

MICHAEL ALLEN WILLIAMS

THE IMMOVABLE RACE

A GNOSTIC DESIGNATION
AND THE THEME OF
STABILITY IN LATE ANTIQUITY



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LEIDEN
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PREFACE

This book represents the final metamorphosis of research which I began in my 1977 Harvard dissertation, "The Nature and Origin of the Gnostic Concept of Stability." However, the present study probably can no longer be called simply a revision of the earlier work. To be sure, certain data and analyses from my dissertation have been incorporated here, but the scope and methodology have been entirely reconceived, and two-thirds or more of the content is completely new. The manuscript for the book was essentially finished by the spring of 1982 and was submitted at that time to NAG HAMMADI STUDIES. After acceptance into the series, the manuscript underwent some minor revisions during 1983, but I have been able to make only a handful of further minor changes during the subsequent period of delay in publication.

It was my dissertation advisor Professor George W. MacRae who first directed me to a closer look at the general subject of gnosticism's relationships to ancient Platonism, and who introduced me to some of the Nag Hammadi tractates that are particularly relevant to this issue. It was out of this early work that my interest in the theme of stability took shape. The precision of Professor MacRae's scholarship and his extraordinary gifts as a teacher provided a constantly inspiring model, and for his unfailing generosity with both his time and ideas I will be forever grateful. I also owe deepest thanks to the other members of my dissertation committee, Professors Helmut Koester, Zeph Stewart, and John Strugnell. They cured me of more misconceptions than I care to remember, but also supplied ungrudging encouragement that I will never forget. Although he was not on my final dissertation committee, I also received helpful criticism and guidance from Professor Dieter Georgi during the earlier stages of my dissertation research.

In the years which followed the completion of my dissertation, several factors motivated me in the fresh directions that eventually produced the present book. But special mention must be made of the stimulation I have received from my colleagues on the University of Washington's Comparative Religion Program, one of the several interdisciplinary programs belonging to what is now the University's Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies. In particular, the vigorous intellectual exchange that has characterized the Comparative Religion Program's annual faculty seminars led me—both directly and indirectly—to an entire series of new questions relating to the general topic of my dissertation. Whatever general worth this study may have would have been enormously diminished without what I have learned from these colleagues. Some of them eventually read drafts of all or portions of the book: Professor Eugene Webb, who also as chairman of the Comparative Religion Program during the past decade aided more than once in enabling me to have time for work

on this project; Professor Caroline W. Bynum, whose greatly respected judgment and rousing encouragement always seemed to come precisely when most needed; Professor John S. Hawley, who suggested revisions which I only wish I had been able to carry through more fully; Professor Rodney Stark, whose observations were especially helpful to me as I was writing Chapter VIII.

To Professor Peter Brown I am truly beholden for interest which he showed in my research, for the welcome support he volunteered, and for the generous advice and criticism that he offered in his inimitably gracious manner. An equally great debt is owed to Professor Bentley Layton, for the care that he took in reading an earlier draft of the book, and for the momentous difference made to me by his encouraging reactions. I also warmly thank Professors Frederik Wisse, James M. Robinson and John Turner for their reading of different drafts of the manuscript and for the important help they have given me. Professor Robert Doran read Chapter III and Professor Douglas Parrott read Chapter VI, and both were kind enough to send me written criticism and make several valuable suggestions.

I am profoundly grateful to the University of Washington's Graduate School Research Fund, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the Jackson School of International Studies, for jointly awarding a major subvention grant, and especially I wish to express my appreciation to Professor Kenneth B. Pyle, Director of the Jackson School, for his ready support in this. And still a second word of thanks is due to the Graduate School Research Fund, for having awarded me a research grant during the summer of 1979 for work on this book.

Mr. Gary Bisbee, of Chiron Inc., has done a splendid job in preparing the camera-ready copy, with marvelous efficiency and with a completely accommodating spirit.

By far the greatest contribution that I must acknowledge has come from three persons: My daughters, Melissa and Beth, did without a father far more than should have been required of them. But above all, I think of the innumerable sacrifices of my wife, Mary. The book itself is what remains of countless, now irretrievable hours that could—by rights ought to—have belonged to her.

ABBREVIATIONS

A. General

BBA	Berliner byzantinistische Arbeiten
BZNW	Beiheft zur <i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
JAC	Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
MPG	J.-P. Migne, ed., <i>Patrologia Graeca</i>
NHS	Nag Hammadi Studies
NovT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
RVV	Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
VigChr	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZKG	<i>Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>

B. Gnostic Literature

Allog	<i>Allogenes</i> (CG XI,3)
ApocryJn	<i>The Apocryphon of John</i> (BG 2; CG II,1; III,1; IV,1)
BG	Papyrus Berolinensis Gnosticus 8502
BJeu	<i>The Books of Jeu</i> (in the Bruce Codex)
CG	Cairensis Gnosticus (Nag Hammadi Library)
Eugnostos	<i>Eugnostos the Blessed</i> (CG III,3; V,1)
GEgypt	<i>Gospel of the Egyptians</i> (CG III,2; IV,2)
GPh	<i>Gospel of Philip</i> (CG II,3)
GrSeth	<i>Second Treatise of the Great Seth</i> (CG VII,2)
GTh	<i>Gospel of Thomas</i> (CG II,2)
Melch	<i>Melchizedek</i> (CG IX,1)
OrigWorld	<i>On the Origin of the World</i> (CG II,5)
ParaShem	<i>The Paraphrase of Shem</i> (CG VII,1)
Silv	<i>The Teachings of Silvanus</i> (CG VII,4)
SJC	<i>The Sophia of Jesus Christ</i> (BG 3; CG III,4)
3StSeth	<i>The Three Steles of Seth</i> (CG VII,5)

<i>TriProt</i>	<i>Trimorphic Protennoia (CG XIII,1)</i>
<i>TriTract</i>	<i>The Tripartite Tractate (CG I,5)</i>
<i>Untitled Text</i>	<i>The Untitled Text in the Bruce Codex</i>
<i>Zost</i>	<i>Zostrianos (CG VIII,1)</i>

INTRODUCTION

Prior to the discovery and publication of the (apparently fourth century C.E.) Coptic manuscripts from the area of Nag Hammadi, and the closely related (apparently fifth century C.E.) Berlin Coptic codex, Papyrus Berolinensis 8502,¹ the designation "the immovable race" was completely unknown to modern scholarship. But since the availability of these manuscripts, this designation has become rather familiar to scholars who work with these texts. It appears some two dozen times in these manuscripts. However, when one takes account of multiple copies of the works involved, the phrase is found in only five writings—and nowhere else in ancient literature, so far as I know:

1. It appears in all four copies of the *Apocryphon of John*, in the dialogue sections at the beginning and in the latter part of the work. For convenience, I quote the instances as found in the Berlin Codex version of *ApocryJn*, and these are rather closely parallel in all four copies, with the exception of the third quotation, where there seems to be a corruption in the text, and where only Codex III from Nag Hammadi contains the phrase "immovable race" (for parallel citations, see the chart below with the Coptic terminology):

BG 22,10–17:

But now lift up your [face] and listen and [understand what I am] about to say to you this day, [so that] you (John) also may proclaim it to [your] kindred spirits, those who are from *the immovable race* of the perfect Human.

BG 64,17–65,3:

You (John) have entered into a consideration of great things, such as are difficult to disclose to anyone except those who are from *that immovable race*.

¹ For a brief introduction to the Nag Hammadi Library, and preliminary English translation of the contents, see James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (New York: Harper & Row; Leiden: Brill, 1977); for the photographic edition of the manuscripts: *The Facsimile Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices*, published under the Auspices of the Department of Antiquities of the Arab Republic of Egypt, in conjunction with UNESCO, 11 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1972–79); the publication of critical editions of the texts, with translation and notes, is still in progress, with the volumes appearing in the "Nag Hammadi Studies" series, also published by Brill. On the Berlin Codex, see Walter C. Till, ed., *Die gnostischen Schriften des koptischen Papyrus Berolinensis 8502*, second edition by Hans-Martin Schenke, TU 60,2 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1972).

BG 71,10–14:

... the seed which he raised up in the thought of the people of the race of the perfect, eternal Light-Human (CG III 36,23–25: *the immovable race* of the perfect Light [-Human]).

BG 73,7–11:

Not Noah alone, but people from *the immovable race* entered into a place. They covered themselves with a cloud of light.

BG 75,15–76,1:

But I tell you these things in order that you might write them down and give them to your kindred spirits in secret. For this mystery belongs to *the immovable race*.

2. In the *Sophia of Jesus Christ*, for which we have one copy in the Berlin Codex and one copy in Nag Hammadi Codex III, the simple form “the immovable race” appears once:

BG 87,8–88,10 (= CG III 96,14–97,16):

Thomas said, “Christ, Savior, why have these things come into being and why have they appeared?” The perfect Savior said, “I have come from the Infinite in order that I might teach you about everything. The Spirit which exists was a begetter possessing a substance-begetting and form-begetting power, in order that the great wealth which is within him might be revealed. Because of his goodness and love he desired to beget fruits through himself alone, so that not only he himself might enjoy his goodness, but also other spirits of *the immovable race* might produce body and fruit, glory and incorruptibility, and his unending grace, so that his goodness might be manifest by means of the unbegotten God, the Father of every incorruptibility and those that came into being after these.”

3. In the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, of which there are two copies in the Nag Hammadi texts,² the term “immovable race” appears only once in that simple form, and then only in the Codex IV version:

CG III 51,6–14 (= CG IV 62,31–63,8)

The incorruptible Human Adamas asked for a son from himself for them, in order that he might become the father of *the immovable, incorruptible race* so that through it (the race) the silence and the voice might appear, and through it the dead aeon might raise itself in order that it might perish.

² Alexander Böhlig and Frederik Wisse, eds., *Nag Hammadi Codices III, 2 and IV, 2: The Gospel of the Egyptians (The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit)*, NHS 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1975).

CG III 59,12–15 (parallel text in CG IV lost):

(The Father) was well pleased with *the great, incorruptible immovable race* of the great strong men of the great Seth.

CG III 61,16–23 (= CG IV 72,27–73,6):

Then the great Seth saw the activity of the devil, and his many forms, and his schemes which will come upon *his incorruptible, immovable race* (CG IV: his scheme which he will bring upon *the immovable race*), and the persecutions of his powers and angels, and their error in that they act audaciously against themselves.

This race which is called “immovable” in these three places in *GEgypt*, is referred to a dozen or so other times in the work, but with variation in the adjectives used (“incorruptible race,” “great, incorruptible race,” “incorruptible, holy race,” etc.), or sometimes simply as “the race.”³

4. In the *incipit* of the *Three Steles of Seth* (118,10–13), the following reference is found: “The revelation of Dositheos of the three steles of Seth, the father of *the living and immovable race*.”

5. The manuscript of the tractate *Zostrianos* is extremely fragmentary, but at least once in this text (51,15f) mention is made of “Seth, the father of *the immovable race*.” In another, even more fragmentary passage in this work (6,28) there seems to be the same phraseology as in 51,14f about “Seth, the son of Adamas,” and this is followed by a reference to “*the [immovable] race*.”

In the manuscripts the Greek term *genea*, “race, family, generation,” is found in every instance of the designation. The other part of the phrase is expressed in all but one instance with a form of the Coptic verb *kim*, “to move, shake, be moved, shaken, etc.” The phraseology which appears in the various manuscripts is summarized in the chart.

In Coptic texts which have been translated from Greek originals, the term *kim* can translate a number of Greek words, but the two most common are *kinein* and *saleuein* and their cognates.⁴ That the Greek term *asaleutos* is found in *ApocryJn* III 33,3 suggests that *hē asaleutos genea* is the Greek phrase which underlies all the instances of the designation “immovable race” in at least *ApocryJn*. At present I would say that there is no evidence to suggest that *asaleutos* is not the underlying term translated by the forms of *kim* in all the rest of the instances as well, and that there is certain evidence beyond the text of *ApocryJn* III 33,3 which makes *asaleutos* likely.

³ See under *genea* in the Greek index in the Böhlig-Wisse edition.

⁴ See W. E. Crum, ed., *A Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1939), pp. 108 f.

The Immovable Race—Coptic Phraseology

<i>Apocrypha</i>	BG	CG II	CG III	CG IV
	22,15f: <i>igeneā ete mask [im]</i>	2,24: (lacuna)	(text missing)	3,20: <i>igeneā [ʿnaikim]</i>
	65,2f: <i>igeneā eʿmmaw ete maskim</i>	25,23: <i>igeneā ʿnaikim</i>	33,3f: <i>igeneā ʿnasaleuton</i>	39,25: <i>i[igeneā ʿn]aikim</i>
	71,12f: (<i>igeneā ʿmpiteileios ʿnrōme ʿnrwoein</i>)	28,3f: (<i>igeneā ʿnleleion</i>)	36,24: <i>i[igeneā e]te meskim</i>	43,10f: (lacuna)
	73,9: <i>igeneā ete maskim</i>	29,10: <i>igeneā ʿnaikim</i>	38,2f: <i>[ige]neā ete meskim</i>	45,7: <i>igen[ea] ʿnaikim</i>
	75,20–76,1: <i>igeneā ete maskim</i>	31,31f: <i>igeneā ʿnaikim</i>	39,18: <i>[igeneā e]te meskim</i>	49,13: <i>igeneā ʿnaikim</i>
<i>SJC</i>	BG	CG III		
	88,8: <i>igeneā ete maskim</i>	97,9: <i>igeneā ʿnaikim</i>		
<i>GEgypt</i>		CG III		CG IV
		51,8f: <i>igeneā ete meskim ʿnaphitharton</i>		63,2–4: <i>igeneā ʿnaikim awō ʿn[aijō]hm</i>
		59,13f: <i>moʿ ʿngeneā ʿnaphitharton ete meskim</i>		(text missing)
		61,19f: <i>teʿfgeneā ʿnaphitharton ete meskim</i>		73,3f: <i>igeneā [ʿnaikim]</i>
<i>3StSeth</i>	118,12–13: <i>igeneā etonʿh awō ʿnaikim</i>			
<i>Zosi</i>	6,28: <i>ige[neā ʿnaikim]</i>			
	51,16: <i>[igen]ea ʿnaikim</i>			

The phrase "the immovable race" has, at some point, obviously become technical terminology which can be used without much, or without any, further explanation. It is an interesting example of precisely the sort of data which lie at the crux of the present debate in modern scholarship over methodological issues in the correlation of the newly available original gnostic writings with ancient gnostic "sects." The discussions in the seminar on "Sethianism" at the International Conference on Gnosticism, convened at Yale University in March of 1978, illustrate some of these issues.⁵ What criteria can be employed to isolate a group of texts as representing "Sethian" gnostics? Even though there may be a number of technical terms, *nomina barbara*, and motifs held in common by a selection of texts, how *many* of these elements, and of what *character*, constitute a sufficient critical mass to allow one to speak of a defined corpus of writings belonging to an identifiable "group" of gnostics?

In this study I do not propose to solve the whole question, but rather to take a close look at only a sample datum which, on the surface, might be expected to have considerable relevance for the overall debate. The phrase "the immovable race" is rare. At least at first glance it seems enigmatic. It perhaps "sounds" sectarian. And when we consider that it does occur in texts which have certain other features in common, and which have an esoteric aura about them, it seems natural to ask whether this might be one characteristic "marking" by which we might identify a distinct gnostic sect. What I want to do here is attempt a fairly close inspection of some things that the phrase "the immovable race" may have to tell us about the persons who were using it.

There is first of all the question of the meaning of the designation itself. I have divided the question into two parts: What is meant by "immovable"? And what are the implications in the use of the term "race"? The first part actually makes up the bulk of the study, Chapters I-VI. My motivation for exploring the use of the term "immovable" in these texts has stemmed not only from an interest in these particular writings, but from a longstanding hunch that a study of the theme of stability in various gnostic traditions would have much to reveal about the place of gnostic spirituality within the spirituality of late antiquity at large. I have attempted in Chapters I-VI not only to distill as much information as possible from these five gnostic texts themselves about the different things they mean by immovability, but also, by comparing many other similar examples of the idealization of immovability in late antiquity, to provide

⁵ See *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut, March 28-31, 1978*, ed. Bentley Layton, vol. 2: *Sethian Gnosticism*, *Studies in the History of Religions (Supplements to Numen)* 41 (Leiden: Brill, 1981, pp. 457-685.

an impression of the larger fabric to which the instances of the immovable race designation belong.

I think that I have demonstrated in these chapters that the phrase "immovable race" was not nearly so arcane in late antiquity as it might seem today. The phrase was not intended, I suggest, to be a code name, a piece of gnostic argot intelligible only within the confines of a sectarian conventicle. Even though the phrase was indeed employed by sectarians, its connotations would have been understood by, and would have appealed to the aspirations of, a much wider outside audience. I imagine that is why it was used. It would probably not be inaccurate to say that there is a certain popular fascination in the modern world—at least in western societies—with the celebrity who is "on the go," the person who has a full calendar that is constantly whisking him or her from meeting to meeting across continents or oceans, the leader in whatever field who is in perpetual motion keeping pace with change and progress. In trying to capture some sense of the world of the authors and readers of these gnostic texts, I have been struck by how much fascination the late antique world seems to have had with a very different sort of ideal: not the person who is keeping pace with change, but the person who has in some sense withdrawn from change, developed an immunity to it: a Soerates, who, some of his late antique admirers were saying, would stand wide-eyed and absolutely motionless for twenty-four hours at a stretch, as though his mind and soul had left his body; a Christian monk, standing in one spot for days or years on end, the closest look that many of his admirers suspect they will get (in this life) at an angel standing before God in the changeless heavenly realm; the emperor Constantius, warmly welcomed by thundering crowds as he enters Rome, but standing rigidly in his chariot with his gaze riveted directly ahead "as if his neck were in a vice," careful not to lift his hand to wipe his face or scratch his nose or even move his hands at all. I hope that I have shown in what follows that such examples are more relevant than one might think at first, for understanding the spirituality of our gnostics and their choice of vocabulary.

The second part of the question about the significance of the designation is taken up in Chapter VII. Why do these texts speak of a "race"? At issue is the question of eligibility, and therefore freedom vs. determinism, openness vs. exclusivity, and how the conversion process is understood. There is a large body of literature attempting to explain how various philosophies or religions can seem to speak of both freedom and determinism, or moral choice and election, at the same time. Gnosticism has very commonly been viewed as a radical form of soteriological determinism. I argue in Chapter VII that such a description does not fit at least the five writings which are the focus of this study. The kind of point that I am making has been made by a few others with respect to different gnostic sources, and I suspect that it could be made and eventually will be

made for most of what we now call gnosticism. The problem involved is a caricature inherited from ancient heresiology that has created a mental block against an adequate reading of the implications of gnostic myth for possibilities in human existence.

Chapter VIII is perhaps the most tentative. If the designation "immovable race" sounds sectarian, is that because it is the product of a single social group that we would want to call a "sect"? What kind of social-historical model should we construct in order to explain the relationship among the five writings which use the designation? I conclude that there were indeed identifiable sectarian groups who called themselves "the immovable race"—i.e., that we do not have in these five writings merely compositions by individuals for private meditation. However, as distinctive as the designation may appear to us now, I do not believe that the documents which use it were produced by what we ought to call a single sect. The evidence seems to suggest that there was more than one sociological type of sect using this "immovable race" designation, and that in some instances the only historical link between such distinct sects may have been that sect B has somehow acquired and incorporated certain elements from a writing or writings from sect A. Finally, in spite of the fact that the designation came at some time to be employed by sects which we probably should call "Sethian," I doubt that it originated there. Rather, my view is that the phrase "immovable race" was probably first used without any reference to Seth, but in a more generalized form as in *SJC* and *ApocryIn*, to refer to the participation of the individual human in an immovable, ideal Human. It may have been only later that some (but apparently not all) "Sethian" groups borrowed this epithet and incorporated it into their speculations about the race of Seth.

CHAPTER ONE

THE TERM *ASALEUTOS* AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

In examining the term for "immovable" found in these gnostic texts, and the ways in which its usage by other ancient writers might illuminate its significance in the gnostic works, we have an immediate problem: In all but one of the instances of the gnostic designation (*ApocryIn* III 33,3) we have a Coptic translation of a Greek term, not the original term itself. However, if we work with the hypothesis that the same adjective underlies all the instances—and based on what evidence we have, there seems no reason to reject this hypothesis—then the Greek adjective is *asaleutos*. If we knew that the Greek term *akinētos* ("immovable") were being used in the phrase "the immovable race," then the provenance and significance of such an expression might be easier to determine. Although *akinētos* can be used in other ways in ancient literature, the connotation which it has in philosophical tradition would likely come to mind most immediately: belonging to the class of things which are not subject to change or movement (*ta akinēta*). As I will point out, *asaleutos* could be used as a synonym for *akinētos* in this philosophical distinction between things subject to movement and things not subject to movement, and it will be seen that there are also other reasons to consider the philosophical distinction usually indicated by *akinētos/kinētos* to be among the connotations belonging to the phrase "the immovable race." But *asaleutos* is not used in this sense in ancient literature nearly as much as is *akinētos*. One could say, therefore, that *asaleutos* might not be the expected word if an author's intention were to select one philosophical term to be used to indicate that a class of things or persons were not subject to motion or change. Does the use of *asaleutos* perhaps suggest the influence of some particular tradition about "immovability" apart from the philosophical discussion?

A. The Theme in Jewish Literature of Yahweh's People "Who Will Not be Moved"

In spite of the still unanswered questions and the differences in theories, a respectable consensus has emerged in modern scholarship on gnosticism to the effect that there are important lines of continuity between at least portions of gnostic literature and certain streams of Jew-

ish tradition.¹ And in casting about in antiquity for some clue as to what our gnostic authors might have meant by an "immovable race," there are analogues in Jewish literature which require consideration. Although the phrase "immovable race" itself is never found, the concern not to be moved or shaken, or in some places the confidence that one will not be moved or shaken, is found several times. Very often the verb *saleuein* is used just this way in the Septuagint. Those who have Yahweh as their helper will not be moved (LXX Pss 15:8; 61:3; Prov 3:26); or it is said that the righteous person, or the person who performs acts of righteousness, will never be moved (LXX Pss 14:5; 111:6; cf. 54:23); or the king, placing his hope in Yahweh, will never be moved (LXX Ps 20:8); or the city of Jerusalem, with Yahweh in its midst, will not be moved (LXX Pss 45:5; 124:1); or the world, established by Yahweh, will never be moved (1 Chron 16:30; LXX Pss 92:1; 95:10). There are passages which are less sanguine about the possibility of being shaken or moved. Having proclaimed, "I will never be moved," is remembered in LXX Ps 29:7 as a piece of rash overconfidence; the petitioner calls out to Yahweh for help in LXX Ps 12:5, lest his enemies rejoice that he has been shaken; and so forth. But in general there is a confidence that those under the protection of Yahweh "will never be moved."

This theme is sometimes found in association with the idea that Yahweh, while providing stability for those in his care, "shakes" other things and persons:

The courses of the river make glad the city of God.
 The Most High sanctifies his dwelling place.
 God is in its midst; it will not be moved (*ou saleuthēsetai*).
 God will come to its aid early.
 Nations are disturbed; kingdoms decline.
 He gives forth his voice; the earth is shaken (*esaleuthē*).
 The Lord of hosts is with us;
 The God of Jacob is our helper.
 (LXX Ps 45:5–8)

That Yahweh is said to shake the earth and cause confusion or disturbance in the natural order at his appearing (Judg 5:5; Job 9:6; LXX Ps 17:8; 76:19; 95:9, 11; 96:4; 98:1; 113:7; Amos 9:5; Micah 1:4; Nahum 1:5; Hab 3:6; Judith 16:15; Sir 16:18; 43:16) is a well-known variant of the ancient Near Eastern motif of the theophany of the storm deity.² Oftentimes the

¹ Cf. Kurt Rudolf, "Gnosis und Gnostizismus, ein Forschungsbericht (Schluss)," *Theologische Rundschau* N.F. 36 (1971): 91–119.

² Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 147–94.

cosmological dimension of this mythic language (i.e., the shaking of the earth or the mountains which is effected by the thundering of the storm-god) gives way to, or is combined with, the historical and/or apocalyptic dimension: so that the shaking is a shaking of kings who are amazed at the sight of Zion's strength (LXX Ps 47:6), or it is understood as the ruin of divine judgment which will fall suddenly and astonishingly on the wicked, as a part of the vindication of the righteous.³ Shaking produced by a theophany is a mythic element found in several gnostic texts, and it appears in one version of one of the texts which use the immovable race designation. In *ApocryJn* II 14,13–26, the revelation of the form of the First Human to the created order below immediately produces disturbance and shaking in the realm governed by the chief archon.⁴ This longer recension of *ApocryJn* also speaks of the shaking of the foundations of Chaos (which means in this text the world governed by the archontic powers) at the descent of the redeemer (II 30,16–29). And both the longer and the shorter recensions of *ApocryJn* describe the initial theophany of Christ to John as something which causes the cosmos to “shake” or “move” (*kim*; *ApocryJn* II 1,30–2,2 par).⁵

Certainly in this contrast between those who are made unshakable or immovable by Yahweh and those who are (or that which is) shaken, we have a theme which was quite visible in ancient Jewish literature (note its prominence in liturgical texts such as the Psalms). Is this ultimately how

³ George W. E. Nickelsburg, Jr., *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*, Harvard Theological Studies 26 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. 80–83; Georg Bertram, “*saleuō, salos*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), esp. pp. 65f. Note, for example, Wisd 4:19; 1 Macc 6:8; Mark 13:25.

⁴ However, the shorter recension at this point (BG 48,6 // III 22,1) says only that the archontic powers “consented” (*kataneuein*), or literally, “nodded their heads.” This may be a corruption in the text, or it might possibly be a bit of gnostic humor: In the earlier portion of the text, as aeonic entities request companions, the Invisible Spirit “consents” (*kataneuein*) in each case and then a new entity is emanated (see below, Chapter Four). Now these archons “bend their heads” to look down at the image of the Human in the water, and then they bring forth their created entity.

⁵ Cf. also *GEgypt* III 54,11–13, although here it is the shaking of “incorruptible ones” (see below, Chapter Five); *TriProt* 43,4–26; *ParaShem* 29,5–9; *GrSeth* 51,24–31; *Acts of Thomas* 10. In the *Untitled Text* in the Bruce Codex (*The Books of Jeu and the Untitled Text in the Bruce Codex*, ed. Carl Schmidt, trans. Violet MacDermot, NHS 13 [Leiden: Brill, 1978]), agitation (*stortr*) is created in the Pleroma because of the brightness of the light coming from the “Triple-powered one” (*tridynamos*). Also the “Depth” which surrounds the Pleroma, and all those within the Depth, are caused to “move” or “shake” (*kim*) by the light. A figure called “the overseer” (*episkopos*) temporarily establishes order again, and this act is interpreted in terms of one of the Psalms which I have mentioned earlier: “And the overseer established (*tajre*) the aeons again, as it is written, ‘He established the world and it shall not be moved’” (LXX Ps 92:1; 95:10; cf. 1 Chron 16:30) (*Untitled Text* ch. 11, p. 246.17–25 Schmidt-MacDermot).

the phrase "the immovable race" came to be coined—out of traditional biblical language about the immovable righteous?

In the gnostic work *Pistis Sophia*, which does *not* contain the phrase "the immovable race,"⁶ we find a version of the myth of the conflict with the archon of Chaos which might be relevant to the question of the possible derivation of the gnostic immovable race designation from the biblical contexts I have mentioned. There is a lengthy section in *Pistis Sophia* (chs. 32–57; Schmidt-MacDermot 46.22–112.6) in which the thirteen "repentances" of Sophia are recorded, each of them being a petition from Sophia in her desperate, fallen condition in the realm of Chaos. Each time that Jesus narrates one of the thirteen repentances, one of his disciples expresses the realization that that particular petition was prophesied in one of the Psalms. At one point in her seventh penitential prayer, Pistis Sophia bemoans her oppression in Chaos, saying, "My light has grown dim, since they have taken away from me my power, and all the powers within me shake (*saleuein*)" (ch. 48; Schmidt-MacDermot 86.25–87.2). Or again, in her twelfth petition: "They have taken away my light and my power, and my power shakes (*saleuein*) within me, and I have not been able to stand in their midst" (ch. 55; Schmidt-MacDermot 107.6–8).⁷ The two Psalms which are identified by the disciples as interpreting these two petitions (LXX Pss 30 and 108) are not among those which speak of persons who are shaken (*saleuein*) or those who "will never be moved." Nevertheless, the description of Pistis Sophia's "shaken" condition, her being oppressed by tormentors, and her crying out for divine aid, are very similar to the pattern in some of the biblical passages I mentioned earlier, which express the concern about being shaken. After her thirteenth penitential prayer, Pistis Sophia is rescued from Chaos. A luminous power is sent by the Savior, and it becomes a crown on the head of Pistis Sophia. This crown of light may be intended as a theophany, for at its appearance on her head, "all the evil matters (*hylē*) which were within her shook (*kim*), and they all separated from her; they were destroyed, and came into being in Chaos" (ch. 59; Schmidt-MacDermot 115.18–20). The shaking of these material elements could be compared to the shaking of natural elements, or of enemies, at Yahweh's theophany, while the figure of Pistis Sophia herself is reminiscent in some ways of the righteous person of, say, LXX Ps 111:6, who

⁶ There is a mention of "the immovable (*asaleutoi*) ones" at one point (ch. 95, p. 221.20), but this is in a catalogue of spiritual entities all of which proceed from "the fatherless ones" (*mapatōr*), and it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine the intended distinction between these *asaleutoi* and the "twelve *akinētoi*" also listed (ch. 95, p. 221.16), or the "incomprehensible ones" (*maennoētos*—ch. 95, p. 222.2), or the "twelve unmarked ones," etc. (The page numbers used in the citations of *Pistis Sophia* are from: *Pistis Sophia*, ed. Carl Schmidt, trans. Violet MacDermot, NHS 9 [Leiden: Brill, 1978].)

⁷ On the expression "to stand," cf. my discussion below in Chapters Two and Three.

“will never be moved.” In a song of praise at her rescue, Pistis Sophia proclaims that “even if all the matters (*hylē*) move (*kim*), I will not move (*ēntinakim an*)” (ch. 59; Schmidt-MacDermot 116.12f).

In *Pistis Sophia*, therefore, we have a gnostic text which on the one hand introduces the theme of immovability in a climactic soteriological context—suggesting its possible relevance for understanding the significance of the immovable race designation which appears in other gnostic texts—and which on the other hand introduces this theme in a style approximating the language about the immovable righteous in Jewish scripture—suggesting the possibility that the gnostic designation immovable race might be a development from, or contain an allusion to, that language.

Yet when we turn to the texts which actually contain the immovable race designation, we find only limited support for such a hypothesis, and only in one or two of the texts involved. It is probably in the case of the *GEgypt* that the best argument could be made for a connection with the biblical language which I have discussed. As I will point out in Chapter Five, the immovable race designation seems to have distinctly militant associations in *GEgypt*, and the portrait in this gnostic work of an oppressed and persecuted group who successfully resist a host of enemies by the help of the deity lends some plausibility to the hypothesis that their being called “immovable” has been inspired by the biblical theme of the people protected by Yahweh from being shaken or moved by enemy or catastrophe. It is also possible that a similar argument might be made in the case of the *ApocryJn*, where also those who belong to the immovable race manage to withstand the assaults of archontic forces. They escape the attempted destruction by flood as a result of a divine warning given to Noah (*ApocryJn* II 28,32–29,12 par). They are not led astray into evil, but instead “they endure all things and bear up under all things, in order that they might perfect the good (BG 66,10f: ‘finish the contest’ [*althon*]) and inherit eternal life” (II 26,3–7 par). If the theme found in *ApocryJn* of assaults on a race which nevertheless abides unmoved by its enemies were seen as a development of the notion of the immovability of the righteous in biblical texts, then a dramatic inversion would have taken place. It could perhaps be viewed as a piece of intentional gnostic irony that the creator of the world, who in the biblical texts rendered his people and his city immovable, and whose theophany brought violent shaking and trembling, is now (at least in the longer recension of *ApocryJn*—see above, p. 10) the one who typically is caused to shake and tremble while he is unable to shake the immovable race. To be a member of the immovable race means in these gnostic texts that one’s stability is precisely *not* assured by trusting in the creator, but rather is threatened by this.

But in the texts which contain the immovable race designation we have no quotation of any of the biblical passages which I discussed earlier.⁸ We have a general thematic resemblance, and we have the fact that the Greek term *asaleutos* seems to be the term used in the gnostic designation, while Greek translations of the biblical texts often use a verb of the same root (*saleuein*). The fact that some of these gnostic texts (especially *Apocryph* and *GEgypt*) are at several points quite undisguised in their interest in and use of other biblical material may give some support to the conclusion that these resemblances between the use of the immovable race designation and biblical language about the immovable righteous are not merely superficial and coincidental. But having laid out that much of a case for a connection between the two, we are stopped at the brink of the evidence in this direction.

B. The Term *asaleutos* in Hellenistic-Roman Literature

On the other hand, Greek translations of Jewish scripture are by no means the only place in antiquity where we find some parallel, both conceptually and in the use of the Greek root *sal-*, to the gnostic immovable race designation. In fact, none of the Septuagintal passages which I have mentioned actually uses the adjectival form *asaleutos*,⁹ while certain other texts which do employ this adjective offer important indications of what our gnostic authors meant by an "immovable race."

The adjective *asaleutos*, like the verb *saleuein*, is sometimes used, metaphorically or literally, to mean the absence of any *salos*, "restless tossing (of the sea)."¹⁰ But most often it is employed without any direct maritime connotation, simply to refer to something which is enduring or not subject to change, such as the rule of a tyrant,¹¹ laws or ordinances,¹² a stele,¹³ or

⁸ Cf. the allusion to LXX Pss 92 and 95 in *Untitled Text* (above, n. 5).

⁹ The term *asaleutos* is found in the LXX (Exod 13:16; Deut 6:8; 11:18), with reference to the *tefillin*—the words of the Torah are to be kept "immovable" before one's eyes; cf. Philo's understanding of the Torah as *asaleutos* (see below).

¹⁰ Josephus, *Bell.* 1.405, for stagnant water; Plutarch, *De sollertia animalium* 982F-983A: during the time when the halcyon lays her eggs, Poseidon "makes the whole sea stand still, waveless, without any tossing (*pasan histēsi thalassan akumona kai asaleuton*); Epiphanius, *Anchoratus*, proem: Christians desire to move from the worldly tossing (*kosmikos salos*) into Christ's quiet (*asaleutos*) harbor.

¹¹ Plutarch, *Dion* 13.3.

¹² Very frequent—e.g., P.Oxy. 2110,7; *Magn.* 116.26f; F. Preisigke and F. Bilabel, eds., *Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Agypten*, vol. 7.2, ed. E. Kiessling (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1960), nr. 9252,24f.

¹³ Line 4 of the Isis hymn from Andros; see Werner Peek, *Der Isishymnus von Andros und verwandte Texte* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1930), p. 15.

a state of mind.¹⁴ And most directly relevant for the present discussion is a more specific kind of context in which *asaleutos* appears: in reference to that which *transcends* movement or change, that which belongs to the Platonic realm of the immutable.

1. *The Immovability of Transcendent Things*

One example of this is in Philo of Alexandria. I will discuss later Philo's contrast between two types of persons, the stable and the unstable. What he has to say on that subject is probably one of the most illuminating pieces of evidence we now have for reconstructing the possible roots of the gnostic immovable race designation. In order to illustrate his ideal of human immovability, Philo points especially to Moses, and especially to Moses' ascent to the summit of Sinai. In Deut 5:31, God, speaking to Moses on Sinai, says, "Stand (LXX: *stēthi*) here by me." Philo finds in the use of the verb *hestanai* here a place to hang a philosophical theory about the immutability of the wise man who participates in the immutability of God, since the verb *hestanai* was employed in philosophical discussions of Rest and Motion (see below, Chapter Two). But Philo's connection of the Sinai ascent with immutability is almost certainly occasioned by more than simply this superficial terminological peg. For Philo, the ascent to the summit of Sinai to receive the Torah signifies nothing less than a mystical entry into the realm of Platonic Forms:

For (Moses) was named god and king of the whole nation, and entered, we are told, into the darkness where God was, that is into the unseen, invisible, incorporeal and archetypal essence of existing things. Thus he beheld what is hidden from the sight of mortal nature, and, in himself and his life displayed for all to see, he has set before us, like some well-wrought picture, a piece of work beautiful and godlike, a model for those who are willing to copy it. Happy are they who imprint, or strive to imprint, that image in their souls. For it were best that the mind should carry the form of virtue in perfection, but, failing this, let it at least have the unflinching desire to possess that form. (*Vit. Mos.* 1.158f; trans. Loeb Classical Library)

Because Moses was stamped with this unchanging reality, the laws which he instituted reflect the same immutability.¹⁵ Laws and institutions of other peoples have suffered modification or abolition, but

¹⁴ Plutarch, *Quomodo quis suos in virtute sentiat profectus* 83E.

¹⁵ Cf. E. R. Goodenough, *By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935; reprint, Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1969), pp. 66ff.

Moses is alone in this, that his laws, firm, unshaken, immovable (*bebaia*, *asaleuta*, *akradanta*), stamped, as it were, with the seals of nature herself, remain secure from the day when they were first enacted to now, and we may hope that they will remain for all future ages as though immortal, so long as the sun and the moon and the whole heaven and universe exist. Thus, though the nation has undergone so many changes, both increased prosperity and the reverse, nothing—not even the smallest part of the ordinances—has been disturbed (*ekinēthē*). (*Vit. Mos.* 2.14f; trans. Loeb Classical Library)

As I mentioned above, it is common to find in papyri and inscriptions references to laws as “immovable.” But Philo seems to be using the language with a distinctly Platonic metaphysical import. Moses’ laws are copies of the heavenly paradigms, the Ideas, and Philo shared views from Pythagorean-Platonic tradition according to which the Ideas were understood as numbers¹⁶—numbers in which there is an “immovable, very firm, and truly divine principle” (*asaleuton kai bebaiotaton kai theion ontōs logon Vit. Mos.* 2.124).¹⁷

The term *asaleutos* occurs only once, so far as I can find, in Plotinus, but there it is used in a connection similar to that found in Philo. In *Enn.* 4.3.15, Plotinus speaks of the diversity among souls who descend from the intelligible realm. Some are so weighted down by forgetfulness that they have lost the power to reascend. Some souls succumb partially or entirely to Fate. And some, while enduring what is absolutely necessary, have the free power to perform whatever actions are properly their own, living in accordance with another law, the law of all existing things. This law, says Plotinus, is woven out of the rational principles (*logoi*) here below, and all the causes (*aitioi*), and physical movements, and laws from the Transcendent. It harmonizes with those transcendent laws, both receiving from them first principles and fitting in accordance with them everything which follows. This law “preserves immovable (*asaleuta*) whatsoever things are able to maintain themselves in conformity with the state of the transcendent things, while it leads other things around wherever their nature directs; so that for those who have descended, there is a reason why some of them are found in this condition and some in that” (*Enn.* 4.3.15, 19–23). Plotinus is attempting in this context to address the problem of evil and suffering (4.3.16), and he is employing the Stoic doctrine

¹⁶ John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 159. See Philo, *Op. mund.* 102, *Her.* 156.

¹⁷ Cf. Hans Joachim Krämer, *Der Ursprung der Geistmetaphysik: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Platonismus zwischen Platon und Plotin* (Amsterdam: Schippers, 1964), pp. 272–81. Note that Philo is using *asaleutos* in the same way that he uses *akinētos* elsewhere: e.g., *Op. mund.* 61: the ordinances and laws which God has fixed as immovable (*akinētos*) in the universe, *Spec. leg.* 4.232: all things in heaven and earth are well-ordered through immovable (*akinētois*) laws and ordinances.

of the universal law which guides all things. The same law is responsible for the fact that some souls which descend are (by nature) swept up in the turmoil of the body to which they are devoting care, like a pilot of a ship who forgets the danger to himself in the midst of his concentration on steering his ship out of troubled waters (4.3.17), while other souls which descend are (by nature) able to avoid this instability. In the passage quoted above, *asaleutos* describes a stability which accompanies conformity to the condition of the intelligible realm.

In the pseudo-Platonic dialogue *Axiochus*, which probably dates from shortly before the beginning of the Common Era, Socrates comforts the gravely ill Axiochus about the prospects for the soul after death. Death is the passage of the true human being (*anthrōpos*) within each of us, i.e., the immortal soul, out of its mortal prison, the body: “. . . when the compound (of soul and body) is once and for all dissolved, and the soul is firmly established (*hidruthēsēs*) in its proper place, the body which is left behind, being earthly and irrational, is not the person (*ho anthrōpos* 365E).” In the world beyond death, where the soul has been firmly established in its proper place, and is no longer mixed with mortal body, it enjoys “a sort of calm life, untroubled by evils, at ease in immovable tranquillity (*asaleutō hesychia*), gazing about at nature, doing philosophy not before a crowd and in a theatre, but in the presence of Truth in full bloom everywhere” (370D).

Plutarch criticizes poets (at least Homer is intended) in *Pericl.* 39.3 by saying that they

confuse us with their ignorant opinions, and are caught in the inconsistencies of their own myths, since on the one hand they call the place where they say the gods live a firm and immovable (*asaleuton*) abode, experiencing no winds or clouds, but perpetually illuminated throughout all time by soft clear sky and wonderfully pure light—on the grounds that some such existence is most fitting for that which is blessed and immortal; and yet on the other hand they display the gods themselves as being full of tumult and hatred and wrath and other passions not even fitting for human beings with any sense.

In the description of the gods' dwelling-place, Plutarch is evidently referring to a passage in the *Odyssey* (6.42–45):

. . . Olympus, where the abode of the gods stands firm and unmoving forever (*asphales aiei emmenai*), they say, and is not shaken with winds nor spattered with rains, not does snow pile ever there, but the shining bright air stretches cloudless away, and the white light glances upon it.¹⁸

Plutarch is not so much questioning the suitability of such a description

¹⁸ Trans. Richmond Lattimore, *The Odyssey of Homer* (New York: Harper & row, 1965), p. 103.

for the dwelling-place of the gods as he is rejecting what are in his view totally unsuitable descriptions of the gods' demeanor and susceptibility to passions. In fact, elsewhere he quotes part of this same passage from the *Odyssey* as belonging among Homer's "sound and true opinions" about the gods (*Quomodo adolescens poetas audire debeat* 20E). Now it is possible that Plutarch's use of the particular term *asaleutos*—which is not found in the Homeric passage itself—is completely incidental here, a use of the first synonym which happened to come to mind. To my knowledge, he nowhere else uses the term in this connection, although he does understand the divine to belong to an unchanging realm.¹⁹ Yet given the several other examples which I am enumerating here, of instances in which *asaleutos* was used for the stability associated with invisible, transcendent realities, Plutarch's use of the word to describe a conception of the immutable realm of the gods could be a reflection of his familiarity with this same use of the word by others.

A contemporary of Plutarch, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, provides one of the clearest examples of the use of *asaleutos* with virtually the same meaning that *akinētos* so commonly has in philosophical texts. The employment by the author of Hebrews of philosophical conceptions and terminology is well-known, although its extent and significance are variously assessed.²⁰ One example of the way in which the author makes use of such conceptions is to be found in Hebr 12:25–28:

Take care that you do not disobey the one who is speaking; for if those who were disobedient to the one warning them on earth (i.e., at Sinai) did not escape, how much less will we escape if we reject the one warning us from heaven—whose voice then shook (*esaleusen*) the earth, but now has promised: "Yet once more will I shake (*seisō*) not only the earth but also heaven" (Haggai 2:6). The "yet once more" indicates the removal of the things which are shaken (*tōn saleuomenōn*) since they are created, in order that the things which are not shaken (*ta mē saleuomena*) might remain. Therefore, having received an unshakable (*asaleutos*) kingdom, let us be thankful and in this manner serve God acceptably, with reverence and awe.

The contrast between the shakable, created order and the unshakable,

¹⁹ E.g., *Ad principem ineruditum* 781F; cf. Daniel Babut, *Plutarque et le Stoïcisme* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1969), pp. 454f.

²⁰ E.g., see Erich Grässer, "Der Hebräerbrief 1938–63," *Theologische Rundschau* 30 (1964): 138–236; Lala Kalyan Kumar Dey, *The Intermediary World and Patterns of Perfection in Philo and Hebrews*, SBL Dissertation Series 25 (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1975); George MacRae, "Heavenly Temple and Eschatology in the Letter to the Hebrews," *Semeia* 12 (1978): 179–99.

eternal order belongs to the dualistic metaphysics of Platonism.²¹ Although the author of Hebrews quotes Haggai 2:6 as a proof-text, and we might have expected to find the Greek verb *seiein* used in the subsequent reference to shakable vs. unshakable things (since that is the verb in the quotation), instead the author seems already committed to *saleuein* and *asaleutos*. Even though these latter terms are not nearly so widely attested as *kinein* and *akinētos* in philosophical distinctions between movable and immovable things, the author of Hebrews seems to know *saleuein* and *asaleutos* as technical terms to be used in just this way.

The passage in Hebrews is doubly interesting because the way in which the use of *asaleutos* here, for all its Platonic overtones, is directly linked to the biblical theophanic "shaking" motif which I have discussed earlier. The prediction of an apocalyptic "shaking" of both heaven and earth is combined with a Platonizing metaphysics wherein an already existing immovable order is expected to "remain" (*menein*),²² after the perishable order subject to movement is removed. George MacRae, in a discussion of the well-known presence of apparently conflicting eschatologies in Hebrews (apocalyptic, futuristic eschatology vs. realized eschatology couched in Alexandrian philosophical language), has suggested that the solution is to be found in the homiletic intentions of the author, who is attempting to support his *audience's* apocalyptic eschatological hopes by grounding those hopes in his *own* Hellenistic, Alexandrian categories. There would be a *blending* of two perspectives rather than a transformation of either one into the other.²³ We may not be able to make quite the same sort of distinction between author and audience in the case of the gnostic texts which use the immovable race designation, but the passage in Hebrews is still an important indication that it may not be necessary to choose *only* the Jewish traditions discussed in the preceding section *or* the Hellenistic philosophical usage of *asaleutos* as the provenance for the gnostic designation. In some of the gnostic texts both elements may be present. To this we will return at a later point.

A further illustration of *asaleutos* used to describe things which belong to a transcendent realm beyond movement and change is found in gnostic texts which speak of "five immovable trees." One text which contains this enigmatic reference is the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas*, where we find in logion 19 the following: "For you have five trees in Paradise which do not move (*esekim an*) in summer or in winter, and their leaves do not fall. He who knows them will not taste death." The Greek term *asaleutos* is not found in this case, but it is used in the *Books of Jeu* to describe a

²¹ Cf. James W. Thompson, "'That Which Cannot be Shaken': Some Metaphysical Assumptions in Heb 12:27," *JBL* 94 (1975): 580-87.

²² Thompson, p. 587.

²³ MacRae, "Heavenly Temple and Eschatology."

certain group of "five trees." In *BJeu* there are several references to these "five trees" (ch. 41, p. 96.14f; ch. 42, p. 100.2; ch. 44, p. 103.22; cf. 103.15f; 104.19; ch. 50, p. 119.23).²⁴ In one of these cases, the five trees are called "immovable":

Again you will go inside them to the order of the five trees of the treasury of light, which are the immovable (*asaleutos*) trees. They will give to you their mystery, which is the great mystery, and their seal and the great name of the treasury of light, which is king over the treasury of light. (Ch. 50, p. 119.22–27)

It is difficult to know just how to interpret these trees. Mention of five trees (although without the designation "immovable")²⁵ occurs in several other documents, and the meaning of the five trees is possibly not always precisely the same.²⁶ The role of the five trees in *Pistis Sophia* and *BJeu*,

²⁴ Page numbers are cited from the Schmidt-MacDermot edition (see above, n. 5).

²⁵ There is one other possible instance, in a Manichaean psalm, but the text is damaged: "For [the five] trees which are in Paradise [...] in summer and winter" (C. R. C. Alberry, ed., *A Manichaean Psalm-Book*, part 2 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1938), p. 161.15ff); the text possibly contained a reference to the trees "not moving" in summer or winter, as in *GTh*, logion 19.

²⁶ *Pistis Sophia* ch. 1, p. 3.7; ch. 10, p. 18.19; ch. 86, p. 191.18; ch. 86, p. 194.14; ch. 86, p. 197.24f; ch. 93, p. 217.22; ch. 96, p. 231.21 (ed. Schmidt-MacDermot); also frequently in Manichaean literature: e.g., *Kephalaia*, ed. H. J. Polotsky and A. Böhlig, vol. 1, part 1 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1940), pp. 30.20f; 48.15; 121.15; 122.7f, etc.; see Victoria Arnold-Dobson, *Die Bildersprache des Manichäismus*, Arbeitsmaterialien zur Religionsgeschichte 3 (Köln: Brill, 1978), pp. 7–44.

The five trees are mentioned in a fascinating and frustratingly brief Coptic parchment fragment, probably from the fourth century C.E., found in Deir el-Balaizah (Paul E. Kahle, ed., *Balaizah: Coptic Texts from Deir el-Balaizah in Upper Egypt* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), vol. 1, pp. 473–77, Edgar Hennecke and Wilhelm Schneemelcher, eds., *New Testament Apocrypha*, trans. R. McL. Wilson, vol. 1 [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963], pp. 331–33). In the first part of the fragment we find the following: "For all they that (were) in the heavenly Paradise were sealed in silence. But such as shall partake thereof will become spiritual (*logikos*), having known all; they shall seal the five powers in silence. Lo, I have explained unto thee, O Johannes, concerning Adam and Paradise, and the Five Trees, in an intelligible (*noeron*) allegory (*symbolon*). When I, Johannes, heard these things, I said: 'I have made a good beginning; I have completed knowledge and a hidden mystery and allegories of truth, having been encouraged by thy love'" (trans. Kahle). What little portion of the continuation of the dialogue is preserved contained further questions and answers about the meaning of other elements from the first chapters of Genesis: Cain and Abel, Noah and the ark, Melchizedek—and then the last fragment breaks off.

The five trees also appear once in the *Untitled Text* in the Bruce Codex: "There is yet another place which is called 'Deep.' In it there are three Fatherhoods. The first is the Hidden, i.e., the Hidden God. And in the second Father, five trees are standing (*aheratou*), and there is a table (*trapeza*) in their midst, with an Only-begotten Logos standing upon the table, who is the twelve aspects of the Mind of the All, and to whom the prayer of everyone is brought. This is he over whom the All rejoiced because he had appeared, and this is he whom the indivisible struggled to know, and this is he because of whom the Human

for example, where they appear as one element in a succession of transcendent entities (the seven amens, the seven voices, the five trees, the three amens, the twin saviors, the nine watchers, etc.) along the path of the heavenly ascent, represents most probably a development which is later than the simpler idea of five trees in Paradise in *GTh*. But almost all the examples do seem to have in common the fundamental idea that these trees are located in a transcendent realm, and this is probably the explanation for their description as "immovable" in *GTh* and *BJeu*. They stand in frozen, unchanging perfection, providing immortality or the *mysterion* of the treasury of light.

It may be that the immovability of the five trees is due not merely to their general association with the transcendent realm, but also to their more specific association with Mind (*nous*) or noetic faculties—which, as we will see in later chapters, are often assigned to the realm of unchanging stability. It may be that the number five in connection with these trees is to be explained (apart from the general popularity of this number) on the basis of its correspondence to the number of bodily senses, and that the five trees in Paradise correspond to five *noetic* senses or faculties through which gnosis is received.²⁷ We do have evidence from other gnostic sources for the grouping of five such noetic faculties, for example in the well-known liturgical formula in the *Acts of Thomas* 27: "Come, elder of the five members, mind, thought, understanding, reflection, reasoning" (*elthe ho presbuteros tōn pente melōn, noos, ennoias phronēseōs, enthumēseōs*,

appeared. In the third is the Silence and the Spring, toward which twelve good ones look, seeing themselves in it; and in it are the Love and the Mind of the All and five seals" (ch. 4, pp. 231,22–232,10). It might be noted that although they are not called "immovable trees" here, the five trees are said to "stand," and given the fact that this latter expression often has the philosophical connotation of "lack of motion" (see below, Chapters Two and Three), it may here be simply another way of saying that they are "immovable." It is somewhat curious, however, that the author does not actually use the term *asaleutos* for these trees if he knew of the phrase "the five immovable trees," since *asaleutos* is one of his favorite adjectives for describing transcendent things.

²⁷ Cf. Robert M. Grant and David N. Freedman, *The Secret Sayings of Jesus* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1960), p. 139; Jean Doresse, *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics*, trans. P. Mairé (New York: Viking, 1960), p. 345. Jacques-É. Ménard, *L'Évangile selon Thomas*, NHS 5 (Leiden: Brill, 1975), p. 107. The author of the Deir el-Balaizah fragment (see above, n. 26) mentions "the five trees" in a list of several items from Genesis requiring interpretation (Adam, Paradise, the five trees, Cain and Abel, Noah and the ark, Melchizedek), and therefore one might expect that the number "five" has been suggested by the text of Genesis itself. But just where in the text such a suggestion would have been found is not immediately apparent. The relation of the five trees to noetic senses would explain the remark in this fragment that the partakers of these trees "will become *logikos*, having known all." It would also account for the association of the five trees in the *Untitled Text* (see above, n. 26) with the Only-begotten Logos who is said to be the twelve aspects of the Nous or Mind of the All.

logismou), and in Manichaean sources such as the *Kephalaia*.²⁸ And there are Chinese Manichaean texts, admittedly of a much later date, in which these same five noetic faculties are indeed individually paired with each of five trees.²⁹ A list of six noetic faculties, identical to the list in *Acts of Thomas* 27 except for the addition of one member, functions in the *Sophia of Jesus Christ* as a combination of faculties which replicates the image of the highest being in subsequent emanations (see below, Chapter Eight). The six noetic faculties in *SJC* seem to belong to what that author calls the "immovable race." The equation of the trees of Paradise with faculties of the human mind is found in Philo of Alexandria, who in one place

²⁸ *Kephalaia*, p. 20.12–31, where the same series of five (though with all but *nous* translated by Coptic terms) are called the five "members" (*melè*) of the Good Tree.

²⁹ Arnold-Döben, *Bildersprache*, pp. 15f; W. B. Henning, *Sogdica*, James G. Forlong Fund 21 (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1940), p. 3. Note the following passage from a Manichaean tractate found in a manuscript (probably 10th century C.E.) from the Dunhuang caves in Gansu (the text has just recounted the removal by the Messenger of Light of "the five trees of death"): "Puis, quand l'Envoyé de la Lumière bienfaisante, s'étant servi de la hache tranchante de la sagesse, eut successivement abattu tous ces arbres, il prit ses propres arbres précieux de cinq sortes, lumineux, purs et sans supérieurs, et il les planta dans les terres de la nature primitive; il arrosa ces arbres précieux avec l'eau de l'ambrosie et ils produisirent des fruits qui donnent l'immortalité.

"D'abord il planta l'arbre de la pensée. Pour cet arbre de la pensée, la racine, c'est la pitié; son tronc, la joie; ses branches, la félicité; ses feuilles, l'éloge de la multitude; ses fruits la calme absolu; son goût, le respect; sa couleur, la fermeté. Il planta ensuite l'arbre précieux, merveilleux et pur du sentiment; la racine de cet arbre est la bonne foi; son tronc, la foi; ses branches, la crainte; ses feuilles, la vigilance; ses fruits, l'application à l'étude; son goût, la lecture et la récitation (des textes saints); sa couleur, la joie calme. Il planta ensuite l'arbre de la réflexion; la racine de cet arbre, c'est le contentement; son tronc, la pensée bonne; ses branches, les règles imposantes; ses feuilles, la vérité qui orne tous les actes; ses fruits, les paroles véridiques par lesquelles il n'y a plus de propos menteurs; son goût, les discours sur la Loi correcte et pure; sa couleur, le plaisir à rencontrer autrui. Ensuite il planta l'arbre de l'intellect; la racine de cet arbre est l'endurance des injures; son tronc, le calme absolu; ses branches, la patience; ses feuilles, les défenses et les préceptes de discipline, ses fruits, le jeûne et les hymnes; son goût, le zèle à pratiquer [la religion]; sa couleur, l'énergie. Ensuite il planta l'arbre du raisonnement; la racine de cet arbre, c'est la sagesse; son tronc, c'est l'intelligence complète du sens des deux principes; ses branches, c'est l'habileté à discuter sur la Loi lumineuse; ses feuilles, c'est de connaître les arguments d'une manière appropriée aux circonstances, d'être capable d'écraser les doctrines hétérodoxes, d'honorer et d'affermir la vraie Loi; ses fruits, c'est d'être habile à interroger et à répondre, et d'exceller à parler en se servant des arguments appropriés; son goût, c'est d'exceller à se servir d'apologues qui font que les hommes comprennent bien; sa couleur, ce sont les belles expressions affables qui font que ce qu'on expose plaît à la foule.

"Le arbres que nous venons de décrire sont ce qu'on appelle les arbres de vie" (trans. from Éd. Chavannes and P. Pelliot, *Un traité manichéen retrouvé en Chine* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1912), pp. 65–67).

