced interest in myths and legends of ancient times,"⁹⁹ while Milik opines,

This Jewish work fell into the hands of a young Parthian aristocrat, a member of a strict Christian sect. Delighted with its narrative charm and moved by some underlying metaphysical truths, Mani decided to give it a place among his own literary works. He confined himself to an adaptation which seems to me not very thoroughgoing: in places a word-for-word translation, in places *résumés* of the narrative sections, in places slight elaboration.¹⁰⁰

What both Henning and Milik are in fact saying is that Mani wrote the *Book of Giants*—and had translations made of it—because he loved *Mār-chen*. This is not a very convincing argument when dealing with a theologian of genius such as Mani. If he wrote the book, it is because he intended it to transmit an essentially religious message. And if he loved the writing that became the source of his own work, he must have found religious value in it. But what were these "underlying metaphysical truths" which Mani discovered in the traditions about the giants? One inference follows from the identification of the Manichaean mythologoumena as typically Gnostic, for it stands to reason that Mani's interest in the giants and their deeds was similar to the Gnostics' interest in them. Hence in his *Book of Giants*, as in the *Kephalaia* and the sources quoted by Theodore bar Khonai and Ibn al-Nadīm, Mani set out to develop a *Gnostic* understanding of the giants—the pervasive myth of the lustful archons and their wicked deeds throughout history.

In fact, the scant fragments of the *Book of Giants* themselves may preserve traces of Gnostic mythologoumena. In fragment *i* from the *Kawān*,¹⁰¹ the 400,000 righteous ones were killed by fire, naphta, and brimstone. This motif does not appear in the Qumrān fragments, but in *Apoc. Adam* 75:9–10, the forces of evil used fire, sulphur, and asphalt against the Gnostics, who, according to the same text, numbered 400,000.¹⁰² This number also appears elsewhere in Manichaean texts. In

⁹⁷See Middle Persian fragment *d* (Henning, "Henochbuch," 29, and "Giants," 66); cf. *4Q En Giants*^b (Milik, *Enoch*, 304).

⁹⁸"Giants," 55.

⁹⁹"Henochbuch," 32.

¹⁰⁰Milik, *Enoch*, 310. Cf. his "Turfan et Qumran, Livre des Géants juif et manichéen," in *Tradition und Glaube, das frühe Christentum in seiner Umwelt: Festgabe für Karl Georg Kulm* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), 124.

¹⁰¹Henning, "Giants," 58, trans. 62. See also Sogdian fragment *g*, *ibid.*, 68–69.

¹⁰²*Apoc. Adam* 73:15–20; 74:12–16. On this number, see 85, nn. 15, 16 *supra*.

Hom. 68:18, 400,000 righteous ones are mentioned in connection with Enoch, while the *Psalter* refers, also in connection with Enoch, "the Righteous who were burnt in the fire," and the "multitude that were wiped out—four thousand."¹⁰³

In the Sogdian fragment g, the demons (i.e., the Watchers) are said to have imprisoned

all the helpers that were in the heavens. And the angels themselves descended from the heaven to the earth. And (when) the two hundred demons saw those angels, they were much afraid and worried.¹⁰⁴

The 200 Watchers of *1 Enoch* can be recognized here, even though "helpers" as a designation for angels or archangels does not appear in the Enochic literature published so far. While the Prince of Light was called "our helper" in 1 QM XIII.10, the term "helper" seems to have been especially common in Gnostic texts. To be sure, these two motifs might also have been present in the Jewish work, but evidence for that is still lacking. On the other hand, the traces of Gnostic mythologoumena found in the Manichaean fragments are too scant for us to postulate a gnostitized version of the *Book of Giants* as Mani's source.

Whatever the case with the Manichaean *Book of Giants*, the evidence cited above (and especially from the *Kephalaia*) leaves no doubt that if Mani knew the Jewish legends, it was a Gnostic or gnosticizing reading of them with which he became acquainted, most probably while living among the Elchasaites,¹⁰⁵ and which he himself sought to develop. That is to say, for Mani, the complex called "giants" was the embodiment of evil through history; these figures were the equivalent of the Gnostic archons. As in Gnosticism, only by fighting them and opposing their evil designs could the forces of righteousness reach salvation.

Milik claims to have identified another (late) witness to the original *Book of Giants*. For him the *Midrash of Shemhazai and Azael* is a retroversion into Hebrew of the Manichaean *Book of Giants*:

A scholarly Babylonian rabbi could have found and understood without difficulty the Syriac [*sic*] Book of Giants, as recently as the early Middle Ages.¹⁰⁶

The author of the Jewish adaptation of the Manichaean Book of Giants will readily be acknowledged as the rabbi Joseph who is mentioned at the beginning of the midrash on Šemhazai and 'Aza'el. It is

¹⁰³ *MPs*, 143:7–8; see Allberry's references there.