For a brief introduction to the significance of the Dunhuang manuscripts, and further bibliography, see Samuel N. C. Lieu, *The Religion of Light: An Introduction to the History of Manichaeism in China*, Centre of Asian Studies Occasional Papers and Monographs 38 (Hong Kong: Centre of Asian Studies, 1979).

interprets the words "the midst of the wood of Paradise" in Gen 3:8 to mean "the center of the *nous*" (*Leg. all.* 3.28), and who thinks of the trees planted in Paradise as the trees of virtue which God plants in the soul (*Leg. all.* 1.56ff; 3.107f). Clement of Alexandria says that Moses allegorically called divine understanding (*phronēsis*) the "tree of Life" planted in Paradise (*Strom.* 5.72.2). And Philo says that understanding, *phronēsis*—which is one of the five faculties mentioned above—is *asaleutos* (*Omn. prol. lib.* 28). Thus, one possible explanation of the five immovable trees in *GTh* and *BJeu* is that they are five immutable noetic senses, the sources of illumination providing access to the realm which transcends the material realm of change.

Finally, we may note several other instances of the use of *asaleutos* which also come from gnostic texts. Perhaps the single text in which the adjective is used most often is the *Untitled Text* in the Bruce Codex.³⁰ Lengthy portions of this work are devoted to protracted catalogues of attributes (e.g., infinite, uncontainable, ineffable, invisible, etc.) which manifest themselves in various levels in the emanation of the pleroma, and which ultimately find their source in the nature of the "Father of All." A frequent member in these catalogues is the adjective *asaleutos*. One such instance is in a paean directed to the Father, which appears in some unplaced leaves whose relation to the rest of the Bruce Codex is uncertain:

I bless you, Father of every fatherly light;
I bless you, the infinite light, which surpasses every infinite thing;
I bless you, the uncontainable light, which is above every uncontainable thing;
I bless you, the ineffable light, which is before every ineffable thing,
etc. (*Untitled Text* ch. 22, p. 270.15–23).

There are thirty-five more blessings which follow in this hymn of praise, and one of them is: "I bless you, the truly immovable (*asaleutos*) light" (p. 273.3f). There are several places in the *Untitled Text* where we find lists of "Fatherhoods" (*mnteīōt*),³¹ which constitute reflections or

³⁰ See above, n. 5. For another, older English translation of this work, along with extensive commentary, see Charlotte A. Baynes, *A Coptic Gnostic Treatise Contained in the Codex Brucianus* (Bruce MS. 96. Bod. Lib. Oxford) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933).

³¹ Or, perhaps, "families" (see Crum 87a; as a translation of *patriai*?). Note that Philo, *Her.* 280, interpreting the statement in Gen 15.15 that Abraham would at death depart to his "fathers," says that these "fathers" certainly are not the ancestors buried in tombs, but "possibly, as some say, the sun, moon, and other stars to which it is held that all things on earth owe their birth and framing, or, as others think, the archetypal Ideas, which, intelligible and invisible (*noēta kai aorata*) there, are the patterns (*paradeigmata*) of things visible and sensible here—the ideas in which, as they say, the mind of the Sage finds its new

properties of the Father. One of these lists (ch. 6, 233.16–234.26) reports the twelve Fatherhoods which surround Setheus (apparently another name for the Father) and each of these twelve Fatherhoods has three aspects. For example, the first two Fatherhoods have the following aspects:

1st infinite	2nd uncontainable
invisible	immovable (<i>asaleutos</i>)
ineffable	undefiled

Twelve Fatherhoods are listed again in ch. 10 (pp. 244.1–245.2), this time with each one identified as a single face or aspect with thirty powers. Here again, *asaleutos* appears in this list along with other attributes such as infinite, uncontainable, invisible, etc.: “The tenth Fatherhood is an immovable (*asaleutos*) aspect, and thirty immovable powers surround it.” And *asaleutos* appears several other times in the work in similar lists.³² Clearly this term has become for this author a part of the established vocabulary with which one describes the transcendent realm.

In one place, there is in fact a phrase which almost seems to be a cousin of the designation “the immovable race”: In a list of different types of “classes” or “species” (*genē*) which are contained in a certain crown that “the Father of the All gave to the Indivisible,” and which is apparently conceived of as a crown providing perfection in the pleromatic realm, one of the *genē* mentioned is called *asaleutos*:

And on the Indivisible there was a crown having in itself every living kind, and every triple-powered kind, and every uncontainable kind, and every infinite kind, and every ineffable kind, and every silent kind, and every unknown kind, and every still kind, and every immovable kind (*genos nim ēnasaleutos*), and every first-appearing kind, and every self-begotten kind, and every true kind—all being in it. (ch. 9, p. 240.4–12)

Although there is a distinct difference between the references in the other gnostic texts to a *single* immovable *genea* and the mention in this list of presumably a *plurality* of immovable *genē*, this language in the *Untitled Text* is still relevant for the interpretation of the phrase “the immovable race” in the other works. Not the least important reason for this is that the *Untitled Text* is akin in other respects to *Zost.*, *3StSeth*, and some other Nag Hammadi texts, particularly in their common connections with

home” (trans. Loeb Classical Library). Similarly, the “Fatherhoods” of the *Untitled Text* belong to the invisible, transcendent realm. Cf. also Plutarch, *Is. et Os.* 373 E-F: Plato calls the noetic (*to noēton*) “idea” and “paradigm” and “father,” while he calls matter “mother” and “nurse” and “seat and place of becoming.”

³² *Untitled Text* ch. 10, p. 243.11; ch. 12, p. 250.25; ch. 13, p. 252.4; ch. 20, p. 262.15 (Schmidt-MacDermot).

Plotinian circles.³³ I will return below to two further passages from the *Untitled Text* which involve the application of the term *asaleutos* to the archetypal Human, and which consequently will have particular significance for understanding the gnostic language about “the immovable race.”

In the *BJeu*, the passage which I discussed earlier about the immovable five trees is actually one part of a longer description of zones through which the souls pass when they leave the body (chs. 49–50, pp. 116.23–126.3). The order of the five immovable trees is only one stage in the trip, preceded and followed by others, such as: the order of the seven voices, the order of the uncontainable ones, the order of the infinite ones, the order of the pre-hyper-uncontainable ones, the order of the pre-hyper-infinite ones, etc. It is evident that the author’s battery of transcendental adjectives partly overlaps with that found in the lists in the *Untitled Text* (although he has supercharged some of them with prefixes!), and here also *asaleutos* is found: “Again you will go inside them to the order of the immovable ones (*asaleutos*). They will give you their mystery and their seal and the great name of the treasury of light. Again you will go inside these, to the order of the hyper-immovable (*hyperasaleutos*) ones. When you reach that order they give you their mystery and their seal and the great name of the treasury of light” (ch. 50, pp. 120.23–121.2), and then the text continues with further orders through which the soul will pass. There is a similar text in *Pistis Sophia* in which a series of entities are enumerated, and we find mention of “the immovable ones (*asaleutos*),” and immediately preceding these, “the twelve immovable ones (*akinētos*)” (ch. 95, p. 221.15–23). There is no reason to conclude that the author is trying to make some significant distinction between *akinētos* and *asaleutos* here. Since both of these groups of “immovable ones” are mentioned only this once in *Pistis Sophia*—just as the “immovable” and “hyper-immovable ones” are mentioned only once in *BJeu*—there is no clue as to just who or what they are. These lists of transcendent orders in *Pistis Sophia* and *BJeu*, like the catalogues of

³³ To take one example: In *Enn.* 2.9.6,1–3, Plotinus says that his opponents introduce certain “hypostases” called “transmigrations” (*paroikēseis*), “antitypes” (*antitypoi*), and “repentances” (*metanoiai*). These technical terms are found used with respect to ascending levels of existence in both the *Untitled Text* (ch. 20, p. 263.19–23) and in *Zost* (5,24–27; 8,15f; 11,29–12,16; 27,14–28,10; 43,13–31; see below, Chapter Three), and these two gnostic texts contain many other terms and motifs in common; see John H. Sieber, “An Introduction to the Tractate Zostrianos from Nag Hammadi,” *NovT* 15 (1973): 233–40; John D. Turner, “The Gnostic Threefold Path to Enlightenment,” *NovT* 22 (1980): 324–51. For earlier discussions (pre-Nag Hammadi) of the relationship of the *Untitled Text* to Plotinus’s gnostic opponents, see Carl Schmidt, *Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache aus dem Codex Brucianus*, TU 8 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1892), pp. 598–665; *idem*, *Plotins Stellung zum Gnosticismus und kirchlichen Christentum*, TU 20,4 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1901); and the extensive notes in Baynes, *A Coptic Gnostic Treatise*.

“Fatherhoods” in the *Untitled Text*, have the effect of distributing across a chorus of aeonic entities a series of divine attributes which ultimately derive from a single source. In such lists, therefore, the purpose is not to bring into focus the unique features of each item in the catalogue so much as it is to sweep steadily through the entire concatenation and create a sense of the wide range of excellences in the supernal realm.

2. *Immovable Humans*

From the survey thusfar of some instances of the use of *asaleutos*, it is clear that the term came to be employed by many writers in reference to the immutability possessed by transcendent things: for Philo, the unchanging laws of God; in the *Axiochus*, the tranquillity of the soul in the after-life; in Hebrews, the invisible kingdom inherited by the Christian; in *BJeu*, chambers in the supernal realm, etc. To complete this survey, it now remains for us to mention some instances in which *asaleutos* is found applied to *persons*, rather than things.

Although nowhere else in ancient literature except in the five gnostic texts which are the object of this study do we find mention of “the immovable *race*,” we do find a few cases in which a *single* human being is said to be *asaleutos*. Philo speaks in one place of God granting to certain persons the seal of immovability:

Let no one who hears that God is firmly fixed (*epestèrikto*) think that there is something which provides aid to God in order that he might stand firm (*pagiōs stēnai*). Rather, let him consider that what is meant by this statement is that the steadfast God is the stay and support and firmness and stability of all things, stamping immovability (*to asaleuton*) into whomever he wills. (*Somn.* 1.158)

The background for this statement in Philo is to be found in his contrast between character types: the unstable person vs. the stable, immovable hero. In *Post.* 21–31, Philo is dealing with the topic of the stability of God in comparison with creation. Paradoxically, God, who is faster than the fastest heavenly bodies, stands at rest (*hestōs*, *Post.* 19). This leads Philo into a profile of two types of persons: the stable and the unstable. The prototype of the unstable person in this case is Cain, who has disabled the only instrument with which he could have seen God (*Post.* 21)—i.e., the eyes of the soul (cf. *Post.* 18). Philo draws out the significance in the name “Nod,” the land to which Cain is said to have gone (Gen 4:16). The similarity between “Nod,” (נֹד) and the Hebrew term נָדָה, “to shake, toss, etc.,” allows Philo an opportunity to discourse on Cain’s instability.³⁴

³⁴ Cf. *Cher.* 12f, where this etymology is also mentioned. In *Sobr.* 44ff, “Canaan” is said

It is worth noticing the region into which he departs when he has left the presence of God. It is the land called "Tossing" (*salos*), and by this the lawgiver indicates that the foolish man, being characterized by unstable and unsettled impulses, submits to tossing (*salon*) and violent motion, like a swelling sea against contrary winds in the winter; while calm and perfect stillness have not been experienced by him, not even in a dream. Just as when a ship is tossing about (*saleuē*), it can neither sail nor lie at anchor, but carried this way and that it rocks from side to side and vacillates like an unsteady scale; so also the worthless man, having a mind which is reeling and driven by storm, unable to steer his course correctly and without deviation, constantly tosses about (*saleuei*), and is ready for his life to end in shipwreck. The perfect sequence in this series of things astonishes me in no small measure! What happens is that that which draws near to that which stands at rest (*to hestōti*) desires rest out of a longing to be like it. Now that which stands unwaveringly at rest (*to aklinōs hestōs*) is God, and that which is moved (*to kinēton*) is creation; so that one who approaches God desires stability (*staseōs*), whereas he who departs from God, since he approaches changing creation, is naturally carried about. (*Post.* 22–23)

The foolish person's nature is to be moving constantly contrary to right reason (*aiei para ton orthon logon kinoumenos*), to be hostile to stillness (*ēremia*) and rest (*anapausei*), and never to stand firmly (*hestanai pagiōs Post.* 24). The soul of the worthless person is "constantly shaken" (*saleuōn*) since it has no firm footing (*Leg. all.* 3.53). His opinions on various matters are continually changing, so that he even holds conflicting views at the same time (*Post.* 25). He represents the combination of all kinds of opposites: great and small, friend and enemy, and every other contrary pair (*Post.* 25). Like reason can be compared to the soul's legitimate spouse, the nature of the body is the soul's concubine (*Congr.* 59); when the foolish person is given over to the lusts and passions of the body, he is shaken by them; in making this point, Philo interprets the name of the concubine Timna (*Gen* 36:12) to mean "shaken fatigue" (*ekleipsis saleuomenē*), "for the soul faints and loses all power through passion when it receives from the body the great tossing (*salos*) and wave cause by the storm wind which sweeps down in its fury, driven by unbridled appetite"

to mean the same as *salos* (cf. קָנַן and נָוֶה, "to shake, totter, etc."); cf. *SAC* 90, where reason is shaken (*ton saleuonta logon*) in the land of the Canaanites. In *Gen* 4:12–14, in the Masoretic text, Cain is said to become *nāwānād bāāres* (RSV: "a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth"). But the Greek translations of this clause leave one with the impression, not of Cain the wanderer, but of Cain who "trembles" or "shakes" (LXX: *stenōn kai tremōn epi tēs gēs*; among other Greek translations which were known to Origen were *anastatos kai akatastatos*, and *saleuomenos kai akatastatos*; see F. Field, ed., *Origenis hexaplorum* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1875], vol. 1, p. 19).

(*Congr.* 60; trans. Loeb Classical Library, modified). This instability may be only a stage which a person can eventually transcend. Lot, like Cain, is a type of the unstable person, who is irresolute and tottering (*saleuōn*), but only because he is still a novice in contemplation (*Migr.* 148–50).

By contrast, the wise man has stilled the swell and tossing of the soul (*Leg. all.* 2.90). His actions are not unstable like those of the fool, but rather weighty and immovable (*akinētoi*) and not easily shaken (*oud' eusaleutoi* *Leg. all.* 3.44f). Two figures in particular are considered by Philo to be paradigms of stability: Abraham and Moses:

Abraham the wise man, since he stands (*hestēke*), draws near to the standing (*hestōti*) God; for it says, "He was standing (*hestōs*) before the Lord and he drew near and said" (Gen 18:22f). For the approach to the immutable (*atrepton*) God is granted only to a soul which is truly immutable (*atreptō*), and a soul which is in this state does truly stand (*histatai*) near divine power. But that which reveals most clearly the firm steadfastness of the man of excellence is the oracle given to the all-wise Moses: "Stand here by me" (Deut 5:31). Two things follow from this: first, that the Being who moves and turns everything else is himself immovable (*akinēton*) and immutable (*atrepton*); secondly, that he shares with the man of excellence (*tō spoudaiō*) his own nature, which is rest. (*Post.* 27f)

After further comments about the eternal stability of God (*Post.* 29f), Philo depicts God drawing individuals out of the nether world of the passions up to the Olympian realm of virtue and to the stability that belongs to that realm (*Post.* 31). In *Gig.* 48, the wording of Num 14:44: "Moses and the ark were not moved" (LXX: *ouk ekinēthēsan*), is interpreted to mean that virtue (= the ark) is immovable and the wise man is unchangeable. The command to stand in Deut 5:31 is then quoted in order to show that "unwavering stability (*stasis*) and rest is that which is found beside God who stands (*hestōta*) eternally and unwaveringly" (*Gig.* 49). The wise man's manner is therefore "always absolutely the same" (*Gig.* 50), after the fashion of the stability of the noetic realm.³⁵

Such figures as Moses stand as reassuring paradigms for the way in which God seals those whom he wishes with immovability (*Somn.* 1.158). Although Philo does not speak of an "immovable race," he clearly understands that the wise man belongs to an "immovable" class of human beings. While the fool is subject to movement and turning and change (*kinētos kai streptos kai metablētos*), to be unswerving and fixed is something belonging only to God and to the "friend" of God (*Somn.* 2.219).

³⁵ Philo mentions the two passages, Gen 18:22f and Deut 5:31, in other places and makes fundamentally the same point; on Gen 18:22f, see *Cher.* 18f, *Somn.* 2.226; on Deut 5:31, see *Somn.* 2.227; *Conf.* 31f; *SAC* 8; cf. *Deus imm.* 22f

Four other instances of the application of *asaleutos* to human beings all come from a much later period, from the late third through the fourth century C.E., but there are many lines of continuity with the ideal of the immovable hero as it is found in Philo. Probably toward the end of the third century, the Syrian Neoplatonist Iamblichus painted a picture of the legendary Pythagoras, portraying the latter at age eighteen, travelling about absorbing wisdom from the great philosophers such as Thales of Miletus (*Vit. Pythag.* 11–13). Thales informs the young Pythagoras that he should journey to Egypt to learn from the priests there. After stopping along the way at coastal cities in Syria and Phoenicia, and after being initiated at these places into the local mysteries and becoming increasingly aware that really all genuine wisdom had originated in Egypt, Pythagoras then finds transportation to Egypt with some Egyptian sailors who for their part initially accept him on board with the intention of selling him into slavery (*Vit. Pythag.* 14). But their minds are soon changed by the eerie, possibly divine character of this young man, who so effortlessly and mysteriously had descended to the landing where their ship had been docked in Phoenicia, from the summit of a sacred mountain there, and without being delayed in his descent by the rugged and dangerous cliffs and crevasses (15). Arriving on board, he said only, “Are you bound for Egypt?” and after receiving an affirmative reply he simply sat down in silence out of the way of the sailors: “For the whole voyage—two days and three nights—he remained in exactly the same posture, not partaking of food or drink or sleep—unless, while he was in that fixed and immovable steadfastness (*en tē hedraia kai asaleutō epimonē*), he briefly dozed off without anyone noticing” (16). The image which is left in our minds here has been painted by Iamblichus with some care. Pythagoras, we are intended to understand, possessed superhuman qualities, qualities more characteristic of divinity. The sailors could think of no other explanation for this uncanny ability to sit for three days without blinking an eye.

The sophist Eunapius of Sardis, in his *Lives of the Sophists* written a few generations later, at the end of the fourth century C.E.,³⁶ sorts through a succession of fourth century philosophers, measuring and comparing their characters and achievements. He has special praise for his in-law and teacher Chrysanthius. The latter had been a disciple of Aedesius, Iamblichus’s successor, and therefore was well-versed in the Pythagorean and Platonic tradition. Among the many other ways in which Eunapius is fond of describing Chrysanthius’s excellence, he especially likes to draw attention to the latter’s resolute unshakability. One instance of this involves the account of a summons to Constantinople, sent by the new

³⁶ *Philostratus and Eunapius, The Lives of the Sophists*, ed. and trans. Wilmer Cave Wright, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968).

emperor Julian the Apostate to the philosophers Chrysanthius and Maximus of Ephesus (*Lives of the Sophists* 476–77; Loeb pp. 440–46). Maximus and Chrysanthius together consulted oracles on the matter, and the omens were unfavorable. Chrysanthius (wisely, as it turned out) resolved not to go to Constantinople, but Maximus was too flattered by the invitation, and too ambitious, to turn it down.³⁷ While Chrysanthius accepted the gods' first answer, Maximus kept trying until he got from the oracle the answer he desired. "Chrysanthius, however, remained more immovable (*akinētoteros*) than a statue, having resolved not to alter (*kinēsai*) in the least the conclusions that had originally been firmly fixed in his mind." After attaining fame and influence at court, Maximus continued to insist that Chrysanthius also come to Constantinople, but the latter never changed his mind; soon thereafter, the ruin of Julian brought with it the ruin and torture of Maximus.³⁸ Chrysanthius had a son who was given the name of his father's teacher, Aedesius. Eunapius describes the child with typical hyperbole as more or less a divine prodigy—all the more crushing, then, was the blow of the youth's death at the age of only twenty. Yet, "his father at this time clearly showed himself to be a philosopher. . . . he remained immutable (*emeinen atreptos*)" (504; Loeb, p. 558). Finally, just before narrating the circumstances of Chrysanthius's own death, Eunapius sums up the character of the man in these words: "After these events (i.e., Aedesius's death) had taken place, Chrysanthius pursued his accustomed studies. And when many great public and universal calamities and disturbances befell, which shook all men's souls with terror, he alone remained unshaken (*asaleutos*), so that one would have thought that the man was not even present on earth" (504; Loeb, p. 560).³⁹

³⁷ Cf. Peter Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 61: "For Eunapius, [Maximus] is an impressive and meteoric figure. But his behavior with the gods was of a piece with his behavior to his fellow men: with both, he had pushed his luck. In his relations with oracles and seances he had not been a charlatan—only a man in too great a hurry."

³⁸ Another philosopher, Priscus, had also been pressed by Maximus to come to the imperial court, and had finally consented to do so. But Eunapius says that when Priscus arrived, even though there were now plenty of people trying to gain influence with him, just as they were with Maximus, Priscus let none of this go to his head: "he remained immovable (*akinētos*), and was not puffed up by the emperor's court, but rather endeavoured to lower the pride of the court and to bring it to a more philosophic level" (478, Loeb, pp. 446f). As a result of this character, says Eunapius, Priscus later did not suffer any harm when Julian was overthrown (478, Loeb, p. 448).

³⁹ Cf. the following Pythagorean maxim: "Do not readily count as blessed a person who is reeling (*saleuonta*) with friends or offspring or some other thing which possesses only ephemeral security; for all these things are uncertain, and the only firm thing (*bebaion*) is being anchored on oneself and God" (Maxim 91; text in Henry Chadwick, *The Sentences of Sextus: A Contribution to the History of Early Christian Ethics*, Texts and Studies, New Series, 5 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959], p. 91). On standing as a statue, cf. the say-

Perhaps a generation after Iamblichus wrote his *Life of Pythagoras*, and probably in about the same period in the fourth century that someone in Upper Egypt was leafing through the pages of documents such as *ApocryJn* and the other Coptic texts which speak of the "immovable race," somewhere in Egypt the Christian bishop Athanasius was busy sculpting a literary portrait of ultimate human potential that had been lived out in the desert by one heroic figure, the monk Antony.⁴⁰ There are many features in this portrait, but one of the more prominent ones is Antony's stability. He is a person who has done battle with the demons and become expert in their ways. Since demons are actually powerless, they have to depend on their bark. They make noise and create illusions, unlike real angels who work quietly (*ērema*) in effecting their mission (*Vit. Ant.* 28; MPG 26, 888A). Demons create turmoil and disturbance (26; MPG 26, 884A), and stir up (*kinousi*) everything with a multitude of "movements" (*kinēmata*) in order to block the believer's path to heaven (22; MPG 26, 876B). Antony stands as the paradigm of the person quite unaffected by all this. He is the person who is "never disturbed."⁴¹ Emerging from twenty years of solitude, Antony showed no sign of disturbance (*oute . . . etarachthē*) at the crowds pressing upon him, nor any sign of elation at the welcome he was receiving, "but rather he was quite totally balanced, as though piloted by reason, standing firm (*hestōs*) in the state natural to him" (14; MPG 26, 865A). When demons shake his cell, he "remains immovable in thought" (*akinētos menōn tō phronēmati* 39; MPG 26, 900C); assaulted with countless other demonic devices, he "holds his mind immovable (*asaleuton*) and unperturbed" (*akumatōn* 51; MPG 26,

ing attributed to Socrates in Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 3.1.90: "As a statue stands immovable (*hestōs ametakinētos*) on a pedestal, so ought the wise man (*spoudaios anēr*) to be standing on his deliberate choice"; and below, pp. 33f, 87 n. 32, and 95f.

⁴⁰ Cf. Herman Dörries, "Die Vita Antonii als Geschichtsquelle," *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen*, Philologisch-historische Klasse, 1949, nr. 14 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1949), p. 405: "Als die Verwirklichung des wahren Menschen wird Antonius zum *typos* der Theologie des Athanasius"; Richard Reitzenstein, "Des Athanasius Werk über das Leben Antonius," *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften*, philosophisch-historische Klasse, 1914, nr. 8 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1914); and more recently, Robert C. Gregg and Dennis E. Groh, *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), pp. 131–59; Michael A. Williams, "The *Life of Antony* and the Domestication of Charismatic Wisdom," in *Charisma and Sacred Biography*, ed. Michael A. Williams, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Thematic Studies 48, 3–4 (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982), pp. 23–45.

⁴¹ *oudepote gar etaratto*—*Vit. Ant.* 67; MPG 26, 940B; cf. 67; MPG 26, 940A: "For his soul was untroubled (*athorubou*), and he held his outer senses undisturbed, so that from the joy of his soul his face was also happy, and one could sense and perceive from the movements of his body the stability (*katastasin*) of his soul"; 70; MPG 26, 944A: Antony is "not disturbed" (*ou tarattomenos*) by crowds; 9; MPG 26, 857B: he is "unmoved" (*atremas*) by an attack of demons.

917B).⁴² As in the cases of Pythagoras and Chrysanthius, Antony's immovability is due to his relation to something which transcends the realm of movement—the divine, unchangeable Logos.⁴³

A fourth example of *asaleutos* used of an immovable hero in roughly this same period comes probably a couple of generations after the *Life of Antony*, in the description of the monk Adolius in the *Historia Lausiaca*.⁴⁴ We are informed about Adolius that his "great thing" (*to mega*) was that he would stand all night on the Mount of Olives praying and singing, and even if it rained or there was a frost, "he remained immovable" (*asaleutos emene*—*Hist. Laus.* 43.2). Here again is a concrete acting out of stability, of a type which in fact became widespread in monastic circles of the day.⁴⁵

All of these heroes were perceived as men who somehow had hold on a sort of unseen railing which rendered them not only internally stable but also very often revealed something of this internal stability in some very external manner: the rigid posture of Pythagoras on the ship, Adolius's fixed stand, or Antony's untroubled bodily movements and even the arresting of normal bodily aging.⁴⁶

The final instances which I will cite of *asaleutos* used of the human being do not involve the sort of human hero found in the previous examples, but instead speak of an archetypal, immovable Human. In the Bruce Codex, there are five leaves which seem to have some relation to the fifty-one remaining pages of the *Untitled Text* in that codex, although the exact nature of that relation is still uncertain.⁴⁷ In these unplaced leaves we find a description of the "Father of the All," who is himself completely incomprehensible, indescribable, invisible, etc. (ch. 21, pp.

⁴² Cf. the description of the monk John of Lycopolis as remaining *akinētos* after a demon attack (*Hist. monachorum* 1.41).

⁴³ Gregg and Groh, *Early Arianism*, have offered an extensive treatment of Athanasius's conflict with the Arians over the sense in which the Logos is unchangeable (*atēptos*), and they devote a chapter (pp. 131–59) to a discussion of the way in which a figure like Antony was employed by Athanasius, and *could* have been employed by Arians, as a model. They point out that while both Arians and orthodox shared the aspiration toward unchangeability, they differed radically on the question of whether this unchangeability was a matter of *achieved progress* in the constancy of will and purpose, in imitation of a changeable (i.e., possessing free will) Logos who had achieved this steadfastness of will (this is the Arian position: pp. 13–30, 66–70, etc.), or whether this unchangeability was a matter of divine *grace* which transformed changeable human nature by means of contact with a Logos who is unchangeable *by nature* (Athanasius's position: pp. 177–83, etc.).

⁴⁴ Text in J. Armitage Robinson, ed., *The Lausiaca History of Palladius*, vol. 2, Texts and Studies 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904).

⁴⁵ See the discussion below in Chapter Three of "standing" in monasticism (below, pp. 86–89).

⁴⁶ *Vit. Ant.* 14, MPG 26, 864B–865A; Gregg and Groh, *Early Arianism*, p. 147.

⁴⁷ *Untitled Text* chs. 21f, pp. 264.9–277.8. MacDermot, p. xiii, suggests that these leaves are perhaps part of a separate version of material found in the rest of the *Untitled Text*.

264.9–265.7). Through a first thought (*ennoia*) the “members” (*melè*) of the Father come into being. These members are the attributes of the Father, and their collective likeness forms “a City or Human Being” (ch. 21, pp. 265.7–267.2). After a complete inventory of the various parts of this ideal Human (ch. 21, pp. 267.4–270.2), there occurs the following encomiastic summary (ch. 22, p. 270.2–12):

This is the Human, who was made according to each aeon. And this is the one whom the All desired to [know]. This is the all-perfect one; and this is the Human of God, being himself a god. And he is invisible, and unknown, and all-tranquil, and uncontainable, and immovable (*asaleutos*).

Although *asaleutos* is only one of several adjectives which recur in this text in the description of transcendent things, as I have explained earlier, nevertheless it is one of the most frequently encountered, and its importance as an attribute of the ideal Human can be inferred from its occurrence in the passage just quoted and in another passage where it is also used to describe the ideal Human (ch. 8, pp. 238.26–239.9):

Then Setheus sent the Spark into the Indivisible, and it glittered and illumined the whole place of the holy Pleroma. And they saw the light of the Spark, they rejoiced, and they offered ten thousand times ten thousand praises to Setheus and the Spark of light, which had appeared in such a way that they saw in him their whole likeness. And they portrayed the Spark among them as a Human, of light and truth. They called him “all-formed,” and “unmixed,” and they called him “immovable” (*asaleutos*), and all the aeons called him “all-powered.”

What is involved in both passages is the familiar gnostic notion that that which is essentially human is derived from the composite attributes of God.⁴⁸ According to these passages, that which is most truly “Human” is, among other things, *asaleutos*. We may compare with these passages a very interesting feature of the description of the Primal Human and the first created human in the account of the Naasene teaching given by Hippolytus (*Ref.* 5.7.3–5.9.9). Hippolytus says that their teaching included the notion that the earth first brought forth a human who was an image of the heavenly Human named “Adamas”:

And this, they say, is the human whom earth produced alone. And he lay without breath (*apnous*), immovable (*akinèton*), unshakable (*asaleutos*), like a statue, being an image of that one above, the Human Adamas who is praised in song, having come into being through the agency of many powers, about whom much is said. Now in order that the great

⁴⁸ Cf. below, Chapter Seven, pp. 172–79; Hans-Martin Schenke, *Der Gott “Mensch” in der Gnosis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962).

Human above should be completely held fast . . . there was also given to him (i.e., the created human) a soul, in order that through the soul the enslaved molded figure of the great and most beautiful and perfect Human might suffer and be punished . . . (the soul) coming into the human and moving (*kinēsasa*) him, that it might enslave and punish the molded figure of the perfect Human." (*Ref.* 5.7.6–8)

This is reminiscent of the golem theme in gnostic texts such as *ApocryJn* (II 19,10–33 par). However, the point of the story seems reversed in the Naasene version, since instead of the eventual movement of the body being a positive event signifying the reception of Spirit and resulting in the envy of the archons (as in *ApocryJn*), here when the soul goes into and causes movement of the human, the purpose is to *entrap* and punish the human by this means. The original motionlessness of the figure is therefore apparently considered to be a positive quality.⁴⁹ The heaping up of adjectives (*apnous*, *akinētos*, *asaleutos*) may be an indication that an earlier, simpler tradition of a lifeless figure has been expanded upon in order to emphasize the way in which the figure is in the image of the immovable, perfect Human Adamas, and in order to bring to expression philosophical presuppositions about the inferiority of motion to rest.

C. Conclusion

Together, the two last-mentioned passages from the *Untitled Text* and from Hippolytus's account of the Naasene teaching constitute an interesting counterpart to the examples of immovable heroes discussed above. Both sets of examples, though approaching the theme from different directions, illustrate the use of *asaleutos* to describe an aspect of ultimate human potential. Both sets of examples are important for understanding what might have been heard in the phrase "the immovable race" by gnostic authors and readers. It remains true that so far the immovable race designation has been found only in the five gnostic texts, and therefore it cannot readily be assigned to the category of philosophical commonplaces. And yet, against the examples of the use of *asaleutos* which I have discussed, the immovable race designation can be seen to be much less eccentric than it might otherwise appear to be. It is in part a sectarian designation, to be sure. For at least part of its history it was evidently employed as a self-designation by persons belonging to sects with defined boundaries (see below, Chapter Eight). But as a sectarian designation, it may not have been so arcane in late antiquity as it might seem to the modern reader—not as arcane, at any rate, as certain other theologoumena

⁴⁹ Already noted by Luise Schottroff, *Der Glaubende und die feindliche Welt: Beobachtungen zum gnostischen Dualismus und seiner Bedeutung für Paulus und das Johannesevangelium*, WMANT 37 (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1970), p. 17.

in these gnostic texts. To belong to a class of immovable human beings was a general ideal which seems to have had rather wide currency.

But we cannot go further in assessing the relation of the ideal of immovability in our gnostic texts to the larger late antique market for means of access to this ideal, without reaching more deeply into these texts than simply the occurrence of the term *asaleutos* itself. The relevance of examples of the use of *asaleutos* discussed in this chapter for interpreting the immovable race designation will in the process be confirmed and further nuanced.

CHAPTER TWO

IMMOVABILITY IN *THE THREE STELES OF SETH*

A. The "Standing" Adamas

If the text of *3StSeth* contains clues as to what its author may have understood by an "immovable" race, they are probably to be found in the way in which the text asserts the stability of the transcendent, perfect Human, Adamas. The author does not call Adamas *asaleutos*, as the transcendent Human is called in the *Untitled Text* from the Bruce Codex (see above, pp. 31f), but he uses instead a technical term which was well-known in philosophical circles as a term to describe transcendent immovability. He does not describe the creation of a molded image of Adamas, as is found in the Naasene account, and yet it is probable that the relationship between the created human and the transcendent Adamas is viewed in *3StSeth* in a way which is analogous to that in the Naasene teaching which I discussed in the previous chapter; and just as the original immovability of the created human in the Naasene teaching seems to be a participation in the primordial immovability of Adamas, so also the immovability of the immovable race in *3StSeth* may be best understood against what is said of the immovability of Adamas.

3StSeth consists of three sections of praise, each offered to a different transcendent being. The first stele consists of praise to Adamas (118,24–121,17); the second stele is an offering of praise to the Aeon of Barbelo (121,18–124,15); and the third stele is a prayer of praise to the Preexistent one. The progression from the first through the third steles is an ascent of praise, the Preexistent one being the highest level of reality, and Barbelo and Adamas being successive emanations.¹

In the first stele, in praise of Adamas, there is a striking indication of the prominent role which "stability" plays in the thought of the author:

The first stele of Seth: I bless you, Father, Stranger Adamas,² I your son

¹ See James M. Robinson, "The Three Steles of Seth and the Gnostics of Plotinus," in the *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Gnosticism, Stockholm, August 20–25, 1973* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, Leiden: Brill, 1977), pp. 132–42; and Turner, "The Gnostic Threefold Path."

² Coptic: *pigeraadamas*. Cf. *ApocryPh* II 8,34f: *pigeraadaman* (but simply *adamas* in the parallel in III 13,4, and *adam* in BG 35,5); *Zost* 6,23; 13,6; 51,7; and *Melch* 6,6. On the discussion of previous suggestions as to the meaning of the term, see Howard M. Jackson,

Emmach³ Seth, whom you begot without conception as a blessing of our God, since I am your son and you are my Mind, my Father. And I sowed and begot, but you have seen the greatnesses. You have stood (*akaheratk*), since you are unceasing.

I bless you, Father; bless me, Father. It is because of you that I exist; it is because of God that you exist. Because of you, I exist with that one.

You are light since you behold the light. You have revealed the lights. You are Mirotheas. You are my Mirotheos. I bless you as a god. I bless your divinity. Great is the self-begotten Good who has stood (*etafaheratsf*), the God who stood preminent (*etaf^{er} šorp ^enaheratsf*). You came in goodness. You appeared and revealed goodness.

I will speak your name because you are a first name. You are unbegotten. You appeared in order that you might reveal the things which are eternal. You are he who exists. For this reason you revealed the things which truly exist.

You are the one who is mentioned by means of a voice, but you are praised by means of a mind.

You possess power in every place. For this reason, even the perceptible cosmos knows you, because of you and your seed.

You are merciful, and you are from another race and it is over another race. Now (you are from another race and it is over another race.) You are from another race because you are not [the same]; and you are merciful because you are eternal; and you are over another race because you have caused all these to grow.

But concerning my seed, you know that it is in begetting. Now they are from other races since they are not the same, but they are over other races because they are in life.

You are Mirotheos.

I bless his power which has been given to me, he who caused the malenesses which truly exist to become male three times; he who was divided in the Pentad; he who was given to us in a triple-power; he who was begotten without conception; he who came from that which is elect. For the sake of that which is humiliated, he went forth in the Midst.

You are a father through a father; a word from a command. We praise you, the Triple-male, because you have reconciled the All by means of them all, for you have given us power. You came into being from one by means of one. You went, you came to one.

You have saved! You have saved! You have saved us! Crown-bearer! Crown-bestower! We praise you eternally. We praise you, we who have been saved as those who are individually perfect, the ones who are perfect because of you, those who were perfected with you. He who is perfect! He who makes perfect! The one who perfects by means of all these! The one who is the same in every place, the Triple-male!

You have stood (*akaheratk*); you have stood preminent (*ak^{er} šorp ^enaheratk*). You distributed in every place, (yet) you continued to be one;

³Geradamas, the Celestial Stranger," *NTS* 27 (1981): 385–94. The *pi-* is a form of the Coptic article, and Jackson convincingly argues that *ger* is from the Hebrew *gēr*, "stranger." Cf. Birger Pearson, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codices IX and X*, NHS 15 (Leiden: Brill, 1981), pp. 36f.

³On this enigmatic, and still unexplained term, see Birger Pearson, "The Figure of Seth in Gnostic Literature," in: Layton, *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, vol. 2, pp. 484 and 501f.

and you saved those whom you desired. Now you desire that all who are worthy be saved.

You are perfect! You are perfect! You are perfect!

The first stèle of Seth. (118,24–121,17)

It has been recognized for some time now that the Coptic term *aherat* =, "to stand," in this passage is translating forms of the Greek verb *hestanai*, and that therefore this Coptic text seems to be affirming of Adamas the same kind of thing contained in the well-known title *ho hestōs*, "The Standing one," which is found among other places in several texts or passages associated with "Simonian" gnosticism.⁴ Indeed, the fact that *3StSeth* begins by describing its contents as "the revelation of Dositheos about the three steles of Seth . . .," the fact that a Dositheos is associated with Simon Magus in the Pseudo-Clementines in a dispute over the title of *ho hestōs*, and the fact that there are traditions of a Samaritan sect of "Dositheans," have understandably given rise to tentative hypotheses that there was some kind of connection of *3StSeth* with Dosithean or Samaritan traditions.⁵ However, there are still far too many uncertainties involved to

⁴ Simon is called *ho hestōs* in the Pseudo-Clementine literature: for example in *Hom* 2.22.3f: "(Simon) wishes to be considered a certain highest power of the very God who created the world. And on occasion intimating that he himself is the Christ, he calls himself 'The Standing One (*hestōta*).' He uses this title on the grounds that he will stand forever (*stēsomenos aei*) and that his body was not able to fall by reason of corruption"; *Hom*. 2.24.6: "Dositheus said to (Simon), 'If you are the Standing One (*ho hestōs*), I will worship you'"; *Recog.* 3.47.3: "I (Simon) am the Son of God, standing in eternity (*stans in aeternum*), and in the same way I make those who believe in me stand forever (*stare in perpetuum*)"; *Recog.* 1.72.3: "a certain Simon, a Samaritan magician, was deceiving many of our people, asserting that he was a certain 'Standing One' (*stantem*), which is another term for 'Christ'"; cf. *Acts of Peter* 31: "... behold, I (Simon) am the Standing One (*ho hestōs*), and I go up to the Father and will say to him, 'They desired to bring down even me, your Son the Standing One. . .'" In the *Megale Apophasis*, in Hippolytus, *Ref.* 6.9.4ff, the title *ho hestōs* does occur (in 6.13.1), but more frequently a triple formulation is used: *ho hestōs, stas, stēsomenos*.

From the older literature discussing the origin and significance of the title in Simonianism, see A. Hilgenfeld, "Der Magier Simon," *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie* 11 (1868): 375, n. 2; Hans Waitz, "Simon Magus in der altchristlichen Literatur," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 5 (1904): 139–42; Lucien Cerfaux, "La gnose simonienne: Culte et doctrines. III: La brebis perdue," *Recherches de science religieuse* 16 (1926): 491–98. Among the more recent studies, see Hans Gerhard Kippenberg, *Garazim und Synagoge*, RVV 30 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1971), pp. 348ff, n. 136; Karlmann Beyschlag, *Simon Magus und die christliche Gnosis*, WUNT 16 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1974), esp. pp. 45–47; Gerd Lüdemann, *Untersuchungen zur simonianischen Gnosis*, Göttinger theologische Arbeiten 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), pp. 97–100; Stanley Jerome Isser, *The Dositheans: A Samaritan Sect in Late Antiquity*, Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity 17 (Leiden: Brill, 1976), pp. 138–40.

⁵ Hans-Martin Schenke, "Das sethianische System nach Nag-Hammadi-Handschriften," in *Studia Coptica*, ed. Peter Nagel, BBA 45 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1974), p. 172; and Jackson, "Geradamas," pp. 390f. Jackson furthers the argument in an intriguing fashion, by calling attention to the similarity between the name Ger-Adamas and the Phoenician and

warrant a connection of *3StSeth* with a "Simonian" or "Dosithean" sect. On the one hand, we are still in enough trouble just evaluating the supposed sources for Simonians and Dositheans which existed *before* the Nag Hammadi find.⁶ There are enough problems, for example, in determining whether there really is any reason historically to connect Simon with a Dositheos, and in determining just what "Simonian" or "Dosithean" teaching looked like. And on the other hand, it is to be noted that (1) Dositheos was a common name in antiquity,⁷ and (2) the language about "standing," which has attracted the most attention in the discussion of parallels between *3StSeth* and Simonian/Dosithean traditions, is in fact used by many other writers who certainly are not connected with Simonian or Dosithean traditions.

This last point requires considerable elaboration at this time, because of the fact that "standing" terminology appears also in two other of the gnostic texts which contain the immovable race designation, and because the language about "standing" clearly has significance in these texts as technical vocabulary for expressing the ideal of stability. Although the existence of this language about "standing" in a number of sources in late antiquity has been commented upon for some time now,⁸ it has never been treated very extensively, and moreover the availability of still more sources from Nag Hammadi which are found to employ this word in a technical sense may suggest that it is worthwhile to attempt a more far-reaching survey of how this term was used in philosophical traditions in antiquity.

Punic practice of placing the appellative prefix *gr* in theophoric names (although there *gr* does not mean "stranger," but rather designates the person as a "protégé" or "devotee" of a god or goddess); noting that "the Samaritans were *gerim* [i.e., "strangers"] in Palestine from the beginning," and that in the Hellenistic period "many of the alien colonists of this era were, or believed themselves to be, of Phoenician descent," Jackson sees in the name Ger-Adamas a possible reminiscence of a Samaritan sectarian environment "in which the core ideas of the Sethian system evolved" (p. 390). Schenke, in a more recent statement ("The Phenomenon and Significance of Gnostic Sethianism," in Layton, *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, vol. 2, p. 592), is now more hesitant to see in the mention of Dositheos a link to Samaritan tradition, but still considers the matter an "open question."

⁶ See the discussion by Wayne Meeks in *Religious Studies Review* 3 (1977): 137-42.

⁷ A point already made by Doriesse, *The Secret Book of the Egyptian Gnostics*, p. 189; cf. Isser, *The Dositheans*, p. 5.

⁸ See above, n. 4, and the works by Cerfaux, Beyschlag, and Ludemann; Walter Grundmann, "stēkō, histēmi," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. G. W. Bromiley, vol. 7, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), pp. 636-51; Barbara Aland, "Gnosis und Philosophie," in *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Gnosticism* (see above, n. 1), p. 53; Michel Tardieu, "Les trois stèles de Seth: Un écrit gnostique retrouvé à Nag Hammadi," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 57 (1973): 560-61 (see my criticism below, in n. 78).

B. The Greek Term hestanai and the Immovability of the Transcendent

“The moving arrow stands at rest” (*hē oistos pheromenē hestēken*), was one of the famous paradoxes put forth by Zeno of Elea (Aristotle, *Phys.* 6.9, 239b30). The Greek verb *histanai*, in its perfect and second aorist (and occasionally in its present middle and passive) forms, has a long history in Greek literature as a technical term for Rest (vs. Motion). (For convenience, I will refer to this verb using the perfect infinitive form *hestanai*, since the perfect is found in the majority of the passages to be discussed.) For our purposes here, the best place to begin is with Plato, since so much of the usage of *hestanai* which is relevant to the present study is found in texts either from the Platonic tradition or influenced by it in some way. In Plato’s dialogues, *hestanai* is encountered frequently as a technical term for Rest—for example, in this passage from *Laws* 10.893B-C: “. . . when a man asks me, ‘Do all things stand still (*hestēke*), Stranger, and does nothing move (*kineitai*)? Or is exactly the opposite the truth? Or do some things move and some remain at rest (*menei*)?’ My answer will be, ‘Some things move, others remain at rest’” (trans. Loeb Classical Library).⁹

It is well-known that for Plato knowledge requires objects which “remain stable” (*menei*) and are not changing or in motion (*metaballoi ē kinoito*—*Crat.* 439E–440B). In the dialogues probably the most frequent description of this realm of stability—i.e., the Forms or Ideas—is “that which always remains the same” (*aei kata tauta kai hōsautōs echei*),¹⁰ although a variety of other terms are also used by Plato to express this stability.¹¹ We shall see that in later Platonic tradition there will be much use of the verb *hestanai* to describe the stability of the noetic, or of that which is even more transcendent than the noetic. But, by contrast with many later Platonists, Plato himself does not commonly speak of the changelessness of the Forms by talking about them as “standing at rest.”

In fact, in one very famous passage Plato seems on the surface to be denying the appropriateness of this term with respect to the Forms:

Are we actually to be persuaded so easily that motion (*kinēsin*) and life and soul and understanding are not present in Perfect Being (*tō pantelōs ontī*), that it stands motionless (*akinēton hestos*), august and holy, not possessing mind? (*Soph.* 248E–249A)

But it is unlikely that Plato’s interest here is to deny altogether the

⁹ Cf. also *Theaetetus* 180D; 181D; 183A; *Soph.* 249D; 250B-D; 252A-D; *Rep.* 4.436C-E; *Laws* 10.895B; *Tim.* 40B; *Phaedr.* 245E; *Parm.* 138B; 139B; 145E–146A; 156C-E; 160A.

¹⁰ Cf. *Phaedo* 78C-E; 79A; 80D; *Rep.* 5.479A; 6.500C; *Pol.* 269D; *Phil.* 59C; *Crat.* 439E; *Soph.* 248A; *Laws* 7.797B; 10.898A.

¹¹ E.g., *bebaios* in *Phil.* 59B-C; cf. the use of *monimos* in *Meno* 98A.

appropriateness of *hestanai* with respect to the Forms. There has been sharp debate in scholarship over whether "Perfect Being" in this passage is limited to the "pure being" of the transcendent, ideal realm, or whether it is intended more broadly ("the whole of that which really exists") to include both unchangeable Forms as well as the change (*kinēsis*) implied in life and soul and understanding.¹² The latter hypothesis¹³ seeks to preserve Plato's consistency with respect to the changelessness of the Forms. But it may not be necessary to protect Plato here from assigning *kinēsis* to the ideal realm. "Standing at rest" and possessing motion are in fact not always mutually exclusive in Plato's thinking, since there are several different *types* of motion, ranging from the perfectly uniform motion of, for example, a wheel rotating around a point, to random, chaotic movement (e.g., *Laws* 10.893B–898C; *Tim.* 34A).¹⁴ Things manifesting the perfectly uniform movement of rotation are things which are "standing at rest (*hestōtōn*) in the middle" while they move in a single spot (*Laws* 10.893C), and their movement is closest to that of Reason or Mind (*nous*); or elsewhere Plato can speak of the divine class (*genos*) of the fixed stars, which possess only two types of motion: rotation on an axis and revolution with the heavenly sphere, but with respect to the other types of motion this class is "immovable and standing at rest" (*akinēton kai hestos*—*Tim.* 40B). The *Sophist* passage quoted above is not intending to deny the quality of stability to the ideal realm, but only to avoid an extreme, one-sided interpretation of the changelessness of the Ideas: the ideal realm is not lifelessly static, but has a dynamic aspect. Plato's teaching about the two First Principles, the One and the Indefinite Dyad, which was a development of Pythagorean teaching,¹⁵ involved the association of things such as Being, Good, Regularity, Equality, Sameness, and Rest (*stasis*) with the One, while the opposites of these: Non-Being, Bad, Irregularity, Inequality, Difference, and Movement (*kinēsis*) were associated with the multiplicity of the Indefinite Dyad (often called "the Great-and-Small"): "Plato calls motion (*kinēsis*) the Great-and-Small, the Non-being, and the Irregular, and whatever corresponds to these" (Simplicius, *In Phys.* 430.34–431.16

¹² Krämer, *Ursprung*, pp. 194–201.

¹³ E.g., Francis M. Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge: The Theaetetus and the Sophist of Plato* (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1957; reprint of 1934 edition), pp. 242–48; W. D. Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1951), p. 110.

¹⁴ Konrad Gaiser, *Platons ungeschriebene Lehre* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1963), pp. 173–201.

¹⁵ On the problem of reconstructing Plato's teaching not found in the dialogues, cf. Jürgen Wipperfurth, ed., *Das Problem der ungeschriebene Lehre Platons*, Wege der Forschung 186 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972), containing an introduction to the problem, several previously published essays by figures who have addressed the issue, and, on pp. 449–64, a selected bibliography of some of the more important literature.

(Diels).¹⁶ Both of the two First Principles extend throughout the *whole* of reality, although the One is least evident and the Indefinite Dyad most evident in the material realm of change and becoming, while in the ideal realm the ratio is reversed. In principle the Indefinite Dyad must in some degree operate even in the realm of the Ideas, although here the influence of the One "so strongly dominates that here all 'movement' must in the greatest possible degree be uniform and 'at rest.'"¹⁷

Although, as I have said, Plato tends in the dialogues to use terms other than *hestanai* to describe the changelessness of the Forms, there is at least one passage, in the *Parmenides*, in which the Forms are said to "stand." The passage occurs in a curiously inconclusive exchange between Parmenides and Socrates, in which Parmenides raises a series of objections to the theory of Forms, which are never really answered.¹⁸ At one point in the discussion, Socrates comments:

... but, Parmenides, it seems especially clear to me that the situation is as follows: These Forms stand in nature just like patterns (*ta men eidē tauta hōsper paradeigmata hestantai en tē physei*), and the other things resemble them and are likenesses. (*Parm.* 132D)

Now this text would seem rather isolated in the Platonic dialogues¹⁹ were it not for the fact that its description of the Ideas or Forms evidently became a common one in the Academy. Diogenes Laertius, in his account of Plato's teaching, quotes an outline of Plato's doctrine of Forms given by the fourth century B.C.E. writer Alcimus. In this quotation the following remarks are made by Alcimus:²⁰

Each one of the Forms (*eidōn*) is eternal and a thought (*noēma*) and is impassible (*apathes*) with regard to these things. Therefore, he also says that the Ideas stand in nature just like patterns (*en tē physei tas ideas hestantai kathaper paradeigmata*), and the other things resemble these,

¹⁶ See Gaiser, pp. 190f and 536f.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

¹⁸ Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas*, pp. 82ff.

¹⁹ But Cf. *Theaetetus* 176E: "Friend, there are two patterns (*paradeigmatōn*) which stand in reality (*en tō ontī hestōtōn*), the one of divine happiness, the other of godless wretchedness; but, not seeing that this is so, in folly and utter senseless they (i.e., orators in public life who are not true philosophers) unknowingly become through their unjust acts more like the one (pattern) and less like the other." On this mention of *paradeigmata* as a reference to the Platonic Forms, cf. Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas*, p. 229.

²⁰ On the second part of the passage (3.15), cf. Hans Joachim Krämer, *Platonismus und hellenistische Philosophie* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1971), pp. 72–74; Gaiser, p. 544. On the first part (3.13), cf. R. E. Witt, *Albinus and the History of Middle Platonism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937), p. 71; A. H. Armstrong, "The Background of the Doctrine 'That the Intelligibles are Not Outside the Intellect,'" in *Les Sources de Plotin, Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique* 5 (Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 1957), p. 399.

existing as likenesses. . . . Plato, in his understanding of the Ideas, says that if indeed there is memory, Ideas are present in the things which exist, since memory is of something which is at rest and abiding (*êremountos tinos kai menontos*), and nothing else abides except the Ideas. (Diog. Laert. 3.13,15)

The first part of this passage contains a paraphrase of *Parm.* 132D, and it demonstrates that the statement about the Forms in that dialogue was not a remark forgotten by later generations. In a paragraph devoted to Plato's doctrine of the Ideas, Stobaeus also quotes only this one passage from *Parm.* 132D as a proof-text (Stobaeus, *Eclog.* 1.12.6a). And in his commentary on the *Parmenides*, the Neoplatonist Proclus points to the use of *hestanai* in *Parm.* 132D as a reference to the immovability of the Forms (see the discussion below, p. 50).

In Lucian of Samosata's *Vitarum auctio*, when the Platonist steps up on the auction block and is being interviewed by a prospective buyer, the Platonist is asked what the "chief point" (*kephalaion*) of his philosophy is. His answer:

The Ideas and patterns (*paradeigmata*) of existing things. For whatever you see, the earth, the things on the earth, the sky, the sea—for all these things there are invisible images standing (*eikones aphaneis hestasin*) outside the universe. (*Vit. auc.* 18)

We may infer from such passages as this and the previously mentioned allusions to *Parm.* 132D that the description of the Forms as "standing" was already existent in the vocabulary of the early Academy,²¹ although it is difficult to determine whether the usage of *hestanai* with respect to the transcendentals was nearly so common in the Old Academy as it came to be later on.²²

However obscure may be the earlier history of the use of the term *hestanai* as a description of the transcendent realm, certainly in the writings of Philo of Alexandria at the beginning of the Common Era we find this usage well-established. Philo often uses *hestanai* to depict the stability which belongs to God's nature:

²¹ Cf. also Alexander Aphrodisias, *In Metaphy.* 88.20ff (possibly from Aristotle's *On Ideas*: see W. D. Ross, *Aristotelis fragmenta selecta* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1955], p. 128), where there is a reference to a person who argues for the existence of Forms, "saying that the cause of things which come into being in an orderly way (*tetagmenôs*) is that the coming into being is in accordance with a certain stable pattern (*pros hestôs . . . ti paradeigma*), which is the Idea (*tên idean*)."

²² The unchangeability of the Ideas is normally described, in what few fragments we have from figures of the Old Academy such as Xenocrates or Speusippus, with the term *akinêtos* (e.g., Aristotle, *Metaphy.* 1.987b15ff; 1.988b4f; 12.1069a33).

The celestial bodies, as they pass moving objects, are themselves in motion (*kinoumenoi*). But God, who outstrips them all, stands at rest (*hestōs*). (*Post.* 19f)

That which stands at rest (*hestōs*) without any swerving is God; the creation on the other hand is a movable thing (*kinēton*). (*Post.* 23)

It is not proper to say that God "will" stand (*stēsetai*); God stands eternally (*aei hestēken*). (*Post.* 30)²³

God stands eternally (*hestēken aei*) without swerving; creation oscillates and vacillates in opposite directions. (*Leg. all.* 2.83)

God, he who exists (*ho ōn*), alone truly stands (*hestōs*), while other things are subject to turnings and changes. (*Mut.* 57)²⁴

As was seen in the discussion in the previous chapter of Philo's interest in the immovable hero model, Philo likes to speak of the way in which the wise man "stands at rest," participating in God's stability (see above, pp. 26f). In one such context, Philo reveals his indebtedness to the Pythagorean-Platonic doctrine of two First Principles which I have mentioned earlier: the foolish man, says Philo, has a nature which is hostile to stillness and rest, unable to stand firmly (*hestanai pagiōs*), since he holds all sorts of conflicting opinions, and represents in general the combination of all kinds of opposites: great and small, friend and enemy, and every other contrary pair (*Post.* 24f). As Plato associated Movement with the Great-and-Small and associated Rest with the One,²⁵ Philo associates unity with the ability to "stand." In *Gig.* 52 the retreat of the wise man to stability is a silent withdrawal into the unity which belongs to Being:

The use of reason in its spoken form is not firm (*bebaion*), because it is a dyad. But the contemplation of Being (*to on*) within the soul alone and without voice is especially strong, because it is established (*histatai*) in accordance with the indivisible Monad.

Here the Monad-Dyad distinction reflects Pythagorean-Platonic terminology, with the Monad referring to the character of reality in the noetic realm.²⁶

²³ Cf. *Post.* 49 (*ho aklindōs hestōs aei theos*); *Gig.* 49 (*ho aklindōs hestōs aei theos*); *Conf.* 30 (*ho hestōs aei*).