¹⁰⁴ Henning, "Giants," 68–69. See *Keph.* 93:22, 97:33, 98:3, 127:8, etc., where the Greek βoηθός is kept.

¹⁰⁵ This is also the opinion of J. C. Greenfield and M. E. Stone, "The Enochic Pentateuch and the Date of the Similitudes," *HTR* 70 (1977), 51–65, esp. 62.

¹⁰⁶ Milik, *Enoch*, 335.

in fact R. Joseph bar Hiyyā (died A.D. 333), who was the successor to Rabbā bar Nahmanī in the academy of Pumbedītā.¹⁰⁷

This identification, however, rests on rather weak grounds; it is somewhat difficult to imagine a 4th-century Rabbi translating Manichaean tales and publicizing them among his own flock.¹⁰⁸ Yet certain details of the *Midrash of Shemḥazai and Azael* do indeed suggest that this work belonged to the same kind of literature as the Jewish *Book of Giants*. In a dream, Heyyā and Aheyyā, Shemḥazai's sons, saw an angel descending from the firmament and "cutting down all the trees so that there remained only one tree containing three branches." This dream and these images are very close to the Qumrān, rather than to the Manichaean fragments of the *Book of Giants*. *4Q En Giants^b* mentions the dreams of Shemḥaza's sons about a garden, while *6Q 8₂* speaks of "three shoots," apparently Noah's sons.¹⁰⁹ Milik's intuition, therefore, sound more plausible if amended to understand the medieval version of the *Midrash of Shemḥazai and Azael* as a late, *but direct* witness of the Jewish *Book of Giants*, of which Mani's own book was a gnosticized version.

While my suggestion cannot be confirmed conclusively, it is of interest to recall the contexts in which the *Midrash of Shemḥazai and Azael* has been encountered in the course of this work: its heroine, the pure Esterah, was also identified with Seth's sister (Armenian *Death of Adam*); a very similar story, found in a Hermetic context, gave indications of a Jewish origin (*To Horus*). Furthermore, it seems to me that if the story of Esterah's escape from the lustful Shemḥazai indeed belonged to the Jewish *Book of Giants*, then the myth of Norea's escape from the clutches of the archons would merely be the reformulation of a legend already present in Jewish literature. In its Gnostic reformulation, the legend acquired a new and precise soteriological significance, thus becoming a full-fledged myth. Such a suggestion, however plausible, must remain speculative because it rests upon a *midrash* directly attested only in medieval versions. In the course of this work, therefore, I have deliberately avoided basing my analysis on the evidence of *Shemḥazai and Azael*, although the midrashic material clearly bears upon the argument developed here. It would indeed strengthen the conclusions of Part I by indicating that the "inversion process" of the myth of the Fallen Angels was already well advanced in Jewish traditions before the birth of Gnosticism.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 339.

¹⁰⁸ On the extent to which Babylonian communities remained isolated from one another, see J. B. Segal, "Mesopotamian Communities from Julian to the Rise of Islam," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 45 (1955), 109–139.

¹⁰⁹ Milik, *Enoch*, 304, 309.

CONCLUSION

THE Gnostic SEXUAL MYTH

The three parts of this inquiry have addressed, both genetically and structurally, some major themes of Gnostic mythology. The evidence analyzed here shows how the dualistic vision of history corresponds to the dualistic anthropology of the Gnostic *Weltanschauung*.

As we have seen, the view, still widely held, according to which Gnostic thought totally negated time appears to be unfounded, or at least, limited to those trends—neither the earliest nor the main ones—for which salvation was attainable only in the immediacy of personal election. Indeed, the early Gnostic conception of time reveals the deep influence of Jewish eschatology. The importance of *Heilsgeschichte* did not seem to grow with the increasing christianization of the texts, and there are no grounds for claiming, with Rudolph, that the *Historisierung* of the Gnostic savior was due to Christian influences.¹ In the Gnostic system of belief, history was conceived of as a permanent conflict between the Gnostics and the forces of evil. The latter, ruled by the demiurge and his acolytes, the archons, all of whom keep the rest of mankind under their sway, unceasingly sought either to destroy the Gnostics, who were born from the pure “other seed” of Seth, or to pervert them through lustful unions. At the end of time, the forces of evil would be defeated.

We can now understand better how some Gnostics thought themselves to be the seed of Seth, the “other seed,” and how their core myth was directly related to the problem of the origins of evil and righteousness. This core myth, consisting of the pure birth of Seth and of its corollary, Eve escaping from the lust of the demiurge and the archons, itself evolved from the Jewish aggadic tradition about Eve’s seduction by Satan, which resulted in the birth of Cain. We have seen how Satan’s adulterous relations with Eve were integrated by the Gnostics into the paradigm of *mixis*: the union of the angels descended from heaven with the women. From these unions, the giants were born and evil came upon the earth, prompting God to send the flood. For the Gnostics, the leader of these angels was no longer Shemhazai or Satan, as in the Jewish forms of the myth, but the demiurge himself, Yaldabaoth or Sakla (who also retains a Jewish name of Satan, Sammael). Parallel to their indictment of the satanized demiurge, these Gnostics developed an “anthropodicy”; their claim to redemption rested upon their continued purity, while the rest of mankind was tainted by lust.

¹*Gnosis*, 163.

Paradoxically, *gnosis* has been encountered here rather little. In the early Gnostic trends, the major emphasis appears to have been placed on the sexual mythology; only later did it move to the saving knowledge. This impression is corroborated by Hippolytus's testimony:

Therefore, the priests and chiefs of the doctrine were the first who were called Naassenes, being thus named in the Hebrew tongue: for the serpent is called *naas*. Afterwards, they called themselves Gnostics, alleging that they alone knew the depths.²

This evolution, which led Gnostic thought away from mythology to metaphorical theology, may be detected, for instance, in Valentinian language.³ Yet in order to introduce freedom into Gnostic thought, the Valentinians expanded the predestinarian dualism of the early Gnostics into a tripartite anthropology; the "psychics," to whom Abel belonged, could *choose election* and join the Gnostics.

Time and again, I have insisted upon the importance of the Jewish elements, which were thoroughly reinterpreted or inverted in Gnosticism. These elements came not only from apocalyptic texts, but also from traditions later recorded in rabbinic literature; they appeared not as merely discrete mythologoumena, but rather pervaded all of early Gnosis, before its double encounter with Christianity and Middle Platonism. These Jewish elements could hardly be later influences upon a movement further and further estranged from anything Jewish; they must point to Jewish roots of Gnosticism, roots which appear to have run very deep.

Arguing against H. Jonas, R. Grant claims—in agreement with Hippolytus—that the roots of Gnosticism were not *mythological*, but *philosophical*.⁴ The results of this inquiry point to a third option: that the emergence of Gnosticism was strongly related to *exegetical* problems of the first chapters of Genesis. We have seen that Gnostic mythology was established upon a hermeneutical basis directly inherited from Judaism. The radicalization of these Jewish exegetical traditions and their crystallization seem to have been at the core of the key Gnostic myths. Moreover, we have found no reason to assume any Christian mediation through which these traditions would have reached the Gnostics. Problems of major importance for the Gnostics were also dealt with in the philosophical tradition (mainly in the Academy), but it seems that the Gnostics' discovery of this tradition and the extensive influence it exercised upon Gnostic thought were nonetheless secondary. It may be useful to note that this centrality of exegesis to the origins of Gnostic thought runs counter to

²*Elenchos* 5.6. Cf. M. Smith, "The History of the Term *gnostikos*," in Layton, ed., *Rediscovery*, II, 796–807.

³See for instance E. Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis: Heracleon's Commentary on John* (SBLMS 17; Nashville–New York: Abingdon, 1973), 98–113, esp. 103.

⁴In his review of Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, II, in *JTS*, N.S. 7 (1956), 313.

Harnack's argument that Marcion was not a Gnostic *because* he was mainly interested in biblical exegesis.⁵

What were the major exegetical elements in the earliest stages of Gnostic mythology? A reconstruction of the Gnostic *Ursystem* has been attempted by H.-M. Schenke.⁶ In the original mythology, according to him, the unknown God and his consort Sophia had their abode in the Ogdoad. Sophia, however, became pregnant of herself; she aborted, and her imperfect child was the demiurge, who fell down to the Hebdomad and then created the planets and the world with the help of six angels. One great problem with this reconstruction, however, is that the myth described by Schenke is much too complex to be considered primitive.