²⁴ Cf. *Mut.* 54; *Qu. Gen.* 3 55; *Qu. Exod.* 2.37; *Post.* 27f; *Somn.* 1.158; 1.241, 246; 2.221. Philo also uses other terms to portray the stability of God: *atreptos* (*Conf.* 96; *Post.* 27f; *Leg. all.* 1 51, 2.89; *Cher.* 90; *Somn.* 2.221); *akinētos* (*Post.* 28, etc.); *ametablētos* (*Cher.* 90; *Somn.* 2.237); *ēremia*, *stasis*, *hidrustis* (*Post.* 29f; *Somn.* 2.222, 237).

²⁵ See above, p. 40; cf. Aristotle, *Metaphy.* 1 987b20ff, on the derivation of all things from two original principles, the One and the Great-and-Small (*to mega kai to mikron*); see Krämer, *Ursprung*, p. 49.

²⁶ In *Qu. Exod.* 2.29, Moses' ascent to Sinai, which Philo often interprets as a paradigm of the wise man's "standing at rest" (see above, pp. 15f, 28), means that he took on the nature of the monad. Cf. *Vit. Mos.* 2.288, where at death Moses is transformed from a

Numenius is famous for his distinction between two Gods, the first of whom "stands at rest" (*hestōs*), while the second is in motion (*kinoumenos*—Frag. 15 des Places).²⁷ The "rest" (*stasis*) of the First God is called, paradoxically, an "innate movement" (*sumphutos kinēsis*—Frag. 15 des Places), which probably should be understood in the same sense as statements about Nous in Plotinus²⁸ according to which the Nous both is at rest and yet at the same time (perhaps one should say, "from another perspective") is the ultimate source of that movement which brings about the ordering of existence. While Plotinus confines this double role to Nous, Numenius does not make such a strict distinction between the noetic realm and that which is prior to it, but tends rather to speak of the Transcendent as a whole, calling it the First God, or often simply "Being" (*to on*):

So then Being is eternal and firm (*bebaion*), and always the same. It has neither come into being, nor perished, nor increased, nor diminished, nor ever become more or less. And certainly it will not be moved (*kinēthēsetai*) in any respect, not even spatially. For it is not permitted for it to be moved—either backwards or forwards, or ever upwards or downwards; Being will never run to the right or to the left, nor will it ever be moved around its own center. Rather, it will stand at rest (*hestēxetai*), and will be fixed (*araros*) and stable (*hestēkos*), always remaining the same (*kata tauta echon aei kai hōsautōs*). (Frag. 5 des Places)

The language is that of Plato, although, as des Places observes,²⁹ the difficulties discussed in *Soph.* 249A-B about ascribing such absolute rest to Being (see above, pp. 39f) seem to have been forgotten here.

body-soul dyad into a mind (*nous*), having the nature of a monad. On the monadic nature of the noetic realm, cf. *Op. mund.* 15; on the Pythagorean-Platonic influence, see Krämer, *Ursprung*, pp. 274ff.

²⁷ Krämer, *Ursprung*, pp. 87ff, is probably correct in arguing that the First God here corresponds to *both* the One and the Nous in Plotinus, while the Second God is equivalent to the level of Soul. A different position is taken by E. R. Dodds, "Numenius and Ammonius," in *Les Sources de Plotins*, Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique 5 (Geneva: Fondation Hardt), p. 14. But Dodds makes too much of the distinction between the Second and Third God in Frag. 21 des Places, since Dodds himself (p. 13) wonders whether Proclus has accurately understood Numenius here, and since in Frag. 11 des Places, we have a quotation from Numenius in which he states that the Second and Third (see Plato, *Ep.* 2.312D-E) are in fact one.

²⁸ See the discussion below, and compare the discussion above of Plato, *Soph.* 248E–249A.

²⁹ Édouard des Places, ed., *Numénios: Fragments* (Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1973), p. 49, n. 2.

Now if Being is absolutely eternal and immutable (*atrepton*) and never at any time leaves itself, but stands firm (*hestêke*), then this, I presume, is what is meant by that which "is comprehended noetically with the aid of reason" (*Tim.* 28A). And if body (*to sōma*) flows (*rhei*) and is carried along (*pheretai*) by immediate change, it flees and does not exist. Therefore, would it not be tremendous foolishness not to call body indefinite (*aoriston*), something which is an object only of opinion (*doxê de monê doxaston*), and which is, as Plato says, "coming into being and passing away but never truly existing" (*Tim.* 28A)? (*Frag.* 8 des Places)

In other fragments from Numenius, the same contrast is made between flowing matter and the stability of Being or the First God.³⁰ Matter is that which is disorderly (*ataktion*); that which is disorderly does not stand still (*ouch hestêken*), and that which does not stand still would not be Being (*Frag.* 4a des Places).

Several portions of the *Corpus Hermeticum* reveal the influence of the same constellation of ideas and terminology. *Corp. Herm.* 2 and *Corp. Herm.* 10 provide two examples which are interesting both because of their similarities and because of their differences. In *Corp. Herm.* 2.1–8, the argument is set forth that everything which is moved presupposes something unmoved which does the moving,³¹ as well as a place in which the movement occurs. In 2.12, the place (*ho topos*) in which the universe is moved is identified as an incorporeal Mind (*nous*) who completely contains everything within itself; it is unwavering, impassible, intangible, standing at rest (*hestôs*) within itself. This Mind is not God, for God here is the source of Mind (2.14). This relationship seems similar to that between God and the Logos as Philo sometimes describes it,³² with the difference that here the "standing" language is applied, not to the highest entity, but to the noetic expression of the supreme God. *Corp. Herm.* 10 is more difficult to classify in these terms, since much of its content is simply incoherent.³³ But 10.14 does speak of the "One" (*to hen*) from which the beginning of all things comes; and the One is evidently

³⁰On "flowing matter," cf. further *Frag.* 3 and 11 des Places. Krämer, *Platonismus*, pp. 61ff. suggests that this is the influence of Xenocrates' characterization of the material principle as "constantly flowing" (*aenaon*). Note the description of Being or the First God as *argos* (*Frag.* 12) and *to èremon* (*Frag.* 2 des Places).

³¹E.g., *Corp. Herm.* 2.6: "Everything which is moved is moved not within something which itself is moved, but within something standing at rest (*hestôti*); and the mover also stands at rest (*hestêken*), unable to be moved along with the moved object."

³²Compare Philo's occasional designation of the Logos as "place" (e.g., *Op. mund.* 20; *Somn.* 1.62, 117; cf. *Conf.* 96). The Logos is the "place" of the Ideas (*Op. mund.* 20), or the "noetic cosmos" (*Op. mund.* 24). Although Philo does not use *hestanai* of the Logos as much as he does of God (but cf. *Leg. all.* 3.32 and *Her.* 205f), the Logos naturally possesses stability, since this quality belongs to its identity as an archetypal seal or "paradigm" (*Somn.* 1.75, 2.237; cf. *Fug.* 13).

³³Cf. A. D. Nock, ed., and A.-J. Festugière, trans., *Corpus Hermeticum* (Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1972), vol. 1, p. 112.

identified with "God, the Father, and the Good" (10.14). Of the One it is said that "the One alone stands at rest (*hestēken*) and is not moved (*ou kineitai*—10.14).

Another passage from the *Corpus Hermeticum* illustrates what had become a popular use of *hestanai* to describe the stability of "eternity" (*ho aiōn*): "Eternity stands at rest (*hestēke*) around God; the cosmos is moved within eternity; time passes within the cosmos; becoming takes place in time" (*Corp. Herm.* 11.2).³⁴ This kind of description of the "standing" of *ho aiōn* around God may be directly relevant for understanding why in some gnostic texts we read of "aeons" which are "standing" (see below, Chapter Four).³⁵

In Plotinus, *hestanai* is used to denote the rest which is characteristic of the three hypostases, the One, Nous, and Soul. From time to time, Plotinus denies the One *both* the attribute of motion *and* that of rest, since the One is prior to both.³⁶ On the other hand, Plotinus does not hesitate in other passages to use "rest" terminology of the One, when he is wishing to stress its complete lack of any sort of motion. For example, in *Enn.* 6.7.35, after describing by stages the soul's ascent to the One, he notes that at the final stage the soul is not content with the intellection in Nous, since intellection (*noein*) itself involves a kind of motion, and the soul does not wish to move (6.7.35,1–3). When the soul finally achieves union with the One, the soul "does not move, since That one does not move" (6.7.35,42). In 6.7.36ff, Plotinus continues to press the point that

³⁴ Cf. *Asclepius* 30–32, where the *stabilitas* of God and eternity is contrasted with the mobility of time; similarly, Apuleius, *De Plat.* 10; Tatian, *Or.* 26.1: "Eternity stands at rest (*hestōta de ton aiōna*) as long as he who made it wishes it to exist" (see Martin Elze, *Tatian und seine Theologie*, Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte 9 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), pp. 103f); Plotinus, *Enn.* 3.7.1,18f: eternity "stands as a paradigm" for time (*tou kata to paradeigma hestōtos*); 3.7.3,35–37: eternity is that which has stable being (*touto hestōs echon to einai*); Augustine, *Conf.* 11.11: Who will hold the human heart still so that it might stand (*stet*) and behold the light of "ever standing eternity" (*semper stantis aeternitatis*); *Conf.* 11.13: God's years do not come and go, they "all stand at one time, since they stand at rest" (*omnes simul stant, quoniam stant*); Proclus, *Elem. Theol.* 55: "standing eternity" (*hē men hestōsa aidiotēs*), etc. Interestingly enough, in later Platonism there were departures from the old contrast (see Plato, *Tim.* 37C–38B) between eternity at rest and time in movement, and figures such as Iamblichus and Proclus can speak of time in its intelligible aspect as being static or immobile; see S. Sambursky and S. Pines, *The Concept of Time in Late Neoplatonism* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Section of Humanities, 1971), pp. 9–21.

³⁵ In the gnostic writing *The Concept of Our Great Power* (CG VI,4) from Nag Hammadi, we find the question: "How will men prepare themselves and stand (*nseaheraton*) and become unceasing aeons?" (43.9–11).

³⁶ E.g., *Enn.* 6.9.3,42ff; cf. 6.6.3,20ff. Plotinus seems to be dependent upon statements from the first hypothesis in Plato's *Parmenides* (see 139B). Cf. E. R. Dodds, "The *Parmenides* of Plato and the Origin of the Neoplatonic 'One,'" *The Classical Quarterly* 22 (1928): 129–42.

the One must lack all those things involved in or implied by the act of intellection (subject-object duality, life, movement, etc.). In making this argument, he refers in 6.7.39 to the famous passage from *Soph.* 248E–249A, which I have discussed earlier (see above, p. 39). In interpreting this passage Plotinus has understood the “Perfect Being” (*to pantelōs on*) mentioned by Plato to mean, not the One, but rather the Nous. Therefore, Plotinus argues in 6.7.39 that in fact there *is* something above this Nous which *does* “stand augustly at rest” (*semnon hestēxetai*), although he admits that even to use such terms is not to do justice to the actual reality of the One (see 6.7.39,19–33).³⁷

As far as the level of the Nous is concerned, I have just pointed out that at times Plotinus wants to contrast the movement of intellect with the absolute stillness of that which is prior to intellection.³⁸ He is fond of describing the movement of Nous as circular, around the One, which is the object of its intellection (6.8.18,25–30). But precisely because of this circular nature of the movement of the Nous, it can also be said to be at rest, since its movement is absolutely uniform.³⁹ Just as the cosmos is both in movement (revolution) and at rest (revolving around a fixed axis), so the Nous both “stands at rest” (*estē*) and is moved, since it moves around the One (2.2.3,20–23).⁴⁰ To the extent that Nous directs itself toward the vision of the One, it can also be said simply to be at rest:

(The One), being perfect since it neither seeks nor has nor needs anything, overflowed, as it were, and its “spill-over” made another thing. That which came into being turned back (*epestraphē*) toward That one and was filled and became a beholder of That one and thus a Nous. And its stability (*stasis*) toward That one created Being (*to on*), while the

³⁷ Cf. *Enn.* 5.3.12,40ff, where the One is said to stand at rest (*hestēkota*) at the summit of the noetic realm, reigning over it. In 3.3.7,10ff, the One is called the “single, stable (*hestotēs*) root” from which everything derives. Similarly, the “root” metaphor as well as that of the “spring” (*pēgē*) are applied to the One as the source of all being in 3.8.10, and stability terminology is again quite evident (*menein*, *hēsychos*, etc.). On Plotinus’s employment of the images of the “root” and “spring” to express the *dynamis*-aspect of the One, see Krämer, *Ursprung*, pp. 338–51. Plotinus also uses other terms to depict the stability of the One—e.g., *menein* and *akinētos* in 3.8.2,14ff; 5.1.6,25–30.

³⁸ See also *Enn.* 5.6.5,8f: Intellection (*noein*) is a movement (*kinēsis*) toward the Good; 6.2.8,23f: The Idea, since it is the goal of the Nous, is at rest (*en stasei*), while the Nous is its *kinēsis*.

³⁹ *Enn.* 6.7.13; 6.9.5,14ff: We must speak of Nous as a “tranquil and calm movement” (*hēsychon kai atremē kinēsin*).

⁴⁰ Cf. 3.9.1,15ff, where Plotinus says that that which is the object of intellection (*to noēton*) is a Nous “in rest (*en stasei*) and unity and stillness” while the Nous which sees this object is in activity. In 3.9.7–9, Plotinus uses the image of “circling” again, to demonstrate that while the First is before both movement and rest, the things around it are *both* in movement and “stand at rest” (*hestēke*—3.9.7,3); cf. 3.2.3,28ff: the circular motion of the heavens imitates Nous.

vision directed toward That one created the Nous. Therefore, since it stood at rest (*estê*) before That one in order to behold, it became Nous and Being at the same time. (5.2.1,7–13)⁴¹

This striking passage, both in its use of technical terminology and in its mythological tone, bears many resemblances to passages from gnostic works to be examined in this study and we will be referring to it again.

It could be argued that Plotinus is not altogether consistent, sometimes ascribing movement to the Nous and sometimes insisting that the Nous is at rest.⁴² Some of the diversity may be due to inconsistency, but much of the diversity in Plotinus's discussion of movement with respect to Nous results from the fact that Nous does have two "phases": the initial "procession" (*proodos*) from the One, so that multiplicity is introduced; and the "turning again" (*epistrophê*) toward the One, an act of complete self-contemplation which brings about stability and Being.⁴³ When Plotinus wants to stress the character of Nous as the realm of Being (*to on, ta onta*), he presents the picture of Nous poised in unwavering stability, beholding the vision of the One and imitating it.⁴⁴

With regard to Soul, despite the fact that Plotinus repeatedly talks of

⁴¹ Cf. *Enn.* 5.5.5,16–19: That which is called Being (*on*), which is the first to come from the One, having gone forward a little, did not desire to go further; turning inward, it stood still (*estê*) and became the Being and hearth (*hestia*) of all things; 6.2.8,5ff: Behold pure Nous, the hearth of reality, containing a sleepless light; see how it stands at rest in itself (*hestêken en autô*); compare also the description of *ta onta* "standing at rest" in 4.3.8,22f and 6.6.18,36.

⁴² So, for example, A. H. Armstrong, "Eternity, Life and Movement in Plotinus's Account of nous," *Le Néoplatonisme* (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1971), pp. 67–74. In 2.9.1,23ff, Plotinus seems to be arguing against a position much like that of Numenius, who speaks of one Nous at rest and a second Nous in motion (Frag. 15 des Places). Plotinus objects that it is inconsistent to think of one Nous in a sort of stillness (*hêsychia tini*) and the other moved (*kinoumenon*). Instead, "Nous is as it is, always the same, lying still in stable activity (*energeia keimenos hestôsê*); movement toward it and around it is already the work of Soul" (2.9.1,29–32). Yet it has often been noted that this seems to clash with statements in 3.9.1,15ff (see above, n. 40), where Plotinus apparently is talking about one Nous which is the object of thought and another Nous which does the thinking. (This subject-object distinction between two Nous's is rejected in 2.9.1,33ff.) Cf. Dodds, "Numenius and Ammonius," pp. 19f, who suggests that *Enn.* 3.9 is an early draft of an essay which was later discarded. See also Gerard P. O'Daly, *Plotinus' Philosophy of the Self* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), pp. 74ff and 108f, n. 63.

⁴³ See the passage from *Enn.* 5.2.1,7–13 quoted above in the text, and see the passages cited in n. 40. Cf. Krämer, *Ursprung*, pp. 312ff, esp. p. 316.

⁴⁴ In addition to the passages cited above, cf. *Enn.* 2.9.2,3–5: There is one Nous, always the same, completely unwavering, imitating the Father as far as is possible; 4.4.16,23–25: The Good is the center, the Nous is an immovable (*akinêton*) circle around it, the Soul is a moving circle; 4.7.13,2–3: The Nous is passionless (*apathês*), abiding (*menei*) eternally in the noetic realm. Cf. also 5.4.2,18; 5.9.8,7f; 6.3.27

the Soul as being in movement,⁴⁵ he must also point to the stability of the Soul vis-à-vis, for example, the instability of the body: The relationship between Soul and the body is like that between light and air; the light "stands still" (*hestêke*), the air "flows" (*pararrhei*—4.3.22,4). Just as in the case of Nous, the stability of Soul is tied primarily to its contemplation of what is eternal.⁴⁶

While movement is not given a completely negative value in Plotinus,⁴⁷ nevertheless it is clear that when he thinks of the highest and most blessed states of existence, he thinks in terms of entities which "stand at rest."⁴⁸

Among later Neoplatonists we find additional examples of *hestanai* used to describe the stability of the Forms. For example, in his discussion of mathematical theory, Iamblichus says that although some would attribute movement to the principles (*archai*) underlying numbers, and would locate these principles in the soul itself and its faculties, it is better to place the soul in a different class (*genos*) and to suppose that mathematical principles and mathematical essence (*ousia*) are immovable (*akinêtoi*): "For their Forms (*eidê*) always stand at rest (*hestêke . . . aei*), and we behold them always the same" (*De comm. math. scien.* 3, p. 13.9–16 Festa). People everywhere make use of numbers in the practice of philosophic contemplation, since the incorporeal and intermediate character of numbers makes them ideally suited for this purpose. Numbers provide a preparation for theology, a likeness to it, a leading up, a purification, "which frees and purifies the intellectual faculties from its bonds and

⁴⁵ E.g., *Enn.* 1.1.13,3ff; 1.3.5,20; 2.1.4,15ff; 2.2.1,43ff; 3.4.1,1ff; 3.6.3,22ff; 5.1.12,3–6; 5.2.1,17–21; 6.2.6,15ff.

⁴⁶ *Enn.* 3.8.4,14ff: What is called "Nature" is Soul, an offspring of a prior Soul. Nature contemplates "quietly" (*hēsychê*); "standing at rest" (*stasa*), it rests (*anapaueitai*), contemplating its own vision; cf. 3.8.6,13–40; 4.3.10,5 (*kai entautha psychên aei hestōsan*); 4.3.11,16f: The abiding Nous is followed by an abiding (*menousa*) Soul; 4.4.2,30ff: Once the Soul is in the noetic realm, it directs itself immutably (*atreptōs*) toward the intellection.

⁴⁷ Movement and change are simply natural in the cosmic order, according to Plotinus (*Enn.* 4.4.32ff). Movement is something which is connected with life (2.2.1,14f; 3.2.16,16ff; 3.6.6,49ff; 6.2.7), although Plotinus can say that while life in the sensible cosmos moves, life in the noetic realm is immovable (*akinêtos*—3.2.4,13ff).

⁴⁸ *Enn.* 3.2.1,27ff: Nous and Being (*to on*) are the true, eternal cosmos on which the visible cosmos is patterned. Nous "stands at rest" (*hestêke*) and knows no change. It is proper that blessed beings (*tois pantê makariois*) "stand at rest" (*hestanai*) in themselves, not involving themselves in busy activity. Cf. 3.7.4,28–33: The universe (*to pan*) hurries toward the future and does not want to "stand still" (*stênai*), but on the part of the first, blessed beings (*tois prōtois kai makariois*) there is no such desire; and 2.3.18,16–19: The cosmos is an image which is eternally being made, while its "first" and "second" (these apparently are Nous and the higher Soul) "stand at rest" (*hestêkōtōn*). For *hestanai* used of the higher hypostases, cf. also 5.1.11,3; 3.6.4,35ff; 6.6.10,1f. In contrast, in 1.8.3,16 Plotinus lists among the ways in which one might conceive of evil that it is something which "never stands still" (*oudamê hestōs*).

brings them into contact with Being (*to on*), leading them to the noetic (*tois noetois*) by means of the beauty and order of what is beheld in numbers, through contemplation of immutable (*ametaptotōn*) and immovable (*akinētōn*) things, being made like the noetic things which are determinate (*horimena*) and stand at rest (*hestōta*) always the same" (*De comm. math. scien.* 15, p. 55.3–16 Festa).⁴⁹

In his commentary on Plato's *Parmenides*, the fifth century C.E. Neoplatonist Proclus comments on the term *hestanai* in the sentence in *Parm.* 132D: "These Forms stand in nature just like patterns." What else does Socrates intend, asks Proclus, but to refer to the "immovable and immutable essence" (*hē akinētos kai ametabolos ousia*) of the Forms (*In Parm.* IV, 906.17–19 Cousin). What else does "stand" (*hestanai*) mean but "to remain the same" (*kata tauta kai hōsautōs echein*—907.33f Cousin). It is from these stable causes (*tōn hestōtōn aitiōn*) that there are stable principles (*hoi hestōtes logoi*) which preserve the single, ineffable sympathy of the universe (909.13–17 Cousin). Naturally, this passage from Proclus does not by itself prove that Academics had always read *Parm.* 132D this way, but it illustrates how natural it could be for a Platonist to see this technical sense of *hestanai* when it is used of the Forms.

Another Neoplatonic text illustrates a particular use of *hestanai* with respect to the stability of transcendent levels, which finds close parallel in two gnostic treatises from Nag Hammadi which are closely related to *3StSeth: Allogenes* and *Zostrianos*. The Neoplatonic text to which I am referring is the much-discussed anonymous commentary on the *Parmenides* of which fragments are preserved in pages from a palimpsest manuscript in Turin, dating probably from the sixth century C.E. First published in critical edition in the late 19th century, the fragments have been newly edited and translated by Pierre Hadot, who argues that the commentary is by the Neoplatonist Porphyry, student and biographer of Plotinus.⁵⁰ The six surviving fragments of the commentary treat the first two hypotheses in the *Parmenides*, i.e., the two hypotheses which Plotinus associated with the One and the Nous.⁵¹ The first four fragments deal with the One of the first hypothesis and present a rather emphatic negative theology, while the portion of the commentary in the fifth and sixth fragments treats the second hypothesis. Among the differences between the approach of the commentator and that of Plotinus is that the commentator seems to make less separation than does Plotinus between the first One of the *Parmenides*, the One which does not participate in Being (*ousia*—*Parm.*

⁴⁹ Cf. *De comm. math. scientia* 13, p. 48.28–49.1: the determinate and eternally standing (*hestēkota aei*) principles and classes of the mathematical; 15, p. 56.27f: the standing (*hestēkota*) and determinate forms (*eidē*); 16, p. 57.24f: standing forms (*hestēkota eidē*).

⁵⁰ See Pierre Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1968).

⁵¹ See Dodds, "The *Parmenides*."

141E), and the One of the second hypothesis in the *Parmenides*, that is, the One which does participate in Being because it exists (*Parm.* 143A). For Plotinus, the two are distinct since Being (*ousia* or *to on*) belongs to the intelligible world, the Nous, whereas the One is prior to Being, is the source of Being, and cannot be the same as that of which it is the origin (e.g., *Enn.* 3.8.10,26–35). But the *Parmenides* commentator can say of the first One that it is True Being, or That-which-alone-truly-Is (*to monon ontōs on*—IV,27), although he says this with some caution (“if you understand my language”—IV,27f). And at a later point he refers to the first One as “Absolute Being” (*auto to einai*), which is *prior* to “That-which-is” (*to on*—XII,26f).

More directly pertinent to our discussion here is the commentator's treatment of the One of the second hypothesis, or Nous. Here again, the commentator seems to affirm things of the One of the Nous which result in the collapsing of distinctions between Nous and the One. There are two states or aspects of Nous: (1) the state preexisting the distinction between thinker and thought, which seems to be equated with the *first* One, and (2) the emergence of subject-object duality. In the first state, the Nous “cannot enter into itself” (XII,35–XIII,1; XIII,35–XIV,1) since it is already absolutely simply. If we want to imagine what “thinking” is like in such a state where there is no subject-object duality, we must think of analogies such as the difference between the faculty of sight and the faculty of hearing. Words are not seen, visions are not heard, since different faculties are involved (XIII,23–34). “In the same way, the faculty by which the Nous, unable to enter into itself, ‘sees,’ would also be different, transcending the distinction between the intellection and what is thought, beyond these in majesty and power” (XIII,34–XIV,4). The second state or way of looking at Nous, however, involves the emergence into a distinction between subject and object and therefore an emergence from simplicity into otherness. The commentator analyzes this state into a triad of three moments: Existence, Life and Intellection. In Existence (*hyperaxis*), thinker and that which is thought are identical; Life (*zōē*) is the procession of the Nous out of Existence into the act of thinking in order to turn back toward the noetic and behold itself; Intellection (*noēsis*) is the turning or self-contemplation. All three moments are called activities (*energeiai*), but the first, the moment in which knower and known are identical, is called “an activity which stands at rest”: “The activity with respect to Existence would be standing at rest (*hestōsa*), the activity with respect to Intellection, turned toward itself; the activity with respect to Life, having turned away from Existence” (XIV,22–27). The first of these moments seems to be identical with the first state of Nous in which the Nous cannot enter into itself because it is already simple, with

knower indistinguishable from known; therefore, the first member of the triad, Existence, evidently is to be equated with the first One.⁵²

Now it happens that forms of the triad Existence, Life and Intellection appear also in the gnostic tractates *Zostrianos* (to be discussed in the next chapter), *3StSeth*, and *Allogenes*. In *3StSeth*, the triad appears only once, in the third stele containing praise addressed to the Incomprehensible One, and there it probably would not be recognizable as a distinct triad were it not for the use of the triad in the other related texts: "How shall we name you? It is not in our power. For you are the Existence (*hyparxis*) of all these, you are the Life of all these, you are the Mind (*nous*) of all these" (*3StSeth* 125,27–32). In *Allog*, the triad is unmistakable, although there is some fluidity in the specific terms used for the members.⁵³ One passage in *Allog* gives an account of the withdrawal of Allogenes ("The Stranger") through Life to Existence (*hyparxis*), and, just as in the anonymous *Parmenides* commentary, the term "to stand" is used to indicate the stability of Existence:⁵⁴

"Allogenes, behold the bliss which belongs to you, how it exists in silence; by it know yourself as you really are. And, in search of yourself, withdraw (*anachōrein*) into Life, which you will see moving (*eskim*). And though you are unable to stand (*emnčam ngaheratk*), have no fear; but rather, if you desire to stand (*eaheratk*), withdraw into Existence and you will find that it stands (*esaherats*) and is still, after the image of That one who is truly still and embraces all of these silently and without any activity (*-energeia*). And if you receive a revelation from this one by means of a primary revelation of the Unknown One—whom, if you know him, be ignorant of him—and if (because of this) you are afraid in that place, withdraw behind because of the activities; and when you become perfect in that place, be still. And, in accordance with the pattern within you, know that it is likewise among all these, after the same pattern. And [do not] further dissipate, [so that] you may be able to stand

⁵² Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, vol. 1, pp. 326f.

⁵³ See Robinson, "The Three Steles of Seth," pp. 135 and 140f, who calls attention to the parallel between the passage in Proclus, *Elem. Theol.* 103: "All things are in all things, but in each according to its proper nature: for in Being (*to on*) there is life (*zoē*) and intelligence (*nous*); in life, being and intelligence; in intelligence, being and life; but each of these exists upon one level intellectually, upon another level vitally, and on the third existentially" (trans. E. R. Dodds, *Proclus: The Elements of Theology* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1933], p. 93)—and the passage in *Allog* 49,26–38: "He is Vitality and Knowledge and That-which-is (*pe-šoop*). For then "That-which-is (*pe ete pai pe*) continually possesses its Vitality and Intellect, and [Life has] Vitality has Beinglessness (*tmntatousia*; a corruption of *tmntousia*, "Being"?) and Knowledge, and Intellect has Life and That-which-is. And the three are one, although three individually." On the triad in Neoplatonism, see Pierre Hadot, "Être, Vie, Pensée chez Plotin et avant Plotin," in *Les sources de Plotin*, Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique 5 (Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 1960), pp. 105–41. On the significance of this triad in the gnostic texts, see Turner, "The Gnostic Threefold Path," who suggests that *Allog* could have been one of the sources by which the triad was introduced into Plotinian circles (p. 336).

⁵⁴ Cf. Michael A. Williams, "Stability as a Soteriological Theme in Gnosticism," in Layton, *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, vol. 2, pp. 819–29.

(*ēnaheratk*); neither desire to [be active], lest in any way you fall away [from] the inactivity of the Unknown One which is within you. Do not [know] him, for that is impossible. But if, through an enlightened thought, you should know him, then be ignorant of him."

Now I was listening to these things as they were speaking them. Within me there was a silent stillness. I heard the bliss by which I knew myself as <I am>, and in search of <myself> I withdrew into Life, and I entered into harmony with it. I did not stand firmly (*aeiaherati ēnhrai hn outajro an*), but tranquilly (*hn ouhrok*). And I saw an eternal, intellective (*noeron*), undivided movement (*kim*) belonging to all the formless powers which do not limit it (the movement?) with limitation. And when I desired to stand firmly, I withdrew to Existence, which I found standing and still, in the image and likeness of that which was put upon me through revelation of the Undivided One and him who is still. And I was filled with revelation by means of a primary revelation of the Unknown One. [As if] I were ignorant of him, I knew him, and I received power from him, becoming eternally strengthened through him. I knew that which exists within me and the Triple-Power and the revelation of his uncontainableness. By means of primary revelation of the First who is unknown to all, the God who is beyond perfection, I saw him and the Triple-Power within them all. I was searching after the ineffable, unknown god, the One of whom a person is altogether ignorant if he knows him, the mediator of the Triple-Power, who is in stillness and silence and is unknown. (*Allog* 59,9–61,22)

In addition, *Allog* contains a passage where the Coptic equivalent of the title *ho hestōs aei* is applied to the Unknown God:

Nothing acts upon him contrary to the Unity which is still. For he is unknown; for he is a windless region of boundlessness, since he is without bounds, and without powers and without becoming. He did not grant becoming. Rather he contains all these in himself, being still, standing (*efaherarf*). Out of him who stands eternally (*pē etaherarf ēnwoeiš nim*) there appeared an Eternal Life, the invisible and Triple-powered Spirit, the one who is in all these who exist. (66,21–36)⁵⁵

As I mentioned at the beginning of this lengthy survey of examples of the use of *hestanai* for describing the stability of the transcendent realm, I have devoted considerable space to this subject at this point because it will be of significance not only in connection with *3StSeth* but also in connection with other texts which use the immovable race designation. I will have occasion to refer again in later chapters to many of the examples mentioned above.

With respect to *3StSeth* in particular, several points can now be made. The expression *akaheratk*, "You have stood," used of Adamas in *3StSeth*, is probably translating *hestēkas*. Given the present sense of the Greek perfect tense in examples like many of those mentioned on the preceding

⁵⁵ Or: "being still, standing out of Him who stands eternally. There appeared an Eternal

pages, we probably should translate the expression with something like: "You *stand* at rest." Against the background of the examples which have been discussed, this language is immediately understandable as a technical expression which assigns to Adamas the stability associated with the realm beyond movement. The parallel affirmation made about Adamas: *ak^er šorp^e naheratk*, which one could translate literally, "You were the first to stand," possibly translates the Greek *proestēkas*, from *proestanai*, the perfect of *proistanai*; and in the expression *pnoute etaf^er šorp^e naheratf*, we possibly have a translation of *ho theos ho proestōs*.⁵⁶ The verb *proestanai* can have a variety of meanings: to come forward; to be chief or leader; to manage, govern; to champion something, etc. If this is the Greek verb underlying the Coptic here in *3StSeth*, then it most probably has the connotation of "being established in the preeminent order of reality": "You stand preeminent"; "the god who stands preeminent."⁵⁷

C. *3StSeth and the Simonian "Standing One"*

Another point which can now be made has to do with the issue of a "Simonian" background for *3StSeth*. The standing language in this tractate is not particularly convincing as evidence for a specifically "Simonian" or "Dosithean" background. To be sure, there are definite

Life, the Invisible, etc."

⁵⁶Tardieu, "Les trois stèles de Seth," p. 566, suggests *ho prōtoestōs*, but I can find no attestation for a verb *prōtoistēmi* (it is not listed in Liddell-Scott-Jones); Crum 588a, lists the Greek prefix *pro-* as one common equivalent of the Coptic expression *er šorp^e n-*.

⁵⁷ Compare the use of *proestanai* in the following Neoplatonic texts: Iamblichus, *In Parm.* Frag. 1 (from Syrianus, *In Metaphy.* 38,36ff): "... we do say that there exist (*proestanai*) in the intelligible realm eternal paradigms (*paradeigmata*) of all the classes (*eidōn*) of created things and of the things which belong to the universe as a whole and of the immaterial reason-principles in the soul, which (paradigms) have produced (*gennētika*) them and keep watch over (*pronoētika*) their continued existence" (trans. John M. Dillon, ed., *Iamblichi Chalcidensis in Platonis Dialogos Commentariorum Fragmenta*, Philosophia Antiqua 23 [Leiden: Brill, 1973], p. 207); Proclus, *Elem. Theol.* 157: "Whereas it is the function of all paternal causes to bestow being on all things and originate the substantive existence of all that is, it is the office of all demiurgic or formal causes to preside over (*proestēke*) the bestowal of form upon things composite" (trans. Dodds, *Proclus: The Elements of Theology*, p. 139); cf. *Elem. Theol.* 151: "All that is paternal in the gods is of primal operation and stands in the position of the Good at the head of (*en tagathou taxei proistamenon*) the several divine ranks" (trans. Dodds, p. 133); and Iamblichus, *Protrept.* 3 (p. 15.15–24 Pistelli): "Finally, therefore, he gives admonition regarding the departure of the soul and its life alone unto itself, when it is released from the body and from the natures tied to the body. He speaks as follows: 'Set (*siēsōn*) as guide most excellent judgment (*gnōmēn*), which comes from above. / Then, when having left the body you come, liberated, into the aethereal regions, / you will be an immortal, divine god, no longer a mortal.' Therefore, the fact that the most excellent Mind (*nous*) is set (*prostēsasthai*) as ruler in the highest order (*en tē anōtātō taxei*) preserves the soul's likeness to the gods in its purity."

similarities: (1) *3StSeth* 119,4 states, "You stand, since you are unceasing (*ēnatōjn*)," and this can be compared with the connection of eternity (*aei, in aeternum, in perpetuum*, etc.) with the Standing One title in the Pseudo-Clementine texts (see above, n. 4). But on this score, both the Pseudo-Clementine passages and the statement in *3StSeth* are simply in line with many other examples of the use of *hestanai* discussed above. (2) Although it is not explicitly stated in the text of *3StSeth*, I will argue below that there is in this text the implication that individual gnostics share in the stability of Adamas; and the idea of the participation of the believers in the "standing" of Simon is attested in at least one of the Pseudo-Clementine passages (*Recogn.* 3.47.3; see above, n. 4). But once again, this dimension is not lacking in other examples of the use of "standing" language (see below, Chapter Three). (3) The fact that *3StSeth* does not specifically apply the "standing" language to Simon himself, but rather to the transcendent Adamas, is not entirely contrary to what we find of the Standing One title in some of the texts for Simonianism. One such text is a passage from Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 2.52.2. This passage is, in fact, the only witness for the use of the title in Simonianism which we can date with any precision (shortly after 200 C.E.).⁵⁸ In the context of this passage, Clement is discussing the stability of the ideal *gnostikos* and the instability of the person who only thinks that he knows something (2.51.3). The latter is allegorically signified by the biblical Cain, who left the presence of God and went off into the land of Nod, which means "tossing" (*salos*—2.51.4). Clement is drawing here on traditions found in Philo (see above, pp. 25–27), and he also takes up two examples of stability which Philo had found in the biblical text: Abraham in Gen 18:22f and Moses in Deut 5:31. In these two places, Abraham and Moses are said to "stand" when they draw near to God. Clement cites these two instances as examples of the principle that "the approach to the immutable (*to atrepton*) is for that (soul) which is truly immutable" (2.51.6). Immediately after the examples of Abraham and Moses, Clement mentions as a further example that "the followers of Simon wish to imitate in their ways the Standing One whom they reverence" (*hoi de amphi ton Simona tō hestōti hon sebousin, exomoioiousthai ton tropon boulontai*—2.52.2). The important thing to note is that Clement knows of *ho hestōs*, "He who stands," as the title of a being worshipped by Simonians, and whose stability the Simonians imitate. They share in the stability of Him who stands, just as Moses and Abraham shared in the stability of God. However, if one had no other sources for the use of the *ho hestōs* title in Simonianism, one would never guess that it had ever been applied to Simon himself. The role of Simon in the brief reference above is ambiguous. Certainly, *ho hestōs* does not have the appearance

⁵⁸ Beyschlag, *Simon Magus*, p. 62, has pointed this out.

there of the title of a group leader or messianic figure, which is the impression one receives while reading in the Pseudo-Clementines (*Hom.* 2.23.1–24.7) about the struggle between Simon and Dositheos for possession of the title. Clement's brief allusion to the significance of the title gives one the impression that it is more analogous to the "standing" language in *Allog*, where the individual desires to stand at rest after the image of Him who stands eternally.

However, because of their general character, such similarities really provide no firm and specific basis for seeing the "standing" language as a "Simonian" or "Dosithean" element in *3StSeth*. If a link between *3StSeth* and Simonian or Dosithean traditions is to be established, it must not rely too heavily on this terminology—and yet beyond this terminology, what do we really have that could establish such a link? Based upon the absence of the *ho hestōs* title in the earliest sources for Simonianism (Acts 8:9–11; Justin, *Apol.* 26.1–3; Iren., *Adv. haer.* 1.23.2–4), others have suggested that the title was a relatively late addition to Simonian thought.⁵⁹ The prevalence of the "standing" language in other gnostic literature⁶⁰ and elsewhere points to the possibility that it could as well

⁵⁹ Beyschlag, *Simon Magus*, pp. 62ff; Lüdemann, *Simonianische gnosis*, pp. 97f.

⁶⁰ This is perhaps the place to note the possibility that *ho hestōs* could be present in another gnostic document from Nag Hammadi whose Simonian ancestry is being discussed in recent scholarship: *The Thunder, Perfect Mind* (CG VI,2). A fragmentary passage in 21,9f could be reconstructed as follows: [. . .] *if nakim an ʿempran [petah]eraʿf pentaʿtamioi*: ". . . will not move the name. The one who stands is the one who created me" (reconstruction proposed by George MacRae, in *Nag Hammadi Codices V,2–5 and VI, with Papyrus Berolinensis 8502,1 and 4*, ed. Douglas M. Parrott, NHS 11 [Leiden: Brill, 1979], p. 252n, who notes that "The expression might be the equivalent of *ho hestōs*"; and Hans-Martin Schenke, "die Relevanz der Kirchenväter für die Erschliessung der Nag-Hammadi Texte," in *Das Korpus der griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller: Historie, Gegenwart, Zukunft*, ed. J. Irmscher and K. Treu, TU 120 [Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1977], p. 216). In the preceding line 21,8, also fragmentary, there is mention of "the great power" (*inoʿ ʿnʿom*), reminiscent of *hē megalē dynamis* found in some Simonian sources (see summary and discussion of texts in Beyschlag, *Simon Magus*, pp. 99–126). Birger Pearson has proposed the Simonian background of this tractate on the basis of other parallels (in a response to George MacRae, "The Thunder: Perfect Mind," *Protocol of the colloquy of the Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture*, no. 5 [Berkeley: Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture, 1975], pp. 11f). But note the caution expressed by MacRae (in the subsequent discussion of the papers presented): "what I find in Simonianism is this flaunting of evil, but what I fail to find in Simonian Gnosticism is what is distinctive in this document, namely the simultaneous affirmation of both good and evil without an implied choice. . . . I take in good part the parallels to Simonian language that have been pointed out . . . —I think those are very significant, but I find almost as many parallels to Proverbs—and I wonder whether the fact that one can find a number of parallels is sufficient to orient us toward finding a home for the work. I must admit, however, that of all the suggestions that have been made, I think the one about Simonian background is the one that makes most sense. If that is true, though, one has found an expression of Simonianism that is hitherto unattested" (p. 28). This part of the discussion of *The Thunder* at the Berkeley colloquy underscores the methodological difficulties involved in untangling the supposed, but often conflicting sources for

have been borrowed from such other gnostic traditions by Simonianism as the other way around.⁶¹

In short, what we really learn from the appearance of the "standing" language in a text such as *3StSeth* is not that the text could be Simonian or Dosithean, but rather that the "standing" terminology which has been so famous as a "Simonian" theologoumenon was in fact most probably used in similar ways by more than one gnostic tradition. Simply the description of a transcendent entity as "standing" is not something which was a distinctive trait of a single gnostic tradition, but rather it represents a use of a philosophical jargon that had a much broader history.

*D. "Standing" Language Used of Adamas
Rather than Barbelo or the Preexistent*

It will have been noticed in the discussion of the examples of *hestanai* used to describe transcendent realities that it is not always the most transcendent order of reality which is said to "stand at rest," and this fact needs some amplification here, since this is also the case in *3StSeth*. In the discussion in scholarship of the Simonian *ho hestōs* title—and that is where most of the discussion of the technical, religious use of *hestanai* has been focused—the attention has most often been directed primarily to passages like those from Philo or Numenius, where in fact it is the highest being who is said to "stand." Yet in Plotinus, for example, some of the standing terminology which is most parallel to that in *3StSeth* is found of the Nous, not of the One. In order to appreciate the significance of this, it is necessary to comment on the structure of the transcendent realm in

Simonianism, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the advisability of avoiding the linking of one of the Nag Hammadi texts to a specific gnostic sect mentioned by the heresiologists unless there is a more compelling justification for doing so. Cf. Sasagu Arai, "Zum 'Simonianischen' in *AuthLog* und *Brontē*," in *Gnosis and Gnosticism: Papers read at the Eighth International Conference on Patristic Studies (Oxford, September 3rd–8th 1979)*, ed. Martin Krause, NHS 17 (Leiden: Brill, 1981), p. 12: "Es ist allerdings gerade wegen des häufigen Vorkommens des Begriffs [i.e., 'the Standing One'] nicht möglich, von der Bezeichnung *hestōs* her auf die Herkunft der simonianischen Gnosis zu schliessen, wie immer wieder versucht worden ist."

⁶¹ The use of *קמם* in Samaritan sources as a predicate for God, as well as other similarities between Samaritan materials and Simonian sources, have led some scholars to suggest a Samaritan origin for the Simonian Standing One (so Kippenberg, *Garazim und Synagoge*, pp. 347–49, n. 136; cf. Isser, *The Dositheans*, pp. 138–40). But the Samaritan sources date from the fourth century and later, and their usefulness in explaining the origin of this particular theologoumenon is problematic given the evidence from such earlier Greek sources as Philo. It remains possible that the Samaritan tradition itself is in this case borrowing on terminology from philosophical traditions such as those in Philo's writings. Cf. Roland Bergmeier, "Zur Frühdatierung samaritanischer Theologoumena," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 5 (1974): 121–53.

Platonic traditions, and its relationship to what seems to be the structure of the transcendent realm in *3StSeth*.

1. *Differentiation Between the Noetic Realm and Its Source in Platonic Traditions*

Hans Joachim Krämer has attempted to trace the origins of the model found in Plotinus—where there is above the Nous a transcendent One—all the way back to the Old Academy and even to Plato himself.⁶² It will be useful to begin with a summary of some of Krämer's conclusions.

Krämer finds evidence in *Rep.* 6.508B–509B⁶³ for the One as a principle above the Nous, and he argues that the passage from Plato's lost work *On Philosophy*, to which Aristotle refers in *De anima* 404b18ff, provides proof of the One-Nous model in Plato's teaching.⁶⁴ To quote Aristotle:

It was similarly set down in the comments *On Philosophy* that the Living Creature itself comes from the Idea of the One, and from the first length, breadth, and depth; and the rest in the same fashion. But another account is also given, according to which Nous is the One, Knowledge is the Dyad (since it follows a single path to one point), Opinion is the number of the plane, and Sensation that of the solid. For numbers are said to be the Forms themselves, and the principles, and they come from the elements. Things are discerned in some cases by Nous, in others by Knowledge, in others by Opinion, in others by Sensation; and these numbers are the Forms of things.

The first part of the quotation evidences a view of the noetic realm, or "the Living Creature itself" (*auto to zōon*),⁶⁵ according to which this realm is mathematically determined and derives from the One. But the entire passage also betrays the possibility of an ambivalence on Plato's part, in that in the alternative view which is mentioned the Nous and the One are identical.⁶⁶ Krämer suspects that in this respect this passage illustrates the common point of departure for two philosophical highways

⁶² Krämer, *Ursprung*; on Plato, see esp. pp. 193–207.

⁶³ E.g., *Rep.* 6.508B: "This (i.e., the sun), I said, was what I meant by the offspring of the Good, which the Good begat as an analogue to itself, so that as the Good is related in the noetic realm to Mind (*nous*) and the objects of intellection (*ta nooumena*), the sun is related in the same way in the visible realm to sight and the things seen"; 6.509B: "The Good is not being, but is even beyond being, excelling it in seniority and power."

⁶⁴ On Plato's "unwritten doctrines," cf. above, nn. 14 and 15.

⁶⁵ On *auto to zōon* here as the noetic realm, or the "world of Ideas," see Krämer, *Ursprung*, pp. 200–207; Gaiser, *Platons ungeschriebene Lehre*, pp. 44–46; C. J. de Vogel, "Problems Concerning Later Platonism," *Mnemosyne*, ser. 4, 2 (1949): 302–305, and n. 49. The argument for this position is based mainly on *Soph.* 248E–249A, where *zōē* and *nous* are linked together.

⁶⁶ See Krämer, *Ursprung*, p. 379.

taken by Plato's heirs. A passage from the Old Academic tradition which even more succinctly defines this point of departure is a fragment from the early Aristotelian dialogue *On Prayer*: "God is either Nous, or something even more transcendent than Nous" (*ho theos ē nous estin ē kai epekeina ti tou nou*).⁶⁷

According to Krämer, the two directions which were taken were: (1) to separate more clearly the Nous from the "something" (i.e., the One) which transcends it, or (2) to omit a schematic distinction between the Nous and the One as its ultimate ground, and simply to consider the entire transcendent realm *en bloc*. The first alternative is represented in the history of Platonism and Platonism's influence by Speusippus, the early Aristotle (who in the early fragment quoted above seems to leave open the possibility), various gnostic texts, the Pythagorean Moderatus, Philo of Alexandria and then Christian Logos theologians, and Plotinus:

	One:	Nous:
Plato (Aristotle, <i>De anima</i> 404b18ff; Plato, <i>Rep.</i> 6.508B)	<i>to hen</i> = <i>to agathon</i>	<i>auto to zōon</i> = Ideal Numbers = <i>ho nous kai ta nooumena</i>
Speusippus (Frgs. 33a and 38 [Lang])	<i>to hen</i>	<i>ho nous</i> = <i>arithmoi kai megethē</i>
Aristotle (<i>On Prayer</i>)	<i>epekeina ti tou nou</i>	<i>ho nous</i>
Valentinians (Iren. <i>Adv. haer.</i> 1.1.1ff)	<i>Bythos</i>	<i>nous</i> and then the rest of the aeons
Moderatus (Simplicius, <i>In Phys.</i> 230.35ff)	<i>to prōton hen</i>	<i>to deutron hen</i> = <i>to ontōs on kai noēton</i> = <i>ta eidē</i>
Philo (<i>Op. mund.</i> 24, etc.)	<i>ho theos</i>	<i>ho logos (endiathetos)</i> = <i>noētos kosmos</i>

⁶⁷ The fragment is found in Simplicius, *In De caelo* 485.19ff; see Ross, *Aristotelis fragmenta*, p. 57, and Krämer's discussion in *Ursprung*, pp. 135f and 216f.

Clement (<i>Strom.</i> 5.81.6; 5.16.1–5; 7.2.2–3, etc.)	<i>ho theos</i> = <i>to hen</i>	<i>ho logos</i> = <i>monas</i> = <i>noētos kosmos</i>
Origen (<i>De princ.</i> 1.1.6, 1.8.1; 4.2.3, etc.)	<i>ho theos</i> = <i>to hen</i>	<i>ho nous</i> (= <i>ho logos</i>) and <i>hoi noes</i>
Plotinus	<i>to hen</i>	<i>ho nous</i> and <i>ta noēta</i>

The second alternative Krämer finds exemplified in Xenocrates, Aristotle (in his later works), Numenius, and Middle Platonists:

Xenocrates (Frgs. 5, 15, and 34 [Heinzel])	<i>nous</i> = <i>hē noētē</i> = <i>monas</i> (<i>hen</i>) = <i>patēr</i> = <i>prōtos theos</i> = <i>perittos</i> (contains <i>eidē</i> = <i>arithmoi</i>)
Aristotle (<i>Metaphy.</i> 12.1073a14ff)	<i>nous</i> = Unmoved Mover, containing the 55 movers
Numenius (Frgs. 11, 15–17, 19, 20 des Places)	<i>ho prōtos theos</i> (<i>peri ta noēta</i>) = <i>nous</i> = <i>hen</i> = <i>basileus</i> = <i>patēr</i> = <i>autoagathon</i>
Plutarch (<i>Is. et Os.</i> 352A–382F, etc.)	<i>prōtos theos</i> = <i>basileus</i> = <i>patēr</i> = <i>haploun</i> = <i>noēton</i> = <i>on</i> = <i>agathon</i>
Albinus (<i>Epit.</i> 2.2; 9.1–4; 10.1–8)	<i>patēr</i> = <i>prōtos nous</i> = <i>prōtos theos</i> and his <i>noēseis</i> = <i>ideai</i>
Maximus of Tyre (<i>Or.</i> 11)	<i>theos</i> = <i>basileus</i> = <i>patēr</i> = <i>ho noōn aei,</i> <i>kai panta, kai hama</i>

Krämer's approach to these two alternatives is to view them as different articulations of a single model. In both cases the transcendent realm contains the pattern for the cosmos, conceived as "thoughts" of the transcendent Nous. And in both cases there is the presupposition that the transcendent realm itself derives ultimately from a *single* source. But in the first alternative this origin is more sharply articulated. The difference between the two is a matter of whether the Transcendent is dealt with "either as a complexity or in differentiated fashion, *hōs en typō* or '*akribēia*,' in terms of the homogeneity or the articulation, latency or expressivity, implicitness or explicitness, immanence or hyper-transcendence of

the source in its relation to primal reality."⁶⁸ Gnosticism occupies a prominent position in Krämer's analysis of the evidence for this history of a Platonic tradition. Along with the Logos theology of Philo and Christian writers, gnosticism provides important attestation, in Krämer's estimation, of the existence in the period immediately preceding Plotinus of the type of model for the Transcendent in which there is a differentiation between the noetic realm and its source.⁶⁹

2. *Differentiation Between the Noetic Realm and Its Source in 3StSeth*

3StSeth seems to manifest a differentiation between the noetic realm and its source, by the way it distinguishes between the Preexistent, Barbelo, and Adamas. As in several other gnostic tractates in which the aeon of Barbelo is mentioned (including three of the other four documents containing the immovable race designation: *Zost*, *GEgypt*, and *ApocryJn*), Barbelo apparently functions here in *3StSeth* as that stage in the unfolding of reality in which subject-object differentiation first emerges.⁷⁰ Barbelo is said to be the "first glory of the invisible Father" (121,22f); "the first shadow of the holy Father" (122,1-3); "a shadow of the first Preexistent" (124,4f); "one (fem.) from the One (masc.)" (122,12f); "a world (*cosmos*) of understanding, knowing the things of the One, that they are from a shadow" (122,15-17). On the other hand, the "Father" of whom Barbelo is the first glory or shadow is the object of the separate praise in the third stele. This "truly Preexistent" (124,19) is called "Non-being (*piatousia*), the Existence (*hyparxis*) which is prior to existences, the First Being (*ousia*) which is prior to beings, the Father of divinity and life, creator of mind (*nous*), giver of the Good, giver of blessedness" (124,26-33). Therefore, this "Preexistent" is analogous to the Plotinian One, and Barbelo would be most closely analogous to the Plotinian Nous. Indeed, in the second stele, Barbelo is said to have become a "great male noetic First-appearing (*prōtophanes*) one" (123,4-6); and it is also said of her that "because of you is Life, from you is Life; because of you is Mind (*nous*), from you is Mind. You are Mind, you are a world (*cosmos*) of truth, you are a triple-power, you are threefold" (123,18-24).

However, in the third stele it is also said of the "Preexistent" that "you are the Existence of all these, you are the Life of all these, you are the Mind of all these" (125,28-32). We have discussed this triad

⁶⁸ Kramer, *Ursprung*, p. 385. The allusion in "*akribēia*" is to Longinus's statement about the precision of Plotinus's formulations, as compared with those of some of his predecessors (Porphyry, *Vit. Plot.* 20,76; 21,9).

⁶⁹ Krämer, *Ursprung*, pp. 223ff, and esp. pp. 239-54 and 323-37.

⁷⁰ See the important study by Turner, "The Gnostic Threefold Path."

Existence-Life-Mind or Intellection earlier (see above, pp. 51–52). The statement just quoted seems to identify the Preexistent with the Existence-Life-Mind triad, and to a degree this is reminiscent of the treatment of the triad in the anonymous *Parmenides* commentary, where the distinction between the First One and Nous is more collapsed than in Plotinus. By contrast, the same triad is found in *Allog*, but there the Unknown God is said to transcend all three of these: “he lives incomprehensibly, not having Mind or Life or Existence or Non-existence” (*Allog* 61,35–39). In *Allog* it is rather clear that the Unknown God, much like the One of Plotinus, transcends Nous altogether. That this is not so clear in *3StSeth* with respect to the Preexistent may be due to a different position, or it could simply be due to a lack of concern for systematic detail in this primarily hymnic work.

In any case, the praise which is offered to the Preexistent in third stele *as a whole* does seem intended to set him prior to all else, and the hypostasization of Barbelo as the “cosmos” of truth or knowledge renders the relationship between Barbelo and the One from whom she comes (122,12f) roughly parallel to that between the Nous and the One in Plotinus.

3. *The Noetic Realm, the Perfect Human, and Immovability*

This leaves the question of how Adamas relates to Barbelo and the Preexistent, and the significance of his being described as “standing.” There is no indication at all that Adamas is analogous to Plotinus’s third hypostasis, Soul. Instead, Adamas here is a hypostasis which is still in the noetic realm. In the first stele, Seth says to Adamas, “You are my Mind (*nous*)” (119,1). A distinction which is apparently made between Barbelo (who is also called Mind) and Adamas is that Barbelo possesses perfection as a unified whole, while Adamas mediates the more individuated perfection that is manifest in each gnostic. In 124,7–10, Barbelo is addressed as follows: “Hear us, (we who) are individually (*kata wa*) perfect! You are the Aeons of aeons, the All-perfect which exists all together (*hi ouma*).” In 121,2–11, the petitioners again identify themselves as “those who are individually perfect” and they praise Adamas as the mediator of their perfection:

We praise you, we who have been saved as those who are individually perfect, the ones who are perfect because of you, those who were perfected with you. He who is perfect! He who makes perfect! The one who is perfect by means of all these! The one who is the same in every place, the Triple-male! You stand! You stand preeminent! You distributed in every place, (yet) you continued to be one!

And in the third stele, the Preexistent is praised as the *source* of *both* the

individually perfect and the perfect which is non-individuated: "O Unbegotten! From you are the eternal ones and the aeons, the all-perfect ones who are all together and those who are individually perfect" (124,21–25). Although one cannot be certain of the exact Greek terminology which underlies the distinction between perfection which is "all together" (*homou, katholou?*) and perfection which is individual (*kat' hen, kat' hekaston?*),⁷¹ the conception of a transition from more unified perfection to individual manifestations of perfection is clear enough. If Barbelo is Nous in its first emergence into subject-object differentiation from its ground, Adamas is the particular articulation of Nous as prototypical Human, and as such he mediates the perfection of the noetic realm to individual humans.

That Seth calls this prototypical Human "my Nous" (119,1) corresponds to the equation, widely attested especially in Platonic circles, of the mind with the "true human." Plotinus, for example, is famous for statements about the "Human in the Nous" who contains "the Human who is prior to all humans."⁷² In passages where Plotinus uses this language, or speaks of the "true human" (*ho anthrōpos ho alēthēs*—*Enn.* 1.1.7,20; 1.1.10,8), or "the inner human" (*ho eisō anthrōpos*—5.1.10,10), it is clear (usually by his own direct reference) that he is drawing on ideas in Plato's dialogues, especially *Rep.* 9.589A and (the pseudo-Platonic) *Alcibiades I* 130C.⁷³ In the context of the *Alcibiades I* passage, the problem which is being addressed is the meaning of the Delphic maxim: "Know yourself" (*gnōthi sauton*), and the conclusion which is reached is that since the true human is nothing other than the soul (130C), then the Delphic maxim is demanding that the soul know itself.⁷⁴ Especially one must know that part of the soul in which resides the capacity to know and think, for this is the part most like God (133C). This divine part of, or faculty of, the soul is sometimes identified by Plato as the *nous*.⁷⁵ In *Rep.* 9.589D, in the comparison of the soul to the creature composed of three

⁷¹ Cf. Plotinus, *Enn.* 1.1.8,7f: "So we also possess the forms in two ways, in our soul, in a manner of speaking unfolded and separated (*kechōrismena*), and in Intellect (*nous*) all together (*homou ta panta*)" (trans. Loeb Classical Library); cf. 4.1.5; 4.3.4,9–12, etc.