George MacRae has plausibly suggested that the fall of Eve must have played a crucial role in the accretion process through which the Gnostic Sophia myth was built.⁷ It remains impossible to reconstruct exactly the successive steps through which the "fall" of Eve could have played such a role. Yet it follows from the present research that the connection between the "fall" of Eve and the fall of Sophia is best understood when the following mythologoumena, first developed in pre-Gnostic Jewish literature, are taken into account:

- The rape of Eve.
- The imperfect beings (*neḫilīm*—Giants—abortions) emerging from sinful sexual unions.
- The heavenly counterparts of Eve and Adam.
- The double identification of the *descent* of the angels with a *fall*; and of this fall with the fall of Satan and his seduction of Eve.

⁵Of Marcion's "Cainite" attitude to the biblical text, Harnack could say: "Das wahre Christentum ist daher objectiv biblische Theologie und nicht anderes"; *Marcion: Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott: Eine Monographie zur Geschichte der Grundlegung der katholischen Kirche; Neue Studien zu Marcion* (TU 45; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1924), 142.

⁶"Das Problem der Beziehung zwischen Judentum und Gnosis," *Kairos* 7 (1965), 124–133.

⁷"The Gnostic Sophia Myth," 99. In Gnostic texts, Sophia was also linked with the heavenly Anthropos. The relationship between these two figures has been discussed both by Bousset (*Hauptprobleme*, 217) and by Quispel ("Der gnostische Anthropos," 214, 223). Bousset favors the historical precedence of the *Urmensch*, while Quispel thinks that only later did this myth take the place of Sophia's fall. This discussion now appears to be outdated. The new texts make it clear that the male and female aspects of God and of the Immortal Man are concomitant in Gnostic thought. See, for instance, D. M. Parrot, "Evidence of Religious Syncretism in Gnostic Texts from Nag Hammadi," in Pearson, ed., *Religious Syncretism in Antiquity*, 173–189, esp. 178–179. Sophia and Anthropos should be seen as complementary parts of the complex Gnostic myth that seeks to explain the emergence of both evil and the pure seed; the difference between these two principles, as Schenke points out (*Der Gott "Mensch"*, 67), is that while Sophia functions on a cosmological level, the Anthropos functions as an anthropogonical principle. Only in Manichaeism would the Anthropos become integrated to the cosmological myth.

Every piece of evidence seems to confirm the conjecture that the cradle of some of the earliest Gnostic groups was among Palestinian or Syrian baptist sects of Jewish background.⁸ The precise social milieu and conditions in which Gnosticism arose, however, remain beyond our grasp. Similarly, and despite the overall presence of Seth in Gnostic mythology, we remain unable to detect the actual existence of a specific group of "Sethians," as the Church Fathers described them. But this question is secondary to the main problem raised by research into Gnostic origins: How did the passage from the Jewish God to the Gnostic demiurge, from monotheism to dualism, come about? How could the idea of an ignorant creator, weak and witless, arise on the fringes of Judaism? We speak of "dialectics" or of "revolution,"⁹ but such terms merely underscore the strangeness of the phenomenon, they do not explain it.

It would seem, however, that a *hierarchical* duality between God and His demiurgic angel did develop inside Judaism, before the first Christian century, in order to answer the problem of biblical anthropomorphisms.¹⁰ The Gnostics, who were obsessed by another problem, that of the existence of evil and its source, picked up this duality between God and the demiurge and radicalized it by demonizing the demiurge and identifying him with Satan. Here, too, the identification of evil with matter, important though it may be, is only secondary to the demonization process, which transformed a hierarchical duality into a *conflicting* dualism.

The same puzzling passage from monotheism to dualism can also be observed in early Manichaeism. The myths analyzed here in no way indicate that Manichaeism represented an "Iranian" form of Gnostic dualism, as opposed to those trends represented by the Nag Hammadi texts and the reports of the Church Fathers.¹¹ Genetic analysis of some of the basic Manichaean myths reveals the same Jewish sources that underlie other Gnostic myths, strengthening what has become indubitable since the discovery of the *Cologne Mani Codex*: that Mani grew up in a Jewish-Christian gnosticizing community. How texts such as the *Book of Giants* were transmitted to Mani and his disciples is not known. A chain such as Qumrān (Essenes) → Jewish-Christian groups → Syriac "Gnostic" Christians → Manichaeans remains speculative.¹² Here again, the basic fact is

⁸Böhlig, *Koptische-gnostische Apokalypsen*, 95; MacRae, "Apoc. Adam Reconsidered," 577.

⁹E.g. Quispel's affirmation that the idea of the demiurge as a subordinate ruler "originated in Palestine among rebellious and heterodox Jews"; "The Origins of the Gnostic Demiurge," in *Kyriakon: Festschrift Johannes Quasten* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1970), 276.