⁷² *Enn.* 6.7.6,11f: *ho en nō anthrōpos (eiche) ton pro pantōn tōn anthrōpōn anthrōpon*. Cf. 6.7.5,1ff, 6.4.14,22f: "But now on that Human (i.e., in the realm of Nous) there has come another human wishing to exist, . . . and it pushed itself on that Human who we once were" (*Calla gar nun ekeinō tō anthrōpō proselēluthen anthrōpos allos einai thelōn, . . . kai prosethēken heauton tō anthrōpō tō hos ēn hekastos hēmōn tote*). See O'Daly, *Plotinus' Philosophy of the Self*, pp. 59f.

⁷³ Cf. Jean Pépin, *Idées grecques sur l'homme et sur Dieu* (Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1971), pp. 95ff.

⁷⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 71ff, and Hans Dieter Betz, "The Delphic Maxim *gnōthi sauton* in Hermetic Interpretation," *HTR* 63 (1970): 465–84, esp. 471ff, see also Krämer, *Ursprung*, pp. 136–38.

⁷⁵ E.g., *Tim.* 51E; see Gerhard Jäger, "Nus" in *Platons Dialogen*, *Hypomnemata* 17 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967).

forms—the beast, the lion, and the human—it is the human part of the soul which is called divine. The well-known reference to this human part as the “inner human” (*ho entos anthrōpos*) is found in *Rep.* 9.589A.

Philo not only assumes this identification of the *nous* with the true human within the individual (e.g., *Agric.* 2.9; *Her.* 231; cf. *SAC* 23), but he also frequently identifies the *nous* allegorically with Adam: “The mind (*nous*) within us—let it be called ‘Adam’—encountering sense—called ‘Eve’—from which living things seem to derive their life, is excited for mutual intercourse and comes near to her” (*Cher.* 57).⁷⁶ And for Philo, the human mind is stamped after the image of its archetypal Idea, the Logos (*Spec. leg.* 3.207). The status of Adamas in *3StSeth* is similar in this respect to that of Philo’s Logos. Philo calls the Logos the “noetic cosmos,” as opposed to the “perceptible cosmos” which is a copy of it (*Op. mund.* 25). In *3StSeth* 119,31–34, Seth says of Adamas that “even the perceptible cosmos knows you, because of you and your seed.” Like Philo’s Logos, Adamas is distinguished from the perceptible world, but related to it in such a way that he is not completely inaccessible to it.

Another text from Nag Hammadi, *The Thought of Norea* (CG IX,2), refers to Adamas as the Father of mind (*nous*—27,25f), or “the Father of the all, Adamas, who is within all the Adamases who have the thought (*noësis*) of Norea” (28,29–29,3). The pluralization of Adamas, and the statement that the universal Adamas is within all the individual Adamases, strikingly illustrates the sort of participational understanding of the relationship between individual “inner human” and Universal Human which could be implied by Adamas language. The idea seems close to Plotinus’s notion of “the Human which is prior to all humans” and in whom all humans participate. Within the framework of the Platonic heritage, one could glide upward in this way into more abstract (or mythic—and the line is sometimes difficult to draw) language about *the* Human of which any individual human being is a particular manifestation. This can be compared with what is said in *3StSeth* about the *distribution* of Adamas in every place, while he somehow continues as a *unity* (121,10f).

There is still another gnostic source which illustrates this universal/particular relationship between the transcendent Adamas and the individual Adamas or “inner human,” and as it happens, this source is also similar to *3StSeth* in its emphasis on the *immovability* of Adamas. In discussing in Chapter One several instances of the use of *asaleutos* to describe a quality of ideal humanity, I called attention to the description in the Naasene teaching of the earthly image of the heavenly Human Adamas (*Hipp. Ref.* 5.7.3–5.9.9—see above, pp. 32f), and argued that the immovability of the image may have been intended to mirror the positively valued immovability of Adamas. That would not be the only place

⁷⁶ See also *Cher.* 10; *Leg. all.* 1.92; 3.50; 3.246; cf. *Leg. all.* 1.90; *Plant.* 46; *Her.* 52.

in the account of the Naasene teaching where the immovability of Adamas is portrayed. Later on in the text a simile found in Homer, *Odyss.* 24.5–8, of bats flying around in a cave and squeaking as other bats fall from the rock ceiling, is read as an allegorical allusion to the falling down into the world of individuals from Adamas. The Greek word *adamas* means “unbreakable” or “unalterable,” or as a noun it refers to the hard metal “adamant.” In his allegorical interpretation of *Odyss.* 24.5–8, the Naasene author plays upon this meaning of the name Adamas:

The “rock,” he says, is Adamas. This adamant (*adamas*) is the “corner-stone which has become head of the corner” (cf. Isa 28:16; Ps 118:22; Matt 21:42)—for in the head (*kephalē*) is the brain (*enkephalon*) which gives the characteristic form, the essence from which every fatherhood is given form—whom, he says, “I lay down as adamant (*adamas*) at the foundations of Zion” (cf. Isa 28:16), which is an allegory, he says, for the creation of the human. Now the adamant (*adamas*) laid down is the “inner human” (*ho esō anthrōpos*), and the foundations of Zion are the teeth, as Homer mentions the “fence of the teeth” (*Iliad* 4.350), that is a wall or palisade, within which is the inner human who has fallen down from the primal Human (*apo tou archanthrōpou*) above, Adamas. . . . (Hipp. Ref. 5.7.35f)

Thus the idea of a primal Human in whom the inner human in this world participates is brought together with the notion of the adamantine immovability of the former.⁷⁷

A schematization of the relationships among the three hypostases mentioned in *3StSeth* would look something like this:

The Preexistent	— The unified source of all things
Barbelo	— The first emergence of multiplicity in a

⁷⁷ Cf. the explicit connection between Adamas and adamant in the Nag Hammadi tractate *On the Origin of the World* (CG II,5) 108,22–24: “And the earth spread before him, Holy Adamas, which is interpreted, ‘holy, adamantine (*adamantinē*) earth.’” In the related tractate, *The Hypostasis of the Archons* (CG II,4), we also find a reference to the adamantine earth (*pkah*), but without any connection with the name Adamas, which does not appear in this work: “And the Spirit came forth from the Adamantine (*adamantinē*) Land” (88,13f). Here, “land” is a better translation of *pkah* than “earth,” since, as Bentley Layton has pointed out, the Adamantine Land in this text is a gnostic term for the heavenly realm (“The Hypostasis of the Archons (Conclusion),” *HTR* 69 [1976]: 51f). Layton argues that *adamantinē* here means “unyielding,” and is parallel to the term *asaleutos* as it is used in the designation *hē asaleutos genea*: “Thus the Unwavering Generation is firmly rooted in the Unyielding Realm.”

In the *Untitled Text* from the Bruce Codex we read of certain aeonic beings wearing crowns which contain “twelve adamantine (*adamantos*) stones, from Adamas the Light-Human” (ch. 13, p. 252.7–10), and in company with these aeonic beings are three powers, “an unbegotten power, an immovable (*asaleutos*) power, and the great pure power” (ch. 13, p. 252.3–5). Later on in the text we find both *asaleutos* and *adamantos* among the epithets applied to the Father in a prayer (ch. 20, p. 262.15 and 25).

subject-object relationship, with Barbelo, as Mind, beholding the source from which she came

Adamas

— The articulation of Mind in the prototypical Human, through whom Mind is mediated to individual humans

Therefore, the "standing at rest" of Adamas here is not quite like the standing at rest of God in Philo's writings, or the standing of the First God in Numenius's works, even though they are closely related in their use of the same technical terminology. In Philo and Numenius, it is a case of the absolute stasis of the First Principle. In *3StSeth* this language is used with respect to the stability of a particular order within the Transcendent, but not the First Principle.⁷⁸ Although not exactly equivalent, the "standing at rest" of Adamas is more analogous to the way in which Plotinus portrays the Nous coming forth from the One, turning, standing still before the One and beholding it (see above, pp. 47f). In *3StSeth*, it is said of Adamas, "You have *seen* the greatnesses; you *stand*, being unceasing." The association of standing at rest with the vision of transcendent

⁷⁸ In his 1973 article on *3StSeth*, Tardieu ("Les trois stèles de Seth," p. 561) offered in chart form a comparison of *3StSeth* with other ancient sources which contain similar terminology:

Numenius	<i>3StSeth</i>	Plotinus	Origen	Maximus the Confessor
the first God <i>hestōs</i>	first principle <i>hestōs</i> (119,4; 119,16–18)	<i>hē en tō theiō stasis</i> (4.8.1,7) = <i>hen</i>	<i>stasis</i> of God of one nature with God	henad of the intelligibles
the second God <i>kinēsis peri ta noēta</i>	<i>energeia</i> (125,5) of the first principle manifesting those who truly exist (119,26f) = the intelligibles	<i>kinēsis</i> = <i>nous</i> (5.1.4,36) <i>kosmos noētos</i> = <i>nous</i> + <i>psychai</i> (4.1.1,1f)	<i>kinēsis</i> of rational natures	dispersive movement of the intelligibles
<i>kai aisthēta</i>	<i>kosmos aisthētos</i> (119,32f); <i>jpo</i> (120,11) = <i>genesis</i>	this world = the souls in the body (4.1.1,4)	<i>genesis</i> of corporeal natures	<i>genesis</i> of this corporeal world

Thus, Tardieu has identified *ōhe erat* = used in *3StSeth* as a translation of *hestanai*. In fact, he provides a list (pp. 566f) of some twenty-three Coptic terms used in *3StSeth* which he believes to be translations of Greek philosophical terms, and a list of twenty more Greek philosophical terms which have been retained untranslated in the Coptic text. Yet his treatment of the standing terminology is misleading, since the standing of Adamas is treated as parallel to the *stasis* of the Plotinian One, and the "standing" of Numenius's First God.

things is a motif we will see attested elsewhere (see below, Chapter Three), and this connection could be intended in *3StSeth* as well.

E. Conclusion

In *3StSeth* the race of which Seth is the father is “immovable” because its individual members participate in the stability of the Human who is in the noetic realm. The first-person singular praise offered to Adamas by Seth moves into the first-person plural in 120,9 and remains in the plural throughout the rest of the document. The work is evidently intended as some type of communal liturgy, or at least we can say that it intends to express the mystical experience and transcendental aspirations of, not merely Seth, but all “the elect” (118,17). Adamas is the Mind of Seth, and is presumably the universal Mind in which all the minds of those who belong to the “living and immovable race” (118,12f) participate. Their mystical identification with Adamas includes their ascent to the same vision. Just as Adamas “beheld the greatneses,” so, at the climax of the ascent, the elect rejoice at the beginning of the third stele, “We have seen! We have seen! We have seen the truly Preexistent!” (124,18f). We can probably assume that in the attainment of this vision, which amounts to an ascent through the noetic realm, the visionaries also understand themselves to “stand at rest” like Adamas their prototype. We have already seen in passing that this aspiration of the ascending visionary to stand at rest was a significant theme in *Allog*, and more will be said about this in the next chapter, where the visionary Zostrianos stands at various stages in his ascent through the noetic realm. In *3StSeth* there is no such specific statement with respect to the elect. They do not say, for example, “We have stood! We have stood! We have stood!” But if I am correct in understanding Adamas in *3StSeth* to be the Universal Human in whom the individual gnostic participates, then the statement about Adamas “standing” may be a way of referring to the stability of the gnostic’s own mind.⁷⁹

⁷⁹The peculiar title Mirotheas/Mirotheos which is given to Adamas in this text is difficult to explain, but one possible interpretation could be related to Adamas’s identity as Mind. The name, found with three different spellings in *3StSeth* (*miròtheas* in 119,12; *miròtheos* in 119,12f, *mirotheos* in 120,15), is also found in three other texts from Nag Hammadi: in *Zost* 6,30 and 30,14 (*mirothea*); in *GEgypt* III 49,4 (*mirothœ*); and in *TriProt* 38,15 and 45,10 (*meirothea*). A name possibly related to these, *mirocheirothetou*, appears in *Melch* 6,8f and 18,2. Alexander Böhlig has suggested that the forms in *Zost*, *GEgypt* and *TriProt* derive from *moira thea*, “the goddess Moira” (“Die himmlische Welt nach dem Agypterevangelium von Nag Hammadi,” *Le Muséon* 80 (1967): 19; see also Böhlig and Wisse, *The Gospel of the Egyptians*, p. 176). Böhlig suggests that the form Mirotheas in *3StSeth* 119,12 is a form of Mirothea incorporating an agential or functional ending -as, so that it is not a proper name, but an appellative: Adamas is someone who performs the function associated with

Mirothea. From the passage in *GEgypt* III 49,4, where Mirothoë gives birth to Adamas, Böhlig concludes that that function is creation. Therefore, Adamas in *3StSeth* is a creator deity. The other form Mirotheos in *3StSeth* is explained by Böhlig as being a proper name, a masculine form of Mirothea (A. Böhlig, "Zur Struktur gnostischen Denkens," *NTS* 24 (1978): 501f). In the case of *3StSeth* there may be additional evidence which could support Böhlig's hypothesis that the name Moira is involved here. There is a passage in the *Stromateis* of Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 5.83.1–88.4) in which Clement is discussing the notion that knowledge about God is something which comes as a gift from God. In this connection, he cites in 5.83.2 the words of Plato in *Meno* 100B: "From this reasoning then, Meno, it appears that when virtue comes to those of us to whom it comes, it does so by divine gift (*theia moira*)."¹ Clement thinks that these words are an enigmatic reference to the gnostic condition (*gnostikê hexis*—5.83.3). A few paragraphs later in the text, he alludes to what seem to have been school traditions in contemporary Pythagorean and Platonic philosophy, and now instead of *aretê*, "virtue," as the "divine gift," it is *nous*: "The Pythagoreans say that the mind comes into men by divine gift (*theia moira*), just as Plato and Aristotle acknowledge. But we say that additionally the Holy Spirit is breathed into the believer. The Platonists say that the mind (*nous*) is an emanation (*aporrholan*) of divine gift (*theias moiras*) in the soul, and the soul dwells in the body" (5.88.1–2). Since Seth in *3StSeth* calls Adamas "my Mind," and since this exclamation is apparently intended to be shared by members of the "immovable race," then it could be that Pythagorean-Platonic traditions about the *nous* as an emanation of "divine *moira*" are behind the name Mirotheas/Mirotheos in this document.

A completely different explanation, and with its own set of difficulties, might be to see in the name Mirotheos a version of the name *Mihr yazd*, "the god Mithra," who is a creator deity in certain Iranian Manichaean texts, and who has five sons, one of whom is Light Adamas (e.g., see Geo Widengren, *Mani and Manichaeism*, trans. Charles Kessler [New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965], p. 55; Jes P. Asmussen, ed. and tr., *Manichaean Literature: Representative Texts Chiefly from Middle Persian and Parthian Writings*, Persian Heritage Series 22 [Delmar, New York: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1975], pp. 113–42; and the brief survey in Ilya Gershevitch, ed. and tr., *The Avestan Hymn to Mithra* [Cambridge: University Press, 1959], p. 40). The name *Mihr* is spelled variously on Bactrian coins from the first century C.E.: MIIPO, MIOPO, MIUPO, MIPO, etc.; see M. J. Vermaseren, ed., *Corpus Inscriptionum et Monumentorum Religionis Mithriacae*, vol. 1 (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1956), pp. 45f; H. Humbach, "Mithra in the Kuṣāṇa Period," in *Mithraic Studies: Proceedings of the First International Conference of Mithraic Studies*, ed. John R. Hinnells (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), p. 136; David W. MacDowall, "The Role of Mithra among the Deities of the Kuṣāṇa Coinage," in Hinnells, *Mithraic Studies*, pp. 142–50. And in other Greek sources from the Parthian period in Iran we find the forms MIPA-, MEIPA- as prefixes in theophoric names; see Richard N. Frye, "Mithra in Iranian History," in Hinnells, *Mithraic Studies*, p. 65, on Avroman documents. The fact that Mihr/Mithra is a solar deity could explain the connection of the motif of light with the use of Mirotheas/Mirotheos in *3StSeth*: "You are light, since you behold the light. You have revealed the light. You are Mirotheas. You are my Mirotheos" (119,9–13). However, this explanation works much better in *3StSeth* than it does in the other documents where the figure is feminine: *GEgypt* III 49,3f: "... the mother of the holy, incorruptible ones, the great power, the Mirothoë. And she gave birth, etc."; *Zost* 6,30: "Mirothea, the mother . . ."; *TriProt* 38,11–15: "... the virgin, she who is called Meirothea"; 45,9f: "Me[iroth]lea, the glory of the mother."

CHAPTER THREE

IMMOVABILITY IN *ZOSTRIANOS*

A. Introduction

The tractate *Zost* is not only one of the most interesting of the works in the Nag Hammadi library, especially because of its probable connections with Plotinian circles,¹ but also it is regrettably one of the most poorly preserved. So many of its pages are either missing or represented by only a small surviving fragment that we will never be able to reconstruct its contents with any great degree of resolution unless some other copy is found. Nevertheless, since it is not my purpose here to offer an extensive analysis of the metaphysics of the work, but only to address the question of the author's interest in immovability, enough of the contents of the tractate do survive to allow some significant conclusions on that subject.

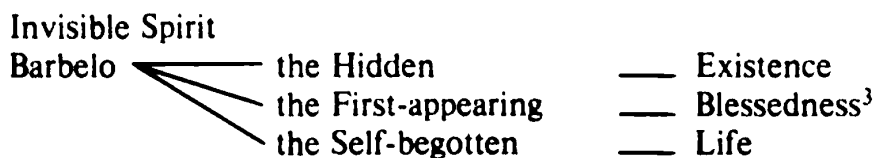
The tractate offers an account of an ascent by the visionary Zostrianos through successive levels of the transcendent realm. The three principal levels are those of the Self-begotten (Autogenes), First-appearing (Protophanes), and Hidden (Kalypsos). These three levels are evidently three different modalities or aspects of the aeon Barbelo,² who is herself related to the Preexistent God or Invisible Spirit in the same way that Barbelo is related to the Preexistent in *3Seth*: she is the first emergence into self-reflection, from the self-identical source of all things. She is the "intellection" (*noēsis*) of the Preexistent God (82,23–83,1); she is the "intellection" or "knowledge" of the Invisible Triple-Powered Perfect Spirit (118,10f—where either *ti[noē]sis* or *ti[gnō]sis* could be restored; cf. 97,1). The Hidden, the First-appearing, and the Self-begotten are successive stages unfolding into multiplicity. It may be these three which are referred to toward the beginning of Zostrianos's ascent as the three principles "which appeared from a single principle (*archē*) . . . the aeon Barbelo" (14,4–6). Zostrianos is then informed about the water belonging to each of the three, in which he is to be baptized:

¹ Jean Dorese, "'Les Apocalypses de Zoroastre, de Zostrien, de Nicothée . . .'" (Porphyre, *Vie de Plotin*, § 16)," in *Coptic Studies in Honor of Walter Ewing Crum* (Boston: Byzantine Institute, Inc., 1950), pp. 255–63; Sieber, "An Introduction to the Tractate *Zostrianos*"; Turner, "The Gnostic Threefold Path."

² See Turner's analysis in "The Gnostic Threefold Path," pp. 328f; and John H. Sieber, "The Barbelo Aeon as Sophia in *Zostrianos* and Related Tractates," in Layton, *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, vol. 2, pp. 788–95.

It is the [water] of Life belonging to Vitality in which you are baptized in the Self-begotten. It is the [water] of Blessedness belonging to Knowledge in which you are to be baptized in the First-appearing. It is the water of Existence belonging to Divinity [and to?] the Hidden One. . . . (15,4–12)

Therefore, corresponding to the three stages of the Hidden, First-appearing, and the Self-begotten is a version of the Existence-Life-Intellection triad discussed in the previous chapter in relation to the anonymous *Parmenides* commentary and to *3StSeth*:



The Self-begotten is presided over by the Self-begotten God, who is called the “principal archon of his aeons and angels who are, as it were, his parts” (19,7–9). Geradamas, or “the Stranger Adamas” (6,21–23; cf. above, p. 36 n. 2) is called the “eye of the Self-begotten” (30,5f; cf. 13,6). In this Self-begotten level are also Seth, the son of Adamas and father of the “immovable race” (6,25–27; 51,14–16), and the souls who belong to the race of Seth itself (7,5–10). *Zost* distinguishes between three forms (*eidē*) of “immortal souls”: those in the Self-begotten, and below these those in the Repentance, and below these those in the Transmigration. In spite of the poor condition of the manuscript in so many places, it is clear that most of the text is taken up with *Zostrianos*’s ascent through all these various levels and of the instruction he received about these levels along the way.

With respect to the concerns of this study, what is to be emphasized is the prominence of the theme of stability in the account of *Zostrianos*’s ascent, and the degree to which this may illuminate what are the connotations for the author of *Zost* in the designation “immovable race.” Especially prominent in *Zost* is the use of the term “to stand,” but we have here a new explicit application of the term beyond what was encountered in *3StSeth*. In *Zost* the term is used not only for noetic entities who are described in the ascent, but also for the visionary *Zostrianos himself*, to describe the characteristic condition of stability which he experiences at each stage of the ascent. While I suggested that such an application to the gnostic visionary of the quality of “standing at rest” was *implied* in *3StSeth*, it was not explicit there as it is here.

³ For the use of this same triad, with the same replacement of Intellection with Blessedness, cf. Marius Victorinus, *Adv. Ar.* 1.50; see Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, vol. 1, p. 62.

B. "Standing" Noetic Entities in Zost

Before discussing the visionary "standing" of Zostrianos himself, I would first draw attention to the way in which the term "to stand" is used for the stability of entities in the noetic realm, as it was in *3StSeth* and in other examples mentioned in the previous chapter. That the author of *Zost* knows the technical sense of *hestanai* from philosophical literature as an antonym for *kinein*, "to move," is illustrated by *Zost* 74,15f: "the three standing at rest (*efahera* [tf]) at the same time, moving (*efkim*) at the same time . . ." Although the page is fragmentary, the preserved portion shows that the reference to "the three" here is to the triad Existence-Life-Blessedness. Possibly what is being said is that this noetic triad is a unity which is comprised of these three interrelated modes or aspects, and which is characterized by both Rest and Movement. We can compare the way in which both Rest and Movement were present in the triad Existence-Life-Intellection in the anonymous *Parmenides* commentary (see above, pp. 50–52), or the way in which Plotinus speaks of the *Nous* being both at rest and in motion (see above, pp. 47f).

Elsewhere in the text, the term "to stand" is used of other noetic entities. In 127,14–17 the Self-begotten God is said to be "standing in an aeon." Since in *Zost* Adamas is either identified with "the Self-begotten God" (cf. 30,4–9), or at least identified with the "eye of the Self-begotten" (30,5f), then the description of the Self-begotten God "standing" in an aeon corresponds to the picture we see in *3StSeth* 119,15–18, where Adamas is praised with the words: "Great is the self-begotten Good One who stands, the God who stands preeminent."

An important passage in 46,15–31 mentions another example of stability within the Self-begotten level. The passage follows a description of how a soul can lose its concentration and fall down into the material realm of nature and birth (45,27–46,15). But in the Self-begotten there are powers which provide for the salvation of souls in the world:

In the Self-begotten ones, corresponding to each of the aeons, glories stand, in order that he who is in [the world?] might be safe beside [them]. The glories are perfect thoughts (*noēmata*) living [. . .] power. They do not perish because they are patterns (*typoi*) of salvation by which each one when he receives them will be saved, being patterned and empowered by means of this. (46,18–28)

These imperishable "glories" which are thoughts or patterns constitute a variation on the Platonic notion of imperishable Forms, which, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, were also often described as "standing." It is perhaps these glories who are then named in 47,1–27. In any case, in the enumeration of certain entities there we find the statement, "These who stand before [. . .], Isauel and Audael and [A]braxis, the ten thousand, Phaleris, with Phalses and Eurios, etc." This

description of an entity or entities standing *before* some other being is found elsewhere in the tractate: In 63,12f we read that an intermediary named Youel "went and stood before the First-appearing"; in 125,17f there is a reference to "those who stand before him."

On the one hand, the picture of beings "standing before" some higher entity must be modeled on conventions of posture in royal courts. As I will point out later (see below, pp. 82f), such language is common in apocalyptic texts in descriptions of angels standing in the heavenly court, and it is possible that such language in our gnostic text derives in part from accounts of angels "standing before God." But on the other hand, that the technical connotation of Rest vs. Movement is also present here is suggested by still another example: In *Zost* 78,10–81,20 there is a passage which is discussing some entity who is feminine in gender, possibly Barbelo (cf. 83,9). At the beginning of the passage, the author is saying that Barbelo(?) did not begin at some point in time, "but rather she [appeared] eternally, standing before him eternally. She became dark by means of the greatness of his [...]. She stood, beholding him and [rejoicing], filled with goodness . . ." (78,13–22). Here is a passage even more similar than what we found in *3StSeth* to Plotinus's description of the Nous "standing before" the One, having been "filled," and "beholding" the One (*Enn.* 5.2.1,7–13; see above, pp. 47f), and the parallel illustrates that "standing" language in this kind of context may have been a part of the technical vocabulary for stability in Platonic circles. Three pages later in *Zost*, the author still seems to be speaking of the relationship of Barbelo to the Invisible Spirit:

[. . .] in order that she might not go forth more and come into being far from perfection. She knew herself (or 'She knew perfection') and him, and she stood [within] herself. She was at ease because of him. Since she was from [him who] truly exists, she [was] from him who truly exists and from all of them, knowing herself and knowing the Preexistent. (81,8–20)

There are several other instances of the use of the term "to stand" in *Zost*, presumably with the same technical sense,⁴ but I will turn now to

⁴ *Zost* 27,9 (of certain souls): "Although they are alike, they are varied, since they are divided, and they stand"; 27,22: one of the three forms of immortal souls comprises "those who stand [upon?] the Repentance"; 115,7–13 (of entities that exist in the Hidden): "They are joined, since they all exist in a single aeon of the Hidden [. . .] divided with respect to power. For they exist in correspondence with each of the aeons, standing in correspondence with the one who reaches them"; 116,7f (possibly of the same group of entities in the Hidden): "Some of them which stand as though existing in [essence] . . ." There are several other instances of the term in *Zost*, but for the most part they occur in portions of the text so fragmentary that only the verb itself can be reconstructed: e.g., 31,14.21; 32,2.9; 65,12; 97,17f; 105,1; 114,14f.22; 116,15.

the use of the term to describe the visionary stability of Zostrianos himself.

C. The "Standing" of the Visionary Zostrianos

Of the instances of this which are preserved, most are found in the early portion of the text, where Zostrianos ascends through the stages of: the Transmigration which truly exists, the Repentance which truly exists, and the Self-begotten. The ascent to this third stage occurs in 6,2–6, although the text is very broken at that point: "And I [ascended] to the [. . .]. I stood there, having seen a light of truth truly existing from its self-begotten root, and the great angels and glories. . . ." At each stage in the ascent, Zostrianos is baptized. He is baptized five times in the name of the Self-begotten, and the formula each time involves a "standing":

And I was baptized in the [name] of the Self-begotten God by these powers which are [in] the living water, Michar and M[. . .]. And I was purified by [the] great Barpharanges. And they [. . .] to me and they wrote me in the glory. I was sealed by those who exist upon these powers, Mi[ch]eus and Seldao and El[en]os and Zogenethlos. I became a [root?]-seeing (or perhaps: [God]-seeing) angel, and I stood upon the first aeon which is the fourth. With the souls I praised the Self-begotten God and the [. . .] father, the Stranger Adamas [. . .] the Self-begotten, the [first] perfect [Human], and Seth Emm[acha] Seth], the son of Adamas the [father of the immovable] race [.] and Mirothea the mother [.] and eminence [.] of the lights and [. . .].

And I was [baptized for the second time] in the name of the Self-begotten God by these same powers. I became an angel of the male race. And I stood upon the second aeon, which is the third. With the children of [Seth] I praised all these.

And I was baptized for the third time in the name of the Self-begotten God by these same powers. I became a holy angel. I stood upon the third aeon which is the second. I [praised] all these.

And I was baptized for the fourth time by [these same] powers. I became a perfect [angel]. And [I stood upon the] fourth aeon [which is the first], and I praised all these. (6,7–7,27)

At this point, Zostrianos seeks answers to various questions about the diversity among souls, and about other matters which are grounded in the character of the Self-begotten realm and its relation to lower and higher levels. He is given extensive instruction on such matters, which takes up several pages of text, and then in 53,15–25 there is a fifth, and presumably final baptism in this level:

And I was baptized for the fifth time in the name of the Self-begotten by these same powers. I became divine. I

stood upon the fifth, combined⁵ aeon of all [these]. And I saw all those who belong to the Self-begotten who truly exists. And I was baptized five . . .

There is a pattern here involving the association of standing with seeing, praising, being baptized, etc. In order to assess the significance of this, it is necessary to place these descriptions of the seer Zostrianos within the broader context of other descriptions from late antiquity of persons "standing at rest." The verb "to stand" is of course a common one in Greek and other languages, but among instances in which individuals are said to be "standing," two rather special categories can be identified which are of significance for discerning the connotations of the term as applied to Zostrianos as visionary:

1) Many texts speak of the possibility of the individual *soul* achieving a condition of "standing," and often this standing follows an ascent of the soul into the transcendent realm, as in *Zost.* There are two sub-categories here, the one being texts within, or influenced by, Platonic tradition where *hestanai*, as we have seen, is commonly used for the stability of the transcendent, and the other being apocalyptic texts in which individuals who ascend to the divine realm "stand before God."

2) Closely connected in many cases with this first category is a second involving descriptions of the *physical* standing at rest of spiritual heroes who are caught up in contemplation, or who are imitating in a quite concrete fashion the stability of a higher order.

D. Transcendental "Standing" in Late Antiquity

1. The Standing of the Soul in the Transcendent in Platonic Tradition

As is well-known, Plato contrasted the instability of corporeal existence with the stability of the noetic realm to which the soul might retreat. The body is subject to the passions: desires, fears, illusions of all kinds, and such things render the individual incapable of beholding the truth, since they create a constant uproar and confusion (*Phaedo* 66C-D). The soul can touch the truth only when it is away from these things (*Phaedo* 65B-C). Therefore, the quest of the soul must be to be "alone unto itself" (*Phaedo* 65C-D; 67C; 79D; 83B). Plato described this transition to solitude as a "gathering" of the soul unto itself,⁶ or, in one place (*Phaedo*

⁵ Or: "inhabited." I have suggested something like "combined" for the term *ἑστῶς* (see Crum 831a-b), since the text states that this fifth aeon is created by the other four (*Zost* 19,6-14). Evidently the meaning is that, considered individually, the four Self-begotten aeons are four, but together they form a single, fifth aeon.

⁶ *Phaedo* 65B-D; 67C; 83A-B. The gathering or collecting of the soul from a condition of "scattering" became a frequent theme in Platonism. "Scattering" or "dissipation"

83A), as a withdrawing (*anachðrein*).⁷ As long as the soul makes use of the bodily senses in seeking answers to questions,

it wanders and is confused and dizzy as though it were drunk, because it is in contact with these things. . . . But when it engages in inquiry alone unto itself, it goes off there to that which is pure and eternally existent and immortal and which remains the same; and since the soul is akin (*suggenēs*) to this, the soul is always in the latter's company whenever it is alone unto itself and can do this; and the soul ceases from its wandering and remains always the same (*aei kata tauta hōsautōs echei*) in the company of these realities, since it is in contact with them. (*Phaedo* 79C-D)

In *Phaedrus* 246Aff, a passage which unquestionably was a text of extraordinary influence on later conceptions of the origin and destiny of the soul, Plato stresses the antithesis between the realm of stability and the realm of confusion and disturbance. The souls in the lower regions are hindered by the "disturbance" (*thorubos*—248B) of the horses which are surging in divergent directions; dragged down by this struggle, these souls are unable to gain a vision of Being and must settle for "opinionative food" (*trophē doxastē*—248B). There results the famous "loss of wings" (248C; 246C-D),⁸ in which the soul falls to earth having forgotten the things seen in the upper region. That upper region, i.e., the region of "colorless, formless, intangible, truly existing essence (*ousia ontōs ousa*)" (247C), the region of the "things which truly exist" (*ta onta ontōs*—247E), is a region devoid of disorder and disturbance. This region is regained by the philosopher when he moves from the plurality of sense impressions to unity (249B). In describing the condition of the "immortals" who arrive at that upper region and gaze upon the realities present there, Plato refers to these souls as "standing":

(*skedasmos*, *skedastis*, *skidnasthai*, etc.) is a property of material existence and a hindrance to contemplation (e.g., Plutarch, *Def. orac.* 430F; *De an. procr.* 1024A; Numenius, *Frag.* 4b des Places; Albinus, *Epit.* 25.1; Philo, *Somn.* 2.211; Plotinus, *Enn.* 5.3.8, 31f). Increasingly one finds this theme coupled with ascetic paraenesis, the collection of the soul from all involvement in passions (e.g., Plotinus, *Enn.* 1.2.5; Porphyry, *Ad. Marc.* 10, p. 280.25; Basil, *Ep.* 2; Gregory of Nyssa, *De virg.* 6.2). In *Zost* 45.1–46.15, Zostrianos is told about the "scattering" (*pyððre ebol*) from which the person who is saved withdraws (*anachðrein*) to collected unity.

⁷ On the later history of this term, see A.-J. Festugière, *Personal Religion Among the Greeks* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), pp. 53–67. The passage in *Zost* 45.1–46.15 mentioned in the preceding note illustrates the importance of mystical *anachðrēsis* among the gnostic opponents of Plotinus, who himself employed the same motif (e.g., *Enn.* 1.1.12, 19). Cf. Jan Helderma, "Anachorese zum Heil: Das Bedeutungsfeld der Anachorese bei Philo und in einigen gnostischen Traktaten von Nag Hammadi," in *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honour of Pahor Labib*, ed. Martin Krause, NHS 6 (Leiden: Brill, 1975), pp. 40–55.

⁸ There is a reference by Plotinus (*Enn.* 2.9.4, 1ff) to the use of this term by his gnostic opponents in their explanation of the origin of the cosmos.

Those who are called immortal, when they arrive at the summit (*pros akrō*), pass outside and stand (*hestēsai*) on the outer surface (*nōtō*) of the heaven, and when they have taken their stand (*stasas*) the revolution carries them around, and they behold the things outside of the heaven. (247B-C)

I cannot point with certainty to an instance in later literature where “standing” terminology must have been drawn from this particular passage in the *Phaedrus*.⁹ However, the prominence of this whole section of the *Phaedrus* in the Hellenistic-Roman period makes it likely that some instances of the portrayal of the individual’s “standing” and “beholding” the things in the noetic realm have been informed by this language from *Phaedrus* 247B-C.¹⁰

I have already mentioned the interest of Philo of Alexandria in the “standing” of biblical heroes such as Moses (see above, pp. 27). Persons such as Moses, wise men, filled with virtue, belong to a group whom God draws to himself and grants participation in his own stability. They belong to a group which transcends all forms (*eide*) and classes (*genē*) and which God has firmly fixed (*hidruse*) near himself—like Moses to whom he said, “Stand here by me” (Deut 5:31; SAC 8). Philo is particularly interested in the ethical dimensions of this—the instability of the fool tossed by passions vs. the immovability of virtue and the wise men who possess it.¹¹ But the achievement of ethical excellence is portrayed by Philo as an *ascent* to the Olympian realm of virtue (*Post.* 31) where divine stability is to be found. Those who follow virtue are set (*histamenoi*) above everything that is earthly and mortal (*Det. pot. ins.* 114). Like Moses, they “stand at rest (*stēnai*), firm and unwaveringly, in God alone” (*Ques. Exod.* frag. 11, trans. Loeb Classical Library).

As I also discussed earlier (see above, pp. 55f), Clement of Alexandria takes up the tradition found in Philo regarding the “standing” of Moses and Abraham and uses it to illustrate the stability of the ideal gnostic.

⁹ But note Plotinus, *Enn.* 1.3.4, 9ff, where the soul, upon arriving on the “plain of Truth” (*Phaedrus* 248B), experiences *hēsychia*; and compare the passage from Proclus, *De orac. Chald.* 4, quoted below (pp. 79f), where it is also a matter of “standing” at the summit (*akrō*).

¹⁰ On the influence of this passage, cf. Jean Danielou, *A History of Christian Doctrine Before the Council of Nicea*, vol. 2: *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, trans. and ed. John A. Baker (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973), pp. 124–26.

¹¹ See above, pp. 25–27 on *Post.* 21–31, and p. 27 on *Gig.* 48, where the immovability of the ark of the covenant is equated with the immovability of virtue. On the association of virtue with stability, cf. also Plutarch, *De virt. mor.* 441C: *hē aretē = logos homologoumenos kai bebaios kai ametaptōtos*; and Simplicius, *In Aristot. Cat.* 287, 4fK: *hē aretē . . . energei bebaiōs hestōsa en tō ametaptōtō eidei tēs epistēmēs*. See Krämer, *Platonismus*, p. 223.

Clement does not use the term *hestanai* all that frequently to designate the stability of the gnostic, but in Book 7 of the *Stromateis*, in his famous description of the ideal *gnostikos*, he uses the term *hestanai* for the ultimate goal of the gnostic's ascent. Clement says that gnosis easily transports one to the divine and holy quality akin to the soul, and leads the person through the stages of mystical advance to the crowning place of rest (*anapausis*—7.57.1). As gnosis crosses over into love, the person is perhaps already "equal to the angels" (*isangelos*), and: "After achieving the highest exaltation in the flesh, since he is always changing to that which is better, as is fitting, he moves through the holy Hebdomad into the chamber of the Father, to the abode which is truly the Lord's, to be, as it were, an eternally standing (*hestos*) and abiding (*menon*) light, totally immutable" (*atrepton*—7.57.5). Clement then says that scripture gives testimony to this reward given to the pious, and he quotes LXX Ps 23:3–6: "Who shall ascend unto the mountain of the Lord? Or who shall stand (*stēsetai*) in his holy place? etc." (7.58.1–2). Clement understands the "standing" of the gnostic as an abiding light in the "chamber of the Father" to be a participation in the divine stability. In *Strom.* 1.163.6, he says that the pillar (*stylos*) of fire which went before the Hebrews (Exod 13:21) shows "God's standing and abiding quality (*to hestos kai monimon*) and his immutable (*atrepton*) and formless light."¹²

Plotinus, who was probably an acquaintance of some of the persons who read *Zost*, also describes the "ascent" of the self to the vision of the Transcendent by employing "standing" language. The soul of the man of excellence "stands at rest" (*stasa*), since he is no longer engaged in discursive reasoning, but rather has turned toward the One and the tranquil (*pros to hen kai pros to hēsychon*—*Enn.* 3.8.6, 35ff).¹³ One who is employing discursive reasoning (*logizomenos*) is desperately trying to acquire what the wise man (*ho phronimos*) already possesses; wisdom is in that which "stands" (*tō stanti*—4.4.12, 9–11).

It is fundamental to Plotinus's concept of illumination that it is not something external which comes to the individual, but rather it is something which is already there; consequently it must not be chased after. Preparing oneself for it, one must "remain in stillness" (*hēsychē menein*), waiting for it as one waits for the sunrise (5.5.8, 5ff; see the quotation below). That which I am seeking is not outside of me.¹⁴ Therefore, one

¹² Cf. Walther Völker, *Der wahre Gnostiker nach Clemens Alexandrinus*, TU 57 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1952), p. 513, n. 2.

¹³ *Enn.* 1.4.12: The *spoudaios* eschews pleasures which are accompanied by "movements" (*kinēseis*—i.e., ebullient emotions); his pleasure and happiness are the type which "stand at rest" (*hestēke*); he is always *hēsychos*.

¹⁴ On the whole question of the retreat into the One as a retreat into the self, see the study by O'Daly, *Plotinus' Philosophy of the Self*.

finds in Plotinus language about the “gathering” of the soul into itself.¹⁵ There is a “center” within the individual which corresponds to the “center” of the One (5.1.11,10–15), and Plotinus frequently describes the individual’s experience of the convergence on that center as a “touching” (*ephapteisthai*).¹⁶ This metaphor is often combined with the metaphor of the “vision of the Light” (5.3.17,25–38; 6.7.36). The soul itself can be said not only to be illuminated by the Light, but at the moment of contact it *is* the Light (1.6.9,18ff; 6.9.9.55; cf. 5.5.7,34f), it *is* god (1.2.6,1–9; 6.9.9,59).

What our soul really desires, says Plotinus, is that which is better than itself, and “when That is present within it, it (the soul) is filled up and stands at rest” (*apopeplērōtai kai estē*—1.4.6,18). If one has experienced the vision of the Light, and then the vision is no more, one must not attempt to determine the place from which it came; there is no such “place”:

Therefore, it is necessary not to chase after it, but rather to remain in stillness until it appears, preparing oneself to be a spectator, just as an eye waits for the rising of the sun. The sun, appearing above the horizon—“out of Oceanus,” as the poets say—gives itself to the eyes to be beheld. But above what horizon does that which the sun imitates rise? It rises above the mind which is in contemplation. For the mind (*ho nous*) will stand still (*hestēxetai*) toward the vision, looking to nothing else but the Beautiful, turning and giving itself completely to that; and having stood (*stas*) and, as it were, having been filled with strength, it at first sees itself to have become more beautiful and brilliant, since That one is near. (5.5.8,5–15)

Tractate 6.9 is one of the classic statements of Plotinus’s mysticism. The final section of the tractate summarizes the experience, and a portion of it reveals the centrality of stability:

Now since there were not two things, but instead the beholder himself became one with the beheld—as though it were not something beheld but something united with—, if he would remember what he became when he was mingled with That one, he would have within himself an image of That one. He was one, and he had within himself no difference with regard to himself or to other things. Nothing in him moved; no emotion, no desire was in him when he ascended, not even reasoning, not even intellection—not even his very self, if one could say that. But as though caught up or raptured in stillness (*hēsychē*), he has attained a solitary steadiness (*katastasei*) in the calm essence of That one, not turning away in any direction, nor even turning toward himself, standing

¹⁵ *Enn.* 1.2.5,7ff; 4.3.32,19f (*ta polla eis hen synagei*); 5.5.7,32–35; 5.3.6,13 (*eis hen panta synagontes*); cf. the Valentinian tractate *TriTract* 92,28–31: “It is called ‘a gathering (*synagogē*)’ of salvation,” because he cured himself of the dissipation . . .”

¹⁶ *E.g., Enn.* 1.2.6,13ff; 5.1.11,13–15; 5.3.17,25–38; 6.7.36,4; 6.7.39,19; 6.9.4,27; 6.9.9,56.

completely at rest (*hestōs pantē*), and, as it were, having become Rest (*stasis*) itself. (6.9.11,4–16)

Or finally, we may compare the rare burst of autobiography which appears in the famous passage in 4.8.1,1–11:

Many times, rising out of the body into myself, and getting outside the things which are other than me, coming inside myself, be^oolding such wondrous beauty, and becoming at that moment especially confident of my better lot, actualizing life in the most excellent sense, and becoming identical with the divine, and having come into this actuality and having been fixed (*hidrutheis*) within it, and having fixed myself (*emauton hidrusas*) above every intelligible thing, and then after this stability (*stasin*) in the divine, descending from Mind into reasoning, I am at a loss to understand how it can be that I am now descending, and how it is that the soul ever came to be in my body, since the soul is the sort of thing which it was revealed to be when apart unto itself, even though it is in the body.

It is evident that similar descriptions of the ascent to a vision of the Transcendent were common in later Neoplatonism as well. In the anonymous *Parmenides* commentary (see above, pp. 50–52), in the first fragment, there is the assertion that the One is actually beyond not only plurality, but also the name “One” and even the conception (*epinoia*) of “One” (II,4–14). The condition of contemplation which does justice to the One is then set forth:

And thus it is possible neither to fall into emptiness nor to dare (*tolman*) to attribute something to That one, but to remain (*menein*) in an incomprehensible comprehension and an intellection (*noēsis*) which conceives nothing. From this exercise, it is possible for you at some time (*pote*), turned away from the intellection (*noēsis*) of the things which have been hypostasized through him, to stand still (*stēnai*) at the ineffable preconception (*proennoia*) of him, which gives an image of him by means of silence, not knowing that it is silent, nor understanding that it is imaging him, nor knowing anything at all, but being only an image of the ineffable, since it is ineffably the Ineffable, but not as though it were knowing the Ineffable—if you are able, though only in imagination, to follow me, to the extent that I am able to describe this. (II,14–27)¹⁷

Proclus affords a similar example:

When the soul stands at rest (*histamenē hē psychē*) in accordance with its own dianoetic faulty, it is the knowledge (*epistēmōn*) of the things which exist. Having fixed (*hidrusasa*) itself in the intellectual portion of its own being, it contemplates all things with its simple and undivided intuitions. But when it has run up to the One, and has folded together all the plurality within itself, it activates by inspiration and makes contact with existences which transcend Mind.

¹⁷ See Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, vol. 1, pp. 116–18.

Like always by nature makes contact with like, says Proclus, since knowledge of something can only come from possessing some likeness to it. All knowledge which results from this likeness involves the bringing together of knower with known: the sense-perceptible with the sense-perceptible, the dianoetic with the dianoetic, the noetic with the noetic. To know that which is prior to Mind, one must bring into contact with it what Proclus calls the "flower of the mind" (*anthos tou nou*):¹⁸ "Just as we advance to mind when we become mind-like (*noeideis*), so also we run up to Oneness when we become one-like (*henoeideis*), standing at rest (*stantes*) on the peak (*akrō*) of our mind."¹⁹

In the preceding chapter (see above, pp. 52f), I quoted a section from the gnostic tractate *Allog* which illustrates one aspect of that writing's relationship to Neoplatonism: the use of technical terms such as "Life" and "Existence" and "standing." At that point, I was calling attention to the fact that *Allog* provides an instance of the stability of Existence being expressed with the technical term "to stand." But perhaps even more striking in that passage is the way in which the *visionary's* goal is to "stand at rest," and how standing at rest is coupled with "seeing" the realities of the transcendent realm.

The influence of the Neoplatonic language about standing at various stages in the ascent to the vision of the Transcendent can also be seen in Christian writers of the fourth century. Gregory of Nyssa comments on the Lord's Prayer:

"Whenever you pray, say, Our Father who art in heaven." "Who will give me wings as a dove?" (LXX Ps 54:7), says the great David somewhere in the Psalms. And I myself would be so bold as to say the same thing: Who will give me those wings, in order to be able with the sublime exaltation in the majesty of the words (i.e., of the Lord's Prayer) to soar up in thought; so that I might leave behind all the earth and fly through all the air which flows in between; so that I might reach the beautiful aether and attain to the star; that I might perceive the beautiful aether and attain to the star; that I might perceive the beautiful order in these things; but that I might not stand still (*stēnai*) among these things, but might also pass through these as well, and get outside all things which move and change, and reach the nature which stands at rest (*tēn hestōsan physin*), the immovable (*ametakineton*) power, fixed unto itself, which both leads and carries all things which are in Being, all things which depend on the unspeakable will of divine Wisdom; so that becoming in thought far removed from all things which alter and change, in the

¹⁸ See J. M. Rist, "Mysticism and Transcendence in Later Neoplatonism," *Hermes* 92 (1964): 213–25.

¹⁹ The passage which I have been quoting is from Proclus, *De oraculis Chaldaicis* 4; text in *Oracles Chaldaïques*, ed. Édouard des Places (Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1971), p. 209.

immutable (*atreptō*) and unswerving establishment (*katastasei*) of the soul, etc. (*De oratione dominica* 2; MPG 44,1140B-C)

Or this influence is also illustrated by Augustine, who says that when he was twenty-six or twenty-seven years old he was struggling with the question of whether God was mutable or immutable, and was coming up with all the wrong answers. He was straining to hear the melody of "sweet Truth," he wanted to "stand still" (*stare*) and listen to Truth, but his error and pride prevented this (*Conf.* 4.15). He desired to be "more stable" (*stabilior*) in God (*Conf.* 8.1),²⁰ "God, from whom to turn away is to fall, to whom to turn is to rise again, in whom to remain is to stand fast (*consistere*)" (*Solil.* 1.1.3). In order to catch a glimpse of what it really means for God to be eternal, one would have to escape from the flow of time, the motions of past and future. "Who will seize (the human heart) and fix it, so that it might stand still (*stet*) momentarily, and momentarily catch the splendor of ever standing eternity (*semper stantis aeternitatis*)? . . . Who will seize the human heart, in order that it might stand still (*stet*) and behold the way in which eternity, standing at rest (*stans . . . aeternitas*), dictates future and past time, being itself neither future nor past?" (*Conf.* 11.11).

The examples which I have cited illustrate the frequent theme in Platonic tradition of the ascent of the individual to some transcendent realm where the individual "stands" and "beholds." It can be seen that in these examples the description of the individual as "standing" is most often not simply a matter of portraying the posture (as opposed to sitting, kneeling, etc.) of the individual, but rather is intended to depict the stability experienced.²¹ This is evident in most instances because of the fact that the "standing" of the individual amounts to an assimilation to the "standing" of some transcendent entity, where clearly the verb "stand" has the technical philosophical connotation of "absence of motion." Given the fact that this same philosophical connotation of "stand" is

²⁰ Cf. Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), p. 105.

²¹ For an analysis from a different perspective of "standing-beholding" motifs in Hellenistic-Roman literature, see Antonie Wlosok, *Laktanz und die philosophische Gnosis*, Abhandlungen der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Klasse, 1960, 2 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1960). Wlosok's work, a revision of her Heidelberg dissertation, deals with the whole theme of the *contemplatio caeli* and its history in later philosophical gnosis. She has given particular attention to the motif of the "upright stance" of the human being, which is mentioned repeatedly in Hellenistic-Roman literature as a distinguishing characteristic of the human, allowing the human to gaze upward and contemplate the orderly movement of the heavens. I have been interested in some of the same texts which Wlosok has illuminated from this perspective, although my own concerns have not been so much with the "upright stance" as with "standing" as an expression of stability.

known to the author of *Zost* (see above, p. 71), it is likely that his description of Zostrianos the visionary, who "stands" when beholding the light of the Truth in the Self-begotten (6,3f), is also an instance of the technical usage of "stand" for the stability accompanying the vision of the Transcendent. Zostrianos in his ascent is participating through his "standing" in one of the characteristics of the realm of the Self-begotten. Just as the Self-begotten God is said to be "standing in an aeon" (127,15–17), Zostrianos "stands" in the various levels of the Self-begotten, giving praise along with the other beings who are present there.

2. "Standing Before God" in Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic

In addition to the examples illustrating a Platonic usage of standing language for the stability of an ascended soul, there are instances from Jewish and Christian apocalyptic texts in which ascended visionaries are said to "stand before God." "Standing before God" or "before the Lord," or course, is a formula found in many other places in Jewish literature than in apocalyptic texts. It is a formula designating the covenantal relationship between Israel and God (e.g., Lev 9:5; Deut 29:10; 1 QH 18:28f, etc.), or the role of those designated to carry out the cultic duties of the covenant community (e.g., 2 Chron 29:11; 1 QH 11:16, etc.). But one special application of the formula is for the literal "standing before the Lord" in the heavenly realm. Often this is a matter of angels or archangels who "stand before the Lord,"²² and the expression belongs to conventional royal court etiquette.²³

In a few instances, however, we find the expression applied to human beings who have ascended into the heavenly realm. In *Slavonic Enoch*, which is of uncertain provenance but quite possibly comes from Egypt (1st cent. C.E.),²⁴ Enoch ascends to the seventh heaven, is abandoned at this point by his angelic escorts, grows fearful and falls on his face, and then is told by the archangel Gabriel to have courage and "stand before the Lord's face into eternity" (2 *Enoch* 21.3). Enoch is then anointed by the archangel Michael and given splendid garments, so that Enoch becomes as one of God's "glorious ones" (22.10), and God commands that Enoch is to "stand before my face into eternity" (22.6). The

²² E.g., 1 *Enoch* 39.12f; 40.1; 47.3; 68.4; 2 *Enoch* 21.1; *Test. Abraham* 7–8; cf. 1 *Enoch* 49.2.

²³ E.g., Daniel and his companions are groomed as court wise men, to "stand before the king" (Dan 1:5,19; 2:2).

²⁴ Ulrich Fischer, *Eschatologie und Jenseitserwartung im hellenistischen Diasporajudentum*, BZNW 44 (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1978), pp. 37–70; Marc Philonenko, "La cosmogonie du 'Livre des secrets d'Hénoch,'" *Religions en Egypte hellénistique et romaine: Colloque de Strasbourg 16–18 Mai 1967* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1969), pp. 109–18.

anointing and clothing in glorious garments could indicate that this description reflects soteriological ritual from a Hellenistic Jewish context.²⁵ In any event, if *2 Enoch* is a Jewish text which predates *Zost* (and there seems no reason to conclude otherwise), it attests to the existence of a conception already in Jewish apocalyptic of the assimilation of the ascended seer to the condition of "standing before the Lord" which is characteristic of the angelic "glorious ones." This is very much like the basic picture in *Zost*, where not only is the visionary described as "standing" in the realm of the Self-begotten but also we are told that within the realm of the Self-begotten there "stand glories" (*Zost* 46,20; see above, pp. 71f).²⁶

In the Greek fragment from Akhmim of the *Apocalypse of Peter*, the twelve disciples have a vision of two men "standing before the Lord," who are identified in the fragment as anonymous "righteous brethren," but who in the parallel text in the Ethiopic version are identified as Moses and Elijah.²⁷ In the *Ascension of Isaiah* 9:6–9, Isaiah sees in the seventh heaven all of the righteous since the time of Adam. Enoch in particular is mentioned, and the text says that Enoch and all who were with him were stripped of their fleshly garments and were wearing their heavenly garments, and "they were like angels, standing there in great glory" (9:9).²⁸

²⁵ Cf. Wlosok, *Laktanz*, pp. 179 and 246f.

²⁶ Maddalena Scopello, "The Apocalypse of Zostrianos (Nag Hammadi VIII.1) and the Book of the Secrets of Enoch," *VigChr* 34 (1980): 376–85, has argued that *Zost* in two places (5,15–20 and 128,15–18) may well be quoting directly from *2 Enoch* (22,10 and 24,3, respectively), although she does not mention the similarity in the descriptions of the seers as "standing." I myself am not yet convinced that there is sufficient evidence to conclude a direct literary dependence on *2 Enoch* in particular, but the formal and thematic parallels which Scopello points out between *Zost* and apocalyptic ascent texts such as *2 Enoch* are surely of material significance, indicative of at least some kind of traditio-historical continuity.

²⁷ Hennecke-Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 2, p. 680f.

²⁸ R. H. Charles, trans., *The Ascension of Isaiah* (London: S.P.C.K., 1917), p. xxiv, points out the possible influence of *2 Enoch* on the description of the seventh heaven. For the expression "standing before God" used to indicate the saved condition of a certain group we can also compare the gnostic tractate *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth* from Nag Hammadi Codex VII, where it is said that "the soul, the one from the height, will not speak of the error which is here, nor will it transfer from these aeons, since it will be transferred when it becomes free and makes use of nobility in this world, *standing before the Father* without weariness, and, eternally mixed with the Nous, she will give power of form" (57,27–58,4). (the translation of the last clause is not only awkward but also uncertain, except for the fact that the phrase "eternally mixed with the Nous" is certainly intended to describe the soul which has become "free.") We should call attention to the association in this gnostic passage of the soul's mixture with Nous and its "standing" before the Father. This parallels the association of Nous with "standing at rest" that is found in philosophical literature.

Still another passage from among the Nag Hammadi texts should be mentioned here, since it too makes use of the "standing before God" phrase to designate a saved group,

Thus, in some Jewish and Christian apocalyptic traditions the "standing" of a seer is a way of indicating the assimilation of the seer to the condition of angels. Since "standing before the Lord" and variants of this expression are common in Hebrew scripture, in other Jewish literature, and elsewhere in the ancient Near East, the use of such an expression for the status of a visionary in any given text does not at all necessarily involve the connotation of Rest vs. Movement which is present in the philosophical usage of *hestanai*. However, at least one writer was aware of *both* the traditional expression "to stand before God" and the philosophical use of *hestanai* for lack of motion; and he was occasionally interested in interpreting the former in terms of the latter. Philo interprets the statement in LXX Gen 18:22f, where Abraham is "standing before the Lord" (*hestōs ên enanti kyriou*), to mean that "since Abraham the wise man stands at rest (*hestēke*), he draws near to the standing (*hestōti*) god" (*Post.* 27; cf. *Cher.* 18f; *Somn.* 2.226). The wording of Deut 5:31 with respect to Moses might also be mentioned again (see above, p. 27). The simple expression "stand here *with me*" is understood by Philo to mean the immovable standing at rest achieved by Moses the visionary in his ascent at Sinai. We may very well have a similar situation in *Zost*, since this text, like Philo, definitely uses the expression "stand" in its philosophical sense in at least some instances, but also seems to be employing the apocalyptic motif of the standing of the seer. As Zostrianos stands on each successive aeon in the Self-begotten he becomes a certain kind of *angelos*. Since after his visionary ascent Zostrianos proclaims "the truth" about what he has seen to beings in the sense-perceptible world (130,5-9), then *angelos* is probably intended to indicate the "messenger" status which Zostrianos is acquiring through the ascent. Yet the parallel between Zostrianos as a "standing" *angelos* in the Self-begotten and the angels who "stand" in the heavenly realms in Jewish apocalyptic is probably no accident, but rather suggests that *Zost* is borrowing on an apocalyptic motif of the assimilation of a visionary to the "standing" of the heavenly angels.

although in this case the "standing" seems to refer not so much to a state enjoyed by souls who have departed from the body (although that is not entirely excluded) as to a state of the soul maintained while still in the body. The passage is in the *Apocalypse of Adam*: "Then the peoples will cry out with a great voice, 'Blessed is the soul of those men, because they knew God with a knowledge of the truth! They will live forever, since they have not been corrupted by their desire, with the angels, nor have they fulfilled the works of the powers, but rather *they have stood in his presence* in a knowledge of God, like light which has come forth from fire and blood" (83,8-23). "Standing firm" in the presence of God is therefore equated with the resistance in this life to the corrupting influence and temptations of cosmic powers, but the implication of the text may be that such a state continues after leaving the body. With the reference here to their "standing in his presence . . . like light," compare Clement's description of the gnostic's becoming "an eternally standing and abiding light, totally immutable" (*Strom.* 7.57.5—see my discussion above, pp. 76f).

It is possible that already in some Jewish circles during the Hellenistic-Roman period an interest in apocalyptic ascent literature—like portions of the Enochic literature, for example—had been filtered through a philosophical conceptual network from which new connotations for older apocalyptic terminology emerged. Perhaps, like Philo, such circles had picked up the philosophical use of *hestanai* and shared the presupposition that immovability characterized the invisible, incorporeal divine realm, and therefore had already seen in the older apocalyptic language about the beings who “stand before the Lord” in the heavens a philosophical expression for their stability and their transcendence of the movement belonging to the material world.²⁹ In any case, this synthesis of apocalyptic and philosophical language appears accomplished in *Zost*, and against the background of the author’s extensive employment of this “standing” terminology we can see that the designation of the race of Seth as “immovable” belongs to the author’s overall picture of the stability of beings who “stand at rest” in the Transcendent.

E. Literal Standing Practiced by Spiritual Heroes

A second category of texts from antiquity in which some special significance is given to the “standing” of individuals is that pertaining to spiritual heroes who make a practice of quite literally standing still while engaging in some type of contemplation. The evidence that such descriptions are relevant for understanding what is found in *Zost* is much less direct than in the case of the first category of texts I have discussed. While *Zost* gives an account of the spiritual ascent of the visionary and the spiritual experience of “standing” in the transcendent realm, the text

²⁹ It is not totally impossible that the tractate *Zost* could even be a product of such a Jewish circle. Cf. Scopello’s observations about the similarity between some phraseology in *Zost* and parallels in Jewish literature (“The Apocalypse of Zostrianos,” pp. 380–82). She calls attention especially to the passage in *Zost* 3,15–24: “I was meditating in order to understand these things, and I was offering up (or bringing up) daily to the God of my fathers, according to the custom of my race. I was praising all these. For my forefathers and my fathers who sought, found. I myself did not cease asking for a resting-place worthy of my spirit, since I was not yet bound in the perceptible world.” She points out parallels in Jewish literature to phrases such as “the God of my fathers” and “according to the custom of my race,” and to the emphasis on meditation (cf. Qumran). Behind the expression “forefathers” she suggests that there is the term *aboth harišōnim*, used for the Patriarchs (Jer 11:10; Isa 43:27, LXX: *hoi pateres humōn prōtoi*), although she perhaps unnecessarily dilutes the parallel by stressing that the “Patriarchs” here in *Zost* have been reinterpreted to mean the primordial Adamas and Seth. In fact, there is nothing in the text of *Zost* itself which demands that identification, and the reference to the forefathers and fathers who sought and found could mean simply previous members of the “race,” all of whom were “sons of Seth.” Not mentioned by Scopello is the further possibility of an allusion to the language of daily sacrifice in this passage: “offering up (*eine ehrat*) daily according to the custom of my race.”

explicitly states that Zostrianos left his body behind on earth (4,23–25) before the ascent and he put this “temple” back on after descending once again (130,5f). The visionary ascent is clearly intended to represent an experience which has been and can be shared by others (e.g., *Zost* 44,1–46,15), but we are not really told about the disposition or posture of the visionary’s *body* during the ascent experience. Perhaps the author regarded this as totally unimportant, since it involved only the physical body. However, in other traditions where regard for the physical is eclipsed by concern for contemplation of an incorporeal transcendent this concern is often accompanied by a certain bodily posture or disposition which is regularly assumed during contemplation, and it is not unlikely that some such custom is presupposed by the author of *Zost*.

In *Allog*, a tractate which is very closely related to *Zost*, and in which we find what is perhaps an even more prominent emphasis on the transcendental standing of the visionary (see above, pp. 52f), there is toward the end of the document what seems to be a reference to the visionary Allogenes’ physical posture, assumed in connection with the ascent:

“Write what I will say to you and what I will bring to your remembrance for the sake of those who will be worthy after you. And you will place this book upon a mountain and summon the guardian: ‘Come, O Dreadful One.’” After he said these things he (i.e., the revealer) departed from me. And I was full of joy and I wrote this book which was appointed for me, my son Messos, in order that I might disclose to you the things which were proclaimed in my presence. At first I received them in great silence, and I stood by myself (*aeiaherat kataroi*) preparing myself. These are the things which were disclosed in me, O my son. . . . (*Allog* 68,16–35)

This description of Allogenes, “standing” in preparation, is quite possibly directly connected with the aspirations toward transcendental “standing” found in *Allog* 59,9–61,22. That is, the author of *Allog* may be depicting a physical pose for the seer which is appropriate to the condition of noetic stability that is achieved in the vision.

Descriptions of spiritual heroes in antiquity which offer analogies to this passage in *Allog* may be of help in fleshing out the external praxis underlying the visionary experience described in *Allog*, and, by extension, that described in *Zost*.

1. The Practice of Standing in Christian Monasticism

Standing, of course, was an attitude for prayer which was practiced in several traditions,³⁰ but what we are interested in here are certain

³⁰ Cf. for example, remarks in the Talmud on the importance of saying the *tefillah* while

instances where particular attention is called to the posture and to its significance. The most famous examples probably involve the practice which is attested among various Christian monks of standing in one place, absorbed in prayer or contemplation. I mentioned in Chapter One the description of the monk Adolius "standing" and singing and praying all night on the Mount of Olives, whatever the weather, remaining immovable (*asaleutos*).³¹ In *Hist. Laus.* 18.14–17 we hear of the impression upon Pachomian monks at the monastery of Tabennisi that was made by Macarius of Alexandria through his immovable "stand." Visiting the monastery incognito, Macarius observed that during Lent the monks practiced various types of ascetic denial, including some who would remain standing (*hestōta*) all night,³² but would sit during the day. Macarius, we are told, took his stand (*estē*) in a corner and stayed there—night and day, presumably—until Easter without kneeling or lying down. He ate nothing but a few cabbage leaves, "and that was only on the Lord's day, so as to give the appearance of eating," and only left his stand when the natural need for elimination required him to go outside—from which he would always quickly return and stand still once again, never opening his mouth, but "standing in silence" (*siōpē hestōs*). The eventual result of this was loud complaint from the other monks about "this fleshless one" (*ton asarkon*), who had to go or else they would all leave. Palladius records the following as Macarius's own description of such an ascetic stand:

standing (e.g., *bBerakoth* 30a), and standing without moving or being distracted (*bBerakoth* 32b–33a: it is in this passage, in an explanation of the text from *Mishnah*, *Berakoth* 5.1: "even if a snake is wound around his heel he may not interrupt his prayer," that the famous story is told about the rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, who placed his heel over the hole of a poisonous reptile which had been injuring the populace, and stood there—presumably praying—until the reptile bit him and, to the amazement of all, itself died).

³¹ *Hist. Laus.* 43.2 (see above, pp. 31f). Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les saints stylites*, Subsidia hagiographica 14 (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1923), p. clxxxii, has suggested that Adolius is one of the two anonymous "standing" monks mentioned in a poem by Gregory of Nazianzus (MPCG 37, 1456–57). But my own sense is that we are dealing with a practice here which was widespread enough that we cannot make such an identification with any kind of certainty.

³² Again, this was apparently not uncommon. In *Hist. Laus.* 48.3, we hear of the monk Elpidius, who had the habit of standing and singing all night; cf. Delehaye, *Les saints stylites*, p. clxxxii. The miraculous strength of Theodore of Sykeon is conveyed in one place by mentioning that, after having been rather severely injured in an accident (arranged by unclean spirits whom he was about to exorcize in a village) while traveling, upon arrival at his destination he nevertheless "stood (*estē*) like an iron statue through that night and without sleeping continued in praise to God" (*Life of Theodore of Sykeon* ch. 115, trans. in Elizabeth Dawes and Norman H. Baynes, *Three Byzantine Saints* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1948], p. 164, text in A.-J. Festugière, ed., *Vie de Theodore de Sykeon*, vol. 1. *Texte grec*, Subsidia hagiographica 48 [Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1970], p. 91).

Having successfully accomplished every form of activity which I had put my mind to, I then came upon another desire, namely, I wanted to spend five days with my mind totally undistracted from its concentration upon God. Having decided this, I shut up my cell and its hall, so that I might not answer anyone, and I stood still (*estēn*) beginning at the second hour. I commanded my mind as follows: "Do not descend from heaven; there you have angels, archangels, the powers above, and the God of the universe. Do not descend from heaven!" (*Hist. Laus.* 18.17)³³

The parallel with the "standing" of Zostrianos as an angel himself among the standing glories in the Self-begotten is striking, except that the description of Macarius is focused on the actual external praxis of standing still, which is not directly mentioned in *Zost.*

In *Historia monachorum* 13.4,³⁴ we read of a certain monk by the name of John who, the text claims, once spent three entire years standing (*hes-tōs*) under a certain rock, praying ceaselessly, never sitting down, never sleeping except when dozing off involuntarily while continuing to stand, and eating nothing but the eucharist brought to him on the Lord's Day by a presbyter. Although tempted by Satan, John nevertheless stood there until from their lack of movement (*ek tēs akinēsias*) his feet began to rot and exude pus. The text says that later, in his teaching to other monks, John would urge them on to "the more perfect establishment" (*katas-tasin*), reminding them "to withdraw to intelligible things, away from perceptible things" (*apo tōn aisthētōn epi ta noēta anachōrein*—13.11). Whether or not some monk named John himself actually used this kind of Platonic terminology³⁵ to describe the experience of stability, its appearance here indicates that it was a natural description for some people to use of the kind of retreat presumably illustrated by John's quite concrete acting out of the "more perfect establishment."

Theodoret, fifth century bishop of Cyrrhus, mentions continual standing as being among the ascetic paths to heavenly ascent that were practiced by Syrian monks:

It is both the case that the wicked spirit common to humans searches out many routes for evil in its struggle to deliver over the whole of human nature to utter destruction, and also the case that fledglings in piety devise many and various paths for the heavenly ascent (*hē eis ouranon anodos*). For some, taking up the struggle in the company of others (and

³³ Basil's famous letter to Gregory describing the monastic life does not mention "standing" as a part of monastic practice, but it does develop the theme of withdrawal (*anachōrēsis*) from the disturbances of life which rock the soul like the tossing (*salos*) of the sea, and devotion to a life of tranquillity and praise of God in imitation of the angels (*Ep.* 2).

³⁴ Text in A.-J. Festugière, ed., *Historia monachorum in Aegypto*, Subsidia hagiographica 34 (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1961), p. 99.

³⁵ Cf. A.-J. Festugière, *Les moines d'orient*, vol. 4, part 1 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1964), p. 88, n. 58.

there are myriads of such societies, even beyond counting), enjoy unfading crowns and achieve the desired ascent. While others, embracing the solitary life, practicing to address only God, and interacting with not even a single human soul, enjoy the victor's acclamation. Some spend their life praising God in tents, others in cells. Some devote themselves to lives in caves and grottos. But many, some of whom I have mentioned, are convinced that they should not have a cave or grotto or tent or cell. Rather, exposing their bodies to the open air they endure the totally opposite conditions, now frozen stiff by the bitter cold, now scorched by the blazing sun. And among this group, there is again a variety in lifestyle. For some stand continually (*hestōsi diēnekōs*) while others divide the day between sitting and standing (*stasin*). Some surround themselves with fences and refuse all communication with the multitude, while others make use of no such screen but leave themselves accessible to all who long after contemplation. (*Religiosa historia* 27; MPG 82, 1484C–1485A)³⁶

And of course, perhaps the most famous example of the practice of "standing" among Syrian monks is Simeon Stylites (d. 459), a contemporary of the bishop Theodoret. Theodoret seems slightly ambivalent in his attitude toward Simeon's *stasis* on top of a pillar (*Religiosa historia* 26; MPG 82, 1464D–1484C), intimating by some of his description of the phenomenon that he views with some reserve this novel form of standing which attracts so many sight-seers. Nevertheless, whatever may have been going through the mind of Simeon in his gradual increasing of the height of his pillar, Theodoret is able in one place to explain Simeon's practice in terms of a desire "to fly up to heaven, and be delivered from this earthly life" (MPG 82, 1473A-B).³⁷

³⁶ Earlier, Theodoret mentions several specific examples of the practice of this immovable stand: the monk Abraham whose body was subjected to "such sleeplessness, standing (*staser*), and fasting that for the longest time he remained motionless (*akinēton*), not even able to walk" (*Relig. hist.* 17, MPG 82, 1420C); the *stasis* of the monks Moses, Antiochus and Antony (ch. 23, MPG 82, 1456D–1457A); Zebinas, Polychronius, and Damianus (ch. 24, MPG 82, 1457B–1460B). For further examples, see Delehaye, *Les saints stylites*, pp. clxxxiii–clxxxiv.

³⁷ In these remarks on Simeon, I am indebted to Prof. Robert Doran, who graciously provided me with a draft copy of the Introduction to his forthcoming translation of three accounts of the life of Simeon: that by Theodoret, that by "Antonius" (see Hans Lietzmann, *Das Leben des heiligen Simeon Stylites*, TU 32.4 [Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1908], pp. 20–78), and a Syriac life (in two recensions, whose primary representatives are Vatican ms 117 and British Library ms Add 14484). (In addition to his forthcoming translation, cf. also Doran's "Compositional Comments on the Syriac Versions of the Life of Simeon Stylites," *Analecta Bollandiana* 102,1–2 [1984]: 35–48.) In the draft which Doran sent to me, he seems inclined to accept my argument for the possible significance of the "standing" by Syrian monks such as Simeon. However, he quite correctly points out that for the "standing" practiced in Syrian monasticism there is at least one other important factor to be examined: the fact that early Syriac Christian ascetics were sometimes called *bnay qyāmā/bnāt qyāmā*. There has been debate over the significance of this designation. Arthur Voöbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient*, vol. 1, *Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium*

Now almost all of these accounts of the Christian monastic practice of standing unmoved for the purpose of attaining transcendence, or as a sign of communion with the heavenly realm, come from a period somewhat too late to provide certain evidence for the existence of the same or a similar practice in the third century C.E., i.e., at a time more contemporary with *Zost* and *Allog*. But there are enough similarities between some of these instances in Christian monasticism and the description of mystical withdrawal in *Zost* and *Allog* as the pursuit and achievement of a "standing" condition, to suggest that there could be some historical continuity involved. At the very least, we can observe that it is quite plausible that such a connection might have occurred to the fourth century C.E. owners of some of the Nag Hammadi codices.

184 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1958), pp. 97–103, and "The Institution of the *benai qeïama* and *benat qeïama* in the Ancient Syrian Church," *Church History* 30 (1961): 19–27, argued that *qyāmā* in this designation primarily has the meaning "covenant," and that these Syriac ascetics were therefore the "sons and daughters of the covenant" who had taken the vows of celibacy associated with the covenant community. but *qyāmā* can also connote "standing," and A. Adam, "Grundbegriffe des Mönchtums," *ZKG* 65 (1953/54): 224–28, understood *bnay qyāmā/bnat qyāmā* to mean "those who are characterized by the upright stance," and took this as another designation equating the ascetic life with the *vita angelica*: "Der Ausdruck 'die Stehenden' aber ist eine Bezeichnung der Engel: sie liegen niemals schlafend da, sondern sind die immer Wachenden" (p. 226); and Peter Nagel, *Die Motivierung der Askese in der alten Kirche und der Ursprung des Mönchtums*, TU 95 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1966), pp. 43f, takes this one step further by suggesting that in this designation the term *qyāmā* means "standing" in the sense of *anastasis*, "resurrection," so that these ascetics anticipated the *vita angelica* as "sons and daughters of the resurrection."

It is apparent that the discussion of the *bnay qyāmā/bnat qyāmā* designation in Syriac Christianity could very well illuminate, and itself be illuminated by, an analysis of some of the standing language in Nag Hammadi texts, particularly since certain of the latter may be Coptic versions of works that originated in Syria. The *Gospel of Thomas*, for instance, which seems to have a Syrian ancestry, uses the term "to stand" (*ōhe erat* =) in what might be a technical sense, to describe the *monachoi* (logion 16), the chosen (logion 23), or the person "who will not experience death" (logion 18). It may be that the Syrian *bnay qyāmā/bnat qyāmā* tradition is another example of the development of the Jewish theme of "standing before the Lord" (and assimilation to the condition of angels), which I am arguing is one of the motifs behind the picture of the visionary Zostrianos, and that the Syrian version has not yet been influenced by the Platonic philosophical connotations of *hestanai* in the way that *Zost* has been. In an earlier correspondence in which he offered some reactions to my discussion in this chapter, Doran quite justifiably cautioned that philosophical connotations in the "standing" motif in Nag Hammadi texts such as *Zost* ought not too quickly to be read into the practice of standing in monasticism outside of Egypt, and that some of the language which a figure such as Theodoret chooses to describe the standing of Simeon and others may tell us more about Theodoret's classical education than about what was going on in the minds of Syrian monks themselves. I simply have not been able in this study to treat the Syriac evidence with the thoroughness that will be necessary before a clearer picture of relationships or non-relationships can be drawn. But I would suggest that what can be seen is that such a further analysis is called for.

To be sure, we still do not know for certain just who such owners would have been. The proximity of the area in which the Nag Hammadi texts were discovered to Pachomian monasteries at Pabau and Chenoboskia, the decidedly ascetic posture of so many of the Nag Hammadi texts, the evidence from the cartonnage which places the manufacture of the books at a time that is contemporaneous with the growth of such Pachomian monasteries, the references in certain of the cartonnage papyri to monastic terms and names of monks, and finally, the appearance in one fragment of the name "Pachomius" (which, however, was a very common Egyptian name)—all of these factors have encouraged speculation that the codices (or some of them) were once in a library of a Pachomian monastery. Some of the most recent study of the cartonnage papyri has been characterized by skepticism about how much the cartonnage supports a specifically *Pachomian* monastic provenance, but some type of monastic context is still one of the most defensible theories (see below, n. 47). Given the similarities with respect to the theme of "standing" which I have discussed, it would not be surprising to find out that among the now anonymous fourth century owners of books like Codex VIII (in which *Zost* is found) or Codex XI (which contains *Allog*) were monks who, though perhaps not themselves Pachomian, had much in common with those Pachomian monks described in *Hist. Laus.* 18.14–17 who were impressed by the "fleshless" Macarius's ability to stand motionless and who themselves practiced standing as a path to contemplative transcendence.

That *some* kind of literal standing also accompanied the contemplative pursuits of gnostics in the third century or earlier who were responsible for the composition of, and who were the earliest readers of texts such as *Zost* and *Allog*, would not (given the rather common practice generally in the ancient world of standing for worship) be a very risky hypothesis. A more interesting question is whether such standing would also have been understood not just as a customary sign of reverence, but as a concrete manifestation in these gnostics of a supra-mundane immovability (i.e., their identity as belonging to the "immovable race"). I think that we have enough evidence to make such a hypothesis at least plausible and attractive. The instances on the one hand of gnostic emphasis on immovability and standing connected with ascension to and visions of transcendent realms, and on the other hand of rigid standing for contemplation among fourth-century monks, may therefore be mutually illuminating. The latter, for which we have more "external" description, may help us to imagine how the gnostic experience of "standing" which is described largely from an "internal" perspective might have been acted out physically (although perhaps not always to the extremes found in some of the monastic instances) by devotees. At the same time, gnostic material may

provide new evidence regarding the significance and earlier history of at least some instances of the later monastic practice.

2. Socrates' *Habit of Standing Still*

There is still another instance from antiquity of the description of the physical standing of a spiritual hero which could be relevant here. Socrates was evidently famous for his habit of going off and standing motionless while thinking through some problem. In Plato's *Symposium*, Aristodemus runs into Socrates as the latter is on his way to the banquet at Agathon's house (174A). Socrates takes the liberty of asking Aristodemus to come along to the banquet, but after the two start on their way, Socrates becomes absorbed in contemplation and begins to lag behind, and as Aristodemus attempts to wait for his companion, Socrates tells him to go on ahead to the banquet (174D). So the uninvited Aristodemus, embarrassingly enough, arrives at Agathon's house without Socrates. Nevertheless, he is warmly welcomed by the host. Agathon sends a servant to find Socrates, and the servant returns with the news that Socrates had withdrawn (*anachôrêsas*) to a neighbor's porch and "stood" (*hestêke*) there, and refused the invitation to come inside (175A). Agathon remarks that this is strange indeed, but that the servant is to keep on inviting Socrates and is not to let him go. However, Aristodemus objects: "No, leave him alone, for this is a habit of his. From time to time he goes off (*apostas*) somewhere at random and stands (*hestêken*). he will be here soon, I think. Do not move (*kineite*) him but leave him alone" (175B).

There seems to have been one particularly impressive instance where Socrates stood motionless in contemplation, and, significantly, this is also mentioned in the *Symposium*, toward the conclusion (220C-D). Alcibiades is recounting famous deeds or characteristics of Socrates, and he mentions among other things an event which had occurred while he and Socrates were soldiering together at Potidaea:

Immersed (*sunnoêsas*) in some problem at dawn, (Socrates) stood (*heistêkei*) in the same spot considering it; and when he found it a tough one, he would not give it up but stood there (*heistêkei*) trying. The time drew on to midday, and the men began to notice him, and said to one another in wonder: "Socrates has been standing there (*heistêke*) in study ever since dawn!" The end of it was that in the evening some of the Ionians after they had supped—this time it was summer—brought out their mattresses and rugs and took their sleep in the cool; thus they waited to see if he would go on standing (*hestêxoi*) all night too. He stood (*heistêkei*) till dawn came and the sun rose; then walked away, after offering a prayer to the Sun. (trans. Loeb Classical Library)

Festugière long ago drew attention to both of these passages from the *Symposium*, and argued that it is significant that this picture of Socrates as

a contemplative in retreat is found precisely in this dialogue, with its famous description of the gradual ascent to Absolute Beauty in 210Aff.³⁸ This language describing Socrates's standing in contemplation, said Festugière, identifies Socrates as the perfect *erōtikos*, the lover of wisdom and Ideal Beauty. And Festugière called attention to the repeated use in these two passages of the verb *hestanai*, commenting that "c'est comme un terme technique."³⁹

Given the fact that *Zost* and *Allog* are among those gnostic texts which contain considerable material related to concepts and jargon of the Platonism of late antiquity, and moreover may very likely be identified with the apocalypses of Zostrianos and Allogenes which Porphyry says Plotinus's (Platonist) gnostic opponents were using, and given the further fact that the term "to stand" figures prominently in *Allog* and *Zost* as a technical term for the seer's stability, it is not so implausible that the model of Socrates standing in contemplation could have been familiar to gnostics who were reading these works and could have helped to shape their conception of how perfect stability might concretely manifest itself in one who truly belongs to the "immovable race." We do not have any direct evidence for this connection, of course, but on the one hand we do know that the *Symposium* was an important dialogue in Platonic circles of the third century: Porphyry says, for example, that Plotinus often used to practice the mystical ascent "according to the ways taught by Plato in the *Symposium*" (*Vit. Plot.* 23). And on the other hand, we do know that the habit of Socrates of standing motionless had not been forgotten, even if it is not mentioned very often. In the early third century C.E., Diogenes Laertius makes a brief mention of the tradition that at Potidaea Socrates "remained (*meinai*) in one position (*schēmatos*) all night" (2.23). but earlier, in the second century C.E., the use which is made of the tradition by Aulus Gellius illustrates some amplification, for the purpose of setting this habit of Socrates as a model for the philosophic discipline of the body:

Among voluntary tasks and exercises for strengthening his body for any chance demands upon its endurance, we are told that Socrates habitually practised this one: he would stand (*stare solitus*), so the story goes, in one fixed position (*pertinaci statu*), all day and all night, from early dawn until the next sunrise, openeyed (*inconivens*), motionless (*immobilis*), in his very tracks and with face and eyes riveted to the same spot in deep

³⁸ A.-J. Festugière, *Contemplation et vie contemplative selon Platon* (Paris: Vrin, 1936), p. 69, n. 5.

³⁹ Cf. Stanley Rosen's comment on the passage in *Symp.* 175B: "In the face of the spontaneity or motion of the banquet, Socrates prepares himself by coming to a standstill. Motionlessness is thus linked with profound reflection; when Agathon orders the slave boy to insist that Socrates come in, Aristodemus warns: 'don't move him, but let him be' (175b3). Agathon prefers motion to rest" (*Plato's Symposium* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968], p. 26).

meditation, as if his mind and soul had been, as it were, withdrawn from his body (*tamquam quodem secessu mentis atque animi facto a corpore*). When Favorinus in his discussion of the man's fortitude and his many other virtues had reached this point, he said: "He often stood from sun to sun, more rigid than the tree trunks" (*pollakis ex hēliou eis hēlion heistēkei astrabesteros tōn premnōn*). (*Noctes Atticae* 2.1.1–3; trans. Loeb Classical Library)

One notes that already in the fragment quoted here from Gellius's teacher, Favorinus,⁴⁰ there is more said than in the *Symposium* passages themselves. In the *Symposium*, the first passage indicated that Socrates *habitually* would go off and stand still (for unspecified periods of time) while thinking through a problem, and the second passage recorded *one* impressive instance in which he did this for twenty-four hours. But the twenty-four hour rigid standing was habitual according to Favorinus, and Gellius carries forward the same amplification, with perhaps some of his own embroidery.

Now it would have been a marvelous confluence in the evidence if at this point I could produce texts illustrating that the model of Socrates the standing contemplative had not gone unappreciated in Platonic circles where we find significant development of Plato's use of *hestanai*, for the description of the soul in its mystical retreat to the Intelligible. Unhappily, there is no such text of which I am aware. Plotinus, for instance, never mentions this incident, and in fact has left no real trace in his writings of much biographical or even anecdotal interest in Socrates the man.⁴¹ The next, and the only further, instance which I have found of a reference to the "standing" of Socrates is in the sixth-century commentary on Aristotle's *De anima* by the Christian grammarian John Philoponus, who, in making the point that "the mind (*nous*) is contrary to movement," comments that "those who devote themselves to noetic matters (*ta noēta*) have no simultaneous sensation of movement, nor even a sensation of rest (*staseōs*); therefore, at the battle of Delium (sic!—cf. Plato, *Symp.* 221A), Socrates was standing (*stas*) throughout the night and did not experience the sensation of the standing at rest (*tēs staseōs*), because he was contemplating something (*dia to ennoein ti*)."⁴²

While the tradition of Socrates' habit of "standing" cannot be linked with certainty to our gnostic texts—to the description of the seer Allogenes, for example, "standing" by himself and "preparing" himself—,

⁴⁰ See Eckart Mensching, ed., *Favorin von Arelate: Texte und Kommentare*, Eine alttumswissenschaftliche Reihe 3 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1963), p. 154, Frag. 65; Adelmo Barigazzi, ed., *Favorino di Arelate: Opere* (Firenze: Felice le Monnier, 1966), pp. 525, Frag. 97.

⁴¹ See Klaus Döring, *Exemplum Socratis: Studien zur Sokratesnachwirkung in der kynisch-stoischen Popularphilosophie der frühen Kaiserzeit und im frühen Christentum*, Hermes 42 (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1979), p. 12.

⁴² In *De anima* 3.9 (432a15); text in *Commentaria in Aristotelem graeca*, vol. 15, ed. Michael Hayduck (Berlin: Reimer, 1897), pp. 572f.

when viewed together with other examples which have been mentioned, it helps to illustrate the attractiveness of the ideal of the "immovable" hero in late antiquity; and, whether or not Socrates in particular may have come to mind for the gnostic authors and readers, I would suggest that this ideal is a model against which we need to read the aspirations toward "standing" in a text such as *Zost* or *Allog*.

A visual counterpart to Gellius's rhetorical description of Socrates standing fixed, motionless, and with his eyes riveted to one spot in contemplation, is found in portrayals in stone or paint of late antique philosophers, saints, or emperors—portraits of the *pneumatikos*, "with eyes immersed in a transcendent world," with a gaze which "looks past the things surrounding man, through time and space—indeed, through the whole tangible reality—and rests upon a point at an endless distance," portraits in which "all physical movement has ceased in the deep stillness, the great *sigē* in the presence of the Holiest."⁴³ This iconographic motionlessness seems at times to have been consciously imitated, or, in many cases, a direct comparison was drawn by others. For example, there is the description of the monk Theodore of Sykeon "standing like an iron statue through the night" (see p. 87 n. 32). Or Eunapius portrays the philosophic life-style of the fourth-century Antoninus (himself a son of renowned philosopher parents) who went to the mouth of the Nile at Canobus and devoted himself to the worship of the gods, "made rapid progress towards affinity with the divine, despised his body, freed himself from its pleasures, and embraced a wisdom that was hidden from the crowds." When students used to throng to him requesting an audience, some would be

fed with the philosophy of Plato, but others, who raised questions as to things divine, *encountered a statue*. For he would utter not a word to any one of them, but *fixing his eyes and gazing up* at the sky he would lie there speechless and unrelenting, nor did anyone ever see him lightly enter into converse with any man on such themes as these.⁴⁴

Or, there is the unforgettable account given by Ammianus Marcellinus of the entry of Constantius into Rome in 357 C.E.:

Accordingly, being saluted as Augustus with favouring shouts, while hills and shores thundered out the roar, he never stirred, but showed himself as calm and imperturbable (*immobilem*) as he was commonly seen in his provinces. For he both stooped when passing through lofty gates

⁴³ H. P. L'Orange, *Art Forms and Civic Life in the Late Roman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), pp. 31–33; *idem*, *Apotheosis in Ancient Portraiture*, Instituttet for sammenhengende Kulturforskning, Serie B, 44 (Oslo: Aschenhoug, 1947), p. 106.

⁴⁴ Eunapius, *Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists* 471f, trans. pp. 419–21, Loeb Classical Library. Cf. above, Chapter One, n. 38.

(although he was very short), and as if his neck were in a vice, he *kept the gaze of his eyes straight ahead*, and turned his face neither to the right nor to the left, but (as if he were a lay figure) neither did he nod when the wheel jolted nor was he ever seen to spit, or to wipe or rub his face or nose, or move his hands about. And although this was affectation on his part, yet these and various other features of his more intimate life were tokens of no slight endurance (*patientiae*), granted to him alone, as was given to be understood. (Amm. Marc. 16.10.9–11; trans. Loeb Classical Library)

This passage from Ammianus attests both to the perception of immovability as a quality belonging to the divine,⁴⁵ as well as to the fact that kinship or communion with immovable essence might be expected to manifest itself in heroes in quite concrete ways. We might also compare the example already discussed in Chapter One (see above, pp. 27f) of Iamblichus's picture of Pythagoras, sitting in the boat which was carrying him to his initiation into the mysteries of Egypt, fixed in a rigid and immovable (*asaleutos*) steadfastness.

To sum up, all of the references which I have been discussing, early Christian monks standing rigidly for hours or days, philosophers standing or sitting or lying motionless, an emperor sitting rigidly and transcending all normal human movements—all of these bear witness to a common presupposition that orientation toward or the establishment of some relation to that which transcends this world tends to effect some form of physical motionlessness. In several cases, especially in some of the cases having to do with monks, but also in the descriptions of philosophers such as Pythagoras or Socrates, there are distinct parallels between the disposition of the incorporeal elements of the individual (the mind ascended into heaven among the angels; mind and soul seemingly withdrawn from the body; or simply a general statement about devotion of the mind to prayer or deep contemplation) and the ascent of Zostrianos's soul to a vision of transcendent things. Given the prominence in *Zost* of the theme of the "standing" of the soul in the transcendent realm, it seems worthwhile to ask whether the kind of visionary experience of "standing" in the Transcendent which is described in *Zost* may not have been "acted out" by some of its gnostic readers in a fashion not unlike the contemplative or visionary standing attested in the other literature. The passage in *Allog* 68,16–35 (see above, p. 86), with its picture of the visionary Allogenes "standing" in preparation, tends at least to encourage such a conjecture because of that document's extensive similarities to *Zost* in other respects. Whether such standing would have been practiced on a more or less

⁴⁵ L'Orange, *Apotheosis*, pp. 125f, in discussing late antique portraiture of divine or spiritual heroes at large, has pointed to the "hieratico-statuary style" reflected in this passage and elsewhere of other emperors, a style expressing the *divina majestas*.

private basis, as the wording of *Allog* 68,16–35 (“I stood by myself”) could suggest, and as is the case for many of the other examples which I have adduced, or whether there could have been some type of communal practice of standing—something analogous to the standing during portions of the all-night worship of the Therapeutae, as Philo describes it,⁴⁶ or analogous to the all-night standing said to have been practiced during Lent by certain monks in the Pachomian community at Tabennisi (*Hist. Laus.* 18.14; see above, p. 87)—is obviously a question which steps even further beyond our range. If we are to conclude that a text such as *Zost* will have been used over time by several *different* types of groups—not unlikely—then of course there may be more than one answer to the question. As I indicated earlier, one current hypothesis as to the fourth-century owners of the Nag Hammadi codices, viz., that they were Egyptian Christian monks, would leave the door invitingly open for the further conclusion that the practice of contemplative standing by fourth century monks could have been one of the reasons for the attractiveness to them of texts such as *Allog* or *Zost*. To be sure, interest in visions and revelations in general is in evidence for fourth-century monastic circles, and could account on a broader basis for their collection of Nag Hammadi documents.⁴⁷ But the association of visionary experience with the achievement of stability, and with the act of standing in contemplation for periods of time, may be a more specific link. It is easy to see how attractive the picture in *Zost* of the visionary who belongs to and “stands” in the realm of the “immovable race” might have been to circles among whom the “immovable” spiritual athlete, quite immune to the demonic disturbances plaguing ordinary humanity, was achieving such a visible profile.⁴⁸ Indeed, since *Zost*

⁴⁶ Before the meal, the celebrants are standing (*stantes*) in a line for prayer, with their eyes and hands lifted up to heaven, “their eyes having been trained to gaze into things worthy of contemplation” (*Vita contempl.* 66). After the meal, they conduct an all-night vigil (*hē pannuchia*), for which they all rise once again (*anistantai*), for the chanting of hymns and choric dancing which continues until dawn (83–89). At dawn, they stand (*stantes*) with their eyes toward the east waiting for the appearance of the sun (89).

⁴⁷ Charles W. Hedrick, “Gnostic Proclivities in the Greek *Life of Pachomius* and the *Sitz im Leben* of the Nag Hammadi Library,” *NovT* 22 (1980): 78–94; Williams, “The *Life of Antony*.” For discussions of the evidence from the cartonnage in the bindings of the codices, see John W. B. Barns, “Greek and Coptic Papyri from the Covers of the Nag Hammadi Codices: A Preliminary Report,” in *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honour of Pahor Labib*, NHS 6, ed. Martin Krause (Leiden: Brill, 1975), pp. 9–17 (who suggested that evidence in the cartonnage papyri could indicate a specifically Pachomian monastic community as the owners of these books); and John W. B. Barns†, G. M. Browne and J. C. Shelton, eds., *Nag Hammadi Codices: Greek and Coptic Papyri from the Cartonnage of the Covers*, NHS 16 (Leiden: Brill, 1981), especially pp. 1–11 (where Shelton is far more skeptical about evidence in the cartonnage for specifically Pachomian monasticism).

⁴⁸ See above, pp. 30f. Note especially that although it is not a matter of Antony standing rigidly in a trancelike state, Athanasius does portray him as being totally unruffled by the commotion of the crowds who press on him as he emerges from his twenty years of soli-

can be dated with some confidence in the third century, or perhaps earlier, it constitutes testimony to the larger and more complex history of the ideal of the achievement of immovability in the contemplation of the Transcendent, of which the figure of the immovable monk in later Christian monasticism is only one example. In *some* cases—although there is definitely no reason to conclude this for all the diverse instances from various geographical areas—this fourth century monastic ideal may represent a direct historical descendant of an earlier gnostic ideal of membership in the “immovable race.”

Thus far, I have suggested that in *Zost* the “immovability” of the race of Seth could have connoted two things: (1) There is the internal, noetic immovability which is realized when the soul, like the visionary Zostrianos, ascends into the transcendent realm and “stands,” beholding there other “standing” noetic entities. This ideal of the achievement of stability through an ascent to a vision of the Transcendent may be an amalgam of the widespread Platonic notion of the soul’s ability to ascend to the noetic and “stand,” and the Jewish apocalyptic motif of the “standing before God” of angels, the departed righteous, and ascended seers. The implication in *Zost* seems to be that even though the “saved” person is still in the body he or she is already identified with the “immovable race.” The ascent or withdrawal into the transcendent realm does not happen only at the moment of the physical death of the body, but rather is a mystical ascent after which the individual, like Zostrianos, puts on the body once again. But what has taken place in the process is the reception of power (*Zost* 44,1–5) through which salvation is achieved. There has been a vision of and an identification with the Transcendent. The “glories” or perfect *noēmata* which stand in the realm of the Self-begotten constitute “patterns” of salvation, and one has been saved by “receiving” these (46,18–28; see above, pp. 71f).

(2) Although the evidence in the case of *Zost* itself is circumstantial, it is possible that there was an expectation on the part of many readers of this work that this internal immovability would be accompanied by some external *practice* of stability. This could have included something like the motionless, contemplative standing found among Christian monks, and for which there are also analogies in late antique portrayals of philosophers absorbed in contemplation.

tude, “standing firm in the state natural to him” (*en tō kata physin hestōs*—*Vit. Ant.* 14; MPG 26,865A). Notice also the connection between stability and visionary powers in Antony’s words in ch. 34: “For I believe that when the soul is purified in every respect and is standing firm in accordance with nature (*kata physin hestōs*), that it is able, having become clear-sighted (*dioratikē*), to see (*blepein*) more and farther than the demons, since it has the Lord giving revelation (*apokalyptonta*) to it” (MPG 26,893B).

*F. Asceticism as a Manifestation of Immovability in Zost:
The Fleeing of Femaleness as a Transition to Stability*

There is at least one further type of external manifestation of immovability which may be implied in *Zost*, and that is the practice of asceticism—including probably the rejection of sexual intercourse. We have evidence for this within *Zost* itself and also testimony from one outside source, Plotinus. In the treatise of Plotinus which Porphyry said was directed against persons who were reading an *Apocalypse of Zostrianos*, Plotinus accuses his opponents of despising virtue and being interested only in the pleasure of the body (*Enn.* 2.9.15). But, like so many other examples of rhetorical slander from antiquity, there is no indication that Plotinus has this information by direct observation, but only through inference.⁴⁹ Plotinus says that there could be only two possibilities in the choice of an ultimate goal (*telos*): either the *telos* is found in the pleasure of the body, or it is found in Beauty (*to kalon*) and Virtue (*hē aretē*). Since his opponents, he claims, have never written on Virtue, then this is proof that their *telos* is the pleasure of the body (2.9.15,4–14). Yet Plotinus contradicts himself later on in the same treatise when he says that his opponents claim to “hate the body from a distance” (*porrōthen misountas*), so that they are able to “flee from the body” (*pheugein to sōma*—2.9.18,1f). He says that they “censure the soul for its association with the body” (2.9.6,60), and that they have drawn their inspiration for “hating the nature of the body” (*misein . . . tēn tou sōmatos physin*) from Plato’s censure of the body as a hindrance to the soul (2.9.17,1–3). In other words, preoccupation with bodily pleasure would seem from these statements to be precisely what the opponents have renounced.

Within *Zost* the contrast between “femaleness” (*timntshime*) and “maleness” (*timnthowt*) apparently expresses this ascetic disassociation from the body. In *Zost* 1,10–13, Zostrianos says that he separated himself “from the somatic darkness and the psychic chaos (mixed) in mind and the femaleness of desire (*epithumia*) in the darkness.” Throughout the rest of the text of *Zost*, in the visionary revelations which are related, “maleness” is repeatedly found as a characteristic of this or that transcendent entity. This attribute is especially associated with the second of the three principal levels or modalities of Barbelo, that of the First-appearing, who is often referred to with something like this formula: “the great male invisible perfect Mind” (18,5; cf. 13,3; 44,27–29; 127,7–9; 129,4–6). A revealer figure named Youel is called “the male virginal glory” (125,14f; 57,14f). In one place, the whole of Barbelo seems to be called “the male

⁴⁹ Cf. Michael A. Williams, “Gnosis and Askēsis,” in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, Band II 22: *Religion—Gnostizismus und Verwandtes*, ed. W. Haase (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, forthcoming).

virginal perfect triple race" (83,8–12). In short, it is obvious that "maleness" is a positively valued quality which belongs, like "perfection," to transcendent realities.⁵⁰

There is one passage in which the phrase "the male race" (*genos enhowt*) is probably functioning as an equivalent to the designation "the immovable race." This occurs in the passage which I quoted earlier which describes Zostrianos's ascent through various levels of the Self-begotten (see above, pp. 73f): "And I was [baptized for the second time] in the name of the Self-begotten God by these same powers. I became an angel of the male race. And I stood upon the second aeon, which is the third. With the children of Seth I praised all these" (7,1–9).⁵¹ Given the fact that in *Zost* Seth is the father of the immovable race, it seems natural to assume that in the above passage "the male race" is another way of talking about the "children of Seth," or "the immovable race." "Immovability" and "maleness" would therefore be attributes of the children of Seth, and this raises the question of some connection between "maleness" and "immovability."

The association of "maleness" with "immovability" is suggested by other traditions which may have influenced *Zost*. In the catalogues of opposites which are found in Pythagorean-Platonic tradition, two pairs of opposites which sometimes appear are Male vs. Female, and Resting vs. Being-Moved. Aristotle's version of the table of opposite principles (*archai*), which he says is put forward by some Pythagoreans, is the most famous example (*Metaphy.* 1.986a22–27):

limit	(<i>peras</i>)	—	unlimited	(<i>apeiron</i>)
odd	(<i>peritton</i>)	—	even	(<i>artion</i>)
one	(<i>hen</i>)	—	many	(<i>plèthos</i>)
right	(<i>dexion</i>)	—	left	(<i>aristeron</i>)
.. male	(<i>arren</i>)	—	female	(<i>thèlu</i>)
.. resting	(<i>èremoun</i>)	—	being-moved	(<i>kinoumenon</i>)
straight	(<i>euthu</i>)	—	crooked	(<i>kampulon</i>)
light	(<i>phôs</i>)	—	darkness	(<i>skoros</i>)
good	(<i>agathon</i>)	—	bad	(<i>kakon</i>)
square	(<i>tetragôn</i>)	—	oblong	(<i>heteromêkes</i>)

⁵⁰ Cf. further instances of the adjective "male," many of which occur in very fragmentary sections: 2,13f; 18,21; 19,22; 24,3f; 41,12.20f; 44,29f; 51,22; 52,16; 53,12; 54,15; 56,17f; 61,17f; 84,6; 97,1.

⁵¹ I express my gratitude to Prof. John Sieber, the editor and translator of the *Zost* tractate for the Brill edition, who kindly helped me out with the decipherment of portions of lines 4–6 which were too faded to be legible to me from the facsimile edition. He informed me that Prof. Bentley Layton had been able to read the following, by reading this portion under ultraviolet light: *aeiðope enouangelos engenos engenos enhowt*. The second *engenos* is presumably a dittography.

This is the only instance, so far as I know, in which the lists contain both the male/female and the resting/being-moved dichotomies, but both pairs do recur separately in later versions. For example, in Plutarch, *De Is. et Os.* 370E, it is said that the Pythagoreans list several terms under the two categories of “the good” and “the bad”:

the good	(<i>to agathon</i>)	—	the bad	(<i>to kakon</i>)
the one	(<i>to hen</i>)	—	the dyad	(<i>to dyas</i>)
the limited	(<i>to peperasmenon</i>)	—	the unlimited	(<i>to apeiron</i>)
.. the abiding	(<i>to menon</i>)	—	the moving	(<i>to pheromenon</i>)
the straight	(<i>to euthu</i>)	—	the crooked	(<i>to kampulon</i>)
the odd	(<i>to peritton</i>)	—	the even	(<i>to artion</i>)
the square	(<i>to tetragōnon</i>)	—	the oblong	(<i>to heteromēkes</i>)
the equal	(<i>to ison</i>)	—	the unequal	(<i>to anison</i>)
the right	(<i>to dexion</i>)	—	the left	(<i>to aristeron</i>)
the bright	(<i>to lampron</i>)	—	the dark	(<i>to skoteinon</i>)

In Porphyry, *Vit. Pythag.* 38, the two major categories of opposing “powers” (*dynameis*) are “the better” and “the worse”:

the better	(<i>hē beltōn</i>)	—	the worse	(<i>hē cheirōn</i>)
monad	(<i>monas</i>)	—	dyad	(<i>dyas</i>)
light	(<i>phōs</i>)	—	darkness	(<i>skotos</i>)
right	(<i>dexion</i>)	—	left	(<i>aristeron</i>)
equal	(<i>ison</i>)	—	unequal	(<i>anison</i>)
.. abiding	(<i>menon</i>)	—	moving	(<i>pheromenon</i>)
straight	(<i>euthu</i>)	—	curved	(<i>peripheres</i>)

And the Middle Platonist Eudorus of Alexandria (1st cent. B.C.E.) is quoted by Simplicius (*In Phys.* 181.10ff) as claiming that the Pythagoreans posit in the highest sense the One (*to hen*) as the first principle, but that in a secondary sense there are two first principles, the One and the Indefinite Dyad, which are called by Pythagoreans various things:

the One	(<i>to hen</i>)	—	the Indefinite Dyad	(<i>hē aoristos dyas</i>)
ordered	(<i>tetagmenon</i>)	—	disorderly	(<i>ataktion</i>)
definite	(<i>hōrismenon</i>)	—	indefinite	(<i>aoriston</i>)
knowable	(<i>gnōston</i>)	—	unknowable	(<i>agnōston</i>)
.. male	(<i>arren</i>)	—	female	(<i>thēlu</i>)
odd	(<i>peritton</i>)	—	even	(<i>artion</i>)
right	(<i>dexion</i>)	—	left	(<i>aristeron</i>)
light	(<i>phōs</i>)	—	darkness	(<i>skotos</i>)

Although there is some variation in these tables of opposites,⁵² it is clear that there was a tendency in Platonic tradition to associate maleness and rest with one category and femaleness and movement with the opposite category.⁵³

We are probably to see this same parallel contrast between maleness and femaleness, and between rest and motion, reflected in *Zost.* In the concluding, hortatory section of *Zost.*, the readers are urged to "flee the insanity and bondage of femaleness, and choose for yourselves the salvation of maleness" (131,5–8). But this flight from femaleness to maleness is, like the ascent of Zostrianos, the establishment of an identity with a stable Transcendent, the reception of the perfect thoughts (*noēmata*), or glories, which "stand at rest" in the realm of the Self-begotten (46,18–28), a transcendence of "changeable matter" (5,9) and the "somatic darkness" and "femaleness of desire in the darkness" (1,10–14). The "choosing of maleness" and the identification with the "immovable race" seem therefore to imply some active denial of bodily desires. Given the remarks of Plotinus about his opponents, it seems safe to conclude that a "despising" or "hatred" of the body and its desires was acted out in some way by earliest readers of *Zost.*

We do not have much information, however, as to just what form of "despising" of the body and its desires is expected by the author of *Zost.* for those who belong to the "immovable race." One assumes that "desire" would include sexual desire and that the evangelical vehemence of the appeal to reject femaleness implies among other things the rejection of sexual intercourse, the demand for total continence. But this is not actually spelled out in the text, as it is in two other texts which speak of the "immovable race": *ApocryJn* and *SJC*.

⁵² See Walter Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, trans. Edwin L. Minar, Jr. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. 51f; J. E. Raven, *Pythagoreans and Eleatics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), pp. 10–20.

⁵³ Philo seems to be picking up on the same tradition when he remarks (*Abr.* 101f) that the feminine gender of the noun *aretē*, virtue, is misleading, since in fact virtue is male (*arren*), "inasmuch as it causes movement (*kinēi*) and manages and prompts noble thoughts of noble deeds and words," while the masculine noun *logismos*, "reasoning," in fact refers to something feminine in nature, since reasoning "is moved (*kinoumenos*) and trained and aided and in general belongs to passivity (*en tō paschein*)." And a faint echo of the parallel between the opposites right-left and abiding-moving may be present in the prayer of John just before his death in *Acts of John* 114: "Let the places on the right stand at rest; let the ones on the left not remain" (*dexiōi topoī stekētōsan, aristeroi mē menetōsan*).

CHAPTER FOUR

IMMOVABILITY IN THE *APOCRYPHON OF JOHN*

Of the texts which use the phrase "the immovable race," the *ApocryJn* stands out as the one in which the phrase is used most often and most consistently. But as in the case of *3StSeth* and *Zost*, the emphasis on stability surfaces in *ApocryJn* in more than just the immovable race designation. We will see several elements in the contrast between instability and stability in *ApocryJn* which parallel what has been found in *3StSeth* and *Zost*, but there are also in *ApocryJn* two very visible dimensions which were not so apparent in those two works: (1) *ApocryJn* presents a *developed etiology* of instability or movement by means of the version of the Sophia myth found in this work, an etiology which can be shown to be a variation of an etiology of movement found elsewhere in Platonic texts, or in texts influenced by Platonism. The author of *Zost* does indeed allude to a version of the Sophia myth (*Zost* 9,1–11,9; 27,12),¹ and probably presupposes a similar etiology; but the section where the myth is alluded to is not fully preserved, and what is preserved does not itself present the kind of developed etiology present in *ApocryJn*. (2) In *ApocryJn* the transcendence of *passions*, involving the successful victory over *personal cosmic forces* who work to inflame passions, constitutes the fundamental problematic in the achievement of stability. The flight from the "femaleness of desire" was seen as a part of the transition to stability in *Zost*, but there was not the elaboration in *Zost* which is to be encountered in *ApocryJn* on the struggle against and victory over passions, a victory which in *ApocryJn* is the distinguishing characteristic of those who belong to the immovable race.

Even though both of these dimensions were possibly of significance also for the readers of the other texts under discussion, I will examine them here because of their particular visibility in *ApocryJn*.²

¹ Sieber, "The Barbelo Aeon as Sophia."

² Where there are not appreciable differences among the four manuscripts of *ApocryJn*, or where differences are not material to my argument, I will usually cite the Codex II version, omitting cross-references. Exceptions to this will be instances in which the version in II is more poorly preserved than one of the other texts, such as in the beginning portion of the tractate.

A. The Stability of the Transcendent Realm: "Standing Aeons"

The stability of the transcendent realm is portrayed in *ApocryJn* by means of a technical term whose importance I have discussed at great length in Chapters Two and Three: "to stand" (Coptic *aherat* = or *ōherat* =). In the texts of *ApocryJn* which have survived, this verb is not found used of the highest or most primal being, who is variously called "the Monad," "God," "Father of All," and very often "the Invisible Spirit." The verb is first used of the subsequent emanations which come to appearance. But the absolute stability of the Invisible Spirit is expressed in the statement that "his aeon is incorruptible; he is still, resting in silence, he who exists prior to everything" (BG 26,6–9).³ From this primal unity emerges the unity-in-plurality that will constitute the aeonic realm. The description of this emergence seems to make some use of the technical term "to stand" as the term was employed in *Zost* and *3StSeth*, and in other texts in late antiquity: to identify the condition of "standing at rest," as opposed to "being in motion."

The first instance of this is in the account of the first emergence of a subject-object duality, which results from the Invisible Spirit's self-contemplation:

(The Invisible Spirit) contemplated his own image when he saw it in the pure light-water which surrounds him; and his thought (*ennoia*) performed an act, it appeared, it stood (*asaherats*) before him out of the brilliance of the light. This is the power which is before the All, which appeared; that is, the perfect Providence (*pronoia*) of the All, the light, the likeness of the light, the image of the Invisible. She is the perfect power, Barbelo, the perfect aeon of glory. (BG 27,1–14)

A similar depiction of an entity (probably Barbelo, although the fragmentary text prohibits certainty) appears in *Zost* 78,12–22:

... she did not begin [within?] time, but rather she appeared from eternity, standing before him in eternity. She was darkened⁴ by the greatness of his [. . .]. She stood, gazing at him, and [rejoicing] because she was filled with goodness . . ."

And that both of these texts represent the use of *hestanai* as a technical philosophical term is suggested by their similarity to the passage from Plotinus, *Enn.* 5.2.1,7–13 to which I have drawn attention earlier:

³ Cf. the same thing said of the Hidden One in *Zost* 118,4.

⁴ Or perhaps, "blinded" or "stupified." The Coptic *as^{re}rebe* probably renders a form of *skotizein* (Crum 52b), which might have the other connotations.

(The One), being perfect since it neither seeks nor has nor needs anything, overflowed, as it were, and its "spill-over" made another thing. That which came into being turned back (*epestraphē*) toward That one and was filled and became a beholder of That one and thus a Nous. And its stability (*stasis*) toward That one created Being (*to on*), while the vision directed toward That one created the Nous. Therefore, since it stood at rest (*estē*) before That one in order to behold, it became Nous and Being at the same time.

Therefore, among other things which the author of *ApocryJn* wants to tell the readers about Barbelo, there is the fact that this "aeon" is "standing at rest." In fact, it may be that the use of the term "aeon" itself for Barbelo and other transcendent entities would already have prepared the ancient reader for descriptions of them as "standing," since, as I have pointed out earlier (see above, Chapter Two, n. 34), it is common in Platonic texts to find "eternity" (*ho aiōn*) referred to as "standing."

After the appearance of Barbelo, this mythological narrative of the unfolding of reality continues with successive requests by Barbelo for aeonic companions. Our manuscripts at this point are in agreement in the presentation of the feature which I want most to underscore—viz., the "standing" of these entities—but the two basic recensions (II/IV and BG/III) diverge noticeably in other respects:

II 5,11–6,2

BG 28,5–29,8

The first to come forth, namely
Barbelo, *asked* the Invisible
Spirit to give her Foreknowledge
(*prognōsis*); and the Spirit
consented.

And when he consented,
Foreknowledge appeared,
and it *stood with* Pronoia, who
is one with the thought
of the Invisible, Virginal Spirit.

It *glorified* him and his
perfect power, Barbelo, for on
account of her [it] had come into
being.

[Again] she *asked* that
[Incorruptibility] be given to her.

And he *consented*.

And by [his consent]
Incorruptibility appeared.
It *stood with* Thought and

Barbelo *asked* him
to give her Foreknowledge.

He *consented*.

When he consented,
Foreknowledge appeared;
it *stood with* Ennoia, that is
Pronoia,

glorifying the Invisible one
and the perfect power, Barbelo,
for on account of her they (!)
had come into being.

This power *asked* that
Incorruptibility (*aphtharsia*) be
given to her.

And he *consented*.

When he consented,
Incorruptibility appeared.
It was *standing with* Thought (*ennoia*)

Foreknowledge,
glorifying the Invisible
 one and Barbelo, because of
 whom they had come into being.
 And Barbelo *asked* that Eternal Life
 be given to her.
 And the Invisible Spirit *consented*;
 and by his consent
 Eternal Life appeared,
 and the *stood*
glorifying the Invisible
 Spirit and Barbelo, on account
 of whom they had come into
 being
 And again she *asked* that Truth
 be given to her,
 and the Invisible Spirit *consented*.
 Truth appeared,
 and they *stood*
 and *glorified* the Invisible
 . . . Spirit, and Barbelo,
 on account of whom they had come
 into being.

and Foreknowledge,
glorifying the Invisible one
 and Barbelo, because on account
 of her it had come into being.
 She *asked* that Eternal Life
 be given to her.
 He *consented*.
 When he consented,
 Eternal Life appeared.
 They *were standing*,
glorifying him and Barbelo,
 since on account of her
 they had come into
 being, through the revelation
 of the Invisible Spirit.