¹⁰G. Stroumsa, "Le couple de l'Ange et de l'Esprit, traditions juives et chrétiennes," *RB* 88 (1981), 42-61. See also *idem*, "Form(s) of God: Some Notes on Metatron and Christ," and A. F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (SJLA 25; Leiden: Brill, 1977).

¹¹This taxonomy, developed by Jonas, is accepted anew by Rudolph (*Gnosis*, 74). On the nature of Manichaean dualism, see now my "König und Schwein: zur Struktur des manichäischen Dualismus," in J. Taubes, ed., *Gnosis und Politik* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1984), 141-153.

¹²This chain was proposed by J. C. Greenfield, in his Prolegomenon to H. Odeberg, *III Enoch* (New York: Ktav, 1973), XLI-XLII.

that *Enoch* and related material were current in a number of circles and played a major role in the crystallization of Gnostic mythologies.

In the course of his anti-Manichaean polemics (in *Contra Faustum*), Augustine coined the expression *salvator salvandus*. The *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* considered the myth of the savior who himself needed salvation to be *the* central Gnostic myth. While the figure of Norea may in fact fit this conception, Norea is not the central Gnostic savior figure; she may equally be viewed as representing the Gnostics themselves in their combat against the archons. For their main savior figure, Seth, we have found no evidence that he ever needed to be saved.¹³ The words of *Allogenes* 50:33–36 are appropriate here: “that you might escape in safety to the One who is yours, who was first to save and who does not need to be saved.” It could not be said more clearly that for the Gnostic author, *salvator salvandus non est*. The notion of a “redeemed redeemer” does not seem to be inherent to all Gnostic trends. The findings of the present work thus agree with those of C. Colpe, who found the model of the Gnostic *erlöster Erlöser*, as propounded by Reitzenstein, to be wanting.¹⁴

The Christian heresiologists often accused the Gnostics of lewdness and licentiousness, sometimes with appalling details of the Gnostics’ sexual behavior.¹⁵ Nothing in the Gnostic texts themselves supports these accusations. On the contrary, the texts consistently reiterate their total condemnation of lustful acts. This discrepancy has led some scholars to insist upon the element of slander in the descriptions of the Church Fathers.¹⁶ Yet the phenomenon may be explained without total reliance on defamation. The obsessive preoccupation of the Gnostics with sex, as reflected in their mythology, could well have shocked the Fathers, who misinterpreted it as a clear sign of their unchaste behavior. But the student of religion should not be surprised by the combination of strongly ascetic behavior and sexually-centered mythology.¹⁷

In 1826 Daniel Parker, a Baptist preacher in Georgia, published a pamphlet in which he established his doctrine of the “two-seeds-in-the-Spirit.” According to it, two seeds were planted in Eve, one by God and the other by Satan; the election of each individual is determined by the seed from which he or she came. Everyone is thus either a Son of God or a “son of Satan.” And there still exists in the United States a small

¹³*Contra* H.-C. Puech, “Archontiker,” *RAC* I, 641. See also Schenke, “Gnosis,” in J. Leipold and W. Grundmann, *Umwelt des Christentums*, I (Berlin: Evang. Verlaganstalt, 1965), 32. But see Manichaean developments, pp. 148–149 *supra*.

¹⁴*Die religionsgeschichtliche Schule: Darstellung und Kritik ihres Bildes vom gnostischen Erlösermythus* (FRLANT, N.F. 60: Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), esp. 191. See Colpe, “Die gnostische Gestalt des erlösten Erlösers,” *Der Islam* 32 (1955), 195–214.

¹⁵E.g. Epiphanius, *Pan.* 26; see the remarks of A. Henrichs, “Pagan Ritual and the Alleged Crimes of the Early Christians,” *Kyriakon*, 28–29.

¹⁶E.g. H. Chadwick, “The Domestication of Gnosis,” in Layton, ed., *Rediscovery*, I, 3–15; cf. my “Ascèse et Gnose: aux origines de la spiritualité chrétienne,” *Revue Thomiste*, 81 (1981), 557–573.

¹⁷See my remarks, “The Gnostic Temptation,” *Numen* 27 (1980), 278–286.

Baptist community of believers in the “two-seeds-in-the-Spirit.”¹⁸

This quirky resurgence of a predestinarianism so close to that of the Gnostic myths studied here is a reminder to the historian that he or she alone cannot hope to deal adequately with all facets of a religious phenomenon as complex as Gnosticism.

¹⁸S. E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1975), II, 177, n. 11. Parker's pamphlet is not listed in the *National Union Catalogue*.

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