Both recensions agree in referring to the collectivity of emanated aeons up to this point as a "pentad" of aeons, although they seem to differ on how the number five is calculated:

II 6,2–10

This is the aeonic Pentad (*pentas*)
 of the Father, which is the First
 Human, the image of the Invisible
 Spirit. It is:
 Pronoia, which is Barbelo and Thought,
 with Foreknowledge,
 and Incorruptibility,
 and Eternal Life,
 and Truth.
 This is the male-female aeonic
 Pentad, which is the aeonic
 Decad, which is the Father.

BG 29,8–18

This is the Pentad (*imehti*) of
 the aeons of the Father, which is
 the First Human, the image of the
 Invisible one, which is:
 Barbelo,
 and Thought (*ennoia*),
 and Foreknowledge,
 and Incorruptibility,
 and Eternal Life.
 This is the male-female Pentad,
 which is the Decad of the aeons,
 which is the Father of the
 Unbegotten Father.

It is not my purpose here to solve the very difficult question of how this

disagreement between the recensions came about, since the primary fact in which I am interested is that, although the recensions diverge in some ways, they do agree in presenting the picture of an emanated Pentad of aeons "standing" and "glorifying."⁵

After this account of the emanation of the primal Pentad, there is a depiction of the further filling out of the population of the aeonic realm. This narration might be divided into two stages. There is first of all the begetting from the Invisible Spirit and Barbelo of the Spark of Light, who is called: the Only-begotten (*monogenēs*), the Self-begotten (*autogenētos*) God, and Christ (II 6,10–7,15 par). After this Spark appeared, he "stood before" the Invisible Spirit, just as Barbelo had done, and he received an

⁵ It is not even precisely clear at some points just how we are to define the divergence between the recensions. My translation of II 6,2–10 suggests that the author is equating Thought with Barbelo, to constitute the first of the five aeons. This might be defended by pointing to the fact that Barbelo = Pronoia is called Thought (*ennoia*) in both recensions (II 5,4; BG 27,5, which would be parallel to the missing portion of text in II 4,27; BG 28,9f).

But it may also be possible to interpret the text of II 6,2–10 in at least two other ways: (1) "Pronoia, which is Barbelo" could refer to the *whole* Pentad, and the author would be listing in what follows the individual members ("it is Pronoia, which is Barbelo, and: Thought, Foreknowledge, Incorruptibility, Eternal Life and Truth"); or (2) the author may be intending to pair Thought and Foreknowledge (the only two in the list which are linked with *mn* rather than *awō*) and count them as a single unit of the Pentad. Note that Thought and Foreknowledge do appear paired earlier, in the account of the emanation of Incorruptibility ("It stood with Thought and Foreknowledge"—II 5,23f), and that pairing is rather abrupt, since the text had mentioned only the emanation of Foreknowledge up to that point, and not Thought (—unless we equate Thought with Barbelo, as in my suggestion). Till, *Die gnostischen Schriften*, p. 40, suggested that the sudden appearance of Thought in BG 28,9f, and the absence of any request by Barbelo for Thought, could be the result of a textual corruption. It might be that the author of the II/IV recension has sensed difficulties in the passage and has tried to smooth them over by the addition of a fifth aeon, Truth, and the fusion of the ambiguous member Thought with either Foreknowledge or Barbelo. But the original difficulties which could have prompted such an emendation—the sudden and unexplained presence of Thought, as in BG 28,9f, and then the inclusion of Thought as a separate member of the Pentad, as in BG 29,8–18—may not have been due to textual corruption, but may simply have arisen because of an ambiguity inherent in the myth: The four members, Thought, Foreknowledge, Incorruptibility, and Eternal Life, seem to constitute attributes of Barbelo which emerge sequentially in mythic fashion. But the first of these, Thought or Ennoia, may have been conceived as the *primary* attribute and one which was *already* manifested in the initial appearance of Barbelo, who is identified as Ennoia or Pronoia in BG 27,5–11. This, and not a textual corruption, might explain why the figure "Ennoia, that is Pronoia" in BG, or simply "Pronoia" in II, is portrayed as an already existing companion for the new emanation Foreknowledge; and it would also explain how Ennoia/Pronoia and Foreknowledge can then be implicitly distinguished from Barbelo, on account of whom "they had come into being" (BG 28,13; II 5,25f). In BG 29,8–18, the distinction between Barbelo and Thought is retained even for the purpose of counting up the members of the aeonic Pentad, but it is possible that the lack of an actual account of a separate emanation for Thought prompted a later redactor to add the account of the emanation of "Truth," which is now found in II, so that there would be such a separate emanation for each member of the Pentad.

anointing poured out upon him by the Spirit. Also like Barbelo, and like the other aeons before him, the Spark or Christ "glorified" the Invisible Spirit and Barbelo, while "standing" in the Spirit's presence (II 6,23–33 par).

Just as Barbelo had asked for companions, so also Christ asked for Mind (*nous*), and the appearance of Mind follows the same pattern as has been seen earlier: request, consent, appearance, standing, glorifying: "(Mind) stood with Christ, glorifying him and Barbelo" (II 7,1–3 par). In the BG/III recension, this same pattern is repeated once again with the appearance of Will (BG 31,11–15 // III 10,15–20). And then both recensions offer a summary picture of the aeons now in existence:

II 7,11–15

The Eternal Life in his Will,
and Mind and Foreknowledge,
stood, glorifying the
Invisible Spirit and
Barbelo, since on account of
her they had come into being.

BG 31,18–32,3

The Divine Self-begotten,
the Eternal Life and Will,
Mind and Foreknowledge
stood, glorifying the
Invisible Spirit and
Barbelo, for on account of
her they had come into being.

The second stage is that in which the Divine Self-begotten is "completed" (II 7,15–9,24 par). Fortunately, the BG and III texts still retain in their Coptic translations for this section some Greek terms of special interest for the present study. The first instance of this is at the beginning of the section (the text in IV is too fragmentary here to be of much help):

II 7,15–22

The Holy Spirit
completed the Divine
Self-begotten, the
Son, with Barbelo, that
he might stand near
(*atrefaheratf e-*) the
great and invisible
virginal Spirit,
as (?) the Divine
Self-begotten, the
Christ, whom he honored
with a great voice (*smē*).
He appeared through
Pronoia.

BG 32,3–12

(he was?)
completed by the Spirit,
the eternal Self-begotten,
the Son of Barbelo,
for he stood near
(*afaheratf e-*)
him, the eternal,
virginal, invisible
Spirit. It was the
Self-begotten God,
Christ, whom he honored
with great distinction,
since he had come into
being through his First
Thought (*ennoia*).

III 11,3–10

The great, Invisible
Spirit completed [him],
the Divine Self-begotten,
the Son of Barbelo, for
a position near
(*parastasis*)
the great, Invisible
Spirit. It was the
Divine Self-begotten,
the Christ, whom he
honored with great
distinction (*timē*),
since he had come into
being through a First
Thought (*ennoia*).

And just as the Self-begotten (*autogenēs*) is to stand in a position near the Invisible Spirit, so the Self-begotten God is to have four "luminaries" (*phōstēres*), Armozel, Oriel, Daveithai, and Eleleth, who are to stand in a position near him, each accompanied by three further aeons, bringing this group to twelve:

II 7,34–8,1	BG 33,2–3	III 11,19
He looked out that they might stand near (<i>atrouðheeratou e-</i>) him.	They appeared from the Self-begotten that they might stand near (<i>je eweahera [tou] e-</i>) him.	They appeared in(?) a position near (<i>parastasis</i>) him.
II 8,20–25	BG 34,7–13	III 12,16–22
These are the four luminaries which stand near (<i>etaheratou a-</i>) the Son of the Great One, the Self-begotten, the Christ, through the will and the gift of the Invisible Spirit.	These are the four luminaries which stand near (<i>etaheratou a-</i>) the child, the great Self-begetter Christ, through the approval of God, the Invisible Spirit.	These are the four luminaries which stand near (<i>etaheeratou a-</i>) the child, the {through the approval of the } great Self-begetter Christ, through the approval of the Invisible Spirit.

It is clear from a glance at these parallels that the Coptic expression *aherat* = *e-*, which has not been used up to this point in the text for describing aeons, is translating the Greek *paristanai* or *parastasis*, rather than the simple *hestanai*.⁶ It is possible that also the Coptic expression

⁶ Hippolytus, *Contra Noetum* 11.1, uses the same term in describing the presence of the Logos with God: "Even though (God) was alone (*monos*) he was multiple (*polus*). For he was not without word (*alogos*) nor without wisdom (*asophos*) nor without power (*adunatos*) nor without will (*abouleutos*). But everything was in him and he was the All (*to pan*). . . . But as leader and counsellor and maker of the things which come into being, he begot the Word. . . . By the utterance of a prior sound and begetting light from light, he put forth (*proēken*) in creation his own mind (*nous*) as Lord, previously visible only to him. He made visible him who was previously invisible to the world which comes into being, so that through his appearing the world might see and be able to be saved. And so another (*heteros*) stood near (*paristato*) him. In saying 'another' I do not mean two gods, but rather it is like light from light or as water from a spring or as a ray from the sun. For there is a single power which is out of the All; the All is the Father, out of whom is the power, the Word" (*Contra Noetum* 10.2–11.1). In spite of the obvious differences between Hippolytus and *ApocryJn*, both are concerned to illustrate the unfolding of multiplicity from a single source, and both describe this as a coming into appearance of an entity or entities, which then *stand(s) near* or beside the source. This is a reminder that for a person like Noetus there may have been little material difference between the fundamental errors of Logos theologians and gnostic writers like the author of *ApocryJn*. Some of the language about the

aherat = *mn*, which has appeared in the earlier portions and which I have been translating "to stand *with*," could represent *paristanai* or some other cognate. But several of the passages which I have quoted from these first pages of *ApocryJn* have used *aherat* = without any accompanying prepositional phrase, referring simply to aeons which were "standing." In these cases, the Greek *hestanai* most likely is being translated.

I would say that in this first section of *ApocryJn* we have another example of the reinterpretation or refocusing of traditional "heavenly court" language through the lens of a philosophical vocabulary, as I argued is the case in *Zost*. We may compare both situations with the kind of thing Philo does with passages which speak of Moses or Abraham "standing before" or "near" God. In *ApocryJn* the myth intends to convey the scene of a kind of heavenly court, with aeons playing the role of the angels which "stand near" God. And yet here we do not after all have angels, but rather "standing aeons," *hestōtes aiōnes*, which are at the same time closely analogous to Platonic "standing forms" (see above, pp. 39–42, 49f).

There are some obvious parallels between the cast of mythological characters here and those found in *Zost* and *3StSeth*, but there are also some interesting differences in detail in how the "standing" language is used of these entities. For example, the one figure in *3StSeth* to whom this language was explicitly applied, Adamas, is not explicitly so described in *ApocryJn*. Instead, Adamas is said to be "established" (*kathistanai*—BG 35,6; III 13,4f) in the first of the four aeons of the Self-begotten. The same verb is used for the establishment of Seth, the seed of Seth, and the souls who belatedly repent, in the second, third, and fourth aeons of the Self-begotten (BG 35,20–36,8 // III 13,17–14,3); and it is also used for the establishment of the "four luminaries" in each of the four aeons (BG 33,13–34,13 // 12,5–22; Codex II has the Coptic *sehō* = *erat* = in the case of the four luminaries and of Adamas, and *teho erat* = in the other instances). In *3StSeth*, Adamas was identified with the "Self-begotten who stands, the God who stands preminent" (*3StSeth* 119,16–18). In *ApocryJn*, Adamas is distinguished from the Self-begotten (= Christ), but both are in effect pictured as fixed or standing at rest in the aeonic realm, even though the greater mythological elaboration in the cast of characters in *ApocryJn* is accompanied by a more graphic language for the stability of the noetic entities. It seems to me that in order to catch the point of the drama which subsequently unfolds in *ApocryJn*, involving the *departure* from this "heavenly court" by Sophia who had been one of the twelve aeons "standing near" (*paristanai*) the Self-begetter Christ, it is necessary to see that a philosophical nuance has been given to the more

"standing" of transcendent entities which I am discussing seems to have played a significant role in the frustrating second-century battle for solutions to the Monarchian issue.

mythological language for the standing of the entities in the aeonic realm. The author does not want to say simply that all these beings are reverently standing up here and there at their posts; he wants to say that they transcend motion.

B. The Mistake of Sophia as an Etiology of Movement

Sophia is not willing to remain in her position, glorifying. Instead, she commits an act of self-will, by producing a thought "out of herself" (II 9,30 par), rather than presenting her request to the Invisible Spirit, as had been the pattern for all the earlier emanations. The product of Sophia's self-willed thought, the archon Ialdabaoth, is himself called "the Self-willed one" (*pauthadēs*—II 13,27 par). A grotesque mutant, Ialdabaoth is theriomorphic, with the combined features of a serpent and a lion,⁷ and

⁷ II 10,7–9: "And when she looked at her desire, it had taken on an altered form (*typos*), (that of) a lion-faced serpent (*ēndrakōn ēnho ēmmouei*)"; BG 37,18–21: "And she saw when she considered it that it had taken on another form (*typos*), being serpent-faced and lion-faced (*ēfo ēnha ēnhof awō ēnho ēmmouei*)"; III 15,9–11: "And she saw when she considered it that it had taken on another form (*morphē*), lion-faced, serpent-faced (*ēnha ēnmouei ēnha ēnhaf*)."
Gilles Quispel, "The Demiurge in the Apocryphon of John," in *Nag Hammadi and Gnosis*, ed. R. McL. Wilson, NHS 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1978), pp. 9f, argues that the BG and III versions are defective, since they suggest "that Ialdabaoth has two faces like the Roman deity Janus *bifrons*." But the Coptic noun *ho* could have the more general meaning of "appearance" and thus the BG/III recension would simply be a general reference to the "lion-like, serpent-like" features of Ialdabaoth. This would only mean that we need not assume that the version in II is the more original; but it would not necessarily rule out Quispel's further argument that the lion and serpent features are an indication that the Orphic Phanes or Eros "is a prototype of this Ialdabaoth" (p. 33). Nor would it rule out the possibility that this characterization of Ialdabaoth could also have some direct relation to the well-known examples of leontocephaline figures (usually encircled by a serpent) found in association with Mithraic iconography. Yet the interpretation of these latter figures remains itself quite problematic: for a selection of examples, see M. J. Vermaseren, *Corpus Inscriptionum et Monumentorum Religionis Mithriacae* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1956–60), e.g., figs. 29a; 85; 86; 89; 90; 144; 152; 153; 156; 157; 188; 210; 291; 295; cf. 197; 211; 227. For a sample of the recent debate on the identification of the leontocephaline figure, see discussions in Hinnells, *Mithraic Studies*, by R. L. Gordon (pp. 220–24; A. D. H. Bivar (pp. 277–85; M. Schwartz (p. 416 n. 38); M. J. Vermaseren (pp. 446–56 and U. Bianchi (pp. 457–65).

But there is another possible allusion in this description, which to my knowledge has thus far not been noticed: There could be an allusion here to a passage in Plato's *Republic* 9.588B–590B, where Plato symbolizes the three parts of the soul—the rational (*to logistikon*), the spirited (*to thumoeides*), and the appetitive (*to epithumetikon*)—with the forms of the human (*ho anthrōpos*), the lion (*ho leōn*), and the many-headed beast (*to thērion polycephalon*—588C; *polykephalon thremma*—589B), respectively. The particular attraction of seeing an allusion to this passage in the lion-like, serpent-like Ialdabaoth is that it could explain something else which is said about Ialdabaoth in *Apocryph. Jn.*, namely, that he is the "self-willed one" (*pauthadēs*—II 13,27 par). In the *Republic* passage, Plato mentions that "self-will" (*authadeia*) and "discontent" (*duskolia*) result when the "lion and serpent part" (*to leontōdes te kai ophēōdes*) is allowed to grow strong (*Rep.* 9.590A–B). This sudden mention of the "serpent part" is enigmatic, since it had not appeared earlier in Plato's discus-

lacks any of the "Human" features which had earlier come to appearance among the aeons.

As Sophia looks upon her offspring, his self-willed activity in setting up his own empire, and the ugly jealousy and ignorance of his boast that there is no god above him, she becomes deranged with grief and guilt and in her agonizing restlessness she is the very antipode of the "standing" aeons:

II 13,13–26

BG 44,19–45,19

Now the Mother began to
go back and forth (*šeei*).
She recognized her deficiency
from the fact that the brilliance
of her light grew dim and she became
dark because her consort had
not agreed with her. And I said,
"Lord, what does 'she went back

Now the Mother began to
rush around (*epipheresthai*).
She recognized her deficiency,
since her consort
had not agreed
with her in her derogation
from her perfection. And I said,
"Christ, what does 'to rush

sion. Evidently, it represents another aspect of the "lion" or "spirited" part, perhaps a baser aspect; cf. B. Jowett and Lewis Campbell, eds., *Plato's Republic* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1894), vol. 3, p. 436. Ialdabaoth is the offspring of Sophia's illegitimate passion, and in *ApocryJn* this theriomorphic being and his own offspring govern the realm of the passions. That the appearance of this self-willed, lion-serpent figure coincides with the loss of the Human image, a "fall" from the realm of the Human, fits rather well Plato's distinction of the "rational-human" part from the lion and many-headed beast portions of the soul. Even if the lion-like, serpent-like appearance of Ialdabaoth in *ApocryJn* were related to the leontocephaline iconography or the Orphic Phanes/Eros, it could be that a conscious secondary allusion to the *Republic* passage has been developed by the author in order to underscore the anthropological statement of this portion of the myth.

Although not constituting direct confirmation for this hypothesis, the fact that a (very bad) Coptic translation of *Rep.* 9.588A–589B is found among the gnostic and Hermetic tracts in Nag Hammadi Codex VI (48,16–51,23; see the edition and translation by James Brashler, in *Nag Hammadi Codices V,2–5 and VI, with Papyrus Berolinensis 8502,1 and 4*, ed. Douglas M. Parrott, NHS 11 [Leiden: Brill, 1979], pp. 325–39) does at least remind us of the popularity of this particular portion in Codex VI the Platonic origin and character of the passage might well have been forgotten (Brashler, p. 326).

Stevan L. Davies, "The Lion-Headed Yaldabaoth," *Journal of Religious History* 4 (1981): 495–500, argues that the source of the lion-headed Ialdabaoth may have been Jewish communities in the Egyptian city of Leontopolis, where there was a cult of the lion-headed Egyptian goddess Sekhmet, who occasionally seems to have been depicted also as a lion-head on a serpent body. Davies points out that we know of a Jewish temple built in Leontopolis in the second century B.C.E. by Onias, a temple which was met with some criticism by Palestinian and even some Egyptian Jews. Davies suggests that Jews in Leontopolis, feeling estranged from Judaism elsewhere, may have begun "to invert their own mythology and to conceive Yahweh as an oppressive, warlike deity," and that the resulting Ialdabaoth figure took on the lion and serpent features of the oppressive and warlike deity "next door," Sekhmet. There are seductive features to this theory, although in my view it does not succeed in settling the question but only in raising one notch further our consciousness of the multiplicity of traditions in antiquity which are among the candidates.

and forth' mean?" He smiled and said, "Do not think that it is as Moses said: 'over the waters.' No, but rather, when she saw the evil which had come into being, and what her son had taken, she repented and became ashamed in the darkness of ignorance,

and she began to weep with a movement (*hn oukim*). Now the movement (*pkim*) is the 'going back and forth.'"

around' mean?" He smiled and said, "Do you think that it is as Moses said: 'over the waters'? No, but rather, she saw the evil and the apostasy which would come into being from her son, and she repented and, going to and fro (*esna esnèw*) in the darkness of ignorance, she began to be ashamed and did not dare return, but instead went to and fro.

Now her going to and fro is the 'rushing around.'"

The verb *epipheresthai* in LXX Gen 1:2 ("The Spirit of God *rushed over* the waters") has become a peg on which to hang the contrast between the stability of the aeonic realm and the instability of the chaotic realm of darkness. Already in 1964 Rudolphe Kasser saw the importance of this passage for understanding the phrase "the immovable race" in *ApocryJn*. The description of Sophia portrays one who is tormented into restless movement:

L'image évoquée est psychologiquement très claire: c'est celle de l'enfant qui se sent coupable et se balance d'un air gêné, s'appuyant tantôt sur un pied, tantôt sur l'autre; c'est celle aussi de l'homme tourmenté par le remords, et qui, ne pouvant tenir en place, va et vient incessamment, comme un fauve en cage.⁸

The origins and history of the various versions of the Sophia myth which we now find among the texts for ancient gnosticism are almost certainly too complex to be explained by any single, unilinear model.⁹ But in an attempt here to illuminate the way in which the myth of Sophia's act is used in *ApocryJn* to mark the passage from Rest to Movement, one tradition among those which may have informed the various Sophia myths found in gnostic sources calls for special comment: Platonic tradition about the descent of the soul.¹⁰

⁸ Rudolphe Kasser, "Bibliothèque gnostique I: Le livre secret de Jean," *Revue de théologie et de philosophie*, 3rd series, 14 (1964): 147.

⁹ E.g., G. C. Stead, "The Valentinian Myth of Sophia," *JTS* 20 (1969): 75–104; George W. MacRae, "The Jewish Background of the Gnostic Sophia Myth," *NovT* 12 (1970): 86–101; Nils Dahl, "The Arrogant Archon and the Lewd Sophia: Jewish Traditions in Gnostic Revolt," in Layton, *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, vol. 2, pp. 689–712.

¹⁰ K. Rudolph, "Gnosis und Gnostizismus: Ein Forschungsbericht," *Theologische Rundschau*, N.F. 38 (1973): 12–25; Hans Jonas, "The Soul in Gnosticism and Plotinus," in P. M. Schull and P. Hadot, eds., *Le Néoplatonisme* (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche

This descent is a passage of the soul from Rest into Movement. To be sure, Plato does describe the soul as “always moving” (*aeikinētos*) and as “that which moves itself” (*to hautō kinoun*), and in this way defines the soul’s immortality (*Phaedrus* 245C–246A); and the association of the soul with motion in later Platonic tradition is so common and so well-known that one hardly needs to give examples of it here. However, as I have already illustrated in Chapter Two (see above, pp. 75f), Plato also wanted to speak of a relative *stability* which could be achieved by those souls who arrive at the upper region that is devoid of disorder and disturbance, and who “stand on the outer surface of heaven” (*Phaedrus* 247B–C). Therefore, especially in those places where Plato speaks more mythologically about the soul’s descent into association with the corporeal, he wants to speak of this as a transfer from relative rest to increasing disturbance and movement. One instance of this is the passage about the soul’s “loss of wings” in *Phaedrus* 246A–248E.

But a much longer passage, and one with features which could even suggest its direct influence on the account of Sophia’s act in *ApocryJn*, is found in the *Timaeus*. The body of the World-Soul is given a movement proper to it: rotation, the most perfect of the seven motions (34A). Four forms of living creatures are made to inhabit this cosmos: the heavenly class (*genos*) of the gods, the winged type, the water-dwellers, and the land-dwellers (39E–40A). The divine class, the fixed stars, are formed mostly out of fire and each star is given two of the seven types of movement: rotation and revolution, “but with respect to the other five movements, it is immovable and standing at rest (*akinēton kai hestōs*), so that each of them might be as perfect as possible” (40B). A number of souls is formed corresponding to the number of stars, each soul is placed in its own star, and then they are all given instruction by the demiurge about the nature of the All and what their destiny as souls will be (41D–E). Reading the myth up to this point, we have the picture of perfect souls which are participating in the more divine forms of motion, but which can still be described as “immovable and standing at rest” as far as the other forms of motion are concerned. At this point, however, the souls are told by the demiurge that

when, from necessity, they are implanted in bodies, and there is the *to and fro movement* of their bodies (*kai to men prosioi to d’ apioi tou sōmatos autōn*), then the first necessity which would befall them is the innate sense perception (*aisthēsin*) common to all, which comes from violent passion (*pathēmātōn*); second, desire (*erōta*) mixed with pleasure

Scientifique, 1971), pp. 45–53; A.-J. Festugière, *La Revelation d’Hermès Trismégiste*, vol. 3: *Les doctrines de l’âme* (Paris: Gabalda, 1953); Krämer, *Ursprung*, pp. 223–64; John Dillon, “The Descent of the Soul in Middle Platonic and Gnostic Theory,” in Layton, *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, vol. 1, pp. 357–64.

(*hēdonē*) and grief (*lupe*); and added to these, fear (*phobon*) and anger (*thumon*) and whatever (passions) naturally go with these, along with whatever (passions) are their opposites. (42A-B)

The task which is set before the incarnate soul is to synchronize its own movements as much as possible with the perfect movement of the World-Soul (42C; 44B; 47B-C; 90D), to become stable (*kathistanai*—44B; 47C), and to master the turbulent mass of corporeal elements to which it is attached (42C-D).

The statement in the *Timaeus* that the beginning of “to and fro” movement for souls will also be the beginning of the experience of the passions is close to the pattern of the Sophia myth in *ApocryJn*. Prior to her act, Sophia is among the aeons standing in the aeonic realm; but her act brings with it passions (her own passions of desire and then grief, and the passions of the created realm at large—see below), and her movement “to and fro.” It is possible that the interpretation we see in *ApocryJn* of the term *epipheresthai* from LXX Gen 1:2 has been shaped by the *Timaeus* passage just quoted.

It is also possible to employ a somewhat more indirect approach in order to show that the act of Sophia is being interpreted in *ApocryJn* in terms of a philosophical etiology of movement. Another gnostic version of the Sophia myth is to be found in the Valentinian *Tripartite Tractate* from Nag Hammadi Codex I, a tractate which contains many obvious Platonic elements.¹¹ In this document the role of Sophia is played by the Logos, but the myth has basically the same structure—at least, it has the same basic structure at those points in which I am interested here. A primordial unity is depicted among the Father, the Son and the Assembly of the aeons. This three-part structure of the aeonic realm matches to a certain extent the structure of the transcendent realm in *ApocryJn*, although the latter is mythologically more complex. Both myths seem to cast silhouettes roughly congruent with that of the One-Nous analysis of the Transcendent in Platonic tradition (see above, pp. 58–61):¹²

	<i>TriTract</i>	<i>ApocryJn</i>
The One	Father	Invisible Spirit
Nous	Son	Barbelo
+ noēta	Assembly of aeons	+ Pentad of aeons
		Divine Self-begotten
		+ his aeonic
		populations

¹¹ J. Zandee, *The Terminology of Plotinus and of Some Gnostic Writings, Mainly the Fourth Treatise of the Jung Codex*, Uitgaven van het Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul 11 (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut in her Nabije Oosten, 1961).

¹² On the *TriTract*, cf. Einar Thomassen, “The structure of the Transcendent World in the Tripartite Tractate (NHC I.5),” *VigChr* 34 (1980): 358–75.

As in the case of *ApocryJn*, prior to the act of one of the individual aeons (the Logos) the picture presented is of a transcendent realm which "unfolds" of "stretches out" (e.g., *TriTract* 73,23ff) and is unified and stable.

The Father (51,1–57,8) is unchangeable and immovable (51,23–52,32), never moving from one form to another. The Father is "he who is established" (*pet^efsmant e^emmaf pe*—52,12f). He possesses an unchangeable unity, his establishment (*piteho aretf*), even though he has no face or shape such as people usually associate with identity (54,28–33). The Son (56,1–57,34) participates in this same establishment because he is not distinct from the Father, but rather he *is* the Father contemplating himself, seeing himself, loving himself, giving glory to himself. The Father and Son are united in a loving embrace in which there is complete silence (55,36f; 56,25). Emanating from their mutual praise is the Assembly (*ekklēsia*) of the aeons. Again, there is no separation involved, for these procreations are merely the swelling fulness (*plērōma*) of the Father (59,35ff), and the unfolding of his properties (*aretai*) and faculties (73,8–11).

The Father causes the Son to appear as a form (*morphe*) which provides place (*topos*) and firmness (*tajro*) for the All (65,7–9). This form constitutes a perfect articulation of divine properties in a single image:

Truly he is all the names, and properly speaking he alone is the first one, [the Human] of the Father, whom I [call]:

the form of the Formless,
 the body of the Incorporeal,
 the face of the Invisible,
 the word of the Indescribable,
 the mind of the Inconceivable,
 the spring which poured forth from itself,
 the root of those who are planted,
 the god of those who exist,
 the light of those whom he illuminates,
 the desire of those whom he desired,
 the providence of those over whom he exercises providence,
 the intelligence of those whom he made intelligent,
 the power of those to whom he gives power,
 the gathering of those whom he gathers unto them,
 the revelation of the things sought after,
 the eye of those who see,
 the air of those who breathe,

the life of the living,
 the unity of those who are blended in the All.
 They are all in the single one, as he clothes himself completely.
 (66,8–32)

The “names” mentioned at the beginning of this passage are the properties of the Father, and each of the aeons is one of these names (73,8–10). By means of this single form all of the names can give perfect and united glory to the Father.

However, later in the text there is an explanation of a different type of glorification, which is *not* unified, but which instead originates from the will of *each one* of the aeons (69,25–40). This type of glorification arises from the “free will” (*mntautexousios*—69,26; 74,20f) possessed by the aeons, which allows each to do what it desires (cf. 75,35–76,2). Here it is not a matter of a unified glorification of the Father, a glorification which would include the simultaneous praise of *all* the Father’s infinite pleroma of properties. Because of free will it is theoretically possible for only one of the properties to attempt its own, limited glorification of the Father. The myth presented by the author portrays exactly that kind of event. There is an attempt by one of the aeons—the Logos—the grasp on its own the essence of the Father (75,17ff). But since it is impossible for the Father to be comprehended by any *one* of his properties, the Logos is successful only in begetting himself.

What is being conveyed by this portion of the myth is an important presupposition about attempts to attain to knowledge of the highest God, a presupposition which *TriTract* shares with many other gnostic texts, including *ApocryJn*: The message is that any given description of the Father involving only one (or a few) of his aspects can be successful in grasping only that single attribute, while a true grasp of the Father is actually beyond reach, since his attributes are infinite. Therefore, while the Logos brings *himself* forth as a perfect “single one” (77,12ff), everything else which he sought to grasp is brought forth in inferior shadows and imitations (77,15–17).

A distinctly ambivalent attitude toward the Logos is revealed in this text, and this seems to be a mythological way of stating an ambivalence toward rational expression in theology. On the one hand, it is said that the intention (*proairesis*) of the Logos had been good (74,2–4) and that the action of the Logos is not to be condemned since the arrangement (*oikonomia*) which had been caused by the act of the Logos was ordained to be (77,6–11). On the other hand, it is clear that the poverty in the attempt of the Logos is mirrored in an unfortunate fashion in the host of conflicting opinions among competing philosophical schools (108,36–110,32). A similar ambivalence toward human “wisdom” may underlie the myth of Sophia’s act in *ApocryJn*. Sophia herself belongs to the

transcendent world of the aeons, and so long as she shares in that choral glorification with all the other aeons, she enjoys the firm establishment which belongs to that realm. But when her self-will motivates her to search after an expression or formulation of the Transcendent on her own, she succeeds only in producing a hideously defective image of divinity.

Now in *TriTract* the act of the Logos is connected with the beginning of motion just as is the act of Sophia in *ApocryJn*, although even more explicitly. The act of the Logos is referred to as "the movement of the Logos" ([p]kim *ente plogos*—77,9), or "the movement which is the Logos" (pkim *ete plogos pe*—77,7). In two later passages this earlier mythological event is alluded to in the phrase "the Logos which moved" (*plogos entahkim*—85,15f; 115,21). It could hardly be clearer that this act by one of the aeons of the pleroma is intended to be seen as a first departure into movement, from the rest or stability of the aeonic realm. In another Valentinian text in the same codex, the *Gospel of Truth*, an earlier fateful departure from the stability of the aeonic realm is mentioned in a reference to the redemptive work of the Savior: "He turned many from the Error. He preceded them to their places from which they *had moved* (*kim*) when they accepted the Error because of the depth of him who encompasses every place yet himself is not encompassed" (22,20–27). The impossibility of plumbing the depth of the divine nature has led to the acceptance of something less.

The act of the Logos in *TriTract* is called not only a "movement" but a "going forth." The Logos is said to have "gone forth" (*afiti empefwaei*—76,5.21.26f) in his attempt to comprehend the Father. In Irenaeus's account of Valentinianism in *Adv. haer.* 1.1.1–8.6, the act of Sophia is also called a "springing forth" (*proallesthai*):

And Sophia, the very last and youngest emanated aeon of the Decad, which had come into being from the Human and the Church, sprang forth (*proêlato*) and experienced passion (*epathe pathos*) without the embrace of her consort Desired. This passion had begun among those (aeons) around Nous and Truth, but it broke forth (*apeskêpse*) in this one who turned aside, on the pretext of love, but really out of audacity (*tolmês*), because she did not have the kind of communion with the perfect Father shared by Nous. This passion is said to be the seeking after the Father. (*Adv. haer.* 1.2.2)¹³

¹³ Although the text of *ApocryJn* does not describe Sophia as "springing forth," this in fact is said of Sophia in the Latin text of Irenaeus's account of the "Barbelognostics," an account which seems to be based on some document containing a myth similar to that in *ApocryJn*: "Therefore, when (Sophia) saw that all the rest had a consort, but that she did not have a consort, she looked for one with whom she could unite. And when she did not find one, she became anxious and extended herself and looked into the lower regions thinking to find a consort there. And not finding one, she leapt forth (*exsiliit*), being at the same time dis-

In these Valentinian myths the "going forth" of Sophia or the Logos is a move to the levels of the psychical and material, and away from the noetic, and the description of this as a "going forth" seems to be an employment of a motif popular in Platonic tradition. Compare the following passage from Plotinus, the first part of which I have discussed earlier in connection with the motif of the "standing" of the Nous:

(The One), being perfect since it neither seeks nor has nor needs anything, overflowed, as it were, and its spill-over made another thing. That which came into being turned back toward That one and was filled and became a beholder of That one and thus a Nous. And its stability toward That one created Being, while the vision directed toward That one created Nous. Therefore, since it stood at rest before That one in order to behold, it became Nous and Being at the same time.

I have mentioned this much of the passage earlier, when discussing the stability of aeonic entities in the gnostic texts, for example, Barbelo in *ApocryJn* (see above, p. 105). But the *departure* from that stability which we see in figures such as the Logos or Sophia finds its analogue in the "movement" of Soul, to which Plotinus turns in the continuation of the passage:

In a fashion like That one, (the Nous) makes things similar (to itself) by pouring forth a great power—and this is its image (*eidos*)—just as That one had earlier poured forth its image. And this image (i.e., Nous's image) is Soul's activity (*energeia*) coming into being out of essence while (Nous) remains at rest (*menontos*); for Nous also came to be while That one which was prior to Nous remained at rest (*menontos*). But Soul does not remain at rest (*hē de ou menousa*) when producing; but rather, entering into motion (*kinētheisa*), it begot a likeness (*eidōlon*). Therefore, on the one hand it is by looking toward the source from which it came that Soul is filled, and on the other hand it is by going forth (*proelthousa*) into a movement which is different and opposite (*kinēsīn allēn kai enantian*) that Soul begets a likeness, sense-perception, and the nature which is in growing things. (*Enn.* 5.2.1, 13–21)

Though Plotinus stresses that such a "procession" of Soul is not a past "event," but rather that Soul has eternally filled the universe (e.g., 4.3.9, 12–15), nevertheless, "for the sake of clarity" (4.3.9, 15) Plotinus often uses the mythological language of "going forth" to explain the "movement" of Soul into the material realm.¹⁴

gusted because she had made the impulsive move (*impetum*) without the good will of the Father" (*Adv. haer.* 1.29.4).

¹⁴ E.g., *Enn.* 1.8.4, 25–33: The perfect soul "remains at rest" (*menet*) directed toward Nous and is pure and turned away from matter, etc.; the soul which does not remain at rest (*hē mē menousa*), but "goes forth" (*proelthousa*) to the imperfect, beholds darkness; 4.3.6, 20–34: some souls remain inclined toward the intelligible realm and have greater

This style of talking about the “going forth” from the noetic into the material is illustrated earlier in the Platonic tradition by a remark made by Plutarch:

Moreover, Eudoxus says that the Egyptians have a mythical tradition in regard to Zeus that, because his legs were grown together, he was not able to walk, and so, out of shame, tarried in the wilderness; but Isis, by severing and separating those parts of his body, provided him with a means of rapid progress. This fable teaches by its legend that the mind (*nous*) and reason (*logos*) of the god, fixed (*bebēkōs*) amid the unseen and invisible, went forth (*proēlthen*) into Becoming (*eis genesin*) by reason of movement (*hypo kinēseōs*). (*Is. et Os.* 376C)

Isis is identified with the creative and preservative element in nature, she is animate (*empsychos*) and intelligent movement (*kinēsis*—375C), or is self-moved (*autokinētos*—376A-B)—in other words, she is the demiurgic World-Soul.¹⁵ Plutarch also equates Isis with the “receptacle” of Plato’s *Timaeus* (49A, etc.), that is to say, with matter, and as such she receives the imprints of the Logos, Osiris (372E–373B). Isis seems to bear features similar to those of Wisdom or Sophia as found in Philo’s writings, and this results in “an entity which is on the one hand fallen and imperfect, though filled with longing for completion by the *logos* of God, while on the other being the cause of our creation and the vehicle by which we can come to know God,”¹⁶ which means that for Plutarch Isis plays a role analogous to the gnostic Sophia.¹⁷

Although the “going forth” of the *nous* and *logos* of God into Becoming which Plutarch mentions in the passage quoted above is not equivalent in detail to the “going forth” of the Logos in *TriTract* or to the act of Sophia in *ApocryJn*, all three of these amount to versions of the Platonic theme of the transition from the noetic realm to the realm of movement. By his repeated references to the “movement” of the Logos, the author of *TriTract* makes quite explicit his conscious intention to define the act of the Logos in terms of a departure from “establishment” or “fixity” or “immovability.” Like the act of Sophia in *ApocryJn*, the act of the Logos in *TriTract* is a gnostic adaptation of the demiurgic activity which in Middle Platonic tradition was usually assigned to the Demiurge or World-Soul.

power, while others have gone forth (*prosēlthon*) and turned away into the depth (*bathos*): 4.4.5, 28–31: it is not necessary that souls fall (*pesein*) all the way into the depth, since it is possible for them after entering into motion (*kinētheisas*) and going forth (*proelthousas*) for a little bit to come to rest (*stēnai*), and nothing prevents them from escaping again before coming all the way to the lowest place; 4.3.9, 20–33; 4.7.13, 5–16; 5.2.2, 6–10; cf. 5.1.1, 5–7. But *proerchesthai* can also be used by Plotinus for the upward movement of soul (e.g., 5.2.2, 22).

¹⁵ Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, pp. 204–206.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

¹⁷ E.g., *Ebr.* 30–31; Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, pp. 204f and 163f.

And precisely the characteristic of "movement" seems to have been mentioned routinely in Middle Platonic tradition as a property marking off the Demiurge or World-Soul from a "First God" or Nous who is immovable.¹⁸ For Albinus, the "First God" or Nous is himself "immovable" (*akinētos*) and "causes to move" (*kinēsei*) by attraction to himself the "Nous of the whole heaven" (= the Demiurge) (*Epit.* 10.2). Numenius's First God "stands at rest" while the Second God is in motion (*kinoumenos*—Frag. 15 des Places).

Therefore it is against this background that the "moving to and fro" passage in *ApocryJn* needs to be read. For it seems unlikely to be merely coincidental that special attention is drawn in *ApocryJn* to the movement of a figure whose function happens to parallel in certain ways that of the Demiurge/World-Soul of Middle Platonism. In the BG version, the author uses the verb *epipheresthai* in LXX Gen 1:2 to convey the transition from rest to agitated movement which is consequent on the departure from the aeonic realm. It may be that the version of this passage in II/IV ("... she began to weep with a movement. Now *the movement* is the 'going back and forth'") reflects an attempt in this recension to make more explicit the philosophical contrast between Rest and Movement.

But in an important respect the movement of Sophia in *ApocryJn* is unlike the movement of the Platonic Demiurge/World-Soul. In distinguishing between the First God who is immovable and the Second God, or Demiurge, who is in motion, Middle Platonists such as Albinus or Numenius were thinking of the motion of the Demiurge/World-Soul as an ordered and ordering motion. We recall that in the *Timaeus* the body of the World-Soul was given only the most perfect of the seven types of motion (*Tim.* 34A). But Sophia's movement is obviously not viewed in *ApocryJn* as being of the perfect variety. Because it is tied to intense emotion or passion, it bears more resemblance to the agitated movement of the soul fallen into the body, as described in *Tim.* 42A-B (see above) and in many later Platonic writers. It is a motion which is viewed as symptomatic of a "defect" which must be corrected. In other words, there is lacking in *ApocryJn* any type of gradation of movement. The first movement ascribed to any being beyond the realm in which there is total rest is already an agitated movement implicating passion. Without wishing at this point to prove that a version of *ApocryJn* itself was being used by the gnostic opponents of Plotinus, it is nevertheless worth recalling here by way of comparison that one of the key points on which Plotinus and his

¹⁸ See Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, pp. 7, 46, 252f, 284, 316, 366–75, for the tendency in Middle Platonists such as Atticus, Albinus, Apuleius or Numenius to distinguish (contrary to anything explicit in the *Timaeus* itself) between the Demiurge of the *Timaeus* and a Supreme God. This later development often involved the conflation of the demiurgic Nous with the higher or rational aspect of the World-Soul.

opponents disagree is in their assigning to the World-Soul the same *pathê* experienced by individual souls (*Enn.* 2.9.6,60–63), for in Plotinus's view the World-Soul is *apathês* with respect to its body (2.9.7,9–16). In other words, Plotinus can think in terms of the *perfect movement* of the World-Soul, far purer than the agitated, passionate movement experienced by individual souls in bodies. In *ApocryJn* there seems to be no room for any "purer" movement. All movement must mean deficiency; perfection requires immovability.

C. Being "Set Right" as the Recovery of Stability

The central soteriological theme in *ApocryJn* is the correction of Sophia's deficiency. This correction is accomplished in three phases, involving three descents of divine revelation into the world, with a series of counter-moves on the part of Ialdabaoth:¹⁹ the descent of divine revelation to Adam in Paradise, followed by the casting out from Paradise and the implantation of sexual desire; the descent of revelation into the offspring of Adam, Seth and his seed, followed by the imposition of Fate on humanity, the attempted destruction of humanity by the flood, and the implantation of the "opposing spirit" among humans through angels disguised as the mates of the "daughters of men"; and finally, the descent of the revelation in the person of the Savior who is giving the gnosis to John.

In II/IV, the Coptic term which is normally used for the "correction" of the deficiency is *soohe*, "to correct, set right"; in BG/III we find *taho erat* =, "to cause to stand, set on one's feet, establish." In order to understand the contrast between stability and instability in *ApocryJn*, it is necessary to examine the way in which our texts for *ApocryJn* use these terms, since the passages involved are speaking of the *recovery* of stability—the correction of the condition whose symptom in Sophia was the agitated movement to and fro. There are five passages in the text of *ApocryJn* in which these terms are used to designate the correction of Sophia's deficiency (the locations in IV are not listed here, since that text in these cases is too fragmentary to be of much help):

1) II 14,1–13 // BG 46,15–47,14 // III 21,2–16. Sophia's prayer of repentance is answered, and spirit from the pleroma is poured out on her. In this way, Sophia's consort came down to her in order to set right her deficiency. Sophia is not yet brought back up to her own aeon, however,

¹⁹ Hans Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, vol. 1, FRLANT, N.F. 33 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, ³1964), p. 397; *idem*, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, ²1963), pp. 203f; George W. MacRae, "Sleeping and Walking in Gnostic Texts," in *Le Origini dello Gnosticismo*, ed. Ugo Bianchi, *Studies in the History of Religions (Supplements to Numen)* 12 (Leiden: Brill, 1970), pp. 496–507.

but only to the level above her demiurgic son, Ialdabaoth, "until she sets right her deficiency." However, her own back and forth movement and outpouring of passion are ended. This preliminary "setting right" mythologically prefigures the completion of the process—i.e., the way in which eventually the spirit will be poured out on individual human beings and they also will be cured of passions and restored to stability.

2) II 20,9–28 // BG 52,17–54,4 // III 25,1–23. After Ialdabaoth and his archontic offspring have completed the fabrication of a psychical creature, after Ialdabaoth has then been tricked into breathing out of himself and into the fabricated human the power which Ialdabaoth's mother Sophia had earlier impulsively given to him, and after the archons in a jealous rage cast into the lowest depths of matter this human they now realize to be superior to themselves—then from the Beneficent Spirit is sent a helper (cf. Gen 2:18) for Adam, a "thought (*epinoia*) of light," called "Life" (*zoē*), which is a play on the name of Eve (Gen 3:20). But this Epinoia of light is not yet identified with the woman who is later drawn out of Adam. Instead, she is a revelation-bearing thought hidden in Adam, quite out of reach of the archons, and she labors to restore the human being to perfection:

II 20,19–28

Now she assists the whole creature (*ktisis*), laboring with it, and setting it right (*sōhe*) within its pleroma, and teaching it about the manner of the seed's descent, teaching it about the way of ascent, the way of its descent. And the Epinoia of light is hidden in Adam in order that the archons might not know, but that the Epinoia might become a setting right (*sōhe*) of the deficiency of the Mother.

BG 53,10–54,4

She is the one who works on the whole creature, laboring with it, setting it right (*taho erat* =) within its own perfect temple (III 25,14: pleroma), and instructing it about the descent of its deficiency, teaching it about its ascent.

And the Epinoia of light was hidden in him, in order that the archons might not know, but that our sister [Sophia who is like] us might set right (*taho erat* =) her deficiencies by means of the Epinoia of light.

3) II 22,3–9 // BG 57,8–58,1 // III 28,6–17. The tree of knowledge of good and evil, also, is identified allegorically with the Epinoia of light. The archons make every effort to prevent Adam from gaining access to the tree,

II 22,6-9

... in order that (Adam) might
not look up at his pleroma
and thereby realize the nakedness
of his shame. But I have
set them right (*sehō* =) to
cause them to eat.

BG 57,16-58,1

... so that he might not
look up at his perfection
and realize that he is naked
of his perfection. But I have
set them right (*taho erat* =) to
cause them (III 28,16 "him") to eat.

The first person speaker in the last sentence is the Savior. In spite of the fact that in some of the other passages to which I am referring here the agent for the "setting right" is said to be some other figure such as Sophia or the Epinoia, ultimately the whole process is seen as the activity of the Savior.

The actual appearance of the female partner of Adam has not been narrated at this point in the text, but several lines later the dialogue between John and the Savior turns back to the moment of the making of the woman:

4) II 23,4-24 // BG 59,20-60,16 // III 30,1-14. A forgetfulness, i.e., the "sleep" of Gen 2:21, has been cast over Adam by Ialdabaoth, since the latter intends to extract the "power" which he had earlier been tricked into breathing into Adam. In fact, he attempts to extract not merely this power but the even more valuable Epinoia of light. The two are differentiated in *ApocryJn*. The Epinoia of light cannot be touched by Ialdabaoth, but he is successful in extracting from Adam at least "a portion (*meros*) of his power" (II 22,33; the BG/III version is not as explicit about this being only a portion, although this could be implied), and from this another creature, the woman, is formed. The moment of the appearance of the woman is seen as revelatory, a moment in which the "veil" which was over Adam's mind is removed by the Epinoia of light, a moment in which Adam becomes sober from the drunkenness of darkness (III 30,1f: "drunkenness of death"):

II 23,9-24

... and he knew
his image (*tefeine*),
and said:
"This is indeed bone
of my bones and flesh
of my flesh" (Gen 2:23).
For this reason the man
will leave his father and
his mother and cleave
to his wife, and the two
will be one flesh (Gen 2:24).

BG 60,3-16

Immediately, when he
knew his essence (*ousia*),
he said:
"This is now bone
of my bones and flesh
of my flesh."
For this reason the man
will leave his father and
his mother and cleave
to his wife, and the two
will be one flesh.

III 30,3-14

Immediately he knew
his co-essence (*sunousia*)
which was like him:
"Now you are bone
of my bones and flesh
of my flesh."
For this reason the man
will leave his father and
his mother and cleave
to his wife, and the two
will be one flesh.

For they will send to him
his consort
and he will leave his father
and his mother and the two
will become one flesh.

[a dittography of about
two lines]

(This consort is?) our
sister Sophia, she
who came down in
innocence in order that

she might set right
(*sôhe*) her deficiency.

For this reason,
she was called
"Life" (*zôê*), i.e.,
the mother of the living.

For they will send forth
the consort of the
mother,

and will

set her right (*taho*
erat =).

For this reason, Adam
called her

the mother of all the living.

They sent the
consort [of the
mother]

to set right (*taho*
erat =) her deficiencies.
(lacuna)

As one can see, the texts differ significantly here, and none of them can be said to have put the matter very clearly. The version in II seems most intelligible in terms of gender, since Eve is evidently understood as an incarnation of Sophia. But in all three versions the point seems to be the equivalence of Adam's reception of a female partner to the reunion of Sophia with her consort. Immediately there follows another reference to the eating from the tree of knowledge (II 23,24–35 par). Adam's reception of the female partner and the subsequent guidance toward the eating from the tree of knowledge therefore constitute together the first "setting right" of the deficiency. However, this setting right is then frustrated by Ialdabaoth, who seduces the woman and has two archon offspring (= Cain and Abel) by her, and who then introduces the desire for sexual intercourse among the humans so as to reproduce bodies in which his opposing spirit can eventually be inserted (II 23,35–24,31 par).

5) II 24,34–25,16 // BG 63,12–64,13 // III 32,6–22. The last reference to the setting right of the deficiency is in connection with the human offspring of Adam, i.e., the seed of Seth. The mother sends her spirit down into the descendants of Seth, so that these descendants of Seth, so that these descendants will correspond to the pattern of the pleroma, the "race" (*genea*) which is above among the aeons" (BG 63,15f; cf. II 25,2). The two recensions are rather confusing in their divergence here:

II 25,3–16

... the mother also sent down her
spirit, in her image,
and a copy (*antitypos*) of that which
is in the pleroma. For she will

BG 63,16–64,13

... the mother sent the spirit
which belongs to her. The spirit
came down to it (fem.—the essence?)
in order to awaken the essence which

prepare a dwelling place for the aeons which come down. And he made them drink of the water of forgetfulness, from the chief archon, in order that they might not know whence they have come.

In this way the seed came into being for a while, assisting, in order that when the spirit comes forth from the holy aeons he might set it (the seed?) right (*sehō* = *erat* =) and he might heal it of the deficiency,

in order that the whole pleroma might become holy and without deficiency.

is like him, after the pattern (*typos*) of the perfection—to awaken them from the forgetfulness and wickedness of the grave.

And in this way he (the mother's spirit?) remained for a while, and worked on behalf of the seed, so that when the spirit comes forth from the holy aeons he might set them right

(*taho* = *erat* =) outside the deficiency, for the setting right (*ptaho eratf*; III 32,19f:

[. . .] *thōsis*) of the aeon, in order that it might become a holy perfection, in order that now it might be without deficiency.

The final words of this passage would seem to be referring to the *ultimate* setting right. If so, then this brief passage would be speaking of both the second and third descents of the divine revelation into the world.

Assuming that the same Greek verb for “setting right” underlies all of these passages in *ApocryJn*, the Codex III version of the last passage may provide a hint as to what that term was. In the phrase, “for the setting right of the aeon,” we presumably have the nominal form of this verb (cf. BG: *ptaho eratf*). In III 32,19f only the last five letters of the noun remain: *-thōsis*. Till²⁰ and Krause and Labib²¹ suggest the restoration *katorthōsis*. But other cognates would also fit, such as *diorthōsis* or *anorthōsis*. Thus, the verb which is being translated by *sōhe* and *taho erat* = is probably *katorthoun*, *diorthoun* or *anorthoun*.²² My own guess is that we have *diorthōsis* and *diorthoun* in the underlying Greek, since *diorthoun* is used in precisely the same way (the setting right of the passions of Sophia) in Hippolytus's account of the Valentinian Sophia myth (Ref. 5.32.4; 6.36.1–4).

²⁰ Till, *Die gnostischen Schriften*, p. 169n.

²¹ M. Krause and P. Labib, eds., *Die drei Versionen des Apocryphon des Johannes im koptischen Museum zu Alt-Kairo*, Abhandlungen des deutschen archäologischen Instituts Kairo, koptische Reihe, I (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1962), p. 94.

²² Cf. Crum 380b–381a; 456a–b

D. Immovability and Passionlessness

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the fundamental problematic in the achieving of stability in *ApocryIn* involves the transcendence of the passions and the successful victory over the schemes of personal cosmic forces who employ the passions as instruments of control. As we saw above, when the spirit is poured out on Sophia in response to her prayer, we are given to understand that she herself is no longer moving to and fro deliriously, no longer weeping in her wretched grief. Although a "mopping up" of the consequences of her desire remains to be accomplished, she herself has been cured of passion. The descent of the divine revelation has the same effect on those humans who receive it readily. In II 25,23–26,7 par, there is a description of the ideal sort of person in whom the divine revelation has its most perfect effect:

Those upon whom the Spirit of life will descend and exist with the power (in them) will be saved and they will become perfect and be worthy of the greatneses and be purified in that place from all wickedness and attention to evil. Then they attend to nothing except incorruptibility alone, since from here on they are concerned with it, without anger (*orgê*), or envy (*kôh*), or jealousy (*phthonos*), or desire (*epithumia*) and greed for everything. They are held by none of these things, except only the substance (*hypostasis*) of the flesh, which they carry around while they wait for the time in which they will be visited by the Receivers. Now persons of this sort are worthy of the incorruptible, eternal life and the calling, since they endure everything and bear everything, so that they might complete the good (*pagathon*; BG 66,11 and III 33,22: *palthon*, "the contest") and inherit eternal life.

What this amounts to is a description of persons who are in a state of passionlessness (*apatheia*). The setting right effected by their reception of the spirit of life has rendered them immune to the impulses of passions such as "anger or envy or jealousy or desire and greed." The author wants us to understand that the sort of people whom the Savior is describing here belong to the "immovable race" (cf. II 25,20–23). Their pertinacious concentration on "incorruptibility" and their ability while still in the flesh to be without passion are the hallmarks of their immovability.

The equation of immovability with absence of passions is found many places in this period, since the equation of passions with movements (*kinêseis*) was common.²³ Clement of Alexandria provides a pertinent example of this. The true *gnostikos*, according to Clement, is one who is occupied with the things which are "firm and completely unchangeable"

²³ See A. Vögtle, "Affekt," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, vol. I (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1950), cols. 160–73.

(*ta bebaia kai pantelōs analloiōta*—*Strom.* 7.16.6), which is to say, noetic reality (*ta noēta*—*Strom.* 4.148.1). The gnostic is one in whom the “true human being, the mind (*nous*) in the human being” (*Protr.* 10.98.4), is in control, since the human *nous* is in the image of the divine Logos, whom Clement calls the “impassible Human” (*anthrōpos apathēs*—*Strom.* 5.94.4). Naturally, Jesus was the most perfect example of the potential for achieving this state of unchangeableness even while in the body: “He was quite completely without passion, and into him there slipped no passionate movement (*kinēma pathētikon*) at all, neither pleasure nor grief” (*Strom.* 6.71.2). And through their Lord’s instruction, the apostles also managed to gain mastery over all passionate movements, not even admitting impulses which are thought to be good, such as joy or zeal, but rather remaining always unchanging (*analloiōtoi*) in a condition of *askesis* after the resurrection of Jesus (*Strom.* 6.71.3).

Some versions of the Sophia myth in Valentinian sources also illustrate the equation of immovability with absence of passion. In Irenaeus’s account of what is apparently Ptolemaic Valentinianism (*Adv. haer.* 1.1.1–8.6), the “rushing forth” of Sophia and the resultant breaking out of passion is halted by Horos or Limit, who finally separates Sophia from her passion and “firmly establishes” (*stērizen*) her (1.2.2ff). Horos has two functions, that of making stable and that of dividing; insofar as he makes stable and establishes (*hedrazei kai stērizen*) he is called Cross, and insofar as he divides and separates, he is called Horos (1.3.5).²⁴ The pair Christ and Holy Spirit are also brought forward for the “fixing” and “establishing” (*eis pēxin kai stērigmon*) of all the aeons, so that they will not be in danger of experiencing Sophia’s passion (1.2.5). Holy Spirit brings in the “true rest” (*tēn alēthinēn anapausin*), and everything is firmly established (*stērichthenta*) and perfectly at rest (*anapausamena teleōs*). This “fixing” function assigned to Christ and the Holy Spirit is also found in *ApocryJn*, where the whole aeonic realm is said to have been “firmly fixed” (*tajro*) by the will of the Holy Spirit, through the Self-begotten, i.e., Christ (II 8,25–28 par).

Irenaeus notes several dominical sayings and Pauline passages which have been interpreted as revelations of Valentinian doctrines (*Adv. haer.* 1.3.1ff). One of these instances is the story of the woman with a hemorrhage (Mark 5:25–34 par). Irenaeus says that the gnostic interpreter finds

²⁴ Hippolytus’s version of the Valentinian myth at this point states that the Horos is also called Cross because he is fixed unwaveringly and immovable (*pepēgen aklīnōs kai ametakinētos*), which means that as the Limit or Boundary he both participates in the “deficiency” (*hysterēma*) because of direct contact with it and at the same time prevents by his immovability any contact of the deficiency with the aeons of the Pleroma (*Ref.* 6.31.6). The “setting right” (*diorthoun*) of the passions or deficiency of Sophia (*Ref.* 6.32.4, 6.36.1–4) requires the restoration of stability, a restoration of Sophia to the one who gave her form and established (*stērisantos*) her (6.32.2).

the doctrine of Sophia's passion "very clearly disclosed" in this story (1.3.3). The twelve years which the woman suffered disclose allegorically the fact that Sophia is the twelfth aeon in this Valentinian myth:

She who suffered (*pathousa*) twelve years is that power which, extending herself and flowing into the infinity of substance, as they say, if she had not touched the garment of the Son, that is, the Truth of the first Tetrad—which is indicated by the hem—she would have been dissolved into her substance. Instead, she stood still (*estē*) and ceased from her passion (*tou pathous*). For the power coming out of him (they want this to be the Limit) healed her and separated her from her passion.

But obviously the Valentinian exegete is interested in more here than simply the correlation: 12 years of suffering = passion of the 12th aeon. The "flowing" of the hemorrhage mirrors Sophia's futile and exhausting expenditure of energy in her reach for knowledge of the Father. That the ceaseless flow of the hemorrhage is stilled by contact with the "garment" is a detail which has not been wasted on the interpreter. The association of "garment" with "establishment" is a motif found in other gnostic sources,²⁵ and the Valentinian exegete in our passage evidently considers the cure of the woman to be a clear allusion to this motif. That the particular expression "she stood still" (*estē*) is used in this instance may mean nothing more than a dependence on the wording in Luke 8:44: *kai parachrēma estē hē rhusis tou haimatos autēs*. But it is also possible that the exegete wants to call attention to this term, because of its significance as a technical term for absence of motion.²⁶

E. Movement and the Cosmic Powers

The movement of the passions is linked in *ApocryJn* to the influence of personal cosmic forces. Especially is the desire for sexual intercourse identified as a device implanted by Ialdabaoth for his own despicable purposes (II 24,26–29). The II/IV recension assigns four classic passions,

²⁵ E.g., *TriTract* 87,1ff: "The Son of the good pleasure of the All placed himself upon them as a garment (*hēbsou*) by which he gave perfection to him who was deficient and he gave firmness to those who were perfect"; in 128,19ff, baptism is called the "garment" (*hēbsou*) of those who do not strip it off," and "the firmness of the truth, which has no fall, unwaveringly and immovably."

²⁶ Apparently the same use of the story of the healing of the woman with a hemorrhage is found in the *Testimony of Truth* (CG IX,3). This gnostic treatise stresses the abandonment of sexual desire, and the transcendence of the passions at large, and describes the person who has knowledge of the "God of Truth" as "the person who will forsake all of the things of the world, having renounced (*apotassein*) the whole place, *having grasped the hem of his garment*. He has established (*taho erat*=) himself [...]. He has subdued desire (*epithumia*) . . ." (41,6–12).

pleasure (*hēdonē*), desire (*epithumia*), grief (*lupē*) and fear (*hnōhe* = *phobos*),²⁷ to four principal demons, from whom all the rest of the passions then arise (II 18,14–31).

The assignment of responsibility for “movements of the soul” to cosmic forces was common. The Christian apologist Athenagoras, writing during the period in the second century which may well have been also the time of the composition of the *ApocryJn*, goes on at some length about the fallen angels and demons who produce in human souls “movements” akin to the demons’ own natures and desires (*Leg.* 25.1–27.2). The Jewish tradition of the fall of the angels (*Gen* 6; *1 Enoch* 6) plays a role in the theories of both the author of *ApocryJn* (II 29,16–30,11 par) and Athenagoras, therefore. Both writers share what Peter Brown has called

an image of the demonic that made their “earthly power” over the human community responsible, not only for its obvious misfortunes and misdeeds, but also for all the anomaly and confusion that was latent in human culture and in human social relations. To the Christians of the second and third centuries, we must remember, this story of the mating of the angels with the daughters of men and of its dire consequences for the peace of society, was not a distant myth: it was a map on which they plotted the disruptions and tensions around them. When Tertullian reported the exile of astrologers from Roman cities, he treated the measure as an attempt to “mop up” anomalous and disruptive elements which directly continued, on earth and in his own age, the exile of the fallen angels from heaven. The Christian therefore stepped from a world shot through with “loose powers,” made dangerous by incomplete and destructive skills learned from anomalous sources, into the firm and unambivalent protection of a guardian angel.²⁸

The confusion and disruption and incompleteness which Athenagoras emphasizes involve the multitude of different directions in which humans are swept along (*Leg.* 25.3). The proliferation of idol worship, with the frenzied rites which often accompany it, has taken place because irrational movements (*alogoi kinēseis*) of the soul are whipped up around opinions (*peri tas doxas*) and produce no sound understanding God but only inferior illusions (*phantasias*—*Leg.* 26.1–27.2). Therefore for Athenagoras the passionate movements produced in the soul by the cosmic forces go hand in hand with all the inferior and conflicting notions about the divine. I would say that the Sophia myth in *ApocryJn* is making much the same point. The mistake which Wisdom makes is to abandon a position of reverent glorification of the divine and to attempt a definition on her own. Since the divine is ultimately incomprehensible, such a futile attempt is rewarded only with error—a host of mutually conflicting opinions which

²⁷ Cf. Plato, *Rep.* 4.429C–D; *Phaedo* 83B; and see Vögtle, “Affekt,” col. 162.

²⁸ Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity*, p. 75.

merely ape true reality, and which ultimately are responsible for the plight of the individual who is tossed back and forth amidst perplexity, grief, envy, desire, fear, etc.²⁹ As long as the human being lives with the delusion that this or that cosmic being actually is the supreme god over all, then one remains trapped in this cosmos "shot through with 'loose powers,'" as Brown puts it, and there is helplessness before the anomaly and confusion which is "latent in human culture and in human social relations," and the consequent conflicting passionate impulses which never seem to rest.

The effort to identify these "loose powers" of instability and thwart their attacks is an enterprise which *ApocryJn* shares with other literature of the era. One thinks in particular of monastic literature such as the *Life of Antony*, where also we hear that the activity of cosmic powers (demons) is not characterized by tranquillity or gentleness, but rather is something full of disturbance (*tetragmenê*), with loud noises and yelling, "the sort of violent movement (*kinêsis*) one might expect of young ruffians and robbers." This produces in a person terror and disturbance (*tarachos*) and disorder (*ataxia*) in one's thoughts, dejection, hatred of ascetics, grief, fear of death, desire and instability (*akatastasia*) of character (*Vit. Ant.* 38; MPG 26,895B).³⁰ It is easy to see how a document such as *ApocryJn*, which also presented a weaponry against the relentless assaults of the cosmic powers of instability, would still have been attractive to monastic athletes in fourth-century Egypt, long after its original composition.

F. The Instability of Fate vs. Immovable Pronoia

A particular dimension of the instability inflicted by cosmic forces requires special attention: the instability of Fate. The imposition of Fate on humankind is one of the important countermeasures taken by Ialdabaoth and his henchmen in reaction to their recognition of the superiority of the perfect race (II 27,31–28,32). The ability to transcend Fate may

²⁹On the association of "opinion" (*doxa*; *gnômê*) with passions, instability or movement, cf. Plato, *Tim.* 51D-E (see also below, p. 183); *Phaedrus* 248B (see above, pp. 75f); Plutarch, *De an. procr.* 1024A-D; Albinus, *Epit.* 4.3; Clem. Alex., *Strom.* 1.42.4; Archytas, in Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 1.35.5. The connection which I am arguing here between the movement/passion of Sophia in *ApocryJn* and criticism of inferior, competing theologies is a connection which is rather explicit in the version of the Sophia myth in *TriTract*, where contending philosophical and theological viewpoints (108,36–110,32) are viewed as no more than an extension of the "changeable opinion (*gnômê*) of the Logos who moved" (115,20f); cf. Williams, "Stability as a Soteriological Theme," p. 827.

³⁰The Neoplatonist Iamblichus describes the gradual shading from the order and tranquillity among the gods, to lesser degrees of order and increasing degrees of motion in the archangels and then angels, to finally the disturbance (*tarachê*) and disorder (*ataxia*) among the demons (*De myst.* 2.3, 72,12–17).

be one of the more important connotations of the term "immovable" for the author of *ApocryJn*. Because the notion of Fate is often associated with a fixed, *unchanging order* of things, it might have been tempting to think of Fate here in terms of something dreadfully stable and *immovable*.³¹ We might think that, because the gnostics we are discussing here could still use the term *cosmos* (e.g., II 30,6 par), they "retained the idea of order as the main characteristic of what they were set on depreciating,"³² although they radically revaluated this order, so that it now became an "order empty of divinity," an "order with a vengeance."³³ We might think, reading about the various steps in the construction of horoscopes that are recorded so methodically by astrologers such as Firmicus Maternus, that a preoccupation with astrological Fate in antiquity ought to have involved a consciousness of the "rigid and inimical order,"³⁴ the fixed and precise and disheartening or frightening predictability of things.

But this view will have missed something very important about what "Fate" means to a person like the author of *ApocryJn*, and to his or her gnostic readers. People in late antiquity may have been more often baffled by the enigmatic complexities and conflicts both in the movements of the stars and in the labyrinth of human choices, than they were impressed by some fixed and orderly pattern to it all. No one has stated it with greater elegance or insight than has Peter Brown:

The modern scholar expects ancient men to sigh under the weight of a determinism implied in the astrological beliefs of the age. A Late Antique man might have faced his relationships with the stars in a different mood. The influence of the stars was not ineluctable, but baffling. Astrological beliefs condensed an image of man and of his relationships with society that assumed that he lay open to conflicting choices and was subject to a full range of paradoxical triumphs and disasters. Astrology brought down into men's views of their lives and personalities the complexities and conflicts which they saw in the planets as these moved like backgammon counters across the fixity of the heavens. A horoscope was a cobweb of evenly balanced and contradictory forces spun out in the heavens; and a life lived according to a horoscope was a life committed, by men's position in the society in which they lived, to a cat's cradle of profitable and disastrous relationships.³⁵

³¹ Cf. Eusebius, *Praep. evang.* 6.6.58 (252a): "... they say that Fate is a sort of chain of causes which comes down eternally in an unbroken and immutable (*aparabaitōs kai ametakinētōs*) way, from the movement of the heavenly stars."

³² Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, p. 250.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 250, 252.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 250.

³⁵ Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity*, pp. 75f. And it happens that it is precisely in a gnostic text, the *Excerpts of Theodotus*, that Brown (p. 123, n. 84) finds one of the most succinct examples of this mood: "Fate is the concourse (*sunodos*) of many opposing powers. ... From this revolt and warfare of the powers the Lord rescues us" (*Exc. Theod.* 69.1 and

We should not assume that Fate was approached by most people as a static reality, rather than as an inscrutably complex strife between conflicting forces. The third-century gnostic opponents of Plotinus seem to have viewed the whole realm of change in the cosmos—the variety in human characteristics and fortunes and the movements of the stars which were responsible for this—as chaos. They complained about the “disorder” (*ataxia*) which exists around the earth (*Enn.* 2.9.5,13f). This chaos was sensed by them in all those situations in human existence in which circumstances seemed by no means under the control of some rational, just order, but rather seemed to flow and splash in a sort of staged pandemonium, “a tragedy full of frightening things within the spheres of the cosmos” (2.9.13,7f). The material realm is a cosmic gymnasium, full of constant struggle between winners and losers, rich and poor, the unjust and those who bear the brunt of the injustice (2.9.9,1–17). We may be inclined initially to hear in this a complaint about *stagnant* social inequities, which would have been perceived by the opponents as “disorder” because the inequities resulted from no intelligible system of just deserts, but only the accident of birth. We might think initially of the degree to which persons in late antiquity would surely have been conscious of the *constancies* of social status: the conservatism of peasant society in rural areas, the stark verticality separating the relative handful of the very rich at the top from the masses of the very poor at the bottom, the continuity in class from generation to generation.³⁶ This consciousness was probably a part of the complaint, but a consciousness of instances of sudden *changes* in circumstance, including economic and social status, is also prominent in their complaint, judging by what Plotinus tells us about it. Plotinus’s reference in the paragraph in question to the suffering of injustice³⁷ brings to mind the instances of predatory, Mafiosa-style aggression for which there is plentiful attestation in the

72.1). The text goes on to state that the Lord came down to earth “in order to transfer those who believe in Christ from Fate to his Providence (*pronoia*)” (74.2). The notion that Fate can be escaped, that one can be delivered into divine Pronoia, is also a fundamental idea in *ApocryJn*. The distinction between Providence and Fate and the assertion of a Providence which transcends Fate are commonly encountered in Middle Platonic criticisms of Stoic teaching; Apuleius, *De Plat.* 1.12; Ps.-Plutarch, *De fato* 573B, etc.; see Willy Theiler, “Tacitus und die antike Schicksalslehre,” in *Phyllobolia für Peter von der Mühl zum 60. Geburtstag* (Basel: B. Schwabe, 1946), p. 73, n. 4 and pp. 88–90; Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, pp. 208–11, 294–98, 320–26; cf. J. den Boeft, *Calcidius on Fate: His Doctrine and Sources*, *Philosophia Antiqua* 18 (Leiden: Brill, 1970), pp. 8–20.

³⁶Ramsey MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations: 50 B.C. – A.D. 284* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974), pp. 27–101.

³⁷*Enn.* 2.9.9,15–17: “If you suffer injustice, what is that to someone who is immortal? Even if you are murdered, then you have exactly what you want!”

Roman world.³⁸ His mention in the next sentence of the chance of being murdered would not have been regarded by contemporaries as simply a hypothetical but statistically improbable example.³⁹ But one might not only experience instant disaster; there were also plenty of cases of instant fortune. In fact, most people in the Roman world who ascended into massive wealth did so not so much by planned enterprise and business know-how as by chance: sudden legacies from non-relatives were familiar subject-matter when the topic of astrology was addressed.⁴⁰ That one's horoscope might disclose the rough outlines of such possible somersaults in circumstance was widely assumed, but this did not so much provide a demonstration that there was, after all, an intelligible (not to mention moral) order in human circumstances and vicissitudes as it did provide a certain predictability for the manner in which chaos repeated itself.⁴¹

Therefore, when we read in *ApocryJn* of the imposition of Fate by the archons, which binds "with measures and seasons and minutes" (II 28,30f par), we should not too hastily assume that this was intended to evoke a sense of maddening orderliness and regularity. In II 28,15f (but not in BG/III) the bond of Fate is called the "last of the changing bonds" (*thaē emmēre etšbbiaeit*), which seems intended to stress the constant changes produced in human circumstances by Fate. Also in the II/IV recension, the bonds of Fate chain souls in a realm described as "Chaos," ruled by "the angels of poverty and the demons of Chaos" (cf. II 28,11–32 and 30,11–31,22). There is no corresponding reference to Chaos at this point in the BG/III recension, but earlier in this recension we hear of Ialdabaoth's appointment of seven kings to rule over the heavens and give to rule over "the Chaos of the underworld" (BG 41,15; III 17,19f: "the Chaos and the underworld"). The "underworld" (*amnte*) seems to be identified in both versions of *ApocryJn* with life in this world, the corporeal prison in which unenlightened humans suffer in ignorance; it is the dwelling place of those who eat of the poisonous fruit of the archons' tree of life (II 21,17–22,2 par); in the special section in the II/IV recension which recounts the triple descent of Pronoia, it is into "the midst of darkness and the underworld" that Pronoia descends and causes Chaos to shake (*kim*—II 30,11–31,22).

³⁸ MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, pp. 6–12.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4; it is striking how many of the manners of death mentioned by Firmicus Maternus, *Mathesis* 1.9.1, involve violence or sudden catastrophe.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

⁴¹ Note the argument of Firmicus Maternus, *Mathesis* 1.7.1–42, to the effect that there is really no other explanation for the moral chaos in history (the good fortunes of wicked men and the sufferings of the good, for which he gives many examples) than the "chance movements of the stars" (1.7.37).

The heavenly bodies are not separated cleanly from this material realm of chaotic movement and change. Their rulers belong to the company of restless, "incomplete" forces (to use Brown's term) who exercise their tyranny over the cosmos. At least one of the recensions lumps the archontic hosts under the label "robbers" (*lēstai*—II 21,11; there is no parallel for the term in BG 55,11–13, but the Coptic *soone* is found in III 26,22f), a term we find used of them elsewhere (e.g., *SJC* III 107,16). And as the word is used here, the reader would probably not call to mind something like a cat burglar, but rather the sort of slobbering, smut-loving bunch of ruthless and unpredictable cutthroats into whose hands Fate throws Lucius the ass, in Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*. It is from this prison of chaotic disturbance and change that those who belong to the "immovable race" are redeemed. Fate is not considered immutable or inescapable. Fate is transcended through the "setting right" accomplished by Pronoia.

The notion that Pronoia transcends Fate is very familiar in Middle and Neoplatonic sources (see above, n. 35), but the similarity with Middle Platonism here may be even sharper than the mere subordination of Fate to Providence. In II 12,11–13 par, Ialdabaoth combines a special power with each of his archontic authorities, and this list of seven powers is repeated again in II 15,13–23 par: Goodness, Providence (*pronoia*), Divinity, Lordship, Kingdom, Jealousy, Understanding. The version of the list in BG has almost exactly the same group of names, although there is a difference in the order of the first four powers.⁴² Now from this list we can see that the author wants to say that there is a Pronoia operating in the cosmos which is *not* the same as the first and highest Pronoia. It may be that this is not merely a way of ridiculing the claim of the God of Jewish tradition to be the possessor of the supreme Goodness, Pronoia, Divinity, etc., although it is probably at least that. It is also possible that this distinction between a higher Pronoia and a lower Pronoia is related to a similar distinction made by certain Middle Platonists. Pseudo-Plutarch, *De fato*, Apuleius, and later the fourth-century Neoplatonist bishop Nemesius of Emesa, all make use of a rather idiosyncratic triadic division of Pronoia, based on the interpretation of certain passages in Plato's *Timaeus*.⁴³ Pseudo-Plutarch says that the highest and primary Pronoia is the intellection (*noēsis*) or will of the First God, in accordance with which all divine things are arranged (*kekosmētai*) in the best and most beautiful fashion (*De fato* 572F), and which "has begotten Fate" (574B). The reference to the "good" artificer of the universe in *Tim.* 29D–30A is cited as the proof-text (573C–D). The author then suggests that to the

⁴² Cf. A. J. Welburn, "The Identity of the Archons in the 'Apocryphon Johannis,'" *FigChr* 32 (1978): 247f.

⁴³ See Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, pp. 323–26; den Boeft, *Calcidius on Fate*, pp. 15f.

young gods of *Tim.* 42D-E, who created mortals, there belongs a secondary Pronoia which is "begotten together *with* Fate" (574B). As Dillon points out,⁴⁴ this secondary Pronoia seems actually to be identical with Fate. Finally, a third Pronoia "begotten *after* Fate" and "contained within Fate" (574B) is the oversight administered by demons (573F-574A). Apuleius, *De Plat.* 1.12, gives much the same division, although he seems to assign the creation of mortals to the First God, and does not actually refer to a "third *providentia*" by name, but refers only to the responsibility of the demons to be ministers of the gods. Nemesius (*De natura hominis* 44) says that Plato divides Pronoia into three types: the first, that of the First God, exercises providence primarily over the Ideas, and then over the entire universe; a secondary Pronoia, exercised by the secondary gods, oversees common animals, plants and everything involved in birth and decay; the third Pronoia is that exercised by demons who are stationed around the earth, who oversee the affairs of life.

There is a likelihood that the author of *ApocryJn*, like these Middle Platonic sources, has one eye on the *Timaeus* tradition as he constructs his cosmogony. The powers Goodness, Pronoia, etc., are assigned the task of creating Adam (II 15,1-29 par), just as in the case of the young gods in *Tim.* 42D-E and 69Cff. And, like the Middle Platonic sources mentioned above, the *ApocryJn* has an order of spiritual beings beneath the "secondary" order of Ialdabaoth and his powers. Although the two recensions use somewhat different wording, they seem to agree that the Fate produced by the chief archon and his powers is something to which "the gods" and "the angels" and "the demons" and humans are subject (II 28,19f). The points of similarity with the triadic scheme in Pseudo-Plutarch, Apuleius and Nemesius are striking, even though there are obvious differences:

Pseudo-Plutarch	Apuleius	Nemesius	<i>ApocryJn</i>
First Pronoia: = Intellection of First God; "encompasses Fate"	First Providentia: = that of highest God; created mortals	First Pronoia: = that of First God; over Ideas and entire universe	Pronoia of All: = Barbelo, First Thought of the Invisible Spirit
Secondary Pronoia: "encompassed <i>with</i> Fate" or = Fate; = young	Secondary Providentia: belongs to the other gods, the young gods	Secondary Pronoia: belongs to secondary gods, the young gods	Ialdabaoth's Pronoia: along with other powers creates Adam,

⁴⁴ Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, p. 324.

gods of <i>Tim.</i> , who created mortals	of <i>Tim.</i>	of <i>Tim.</i>	and later brings Fate into being
Third Pronoia: administered by demons, "encompassed by Fate"	Demons as ministers of the gods	Third Pronoia: belongs to demons	God, angels, demons, subject to Fate

I have already mentioned earlier in this chapter that the realm of "standing aeons" in which Barbelo, the Pronoia of the All, has preeminence is a version of the Platonic realm of Ideas, which can be compared with Nemesius's comment about the first Pronoia. Like Pseudo-Plutarch, *ApocryJn* has a third order of beings who are encompassed within the bonds of Fate, although, like Apuleius, *ApocryJn* does not actually mention a third Pronoia. And in *ApocryJn* Fate is not begotten by the first Pronoia, as it is in Pseudo-Plutarch, but by the secondary powers.

The triadic division of Pronoia found in the Middle Platonic sources mentioned has been thought by some scholars to have been peculiar to a "school" of the Platonist Gaius. Certainly the differences between the overall scheme in *ApocryJn* and that found in Apuleius *et al.* are significant enough to caution against any hasty connection of *ApocryJn* with a "school of Gaius," which itself is clouded with enough uncertainties.⁴⁵ But the comparison does point to a philosophical context to which the treatment of Fate and the higher Pronoia in *ApocryJn* seems very closely related.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 266–340.

⁴⁶ Pheme Perkins, "On the Origin of the World (CG II,5): A Gnostic Physics," *VigChr* 34 (1980): 36–46, had already pointed out the similarity between the threefold division of providence found in Ps.-Plutarch, *et al.*, and what she identifies as a threefold division of providence in the gnostic tractate *On the Origin of the World*. I have now attempted to work through this question more fully, with respect to both *ApocryJn* and *OrigWorld*, in "Higher Providence, Lower Providences and Fate in Gnosticism and Middle Platonism," in R. T. Wallis, ed., *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism* (forthcoming), and I am now inclined to draw even more attention to the fact that Apuleius never really mentions a "third providence," a silence that is shared by *ApocryJn*, *OrigWorld* (on this detail I am in disagreement with Perkins), and *SJC* (see below, Chapter VI). And most recently, Michel Tardieu, in his commentary on the Berlin Codex, *Écrits Gnostiques: Codex de Berlin, Sources Gnostiques et Manichéennes I* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1984), arrives at similar conclusions about the location of *ApocryJn*'s theory of providences within the context of Platonic theories like that in Ps.-Plutarch, *De fato*. Prof. Tardieu informed me of this during the discussion following my oral presentation of the paper mentioned above, in March, 1984. But unfortunately, a copy of his book itself has reached me too late to be treated here with the careful attention it deserves.

The BG/III recension refers to the higher Pronoia as the "immovable Pronoia" (BG 75,2f // III 39,4f), from which the descended angels led humans astray. Thus, the same term *asaleutos* which is found in the phrase "immovable race" may also be applied to Pronoia. The II/IV recension never calls Pronoia "immovable," but in about the same place in the text where the BG/III recension refers to Pronoia in this way, the II/IV version has some special material of its own: the triple-descent of Pronoia (II 30,11–31,22 par). And here, although Pronoia is not called "immovable," Pronoia's descent is said to cause the foundations of Chaos to "shake" (*kim*). And earlier in II/IV there is another reference to the trembling (*srōt*) of the aeon of Ialdabaoth and the shaking (*kim*) of the foundation of the abyss (II 14,24–26), at the revelation from the "perfect, complete Pronoia" (II 14,20). As I have pointed out in Chapter One (see above, pp. 9f), this shaking at the appearance of the divine is a version of a very ancient theophany motif, and it is possible that whoever is responsible for this language in II/IV is intending to turn upside down the theme from Jewish tradition of the creator whose theophany creates shaking and who keeps his people and his city immovable. If one wishes to be kept "immovable," it is not by trusting in the creator of the world that this can be achieved, but by being "set right" by Pronoia, the one who *truly* belongs to the realm beyond movement and change.

G. Summary

Apart from the use of the phrase immovable race, the *ApocryJn* shares with *Zost* certain other features in its development of the theme of stability. In both cases there is what appears to be the employment of "heavenly court" language, the description of entities "standing" in solemn stillness before the most transcendent being, a motif particularly reminiscent of certain Jewish apocalyptic texts. But in both cases this heavenly court language has taken on distinctly *philosophical* overtones. "To stand" does not merely designate a reverent posture, but the lack of participation by noetic entities in movement and change. The recognition of how significant this Platonic technical terminology is in both texts is crucial to an understanding of what both texts mean by "immovable." If the term *asaleutos* is in fact the Greek term used throughout these two texts in the expression "immovable race," then its context in *ApocryJn* would suggest that the term is being used just like the more commonly encountered *akinētos* is employed in Platonic texts.

There are also significant differences between *ApocryJn* and *Zost*. There is missing from *ApocryJn* the application of the "standing" language to an ascended visionary. I do think that the standing of the gnostic in the aeonic realm is in fact the implied soteriological expectation. The "setting right" of the deficiency will have as its ultimate result the establishment

in the third and fourth aeons of the "souls of the holy ones" and the souls of those who repent only later. These form a part of the aeonic "court" which stands and glorifies. Nevertheless, *ApocryJn* does not talk of the achievement of "standing" by the individual *now*, by means of a mystical *anachôrêsis* or withdrawal, through successive levels within the Transcendent. While the stability which is idealized in *Zost* does demand transcendence of the passions, and presumably ascetic denial, most of the text is devoted to a description of the dizzying elevations which still lie beyond once one has left the body and its passions behind; there is attention to the sequence of increasingly sublime levels in which one may "stand at rest." Except for allusions at the beginning and end of *Zost*, the disturbance and noise of the world of motion is heard by the reader only faintly, somewhere far below. In *Zost*, to belong to the "immovable race" seems to imply the ability to ascend and descend by contemplation back and forth through this vast expanse of stillness and perfection, where even perception (*aisthêsis*) is immovable (*atkim*—48,26) and where even things which are said to be "moving" are at the same time "standing at rest" (74,15f—see above, p. 71). The achievement of stability involves a rather extensive initiation ("baptism") into the peculiar characteristics of each level of the Transcendent and how each is related to the other. As described in *Zost*, the ascent is something like being introduced by stages to individual parts of a subtle and very complex piece of machinery, the peculiar functions of the sub-groups among the parts when put together in units, and the nature of the whole machine when fully assembled—a visionary such as Zostrianos has become adept at disassembling and reassembling the machine with ease (cf. *Zost* 22,1–17).

In *ApocryJn*, rather than the contemplative discipline of an elaborate visionary ascent, we have an *ascetic contest* waged by those on whom spiritual power has been poured out, against the restless and chaotic movements of the passions and the archontic forces who arouse them. "To stand at rest" is presumably something that one will do only after finally being "saved" and "taken up to the rest (*anapausis*) of the aeons" (II 26,30–32 par). For now, there is no mystical *anachôrêsis* allowing one to stand in the Self-begotten, only the power of the Spirit which "sets one right," and allows one to avoid all evil, concentrate solely on Incorruptibility, leave aside all passions, abandon sexual intercourse, and endure everything while still wearing the flesh (II 25,23–26,7 par). This transcendence of passion is at the same time the transcendence of "self-will." One who would leave aside all passions while still in the flesh must leave aside all defective theology resulting from Wisdom's self-willed effort to produce a replica of the Divine. The Divine is not to be defined, it is to be glorified. If one is to be restored one day to the "rest" among the aeons, one must join already in the aeonic choral glorification of the Invisible Spirit and Barbelo. It is a matter of "turning toward" the

Transcendent rather than an “ascent through” it, and in that respect *ApocryJn*’s description of the recovery of stability finds more parallels in Middle Platonic sources, while the “standing” of Zostrianos in the Transcendent found some of its closest parallels in Neoplatonic writings. In the Middle Platonist Albinus, for example, we have no description of the soul ascending to stand at rest in the Transcendent, but rather the following simple paraphrase of *Phaedo* 79C-D: “Therefore the soul, when it is directed toward the sensible by means of the body, becomes dizzy and confused as though it were drunk; but when, alone unto itself, it is directed toward the noetic (*pros tō noetō*), it is established and is at rest (*kathistatai kai èremei*)” (*Epit.* 25.1).⁴⁷ In *ApocryJn* one who has been “set right” is properly aligned, as it were, with the noetic, the realm of the “standing aeons.” This alignment produces enormous power to be used by the ascetic against the unstable, disruptive cosmic powers who control the realm of constant change and movement outside the pleroma.

⁴⁷Cf. Maximus of Tyre, *Or.* 10.3a-b: When the soul turns away from the pleasures and sufferings (*hèdonôn kai pathêmatôn*) of the body, and from the confusion (*tarachou*) surrounding the body, and turns its mind inward upon itself (*epistrepsasa eis heautên ton noun*), then it experiences the Truth itself, and serenity and rest (*galênês kai èremias*).

CHAPTER FIVE

IMMOVABILITY IN *THE GOSPEL OF THE EGYPTIANS*

In spite of several points of contact between the *GEgypt* and the other texts which I have discussed as far as their employment of the motif of stability is concerned, there are also some differences to be observed. On the one hand, there does seem to be a general division in *GEgypt*, comparable to what we have seen in the other texts, between the invisible realm of Rest and the cosmos of Chaos which is full of disturbance. There is an implicit contrast, at least in the Codex III version of *GEgypt*, between the "mutable" and the "immutable." Thus, we have a familiar division which could be seen as related to a Platonic model. On the other hand, the author of *GEgypt* seems to know nothing of the technical term *hestanai*, which has been so visible in the other texts, and in fact he does not even seem committed to a model in which the Transcendent is a realm with a complete absence of motion. If it was possible to see the impress of Platonic philosophical distinctions between Rest and Movement, even to the use of technical terminology, in *3StSeth*, *Zost* and *ApocryJn*, such markings are much fainter in *GEgypt*. Although "immovable" in this text does at least have certain of the same Platonic connotations which it has in the others, it approximates less in this document the more abstract philosophical usage of *akinētos*.

I will not discuss in detail the very elaborate account found in the first part of *GEgypt* of the unfolding of the aeonic realm, but only give a brief outline of the general features relevant for the present study.¹ The overall organization of the transcendent realm in *GEgypt* involves five "ogdoads," or groupings of eight entities. The first three ogdoads are those of the Father, Mother and Son. The ogdoad of the Father consists of Thought (*ennoia*), Word (*logos*), Incorruptibility (*aphtharsia*), Eternal Life, Will (*thelēma*), Mind (*nous*), Foreknowledge (*prognōsis*), and the male-female Father (III 42,5–11 par). The members in the ogdoads of the Mother and Son are more difficult to make out, in part due to the lacunae in the manuscripts at this point (III 42,11–43,4 par). The last two ogdoads are composed of entities belonging to the four aeons which are connected with the divine Self-begotten, the four aeons found also in *ApocryJn* and *Zost*. Each of the four aeons receives a luminary and each luminary receives a consort—thus, the fourth ogdoad; then each luminary receives

¹ See Böhlig-Wisse, *The Gospel of the Egyptians*, pp. 24–50, and the commentary *ad loc.*

a minister, and each minister a consort—thus, the final ogdoad (III 51,14–53,12):

	Fourth Ogdoad		Fifth Ogdoad	
	luminary	— consort	minister	— consort
1st aeon	Harmozel	Grace (<i>charis</i>)	Gamaliel	Memory (<i>mnēmē</i>)
2nd aeon	Oroiael	Perception (<i>aisthēsis</i>)	Gabriel	Love (<i>agapē</i>)
3rd aeon	Davithē	Intelligence (<i>sunesis</i>)	Samlo	Peace (<i>eirēnē</i>)
4th aeon	Eleleth	Understanding (<i>phronēsis</i>)	Abrasax	Eternal Life

“Thus,” says the author, “the five ogdoads were completed, a total of forty, as an incomprehensible power” (III 53,10–12). Although this arrangement does not correspond exactly to what was found in *ApocryJn* and *Zost*, the general parallels are readily apparent. Here also we find Adamas, his son Seth, and the seed of Seth dwelling in the first, second, and third aeons, respectively (III 65,12–20). Like *Zost* (6,21), *GEgypt* says that the souls of Seth’s offspring dwell in the fourth aeon (III 65,20–22). (*ApocryJn* differs from both on this point, placing in the fourth aeon the separate group of souls who repented belatedly (II 9,18–23 par), and on this I will have more to say in chapter VIII.)

Now although the emanation of this host of aeonic entities is described in *GEgypt* in many respects very much like the related account in *ApocryJn*, there is completely absent any use of the “standing” terminology. We hear of entities coming forth and “glorifying” the prior aeons, but never that they “stand,” or “stand before.” Of course, it is not as though this terminology is by any means a *sine qua non* for Platonic influence. We have “card-carrying” Platonists who never use *hestanai* as a technical term for “to be at rest” (e.g., Albinus). But it is noteworthy that in two of the texts which use the immovable race designation (cf. *SJC*, discussed in next chapter) this philosophical term for stability is quite lacking, while it is prominent in the other three. *GEgypt* does speak of stability in the aeonic realm, but it is with the term *mton*, “to rest,” which more than likely translates the Greek *anapauesthai*. The “thrice-male child,” a somewhat ambiguous figure who appears early in the account in connection with the first three ogdoads, is said to “rest” in the Doxomedon-aeon, which is evidently a kind of throne room that envelops the light world (III 43,8–44,4 par). In a portion of *GEgypt*, for which only the text in IV survives, we hear of the coming forth of the Self-begotten Word and his establishment of the four aeons which will eventually form the fourth and fifth ogdoads (IV 59,29–60,22). Even the surviving text in IV is very fragmentary here, but there may be a reference to the “place where the Human rests” (IV 60,27f). Because of the fragmentary state of the text it is not clear where this “place” is, but it is somewhere in the aeonic realm. Much later in *GEgypt*, when there is a

discussion of the ultimate salvation of the race of Seth, we read of certain entities who have charge over "the entrance into the rest (*anapausis*) of eternal life" (III 65,3-5), which presumably refers to the places in the four aeons where the saved will rest. A few lines later we have an enumeration of the four aeons, with the assignment of Adamas, Seth, the sons of Seth, and the souls of the sons to the first through fourth aeons, respectively (see the chart above), and in IV it is said that the sons of Seth "rest" in Davithe (IV 77,16-18; the parallel in II 65,19f simply says that Davithe is the place of the sons of Seth). The text of IV breaks off in the middle of its mention of the souls of the sons, but the parallel text in III 65,21f refers to "Eleleth, the place where the souls of the sons rest." Finally, in the hymn of redemption which begins two pages later, the speaker at one point invokes the deity with the words: "O Aeon, Aeon, God of Silence, I honor you completely! You are my place of rest! O Son ès ès o e . . ." (III 67,15-17; the parallel in IV 80,3 seems to mention instead the "rest of the Son"). Clearly the aeonic realm is regarded as a place of rest. The participation in this "rest" by the race of Seth is probably part of what is meant by this race being called "immovable."

Somewhat surprisingly, however, the author at one point in the text ascribes something very unlike "rest" to the aeonic realm. Having recounted the emanation of all the entities which comprise the last two ogdoads (III 51,14-53,12 par), and the praise which the Word, the Self-begotten, then offered to the prior aeons (III 53,12-54,11 par), the text continues: "Then everything shook (*kim*), and trembling (*siôt*) seized the incorruptible (*aphthartos*) ones" (III 54,11-13). This shaking and trembling is accompanied by the coming forth of the "thrice-male child"² and the "whole greatness of the great Christ," and the filling out of the population of the four aeons so that the inhabitants form the "incorruptible, spiritual assembly (*ekklēsia*)" in the four aeons of the Self-begotten (III 54,13-55,16 par). Now the "shaking" here is easily recognizable as the shaking which accompanies a theophany. Unlike the longer recension of *ApocryJn*, however, where the theophanies of Pronoia caused the archons and the foundations of Chaos to tremble or shake (see above, p. 138), here it is a matter of the aeonic realm itself "shaking" and "trembling." To be sure, at this point in *GEgypt* the race of Seth, which is said to be immovable, has not yet appeared in the four aeons. The race has been mentioned (III 51,8f par; 54,8-11 par) as though it were a future expectation, but it has not actually come into being. Seth's request for his "seed" or race (III 55,16-56,22) does not come until right after the section about the shaking of everything and the increase of the "assembly" in the four aeons. Perhaps we are to understand that such shaking is only

² So the version in IV 66,2f. III 54,13f has "the three male children." On the variation, see Bohlig-Wisse, *The Gospel of the Egyptians*, pp. 43-45.

a prelude to the appearance of Seth's race, and would never be ascribed to that race itself. In any case, compared with the emphasis on the quiet stability in the aeonic realm which is found in the texts which I have examined in Chapters Two to Four, the introduction of shaking and trembling into the realm of the "incorruptible ones" in *GEgypt* is rather unexpected.

Unlike *ApocryJn*, *GEgypt* gives no account of a "mistake of Sophia," and nothing comparable to the first "movement" of Sophia which in *ApocryJn* stands out in rather stark contrast to the stability of the standing aeons. Sophia is mentioned by name in *GEgypt* only twice (in both cases, the text in IV has not survived): near the end, where she is mentioned along with the Invisible Spirit, his Son, the eternal light, an incorruptible consort, and Barbelo, and here she is called "the incorruptible Sophia" (III 69,2f); and in III 57,1, where the text of *GEgypt* first begins to talk about the material cosmos. The archons of the material cosmos, which is called here "Chaos and the underworld" as in *ApocryJn* II 30,11–31,22, do not come into being because of Sophia's misguided initiative, but rather by a decision of the luminaries of the four aeons: "After five thousand years the great luminary Eleleth said, 'Let someone rule over Chaos and the underworld'" (III 56,22–25). The next page of the manuscript has a vertical break down the middle of the page, and only one half has survived, but it can be seen from what is preserved that through the instrumentality of "material (*hylikē*) Sophia" the luminaries of the Self-begotten and their ministers cause archontic angels to come into being, along with cosmic aeons over which those angels are to rule (III 56,26–58,22). The chief angel, Sakla, joins with a great demon, Nebruel, and they beget twelve subordinate angels whose names correspond closely to the twelve authorities begotten by Ialdabaoth in *ApocryJn* II 10,28–11,4. There follows the familiar gnostic motif involving the "vain claim"³ by Sakla that he is the sole originator of all things, the announcement from above that "the Man exists and the Son of the Man," and the creation of a creature (*plasma*) by the archons, copied after the image of the aeonic Human (III 58,22–59,9).

Thus the problematic is set up to which the soteriological efforts of Seth will be applied for the remainder of *GEgypt*. A "deficiency" (*hysterēma*) has emerged (III 59,18). The seed of Seth, when it comes into the world governed by Sakla, will be living in a world of chaos and disruption inflicted by cosmic powers, quite contrary to the character of the aeonic realm of rest. In that much, the tension between stability and instability in *GEgypt* bears a strong similarity to what was found in *ApocryJn*.

³ I borrow the phrase used for this motif by Nils Dahl, "The Arrogant Archon"; cf. George W. MacRae, "The Ego-Proclamations in Gnostic Sources," in *The Trial of Jesus*, ed. E. Bammel, Studies in Biblical Theology, 2nd series, 13 (London: SCM Press, 1970), pp. 122–34.

But *GEgypt* lacks the tidy etiology of movement found in *ApocryJn*, which in Platonic fashion consistently marks off the immovability of the noetic realm from the first emergence of movement in the psychical.

The sowing of the seed of Seth into the world ages governed by the thirteen angels (Sakla + the twelve subordinate angels) initiates a series of conflicts between the seed and the cosmic forces. What the author seems to say is that in past history the seed of Seth has come to birth in human beings who have repented of the error of the archon, kept themselves virgins, and committed themselves to Truth and Justice. This I take to be the meaning of the enigmatic passage in III 60,2–61,2:

Then the great angel Hormos came to prepare the seed of Seth, by means of the virgins of the defiled sowing of this aeon, in a Logos-begotten (*logogenēs*), holy vessel, through the Holy Spirit. Then the great Seth came; he brought his seed and he sowed it in the aeons which had been produced, 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, which he named Sodom. This is the race which came forth by means of Edokla. For through the word, she brought forth Truth and Justice, the beginning of the seed of eternal life which exists with those who will endure because of the knowledge of their emanation (*aporrhōia*). This is the seed of the great, incorruptible race which has come forth through three worlds to the world.

I will have more to say about this passage in Chapter Seven, where I will further defend my interpretation of the reference to “virgins.” For the purposes of the present discussion of the theme of stability/instability in *GEgypt*, I need only point out that the author obviously wants to contrast the resolute endurance in past history of the “great, incorruptible, immovable race” with the forces of instability unleashed against it. Foreseeing that the Devil (*diabolos*, mentioned rather unexpectedly in III 61,17 as the archenemy of the race of Seth) would devise persecutions of the race, Seth requests and receives for the race an army of 400 angels to guard “the great, incorruptible race, its fruit, and the great men of the great Seth, from the time and period of Truth and Justice until the consummation of the aeon and its archons, those whom the great judges have condemned to death” (III 62,17–24). As I mentioned in Chapter One (see above, p. 12), the portrayal of the race here as a group of holy warriors accompanied by an angelic army may suggest that the use of the designation “immovable” by the author of *GEgypt* is related to the theme from Jewish literature of the people of God who are protected by Yahweh from being shaken or moved by enemies or any other disaster. The race is called the “great, incorruptible, immovable race of the great mighty men of the great Seth” (III 59,13f), or “the great race, the incorruptible mighty men of the great Seth” (III 64,23f). The reference to these “mighty men” (*enrōme enjoore*) reminds one of the *gibborim*, the

understood as wandering stars. There is another possible explanation for this language about being subject to movement: The text may well be a reference to potential members of the race of Seth who were under the sway of the thirteen aeons, and who were therefore led to and fro by these powers. The wording is reminiscent of the tormented movement of Sophia in *ApocryIn* (see Chapter Four). In the text of III, those who are led to and fro are finally, through the redemptive activity of Seth, established (*kuroun*—III 64,3f),⁷ and the powers which tormented them are nailed.

The interpretation of the crucifixion as a bringing of fixity or stability is not unique to this writing. I mentioned in Chapter Four some Valentinian instances of this idea (see above, p. 128). In the Valentinian speculation in Iren. *Adv. haer.* 1.3.5, Horos is also called "Cross" insofar as he "makes stable and establishes" (*hedrazei kai stērizēi*). In Hippolytus's account of Valentinianism, there is the similar comment that Horos is also called "Cross" because he is "fixed unwaveringly and immovably" (*pepēgen aclinōs kai ametakinētōs*—*Ref.* 6.31.6). In the *Martyrdom of Andrew*,⁸ Andrew hails the cross on which he is about to be crucified as something which is "fixed in the cosmos in order to establish the unstable things" (*pepēxai gar en tō kosmō ta astata stērixēs*—I.14). And still another example which illustrates how widespread this use of the cross imagery seems to have been is the comment of Ignatius of Antioch: "I

⁷ Hans-Martin Schenke, "The Phenomenon and Significance of Gnostic Sethianism," in Layton, *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, vol. 2, p. 605, has objected to the interpretation of *kurou* here as a Greek verb. Schenke argues that *kurou* here in the III text "has to be interpreted in light of the clear parallel *wōsfou*" in IV 75,19f, which means something like "leave idle, barren," or "annul" (Crum 492b–493a). Schenke thinks that the *-ou* ending in *kurou* must be taken as a third person Coptic suffix, and that the *kur-* must therefore be understood as "a corrupt form of a Coptic status pronominalis (e.g., from *kōrf* or *kōōre*)."
He therefore concludes that the passage must mean: "he nailed the powers of the thirteen aeons to the cross and thereby (or: by it, viz., the cross) brought them to naught." But Schenke's interpretation leaves us with a new difficulty. As long as *wōsfou* in the IV version can be taken in the fairly neutral sense of "render idle," or, as Böhlig and Wisse translate it, "render motionless," then the positive statement which follows about the arming with the armor of knowledge is not as shocking as it is if we have just been told (as in Schenke's rendering) that these powers have been "brought to naught," not just to a standstill. Furthermore, unless we made still another emendation in III 64,5, removing the object marker *en* from *ennetage*, ("He nailed the powers of the thirteen aeons and brought them to naught. Those who are led to and fro he armed with an armor, etc.") then we would have the same problem in the Codex III version as well. And finally, there is the further question as to whether we really are forced to view *kurou* as a corrupt form rather than as the Greek verb *kuroun*, especially since a few lines earlier in the text of III we find what surely can be taken as a usage of the Greek verb *kuroun*: "... the Father who preexisted with his Pronoia and established (*afkurou*) through her the holy baptism" (III 63,21–24)!

⁸ R. A. Lipsius and M. Bonnet, eds., *Acta apostolorum apocrypha*, part 2, vol. 1 (1898; reprint: Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1959), pp. 46–64.

have observed that you are fully furnished with immovable (*akinêto*) faith, just as if you were nailed to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, both in flesh and spirit, and fixed (*hêdrasmenous*) in love by the blood of Christ" (*Smyr.* 1.1).⁹

The reference in *GEgypt* to the nailing of the powers of the thirteen aeons and the establishment of "those who are moved to and fro" could mean the redemption of individuals from the control of astrological Fate. In III 65,12–22 par we find a cataloguing of the four luminaries of the four aeons, and the entities present in each. The second, the aeon of Oroiael, is called the "place of the great Seth and Jesus who pertains to Life, and he who came forth and crucified (*stauroun*) that which is in the Law." This could be an allusion to Colossians 2:14, where the law is said to have been nailed to the cross, or it could be that both *GEgypt* and Colossians draw from a common or similar tradition. The fact that in III 64,3–9 par it is a matter of nailing the powers of the thirteen aeons, while in III 65,12–22 the theme of crucifixion is connected with the Law, may indicate that the author connects the Law with the cosmic astrological forces of the thirteen aeons. Cosmic/astrological conceptions of the Torah are attested elsewhere, and some such teaching seems to underlie the controversies in Colossians and in Paul's letter to the Galatians.¹⁰

Whoever is intended by the words, "those who move to and fro," these are also said to be "armed with an armor of knowledge" (64,6f). That this does actually refer to redeemed gnostics is further suggested by the appearance of the same language about "arming" some lines later, in a hymn of praise which possibly formed a part of a sacramental liturgy (III 66,8–68,1 par). After the opening portion of the hymn, which is made up largely of combinations of letters representing some type of esoteric speech (see below, Chapter Eight, pp. 191f), we find the following:

This great name of yours is upon me, O Self-begotten one, without deficiency, you who are not outside of me. I see you, who are invisible to everyone. For who will be able to comprehend you in another language? Now, therefore, I have known you. *I have mixed myself with the Immutable (pete meššibe), I have armed myself with an armor of light. I have become light.* For the Mother was in that place because of the beauty of grace. Because of this I was formed in the circle of the riches of light which is in my bosom, which forms the numerous begotten ones in the light into which no accusation reaches. I will truly glorify you,

⁹On the later use of the theme of the nailing to the cross in connection with the fixity of the stylite or hesychast, see Derwas Chitty, *The Desert a City* (London: Mowbrays, 1966), pp. 25f.

¹⁰Cf. Eduard Lohse, *Colossians*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), pp. 96–98, 127–31; Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), pp. 213–19; Lloyd Gaston, "Angels and Gentiles in Early Judaism and in Paul" *Scriptures religieuses/Studies in Religion* 11 (1982): 65–75.

since I have contained you, *sou iēs ide aeīō aeie ois ō aiōn aiōn* God of silence, I honor you fully. *You are my place of rest*, O Son *ēs ēs o e*, the formless one who exists in the formless ones, who exists, raising up the human in whom you will purify me into your life, according to your ceaseless name. For this reason the fragrance of life is within me. I have mixed it in water after the pattern of all the archons, in order that I might live with you in the peace of the holy ones, you who truly, truly exist for ever.

The IV recension, very poorly preserved at this point, seems to differ from the above in several respects. Here I am concerned primarily with two statements in the hymn: "I have mixed myself with the Immutable . . . You are my place of rest." The IV parallel to the first statement is reconstructed by Böhlig and Wisse as follows: *anok tinou aimou [it mn pek] iōče*, "I now have mixed with your steadfastness." The term *iōče* is problematic, and the interpretation given by Böhlig and Wisse assumes that it is a (hitherto unattested) form of *iōk*, "be strong, firm."¹¹ Perhaps one might also explain the term as a form of *iōōče*, "to be fixed, joined," which is sometimes spelled *iōče* in Sahidic and Subachmimic, and which often translates the Greek verb *pēgnunai*.¹² The term *pete meššibe*, "that which is immutable," would presumably correspond to something like *atrepton* in Greek, and therefore sounds much more like a description of the Transcendent found often in Platonic texts.¹³ If, as Böhlig and Wisse argue, the version in IV is to be preferred as the more original, then the wording "that which is immutable" in III may be a later alteration which attempts to convey the idea of fixity or steadfastness by means of a more "philosophical" term. The IV version of the statement, "You are my place of rest, O son . . ." may have mentioned instead "the resting place of the Son" (*[pma]ēnmtōn ēnt[e p]šē[re]*—IV 80,3f).

In spite of the genuine difficulties which stand in the way of a conclusive argument as to the original wording in the hymn, it is clear that the hymn intends to speak of a stability which has been achieved, and as such it stands out as a passage of great significance for the present study. Given its immediate context in *GEgypt*, in association with the discussion

¹¹ See Crum 403a-b.

¹² Crum 464a-465a. The verb *pēgnunai* and its cognates appear occasionally in contexts quite relevant for the present discussion. For example, in the Valentinian material in *Iren. Adv. haer.* 1.1.1ff which I have discussed earlier (see above, p. 128), Christ and the Holy Spirit appear for the "fixing" (*pēxis*) and "establishment" (*stērigmos*) of all the aeons (*Adv. haer.* 1.2.5).

¹³ Cf. Philo, *Cher.* 18-20; *Leg. all.* 1.51, *et passim*; Albinus, *Epit.* 9.3: The Ideas are thought of God and are eternal and immutable (*atrepta*); Numenius, *Frag.* 8 (des Places): Being (*to on*) is *atrepton*; Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 2.51.6; note particularly *Strom.* 1.163.6 and 7.57.5, where it is also a matter of the immutability of *light* (see above, p. 77), as in *GEgypt* III 67.2-4: "I have mixed myself with the Immutable. I have armed myself with an armor of light. I have become light."

of a baptism in which initiates are sealed so that they will never taste death (III 64,9–66,8 par), it would seem to be a hymnic confession somehow connected with an initiation rite. The confession that the initiate has been mixed with the stability of the deity is similar in theme to a Valentinian initiation formula in Iren. *Adv. haer.* 1.21.3, in which the initiate says,

I have been established (*estèrigmai*), I have been redeemed, and I redeem my soul from this aeon and from everything associated with it, in the name of Iao, who redeemed his soul unto redemption in Christ, the Living One.

At least in III, there is an implicit contrast between “the mutable” and “the immutable,” and the initiate escapes from the former into the latter. This typically Platonic distinction between mutable and immutable is probably a commentary on what the author and readers of the III recension will have heard in the designation “immovable race.” For the IV recension, and possibly for the original version of the hymn, any particularly Platonic element is absent. This version also could be understood to contain a commentary on the immovability of those belonging to the race of Seth, but it would amount to a somewhat more general statement about the initiate’s being mixed with the steadfastness or firmness of the deity.

In *GEgypt*, therefore, we have a use of the immovable race designation which is less connected with the abstract Platonic division between Rest and Movement than that in *Zost*, *3StSeth*, or *ApocryJn*. Certainly the absence of the technical term “to stand” must be seen as a notable difference between *GEgypt* and these others, given the fact that the author does want to speak of the rest or stability in the Transcendent. And while one does find in Platonic texts the idea of more perfect forms of movement in the noetic realm (rotation, etc.), the ascription of shaking and trembling to the Transcendent which we find in *GEgypt* would be rather unexpected in an author who was conversant with, and was attempting to incorporate, descriptions of noetic stability like those in Platonic sources which I have quoted and discussed in earlier chapters.

In addition, the instability overcome by the immovable race in *GEgypt* is of a sort which is less suggestive of an interest in typically Platonic distinctions between Movement and Rest. I am thinking particularly of the striking absence in *GEgypt* of any explicit development of the theme of unstable passions. When compared with *Zost* and *ApocryJn*, *GEgypt* seems much more concerned with instability in externalized terms. “Immovability” in this text is primarily the quality of endurance possessed by a warrior race engaged in battle with cosmic powers. Now as I pointed out in the preceding chapter, the existence of external cosmic foes is also given a prominent role in *ApocryJn*. But in *ApocryJn* there is, I believe, a certain

introspective consciousness of the internal mechanisms of instability that is lacking in *GEgypt*. In *ApocryJn*, the instability excited by the archons and demons takes its characteristic form in the churning nausea of deep-seated passions (grief, fear, desire, anger, etc.)—as difficult to root out as ingested bacteria. These turbulent passions, aroused deep within the individual, had to be eradicated in order for one to be perfect and therefore “immovable.” The descent of Sophia, her misplaced enthusiasm for producing an image of the divine, the passion which she experienced as a result, and the agitated to and fro movement which accompanied that passion, serve in *ApocryJn* as a paradigm for the soul’s entanglement in passion. None of this development of the theme of passion is found in *GEgypt*. There is no passion of Sophia, so far as one can tell from what remains of the text. If I am correct in my analysis, there is a reference in *GEgypt* to redemption from a condition of “movement to and fro,” but it is not linked with passion, as it was in *ApocryJn*, but more likely with the condition of being under the control of astrological forces. The immovability of the race in *GEgypt* evidently has little to do with an introspective wrestling with tumultuous passions within the soul. One might assume that such a struggle is at least implied by the idealization of virginity in this text. But it is interesting that the author shows no obvious consciousness of this internal struggle, and instead locates the forces of instability almost completely outside the individual, in the persecuting archons whose schemes ultimately prove insufficient to destroy the great, incorruptible, immovable race of the “mighty men” of Seth. It may be possible to see in the more internalized, passion-oriented instability of *ApocryJn* a feature that is related to what seems to be a greater sensitivity in this writing to the difficult process which the achievement of stability may pose for some persons, how it takes longer for some than for others, and how some may simply give up altogether (see below, pp. 166f). In contrast, in *GEgypt* immovability is portrayed in rather unproblematic terms: The forces of instability seem to be deflected like glancing blows off the hard and impervious shell of the immovable, mighty men of Seth.

CHAPTER SIX

IMMOVABILITY IN *THE SOPHIA OF JESUS CHRIST*

The fifth text which employs the immovable race designation, *SJC*, presents a much more consistent distinction between the unchanging aeonic realm and the world of change and movement than did *GEgypt*. In this respect, *SJC* is much closer to the more consistently Platonizing treatment of stability/instability which is found in *Zost* or *ApocryJn*. However, like *GEgypt*, *SJC* totally lacks the use of *hestanai*. Either the author does not know the technical use of the term in connection with stability, or is not interested in it. Admittedly, those sections of *SJC* where we would have anticipated the "standing" terminology (i.e., the sections describing the emanation of the aeonic realm) are largely determined in their content by the source being used by the author—probably a document very much like the tractate *Eugnostos the Blessed*, which is also found in the Nag Hammadi collection (CG III,3 and V,1).¹ Still, if the author of *SJC* did know of the philosophical usage of *hestanai* to express stability, he or she evidently did not consider it important enough to be introduced into the redaction of the source.

If the use of other stability/instability language does give us any clue as to what the term "immovable" connotes for the author, this is probably to be found above all in the sharp contrast between the aeonic realm of incorruptibility and the "cosmos of Chaos." Throughout the account of the unfolding of the aeons, the author presents a picture of rest and unchangeableness. The initial description of the highest being, the Father of All, or First-Father (*propatōr*), involves a series of thirty or so attributes, predominantly negative attributes (III 94,5–95,19), very much like

¹ On the complex question of the literary relationship between *SJC* and *Eugnostos*, I accept the general conclusion of Martin Krause that *SJC* is literarily dependent upon a document equivalent to, or very close to, *Eugnostos*; Martin Krause, "Das literarische Verhältnis des Eugnostosbriefes zur Sophia Jesu Christi: Zur Auseinandersetzung der Gnosis mit dem Christentum," *Mullus: Festschrift Theodor Klauser*, JAC, Ergänzungsband 1 (Westfalen: Aschendorfsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1964), 215–23. The problem is also discussed by Douglas M. Parrott, "The Significance of the Letter of Eugnostos and the Sophia of Jesus Christ for the Understanding of the Relation Between Gnosticism and Christianity," in *The Society of Biblical Literature, One Hundred Seventh Annual Meeting, Seminar Papers* (Society of Biblical Literature, 1971), vol. 2, pp. 397–416.

Unless there is a significant difference between the two manuscripts for *SJC*, and except for passages in which only the text of BG survives, I will give the citation from the Codex III text.

similar lists of attributes in Middle Platonic descriptions of the First God:² ineffable, immortal, eternal, unbegotten, without beginning, nameless, boundless, incomprehensible, etc. One of the things that is said about him is that "he is immutable good" (*ouagathos pe emefšibe*—III 95,10), or, "he is good and does not change" (*ouagathos pe awo mefšibe*—BG 85,14f). This most probably corresponds to the *atreptos*, "immutable," or *ou trepomenos*, "not changing," very common in Platonic writers for the description of the Transcendent.³

The first stage in the emanation of the aeonic realm begins with the First-Father beholding himself in a mirror, and thereby confronting himself as his own image (III 98,22–99,13 par). This initial mirror-imaging is followed by the appearance of a "whole multitude of confronting, self-begotten ones" (III 99,13–15 par). One gets the impression of something like the sudden emergence of an infinite multitude as one steps between two facing mirrors. Of this multitude of self-begotten ones the writer says that "their race (*genos*) is called 'the race (*genea*) without a kingdom over it'" (III 99,17–19 par). Although *SJC* does not explicitly make the identification, it is possible that the author means to equate this race with "the immovable race" mentioned in an earlier section of the text (III,97,9 par), as I will argue in the next chapter. This identification certainly would suit well the description found at this point in the text of the condition of *rest* and immutability enjoyed by the "race over which there is no kingdom." This race is said to be "all resting (*semtōn*) in him (presumably, the First-Father), continually rejoicing in ineffable joy, in his immutable (*ete mefšibe*) glory and immeasurable bliss" (III 100,8–12 par). But in fact, the author wants the reader to imagine complete rest and immutability throughout the *entire* aeonic realm which is described on the following pages. Just before the author turns to the concluding section of the work, which deals with salvation from the cosmos, a final section devoted to the unfolded aeonic realm portrays all the beings in that realm experiencing "ineffable bliss, continually glad in their immutably (*natsibe*) glory and immeasurable rest (*anapausis*)" (III 113,23–114,2 par).

In contrast to this realm of rest and immutability, the visible, created cosmos is repeatedly referred to as Chaos, just as it was in *ApocryJn* and *GEgypt*. When discussing the theme of Fate in *ApocryJn*, I commented that although such a text could still use the term "cosmos" to designate

² E.g., Albinus, *Epit.* 10; cf. the Christian apologist Aristides, *Apol.* 1.4–29, and the comments by W. C. van Unnik, "Die Gotteslehre bei Aristides und in gnostischen Schriften," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 17 (1961): 166–74; and H. A. Wolfson, "Albinus and Plotinus on Divine Attributes," *HTR* 45 (1952): 115–30.

³ E.g., Philo, *Post.* 27–30; *Somm.* 2.221f, 237, *et passim*; Plotinus, *Enn.* 5.9.5, 41ff; and see above, Chapter Five, n. 13.

the created world, we should not assume that the writer wants still to emphasize the *order* (though now the horribly oppressive order) of the visible cosmos (see above, pp. 132f). The author of *SJC* beautifully illustrates this point with the marvelously succinct phrase, "the cosmos of Chaos" (BG 120,9f; text in III missing)! Ialdabaoth, the ruler over this realm is the "Almighty (*pantocratôr*) of Chaos" (BG 119,9f). The heavens above are the "heavens of Chaos" (III 113,18 par). The predetermined period during which the drama of the struggle within the world must go on before the final redemption is called the "number (*arithmos*) of Chaos" (BG 121,10). All these references to the world as a realm of chaos (cf. further BG 109,13; III 113,20 par; BG 118,14) underscore the fact that for this author this world is not a place of rest and immutability, but of chaotic change and unrest. In this world of Chaos one has to confront the band of ruthless archontic "robbers" (III 101,15 par; 107,16 par; BG 121,1–3.16), and no rest could be found unless there was an escape from their clutches (cf. above, Chapter Four, p. 135).

Unlike *ApocryJn*, *SJC* does not speak directly about the imposition of "Fate" upon humankind, but there is one passage in the writing which may allude to Fate. Near the beginning of the work, in a passage where *SJC* parallels *Eugnostos* very closely, there is a listing of three different theories held by philosophers regarding the governance or ordering (*doikêsis*) of the cosmos (III 92,18–93,4 par): The first two are that the cosmos is self-governing, or that it is directed by Providence (*pronoia*). The third theory is not as easily deciphered. The texts read as follows:

<i>Eugnostos</i> III 70,21:	<i>henkowe je oupetêp ešôpe pe</i>
<i>SJC</i> III 93,2–4:	<i>henkowe de je oupetêp ešôpe pe</i>
<i>SJC</i> BG 81,10–11:	<i>h^enkowe de je outethont te</i>

The first two versions could be translated, "Some say that it is something which has to happen."⁴ The obscure expression *tethont* in the BG version of *SJC* is found a few lines later in all three versions (*Eugnostos* III 71,4f; *SJC* III 93,15f; BG 82,7f), where it is said that "*tethont* does not perceive (*aisthanesthai*)."⁵ The term *tethont*, therefore, seems to mean something like "the inevitable,"⁵ or "Fate."

⁴ The expression *petêp ešôpe* possibly corresponds to the Greek *dei* or *chrê*; see Crum 526b.

⁵ So Douglas Parrott's translation in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, p. 209. As Prof. Parrott has kindly pointed out to me, what little remains of the Codex V manuscript of *Eugnostos* at this point (V 1,17–24) confirms that the ambiguous Coptic in *Eugnostos* III 70,21, *SJC* III 93,2–4, and *SJC* BG 81,10f, involves references to Fate. The Codex V manuscript is very poorly preserved here, yet the Greek word *heimarm[enê]*, "Fate," is clearly preserved at just about the place where the text would be referring to the third theory on the governance of the world (V 1,22).

Now the three theories about the governance of the world are given as examples of the ways in which the supposedly intellectual have wrestled with the question of the nature of God. But all three theories are rejected as having missed the truth: "For whatever is of itself is a defiled life, and Providence is without wisdom (BG 82,7: *asophon*), and the inevitable does not perceive" (III 93,12–16 par). In *Eugnostos*, which contains approximately the same statement (III 71,1–5), this is the last—and the only—thing said about Providence, or Pronoia. In *SJC*, on the other hand, the situation is slightly more complex. In the opening dialogue between the Savior and his "twelve disciples and seven women" the Savior is asked about "the nature (*hypostasis*) of the universe, and the plan (*oikonomia*), the holy Providence (*pronoia*), the excellence (or perhaps 'strength': *aretè*) of the authorities, and concerning everything which the Savior does with them in the mystery of the holy plan" (III 91,2–8 par). The reference to the "holy Pronoia" is reminiscent of the prominence of Pronoia in *ApocryJn*. It is not clear that the author of *SJC* would personify Pronoia in the same way as *ApocryJn* does, but the question of the disciples does suggest that there is a holy Pronoia which is *not* "without wisdom," perhaps different from the Pronoia in III 93,12–16 par. Moreover, *SJC* employs the formula: "trample on their *pronoia*," or "humiliate their *pronoia*," to mean the foiling of the scheme of the archontic powers (III 108,16 par; BG 122,3; III 119,2 par). Thus, it seems that in *SJC* the Pronoia which is said to be without wisdom in III 93,12–16 par has been identified with the lower Pronoia of the archons and is distinguished from a higher, "holy Pronoia." This distinction between a higher and a lower Pronoia is similar to the distinction I discussed in connection with *ApocryJn* (see above, pp. 135–38). In *SJC* the lower Pronoia of the archons belongs to the realm of chaotic change and disturbance. The reference to the "inevitable" in III 93,12–16 par might also be understood in this light. While a reading of the parallel passage in *Eugnostos* leaves the impression that the author of *Eugnostos* is denying the notion of Fate (and that of Pronoia) altogether, it may be that the author of *SJC* is wanting to assert only that the Pronoia and Fate *within the cosmos* are not revelatory of the nature of the highest God. However, since no mention of Fate is made elsewhere in the work, the idea that the author is thinking of a Fate imposed by the archontic powers as we find in *ApocryJn* has to remain in the realm of conjecture. What we can be sure of is that he or she views the "providence" exercised by the archontic powers of the cosmos, not in terms of a beautifully ordered plan, but as pure Chaos.

One other feature of the section about the three opinions among philosophers calls for comment. *Eugnostos* introduces the three opinions by saying that in their search after the nature of God, "the wisest among them have speculated about the truth on the basis of the ordering of the

world" (III 70,8–10). *SJC* adds one detail: "Now the wisest of them have speculated on the basis of the ordering of the world *and movement*" (*pkim*—III 92,13–16). This addition may be insignificant—merely a casual observation that movement within the universe had in fact been a common topic in philosophical discussions about the nature of things. Or it could be still another reminder of the author's radical distinction between the realm of movement and change and the realm which transcends this, and of the author's refusal to see in the "movement" of the cosmos anything but Chaos—and certainly not an ordered movement which could reveal something about the First-Father.

This "cosmos of Chaos," this Pronoia of the robbers, can be transcended. It is very clear in *SJC* that a critical step to be taken in order to achieve this is the abandonment of sexual intercourse, which is referred to here as "the defiled rubbing" (*tribē*—III 93,20f; 108,11f par). It is the "defiled rubbing which is from the fearful fire which came from their fleshly one" (*sarkinos*—III 108,11–14). This "fearful fire" seems to refer to the sexual passion in the fleshly creature made by the archons. The disciples are told that they are to remove themselves from the forgetfulness induced by the archontic authorities so that this defiled rubbing never again manifests itself in them (III 108,5–10 par).

The categories of "maleness" and "femaleness" also stand out in sharp contrast in *SJC*, as in *Zost.* The author picks up the phrase in *Eugnostos* III 85,8f: "the deficiency of femaleness," and modifies it to "the deficiency in the female" (BG 107,12f), or later, "the deficiency of the female" (BG 118,15f; text in III missing in both cases). The correction of this deficiency produces a "male multitude" (III 118,7f par) who are destined for the "rest (*[anapau]sis*; BG 125,9: *ma n^emtōn*) which has no kingdom over it" (III 118,14f). It is possible also in the case of this text that there is a conscious connection in the author's mind between the categories of "femaleness" and "movement" on the one hand, and "maleness" and "rest" on the other, and that this connection is a heritage of the Pythagorean-Platonic tradition (see above, pp. 99–102).

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE INCLUSIVENESS OF THE IMMOVABLE RACE

A. Introduction

Having devoted considerable space to an exploration of the range of connotations possibly attached to the term "immovable race" by the authors and readers of the texts in which this designation appears, I now turn to the question of the membership in this race. From the perspectives of the various documents involved, how does one become a member of this race, or can one really "become" a member at all? The very use of a phrase such as "the immovable race," and the fact that this race is portrayed in myth as preexisting the appearance of the physical world of historical experience, might have led us to expect that belonging to this race, and therefore receiving the salvation proper to it, would not be a matter of choice but rather a matter of an identity which certain people have even before physical birth. This expectation might have been all the more natural due to the fact that, from the patristic heresiologists¹ to the present, one finds characterizations of gnostic ideology as a form of determinism in which the destinies of individuals are already set according to the particular class to which those individuals belong (e.g., pneumatics, psychics, hylics, etc.).²

I can illustrate such a characterization in modern scholarship by citing some remarks made by Christoph Elsas in a very important monograph that happens to deal with material which bears directly upon some of the texts treated in this present study. His book, *Neuplatonische und gnostische Weltablehnung in der Schule Plotins*, is a study of the closely related groups and individuals associated with or in dialogue with Plotinus's school—for example, the second-century C.E. Pythagorean-Platonist Numenius, who seems to have been quite influential on subsequent Platonic discussion; Plotinus's gnostic opponents (i.e., their viewpoints as Elsas reconstructs them from Plotinus's criticisms in *Enn.* 2.9) and gnostic traditions at large; Plotinus himself and known members of his school such as Porphyry and

¹ E.g., Iren. *Adv. haer.* 1.6.1–4; 1.7.5; Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 5.3.2.

² For a notable example of an exception to this tendency, see the excellent analysis by Luise Schottroff, "*Animae naturaliter salvandae*: Zum Problem der himmlischen Herkunft des Gnostikers," in *Christentum und Gnosis*, ed. Walther Eltester, BZNW 37 (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1969), pp. 65–97.

Amelius; the Chaldean Oracles, etc. Rather than merely amassing a large array of parallels among these individuals and traditions, and pointing out overall differences, Elsas attempts a more thorough, point-by-point analysis of similarities and differences. Without entering here into a discussion of his book as a whole, I will focus on only one topic—introduced more than once by Elsas as a criterion for distinguishing gnostic from Numenian or Plotinian thought: the contrast between free choice and election. According to Elsas, the Chaldean Oracles and gnostic traditions can be distinguished from a figure such as Numenius in that for the latter the attainment of highest knowledge does not involve the concept of revelation.³ On the other hand, gnosticism stands apart from both Numenius and the Chaldean Oracles on the question of free will. In the Chaldean Oracles, human virtue and the effort involved in its attainment cooperate with the divine power that is experienced in the cultic context.⁴ The gnostic, on the other hand, understands himself to be

independent from all efforts at achievement or other cooperation of human will and action, because of his special divine essence. The only decisive thing is the correct listening, the "contemplation of the divine name." Only in the negative sense does the gnostic have a freedom of choice, in the rejection of the revelation, the right to veto the divinity offered him, which in its acceptance makes perfection secure.⁵

If I read it correctly, it seems to me that in the last-quoted statement Elsas has made a concession which obscures—if it does not finally obliterate—his earlier attempted distinction on the basis of free will. It is not clear to me how one could have freedom of choice "only in the negative sense." As far as I can tell, the real distinction which Elsas is making has to do in the final analysis not with the question of whether *choice* is present or not, but simply whether any *effort* is required for perfection, once one has made the choice in favor of it. But, as will be seen below, I would question the validity of even that distinction.

My reason for referring to the remarks of Elsas is that, while on the one hand they do contain some valuable distinctions, on the other hand they ultimately trip over themselves because they remain entangled in past stereotypes regarding gnostic determinism. Even though Elsas has been perceptive enough to see that the gnostics whom he is describing understood themselves to be capable of *rejecting* the revelation, he has not been able to see that this in itself implies nothing less than that between a gnostic and salvation lies the freedom of choice between both acceptance and rejection. I think that this may illustrate how some past models for

³ Elsas, *Neuplatonische und gnostische Weltablehnung*, p. 244, cf. p. 223.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

understanding gnostic conceptions of membership among "the elect" have already shown themselves to be running against the grain of what is actually found in some gnostic texts. We risk a costly misunderstanding of how authors and readers of such texts may have viewed the possibilities and mechanisms of human existence when we read into the use of terms like "the immovable race" or "the elect" a static determinism in which free choice is absent.⁶ What I want to do in this chapter is to show how the phrase "immovable race" is related to such possibilities and mechanisms, by the authors who make use of the designation.

B. The Absence of Soteriological Determinism

The term *genea*, which is found in all the instances of the immovable race designation, can mean "race, family"; or: "offspring"; or it can be used even of impersonal things to refer to a "class" or "kind"; or it can be employed in a temporal sense to mean "age, generation."⁷ The temporal sense does not suit the term as we find it in our texts. This is most easily seen in *3StSeth*, *Zost* and *GEgypt*, where Seth is said to be the father of the immovable *genea*, and where in addition the *genea* of Seth is equated with the "seed of Seth."

If members of the immovable race are understood to be members of Seth's "family," how then has this come about? Is it something which happened at physical birth or conception? Is it the result of physical ancestry, therefore? Or am I a member of the immovable race from birth because—no matter who my physical parents were—the seed of Seth was at that time implanted within me? Would such an implantation happen only to a select, "chosen" group, for whom this identity would henceforth be irrevocable, or is the seed planted in everyone at birth or conception but brought to maturity only in a few? Or is membership in the immovable race something which begins only later in life, and if so, for whom and by what mechanism does this take place?

In *GEgypt*, the reader is told of a past history of the existence of this race of Seth, a race which has endured persecutions in the form of flood, conflagration, famines, plagues, and false prophets (III 61,2–22 par). But is it possible to determine just *how*, in the author's mind, historical

⁶ The tendency to single out gnosticism as a religious position which, because of its emphasis upon the heavenly or other-worldly "nature" belonging to "the elect" or to "pneumatics," produced two radically divergent ethics (asceticism or libertinism), is one such misunderstanding. It is a caricature which ought to be not so much modified as entirely abandoned, to make way for a completely fresh start in understanding gnostic movements and their location and significance within the religious fabric of the Roman world; see Williams, "Gnosis and Askesis."

⁷ Liddell-Scott-Jones, s. v.

persons in the past were thought to have come to belong to this race? In *GEgypt* III 59,9–61,1 par, there is an account of the “sowing” of the “incorruptible, immovable race of the great, mighty men of the great Seth” in the aeons, or world ages, which come into being. The purpose of the sowing is redemptive, and the way in which the theme of the sowing of the race is connected with the mythological personification of Metanoia, Repentance, in the first part of the account suggests that the invitation to repent is being extended to all created beings:

For she (Metanoia) had come down from above to the world which is the image of night. When she had come, she prayed for the seed of the archon of this aeon and the authorities who came into being from him; that which is defiled and will perish, belonging to the demon-begetting god, and (she prayed for) the seed of Adam and of Seth, which is like the sun. (III 59,19–60,2)

But only in the next lines is the actual “sowing” of the seed of Seth described:

Then the great angel Hormos came to prepare the seed of Seth, by means of the virgins of the defiled sowing of this aeon, in a Logos-begotten (*logogenēs*), holy vessel, through the Holy Spirit. Then the great Seth came; he brought his seed and he sowed it in the aeons which had been produced, 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, which he named Sodom. This is the race which came forth by means of Edokla. For through the word, she brought forth Truth and Justice, the beginning of the seed of eternal life which exists with those who will endure because of the knowledge of their emanation (*aporrhoeia*). This is the seed of the great, incorruptible race which has come forth through three worlds to the world. (III 60,2–61,2)

At the beginning of the second passage quoted, there is an allusion to what seems to be a kind of “virgin birth” for all members of the race. But I question whether the author is really intending to say that into literal female virgins throughout past history was sown the seed of Seth, so that at *physical* birth the children born to such virgins were already a part of the historical race of Seth. “Virgins” here, as in many other places in gnostic literature (and in many other ancient texts), could just as well mean people—male or female—who manage to keep themselves pure. The phrase, “the virgins of the defiled sowing of this aeon,” could therefore mean humans who kept themselves pure from this defilement. Very often in gnostic literature this purity from the defilement of “this aeon”

does involve literal abstinence from sexual intercourse,⁸ and I would say that it is likely that this is intended in this text also. But the point is that the preparation among such virgins of a "Logos-begotten, holy vessel," and the sowing of the seed of Seth into that vessel, may be mythological ways of saying that the "seed of Seth" came to birth among persons who were pure and "worthy" (see III 55,15f par; 66,2 par). In this case, although the mythological past understandably is described almost entirely in terms of Seth's initiative, this would not imply that persons in the past were, already at physical birth, a part of the race of Seth, but rather that "Seth" was sown into persons who proved to be receptive to the sowing. Now I have thusfar said only that this *could* be the meaning of the reference to "virgins" in the quoted passage. What leads me to believe that this is the *probable* meaning is what is said later on in *GEgypt* about the "sowing" of the seed of Seth.

When the author turns to the final stage of Seth's soteriological activity, viz., Seth's incarnation in Jesus, we find more explicit statements as to just how the sowing takes place (III 63,4–64,8 par). The begetting of members of the elect race, here called "holy ones" or "saints" (among whom the author himself and his readers are presumably included), is an activity of the Holy Spirit, "through invisible, secret symbols" (III 63,14f par). These secret symbols probably included the baptism which is mentioned in the text later on (see below in Chapter Eight, p. 192):

III 65,26–66,8

But from now on through the incorruptible Human Poimael, and those who are worthy of (the) invocation, the renunciations of the five seals in the baptism-spring, these will know their receivers as they are taught about them, and they will know them by means of them. These shall not taste death.

IV 78,1–10

... through him who is holy and incorruptible, Poimael and those who are worthy of the baptisms of the renunciations and the ineffable seals of their baptism, these have known their receivers as they have learned about them, having known by means of them, and they shall not taste death.

In any case, the implication is that the "sowing" of the seed of Seth is taking place as initiates carry out the proper rites, which in turn implies a certain open-endedness and the role of the initiates' own volition in the whole process of the begetting of the children of Seth.

⁸ E.g., *SJC* III 93,16–20; 108,5–15; *GPh* 82,2–8; *ParaShem* 10,19–25, *et passim*; cf. Williams, "Gnosis and Askesis."

Therefore, it is not at all clear that the author, in talking about Seth's initiative in begetting a race of children, is logically forced to some deterministic position which denies the individual freedom of choice, any more than are many other writers in antiquity who use heavenly birth or rebirth language (e.g., 1 Pet 1:23; James 1:18; John 3:3). In *GEgypt* a person is indeed "born" into the immovable, incorruptible race of Seth, but *physical* birth has nothing to do with this. It is ritual birth that is important; and this is something one may choose. The comment in the quotation from III 60,2–61,2 above, about those "who will endure because of the knowledge of their *emanation*," should also be understood in these terms. The "emanation" is surely understood to take place when the seed is sown, which, if I am correct, involves the volition of the recipient, and the performance of the proper ritual.

So far as I can see, the only other possible interpretation of the reference to the sowing of the seed of Seth in the past into "virgins of the defiled aeon" would be that there were in fact multiple virgin births, i.e., involving the continual divine impregnation of female virgins throughout history, and that until Seth's incarnation in Jesus this was the way that the race was brought to birth in the world. But this would mean that a *new* manner of begetting is inaugurated with Seth's incarnation in Jesus, for the later passages about the begetting by the Holy Spirit through secret symbols surely must refer to ritual begetting, and these latter-day members of the race of Seth are *not* said to have been begotten in individual virgins. This would mean that the race had been propagated in two very different ways in the "history of salvation"! If the author is saying this, then perhaps readers are to understand that now a new possibility has opened up, so that *anyone* who proves worthy might be begotten by these symbols. Such an interpretation would not really contradict the overall point I want to make, which has to do with freedom of choice—except for the fact that freedom of choice would have been out of the question for everyone living before Jesus. But I really see no reason why we should not understand the author to be speaking all along of the seed of Seth coming to birth in persons who are worthy.

This text can, like several of the other texts in question, refer to the redeemed as "the elect" (III 65,7). But the themes of election and free choice were not always logically distinguished in antiquity, and the use of the term "elect" need not be understood deterministically.⁹

⁹ Cf. the discussion by G. Schrenk, "legō, etc.," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. G. W. Bromiley, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), pp. 168–92; and E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), pp. 257–70, 320, 355f, on the question of election and free choice in some Second Temple Jewish texts; and the study by Eugene H. Merrill, *Qumran and Predestination: A Theological Study of the Thanksgiving Hymns*, Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1975). The two studies by David S. Winston, "Freedom and Determinism in

Also, the preexistence of the seed needs to be separated from the question of the free will of the gnostic initiate. In the case of *GEgypt*, even though the seed is preexistent, it is not sown into the individual until the sacramental "begetting." It is very important that we note and respect the apparent absence in *GEgypt* of the theme of the "sleeping presence" of the seed of Seth in persons who are at last awakened. We do find this theme very strongly emphasized in texts such as *ApocryJn* or *SJC*. We might have expected to find somewhere in the lengthy hymnic section in III 66,8–68,1 some reference to the initiate having been awakened from sleep. There is the reference to the "formless one who exists in the formless ones, who exists, *raising up (eftounos) the human* in whom you will purify me into your life" (III 67,17–21). The verb *tounos*, like the Greek verb *egeirein*, can mean to "awaken." But since we do not have any mythological account provided earlier in *GEgypt* (as we do in *ApocryJn* and *SJC*) of the falling to sleep of the seed, it is not necessary to find an allusion to such a notion in this mention of the "raising up of the human." One might compare the famous baptismal formula in Ephesians 5:14: "Awake, sleeper (*egeire ho katheudōn*), and arise (*anasta*) from the dead, and Christ will shine upon you," which is found in other variations in Clement of Alexandria,¹⁰ and which could refer to baptismal "rising" or "awakening" without implying in deterministic fashion that the initiate possessed *already*, before this event, the identity of one of those to be redeemed. In *GEgypt* the preexistence of the seed of Seth means only that this mechanism for salvation, for spiritual begetting, already exists to be received by those who turn out to be worthy of it.

In *3StSeth* we find a reference to "the elect" (118,17), which in this tractate is probably another term for the "living and immovable race" (118,12f). But on the one hand, there is a lack in this work of any evidence that behind the author's use of the term "elect" lies some theory about the fixed, predetermined identity of individuals. And on the other hand, there are certain indications of a universalizing tendency. Toward

Greek Philosophy and Jewish Hellenistic Wisdom," *Studia Philonica* 2 (1973): 40–50, and "Freedom and Determinism in Philo of Alexandria," *Studia Philonica* 3 (1974–75): 47–70, argue that the apparent contradiction between predestination and free will in Jewish writers such as Philo or Ben Sira or the author of the Wisdom of Solomon is to be explained in terms of the influence of Stoic notions of "relative" free will. Winston's *emphasis* differs from my own, since he finally wants to speak of "some sort of ethical determinism" in Philo that does not allow the soul *absolute* free will—the latter being reserved for God alone. I, on the other hand, am arguing in this chapter against using the term "determinism" for the gnostic texts in question (or for Philo), if one means by the term a division of humankind into fixed classes, and a division which eliminates any role of free will. If this point be granted, then I would be inclined to agree with Winston's overall point, and I would ascribe to the gnostic texts that I am discussing "the relative free will doctrine which characterized much of classical and Hellenistic Greek thought" (*Studia Philonica* 3 [1974–75]: 57).

¹⁰ Clem. Alex. *Protr.* 8.80.2; 8.84.2; see Wlosok, *Laktanz*, pp. 159–64.

the end of the first "stele," where Seth is offering praise to his father Adamas, the following statement is made: "Those whom you willed, them you saved; now (*de*) you will to be saved *all* who are worthy" (121,12-14). The term "(those) who are worthy" is a cliché, and receives no more precise definition in this text than it does in so many other texts in which it is used in much the same way, to refer to individuals who measure up to some sort of standard. In this case, about the only standard which we can infer with some certainty is the receptivity of the individual with respect to the gnosis revealed or implied in the steles, and the person's participation in the appropriate praise. Near the end of the last stele the promise is made that "the person who will remember (or 'contemplate') these things and give glory always will become perfect . . ." (127,5-8). Here also, therefore, membership in the "immovable race" is a matter of *attainment*. The prayers in the text express reverential gratitude and humility ("The power has been given by *you*," etc.), but this in no way contradicts the presupposition of the text that "the elect" must be receptive and must act on the revelation which is received.

The tractate *Zost* is full of the terminology of "election."¹¹ Yet whatever the author means by election, it does not exclude an obvious element of conditionality. Perhaps the clearest example of this is in the conclusion of the work (130,5-132,5), where Zostrianos says that after descending into the sense-world, he went about preaching the truth "to them all" (*Zost* 130,9). The reader is then given a sample of the preaching, and it amounts to a call to salvation, a call to accept quickly the invitation. At the same time, a severe warning is issued not to disobey, not to delay, since time is limited, not to be led astray, because the chastisement (*kolasis*) of the unconvinced¹² is great. The presupposition here, that the truth is something which is offered and may be accepted or refused, also shows through elsewhere in the tractate. Although *Zost* is so fragmentary in places that often it is impossible to reconstruct in detail the train of thought, still, fragments that we do have give the picture of a salvation which is a matter of "seeking and finding": "The person who is saved is the one who seeks after him and his mind and finds each of them" (44,1-4). The author is very interested in the question, "Why are people different from one another?" (8,5), but the answer to this question does not seem to be that differences among individuals have resulted from predetermined and unchangeable membership in distinct classes. Instead, from what can be gleaned from the fragmentary text, *Zost* seems to be describing salvation in dynamic terms rather than in static terms, as a process open in principle to all souls but in actuality achieved by only certain

¹¹ E.g., "the living elect" (*Zost* 1,7; 45,8; 130,4); "the elect" (4,17); "the worthy" (4,16f; 24,21), etc.

¹² Coptic: *atto[r]ēnhēr*; see Crum 438b-439a: translates Greek *apeithēs*?

persons. A fundamental idea in *Zost* is that souls are found in various dispositions due to their differing levels of attainment in the imitation of higher realities. At one point the text states that there are three "forms" or "species" (*eidē*) of immortal souls: those in the Transmigration, those in the Repentance, and the souls of the self-begotten ones (27,13–28,12). But the way these three categories are described suggests that they are *stages* of ascent through which souls may pass, not static identities. In another passage in which these three levels are enumerated, the Greek term *gymnazein*, "to train," is used to describe the effect of the imitation of the aeonic models on souls (12,3). Zostrianos, the hero of the work, ascends through the levels of the Transmigration, the Repentance, the Self-begotten, etc. (5,24–7,27), being "baptized" at each stage along the way. Zostrianos's own heavenly ascent through all these levels is intended to map an ascent which *in principle* is possible for anyone who is shown the "path of ascent" (19,4; 21,19). When this tractate speaks of the "immovable race," or "the perfect male race" (7,6), or "the living elect," or "the living seed," it is speaking of a potential which is made *possible* by revelation, but which cannot be taken for granted. It must be sought after. The message of the tractate is that there is a power-source to be tapped, an opportunity opened up for those who will accept it.

In *ApocryIn* there is a lengthy section found in both major recensions of the work in which the distinction between various types of souls is discussed (II 25,16–27,30 par). The picture put forth reflects an attempt to deal on a theoretical level with the obvious fact that people respond to the gnosis in different ways. However, there is no simple deterministic formula about one group being "by nature" destined for salvation. Instead, the description presents the reader with examples of various responses and degrees of strength, and progress toward salvation is painted in terms indicating process and individual initiative. The most ideal group is made up of those who are "worthy" because they endure and persevere through everything (II 26,2–5 par). They "*become perfect*" (*ēnsešope ēntelios*—II 25,25; *ēnse^er telios*—BG 65,6). The description of this group's ability to transcend all passions completely (II 25,29–33 par) and, while they still wear the flesh, to maintain a concentration totally directed toward the Beyond, the "Incorruptibility," is reminiscent of similar descriptions of ascetic heroes elsewhere in antiquity, for example, in Christian monastic literature. A second group includes souls in whom this ideal response is *not* manifested, but in whom the strengthening effected by the Spirit of Life is a more gradual process (II 26,7–32 par). For still others, the strengthening does not take place within a single lifetime at all, since they do not happen to encounter the gnosis, and are therefore overcome by the power of the "Opposing Spirit" (II 26,36–27,1) and wander into error and works of evil. For such souls there is the prospect of continual reincarnations until the gnosis is finally received and these souls too can

"become perfect" and be saved (II 27,10f). Finally, some souls, even when they do encounter the gnosis, turn away, and for these there is no longer any repentance or reincarnation, but instead they are taken away to await the day on which everyone who has blasphemed against the Spirit will receive eternal punishment (II 27,21–30). As Böhlig has pointed out,¹³ in this latter passage there is a version of an issue prevalent in the ancient church at large—the problem of the lapsed.¹⁴ In explaining the behavior and fate of the souls who reject the gnosis, the author of *ApocryJn* does not have Christ say that such souls reject it because they could never have belonged to the immovable race in the first place, since they were evil by nature. With respect to the entire section, I underscore again that belonging to the immovable race in this document is presented as though it were theoretically open to all who are receptive, but attained in practice only by a selection of souls. Everything hinges on the outcome of the struggle with the deceptive powers of the cosmic archons and demons. The power of the Spirit of Life is, of course, credited with the victory in the cases where victory does occur, and the power of the Opposing Spirit is blamed for error; but the individual who is reading *ApocryJn* learns that winning the battle against the Opposing Spirit requires that a person take the initiative in some very specific and decisive combat maneuvers—above all, the abandonment of sexual intercourse (II 24,26–31; 29,16–30,11 par).

¹³ Alexander Böhlig, *Mysterion und Wahrheit*, Arbeiten zur Geschichte des späteren Judentums und des Urchristentums 6 (Leiden: Brill, 1968), pp. 166f.

¹⁴ In considering the extent to which membership in the immovable race is a matter of choice in *ApocryJn*, the paraenetic intent in such references to lapsed souls must be underscored. One may compare similar pronouncements about "hopeless" cases in writings such as the Epistle to the Hebrews (6:4–6; 10:26f) or I John (5:16f), and Hans von Campenhausen's remark that such texts "are not intended to answer the concrete problem of later penitential discipline, namely whether and, if so, in what cases absolution is to be refused to the contrite sinner who is ready to do penance. . . . The preacher (in Hebrews) wants to give his hearers the most impressive warning possible against apostasy, and he therefore depicts the situation of the man who has once given in to this temptation, and turned his back on the Church, as absolutely desperate; in such a case there is no hope of retracing the steps taken along the road to destruction" (*Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries*, trans. J. A. Baker [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969], pp. 222f, n. 41). Likewise in *ApocryJn* the reference to those for whom there is no longer any repentance stands as a warning to the readers, and implies both the free choice of their attainment to salvation, as well as the possibility of "falling." On this paraenetic dimension in *ApocryJn*, and specifically its connection with the designation "immovable race," cf. Norman R. Peterson, "The Literary Problematic of the Apocryphon of John" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1967), pp. 122–33, who argues that the document is intended to give the *mysterion* of the divine plan to its recipients "so that they will not waver. . . . Anything other than such a 'pastoral' interpretation of AJ reduces it to the level of an informative compendium of religious speculation. But this it patently is not!" (p. 133).

Like *GEgypt*, *ApocryJn* provides something of a history of the seed of Seth. But in *ApocryJn* we do find a myth of the "sleep of forgetfulness" which falls over the seed, a motif which I have pointed out as being absent in *GEgypt*. Although one recension of *ApocryJn* alludes to a sacramental "sealing" (II 31,22-25), and in this moment the initiate is "raised up" (*tounous*—II 31,22), the situation differs from what we found in *GEgypt* in that this moment in *ApocryJn* is not the moment of "begetting" (i.e., the reception of the seed sown by Seth) but only of the awakening of the already-present seed. In both texts, the way the "history" of the seed is narrated suggests that possession of the seed is not deterministically limited to a specific group, but the two texts express this differently. I have argued that *GEgypt* is talking about a past history of the sowing of the seed into worthy individuals, "Logos-begotten virgins." Not everyone would attain to membership in the race of Seth because not everyone is disposed to be pure and worthy. In *ApocryJn*, on the other hand, I believe that what the author is saying is that *every* human being possesses the seed, but only certain ones are finally receptive enough to the awakening gnosis brought by the Spirit of Life that they grow strong and are not overcome by the Opposing Spirit.

In *ApocryJn* II 24,15-25,16 par, the author gives his version of the relationship between Seth, Cain and Abel. In his interpretation, it is not a matter of Cain having propagated a separate race of human beings, who would then be quite outside the seed of Seth. Instead, Cain and Abel are actually archons rather than sons of Adam. Cain and Abel are begotten by Ialdabaoth through his seduction of the virgin Eve. Their real names are Eloim and Yave—obvious allusions to two divine names in biblical tradition—and the names Cain and Abel are (according to BG/III) simply the names by which they are known to later generations, or (in II/IV) names given them by Ialdabaoth in order to deceive. These two archons are given the control of fire and wind and water and earth. They are also set over principalities (*archai*), so that they might rule over the tomb (*spēlaion*). The "tomb" in *ApocryJn* is the body (II 21,10 par), and therefore the two archons known by the names Cain and Abel have control of all the human bodies which come to be produced by means of sexual intercourse (II 24,29f). The spiritual descendants of Adam, who are not begotten by means of intercourse, belong to the seed of Seth. Therefore, the seed of Seth (= human souls) dwells in the tomb (= the body) which is governed by Cain and Abel. Thus, because the seed of Seth lies sleeping within every human being born on earth, the potential for it to come to maturity and to overcome the "tomb" and the power of the Opposing Spirit resides in everyone. What is required is a receptivity to revelation. When the divine Pronoia warned Noah of the flood, Noah proclaimed the warning to all people (II 29,1-4 par). The BG/III recension says simply that "they did not believe him" (BG 73,3), while II

29,5f has: "those who were strangers to him did not listen to him." There is no reason to see even in the Codex II version of this statement any reference to a separate race of persons whose exclusion from the immovable race is predetermined. In the context of the rest of what is said in *ApocryIn* about the possibilities of salvation, this reference to "strangers" seems merely to be another instance of souls who rejected the revelation because they had not overcome the control of the Opposing Spirit.

Finally, also in *SJC* there is an open-endedness with respect to salvation. To be sure, the writing emphasizes the esoteric limitation of access to the truth to those alone who have received revelation from Christ, and this can be contrasted with a much less esoteric style in the parallel writing *Eugnostos*. In one place, for example, the author of *Eugnostos* states that "it is impossible for anyone to argue with the nature of what I have just said with respect to the blessed, incorruptible, true God. Now if anyone wishes to believe the words put down here, let him investigate from what is hidden to the completion of what is manifest, and this thinking (*ennoia*) will teach him how the belief in the things not manifest was found in that which is manifest. This is a beginning of knowledge" (III 74,8–20). Such a passage implies that access to truth about invisible realities is theoretically open to everyone who is willing to examine carefully arguments involving visible things. This passage has been modified in *SJC* (III 98,9–22) so that it is no longer the interested inquirer in general who is addressed, but the disciples in dialogue with Jesus, and it is no longer a general reference to the instructive power of a mental exercise (*ennoia*), but rather a revelation conveyed by "the emanation (*aporrhoeia*) of the thought (*ennoia*)."

Or, to take another example of the esotericization of material in *SJC*: toward the beginning of *Eugnostos* and *SJC*, in the passage which deals with the three theories about the governance of the cosmos, the redaction in *SJC* places esoteric restrictions on what in *Eugnostos* is a more "public" opportunity for enlightenment:

Eugnostos III 71,5–13

Therefore, the one who is able to go beyond these three opinions which I have previously mentioned and go to another opinion and disclose the God of Truth, and be in agreement with everyone about Him, this person is an immortal in the midst of mortals.

SJC III 93,16–24

Now as for you, that which it is fitting for you and those who are worthy of knowledge to know will be given to them—those who have not been begotten by the sowing of the defiled rubbing but by the First, who was sent. For this one is an immortal in the midst of mortals.

However, esoteric language is not the same thing as a deterministic doctrine which eliminates the idea of free choice. The "sowing of the defiled rubbing" refers to sexual intercourse, and the fleshly bodies (cf. III 108,14f par) of even the gnostic readers of this text would have been begotten by that means. Therefore, what the author probably wants to say is that the product of the defiled begetting, the fleshly body, is not "worthy" of the knowledge. Only the other begottenness, "by the First," renders one worthy.

But is this something limited at the outset to only a predetermined few? That is what is not so clear in the text. In III 106,9–15 par, the disciples ask the Savior how it comes to be that from the invisible and immortal realm there is a descent into the world, where there is death. The Savior answers that the Son of Man (who belongs to the third aeon down from the First-Father) and his consort Sophia produce a great androgynous light. This light has a male name ("Savior, begetter of all things") and a female name ("All-begettress Sophia" or "Faith"—III 106,14–24). Now this light is responsible for the introduction of "drops" of light—i.e., human spirits—into the world. The two versions of *SJC* word this in slightly different ways:

III 106,24–107,5

It is from that one (the androgynous light) that all those who come into the cosmos as a drop from the light are sent into the cosmos of the Almighty, in order that they might be guarded by him.

BG 103,10–16

Everyone who comes into the cosmos has been sent by that one as a drop from the light into the cosmos of the Almighty, to be guarded by him.

In a later passage these drops are called "emanations" (*aporrhoea*) of light (BG 119,3f), and it is said that the drop "withered and slept in the ignorance of the soul" (BG 120,2f). Significantly lacking in *SJC* is any development of a theory that this drop comes only into certain people. The generalized way in which the process is described gives the impression that this emanation is in *all* human beings, that the drop "sleeps" in *all* souls. Even in the III version (and certainly in the BG version) of the passage quoted above there seems to be the affirmation that everyone who comes into the world comes as a drop from the light. The distinction which *SJC* makes is not between those who have the drop and those who still sleep. In III 97,23f par, the Savior says, "It is to those who are awake that I have spoken."¹⁵ The awakening of the drop from

¹⁵ For this passage, the Greek text in the fragment of *SJC* in Oxy. Pap. 1081 is preserved:

forgetfulness (III 101,11f; 107,16f par) is what allows the person to break free from the bonds of the archons. If toward the end of the writing the Savior enjoins his disciples to "awaken" or "raise up" (*tounos*) that which belongs to me (*pōi*—III 119,4 par), one need not find in these words a suggestion that humanity is divided into two fixed classes, those who belong to the Savior and those who do not. In fact, just before this injunction the Savior says that he has come "so that I might tell *everyone* about the God who is over everything" (III 118,24f), and the tractate concludes by saying that Jesus' disciples "began to preach the gospel of God . . ." (III 119,14f).

There is one passage in *SJC* which does describe two levels of salvation:

III 117,8–118,2

Whoever knows [the Father with]
[a pure] knowledge will depart
to the Father [and rest in]
the Unbegotten [Father].
Whoever knows him [deficiently]
will depart to [.]
the Rest (*anapausis*) [.]
Whoever knows the immortal
[Spirit] of the light in
silence through reflection
and approval, in truth,
let him bring to me symbols of
the Invisible One, and he will
become light in the Spirit of
silence. Whoever knows the Son
of Man, in knowledge and love,
let him bring to me symbols of
the Son of Man and he will depart
to the places with those who are in
the Eighth.

BG 123,2–124,9

Whoever knows the Father with
a pure knowledge will go
to the Father and will rest in
the Unbegotten Father.
Whoever knows him deficiently
will come to be in the deficiency
and will rest in the Eighth.
Whoever knows the immortal
Spirit which is the Light in
silence through reflection and
approval, truly,
let him bring to me symbols of
the Invisible One and he will
become light in the Spirit of
silence. Whoever knows the Son
of Man, in knowledge and love,
let him bring to me symbols of
the Son of Man and he will come to
be in that place with those who are
in the Eighth.

But as one can see, the attainment to the highest level is said here to be dependent on the purity of one's knowledge and the ability to produce the proper "symbols" (*symbolon*)—possibly a reference to a sacrament, although the term in itself is too general to offer any real evidence for this. In any case, the text does *not* say that individuals are predetermined

tois agrêgorousin [eg]ô lalô; see Harold W. Attridge, "P. Oxy. 1081 and the Sophia of Jesus Christ," *Enchoria* 5 (1975): 1–8.

to go to one level or the other, it only states what level will be achieved by this or that degree of knowledge.

Therefore, looking back over all five of these texts which speak of "the immovable race," I would argue that in none of them do we have the notion of the immovable race as a fixed, predetermined group of human individuals in the world, to whom one either belongs or does not belong, with no contingencies involved at all. In spite of the emphasis on *revelation* in these texts, I am by no means convinced that this somehow, in the minds of these gnostics, was thought of as a *reduction* in the availability of opportunity—that is, esoteric revelations reserved for only a predetermined few, therefore precluding *a priori* the salvation of everyone else. Especially when read within the context of the many other exclusivities to which persons in late antiquity were accustomed, the esoteric revelation in our texts can be better understood as an enhanced vehicle for discerning the true character of the universe, the divine origin and ultimate possibilities for Humanity, and the mechanisms for realizing these—an enhanced vehicle which, I suspect, was envisioned as making salvation *more* accessible rather than less so, for *any* who turned out to be receptive.

*C. Membership in the Immovable Race
as the Achievement of Perfect Humanity*

The mention of the divine origin and ultimate possibilities of Humanity brings me to an important area of discussion with respect to the significance of the immovable race designation. I am convinced that what to us might sound initially like a self-designation brandished among cocky sectarians as an affirmation of their innate privileged status vis-à-vis the rest of humanity, may in fact have been intended in quite the opposite spirit. Although they go about it in more than one way, all five of the texts which contain the designation seem to be saying that to belong to the immovable race is nothing more nor less than to be truly and perfectly Human, to realize full Human potential—a potential which is in theory open to anyone who "seeks and finds," but which in practice is achieved by only certain persons.

In *ApocryJn* the immovable race is never called "the immovable race of Seth," nor is Seth called "the Father of the immovable race," as he is in *3StSeth*, *Zost* and *GEgypt*. In *ApocryJn* this race is usually called simply "the immovable race," but in one, or possibly two, places it is called the "immovable race of the Perfect Human":

BG 22,10–17 par

Now lift up your face and listen and understand what I am about to say to you this day, so that you (John) also may proclaim it to

your kindred spirits, those who are from the
immovable race of the perfect Human.

II 28,3–5

III 36,23–37,1

BG 71,10–14

... (the Holy Spirit)
raised up the seed of the
perfect race and its
thought and the eternal
light of the Human

She raised up
thought of the people of
the immovable [race]
of the perfect [Human?]

... the seed which
he raised up in the
thought of the people
of the race of the
perfect, eternal Light-Human.

Now the Perfect Human in *ApocryIn* is identified, not as Seth, but as Adamas (II 8,28–34 par; cf. Iren. *Adv. haer.* 1.29.3), who himself is the revelatory manifestation of the First Human (II 6,2–4 par; cf. II 14,19–15,13 par). Therefore, to belong to the immovable race in this text does not mean to belong to one among several different human races, but rather to belong to *the* Human race.

The single instance of the expression “immovable race” found in *SJC* occurs in a section of material which is peculiar to *SJC* (III 96,14–97,16 par). In the text which precedes that section, there is a lengthy catalogue of attributes of the First-Father (III 94,5–95,18 par). Immediately after this catalogue, *Eugnostos* III 73,3–16 presents a discussion of noetic powers which are contained within the First-Father and which are the link between the First-Father and the experience of the gnostics. The *SJC* redactor has interrupted the text here with a question from a disciple, in order to introduce this mention of these noetic powers:

SJC III 95,19–96,14

Eugnostos III 73,3–16

Philip said, “Lord, how did he
appear to the perfect?” The Perfect
Savior said to him,

“Before any of the things which have
appeared came to appearance,
the greatness and the authority
were in him, for he encompasses
the totality of all things while
nothing encompasses him. —For he
is all mind (*nous*), and he is
thought (*ennoia*) and
understanding (*phronēsis*)
and reflection (*enthumēsis*)
and reasoning (*logismos*) and
power. They are all equal
powers (*dynamis*). They are
the sources (or “fountains,”

Before anything appeared of the
things which appear,
the greatness and the authorities
which are in him, while he encompasses
the totality of all things, and
nothing encompasses him. —For he
is all mind (*nous*),
thought (*ennoia*) and
reflection (*enthumēsis*),
understanding (*phronēsis*),
reasoning (*logismos*), and
power (*dynamis*). They are all
equal powers. They are
the sources

pēgai) of everything.
 And their whole race (*genos*)
 from the beginning to the
 end were in his foreknowledge,
 the infinite Unbegotten Father.

of everything,
 and their whole race
 unto their limit is in the
 first knowledge
 of the Unbegotten One.

By means of the question from Philip, the *SJC* redactor has interpreted the noetic powers or faculties as the media of the self-revelation of the Father. Just after this passage, the redactor again interrupts the text (as we have it in *Eugnostos*) by inserting another question from a disciple, but this time both the question *and* the answer are peculiar to *SJC*. It is in this answer that the expression “immovable race” occurs, and the context in which it is used suggests that by the “immovable race” the redactor is thinking of the noetic powers just mentioned:

Thomas said, “Lord, Savior, why did these things come into being, and why did they appear?” The perfect Savior said, “I came from the Infinite in order that I might tell you everything. The Spirit which exists was a begetter possessing a substance-begetting and a form-begetting power, in order that the great wealth hidden within him might be revealed. Because of his goodness and love, he desired to beget—through himself alone—fruits, so that not only he might enjoy his goodness, but that other spirits of the immovable race (*genea*) might beget body and fruit, glory and honor and incorruptibility and his unlimited grace; so that his goodness might be revealed through the unbegotten God, the Father of every incorruptibility and the things which came into being after these. (III 96,14–97,16)

If the redactor is intending some equivalence between the immovable *genea* and the *genos* of the faculties just listed, this still may not rule out a further identification of the immovable *genea* with the “*genea* without a kingdom over it,” mentioned a little later in the text (III 99,17–19 par). There, as I mentioned in the previous chapter (see above, p. 154), the *genos* of self-begotten ones resulting from the First-Father’s mirror-imaging is called the “*genea* without a kingdom over it,” which is probably a translation of the Greek *hē abasileutos genea*.¹⁶ The redactor of *SJC* has taken over the phrase from his source (cf. *Eugnostos* III 75,16–18), and then has added a comment by Christ which identifies the disciples as belonging to this race without a kingdom over it (III 99,18–23 par). Because the redactor uses the immovable race designation only once, and

¹⁶Cf. Hippolytus, *Ref.* 5.8.1–2 (where this phrase is said to have been used by the Naasenes); on the background and significance of the phrase in gnostic texts, see Francis T. Fallon, “The Gnostics: The Undominated Race,” *NovT* 21 (1979): 271–88; and Roland Bergmeier, “‘Königlosigkeit’ als nachvalentinisches Heilsprädikat,” *NovT* 24 (1982): 316–39, whose argument that the designation “kingless race” must be post-Valentinian, however, I find unconvincing.

at the same time takes up other designations like "the race without a kingdom over it," the resultant ambiguity and vagueness leave us with more uncertainty about what the "immovable race" is in this text than is the case in the other works which use the title. My own view is that the author is using this phrase "immovable race" to encompass the entire family of incorruptibles in the aeonic realm, which would include the *genos* of noetic faculties in the foreknowledge of the First-Father as well as the subsequent replications of the First-Father's image in the unfolding of the aeonic realm.

In a manner similar to but not exactly like that in *ApocryJn*, the aeonic emanations in *SJC* constitute a genealogy of Humanity in the abstract, proceeding from "the First-Father," whose likeness becomes "the Father," whose likeness in turn appears as "the immortal, androgynous Human," etc. The noetic faculties of *nous*, *ennoia*, *phronēsis*, *enthumēsis*, *logismos* and *dynamis*, whose whole *genos* is contained in the foreknowledge of the Unbegotten Father, are replicated in the Immortal Human, or First Human (III 102,20–103,1), also called "Adam, the Eye of the Light" (III 105,12f; BG 108,10f).¹⁷

I have already had occasion in Chapter II to discuss the relationship between Adamas, Seth and the immovable race in *3StSeth* (see above, pp. 62–67). There I argued that the text assumed a mystical identification, through Seth, of all the members of the immovable race with Adamas, the Universal Human. "Standing" as Adamas "stands" is nothing other than realizing perfect Human potential. And the same sort of abstraction is to be seen, I believe, in the figures of Adamas and Seth in *Zost*. The relationships between Adamas and Seth and the souls of the immovable race, all inhabitants of the level of the Self-begotten (*Zost* 6,1–29 etc.), need to be read against a passage such as *Zost* 30,4–14:

Adamas is the [perfect] Human because he is the Eye of the Self-begotten, he is a knowledge (*gnōsis*) of it [. . .] since the Self-begotten God is a word of the perfect Mind of the truth. Now it is to each of the souls that Seth, the son of Adamas, comes, since he is a knowledge that is appropriate for them, and because of this a living seed comes into being from him.

This passage seems to say that Adamas and Seth are names for two levels of gnosis. Seth is the gnosis as it is conveyed to each individual soul, whereas Adamas is the higher level of gnosis belonging to the Universal Human in whom all the individuals participate, the Perfect Human (cf. *Zost* 6,24f).

¹⁷ In the liturgical formula in *Acts of Thomas* 27, an almost identical list of noetic faculties is referred to as the "five members (*melē*)" (see above, pp. 20f). In *SJC* III 103,1, the noetic faculties are also called the "members" (*melē*) of the First Human.

There is some difference between the two recensions of *GEgypt* as to what is said about Adamas:

III 49,1–16

... from] that [place] the cloud of the great light, the living power, the mother of the holy, incorruptible ones, the great power, the Mirothoë. And she gave birth to him whose name I call, saying, *ien ien ea ea ea* three times. For it is this one, Adamas, the shining light, *who is from the Human, the First Human*, the one

through whom everything came into existence, to whom everything (came into existence), without whom nothing came into existence. The unknowable, incomprehensible Father came forth. He came down from above in order that the deficiency might cease.

IV 60,30–61,18

Then there came forth [from] that place the great cloud of the light, a living power, the mother of the holy, incorruptible ones, of the great powers [...]. And she gave birth to him whose name I shall call, saying ["You are one,] you are one, you are one [*ea ea*] *ea*." Because this one, Adamas, is [a light] which shone forth from the light, the Eye of the [light]. For [this is] *the First Human*, because of whom all things [are, to] whom all things are, and [without whom] nothing is, the [Father] who [came forth] inaccessible, [and unknowable,] who came [from above] to eliminate the deficiency.

The ambiguity in the pronouns and relative clauses here leaves some uncertainty as to whether the term "First Human" refers to Adamas or to an antecedent being, although the latter is probably the case.¹⁸ Adamas the "incorruptible Human" (III 49,18 par; 50,20 par; 51,5f par, etc.) is a replication of the "First Human" and is the "heavenly prototype of the earthly man."¹⁹ All who have been begotten by Seth have come to participate in that perfect Humanity. In the liturgical hymn which possibly was intended to accompany a baptismal sacrament (see above, pp. 149–51), the initiate addresses the divinity as the one who is "raising up the human in whom you will purify me into your life" (III 67,19–21).

The appearance of this gnostic mythology of the perfect, primordial Human within documents which do not reflect a deterministic understanding of the possibilities open to the readers suggests, I would say, the universalistic implications of the mythology—not universalistic in the sense that everyone is expected to be saved, but universalistic in the

¹⁸ See Böhlig-Wisse, *The Gospel of the Egyptians*, p. 177.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

concern for announcing the way of salvation (sometimes, “way of ascent”) which is open to all humans who would seek after it. In all five of the texts, “the immovable race” is another way of saying “the Human family.” This does not correspond to the way we today ordinarily use the term “human race,” since we would tend to use the term inclusively of all physical beings belonging to the biological category *Homo sapiens*. In these gnostic texts, on the other hand, the human *genea*, or immovable *genea*, is a noetic or spiritual category. Although the achievement of full Human potential seems to have been regarded as theoretically possible for all whom we today would include under the label *Homo sapiens*, nevertheless this achievement was certainly not viewed as guaranteed by mere biological birth. It required the right decisions, the acceptance of the gnosis, the cultivation of the power which gnosis bestowed—and this is something many or most people would be unwilling to do.

But then others in late antiquity besides these gnostics could also speak of the participation of individual humans in the Human, leaving open the possibility of any individual’s ability to achieve perfect Humanity, while considering that in practice this might be attained by only a few. I have already mentioned in Chapter Two (see above, p. 63) Plotinus’s statement about the “Human which is prior to all humans” (*Enn.* 6.7.6, 11f). For Plotinus, the “true human” (*ho alēthēs anthrōpos*) who is within each individual, who participates in the “Human who is prior to all humans,” has no part in the chaotic disturbances brought on by the passions of the body, but is in touch with the stable, noetic realm (1.1.9–10). The mystical ascent into the stability of the Intelligible (see above, pp. 77–79) is an ascent into the Self, the Human. But although in principle such full achievement is open to everyone, in practice Plotinus thinks of only a relatively limited circle who actually experience while still in the body the stability of which the true human is capable. Humans here below fall into two overall categories, those who are wise (*hoi spoudaioi*) and “the masses of humans”; the wise are oriented toward things above, while the rest are divided again into two groups: those with some idea of virtue and participation in some good, and the “common crowd” (*ho phaulos ochlos*) who are there to do the work for the better types (2.9.9, 7–12).

Philo of Alexandria distinguishes between the molded human, or human mixed with sense perception, and the “true human” or “heavenly human” (e.g., *Fug.* 71; *Her.* 230–31).²⁰ Heroes such as Moses stand for Philo as demonstrations of the human potential for participation in the immovability of God. Philo’s conception of human potential is rooted in Platonic philosophical presuppositions about the contrast between the stability of Being vs. the instability of Becoming, and in the conviction that the humanity which is most genuine shares in the stability of Being. But

²⁰ For a summary of the relevant passages, see Dey, *The Intermediary World*, pp. 20–30.

Philo no more expects everyone to achieve this than does Plotinus. Philo thinks in terms of various types or races (*genē*) of individuals. For example, he contrasts the "race of Cain" with the "race of Seth" in *Post.* 40–48: Those who say that everything involved in thinking, perceiving, or speaking is not a gift of God but a gift of their own soul are impious and belong to the race of Cain; those who are among the lovers of virtue who acknowledge all this as God's gift belong to the race of Seth: "The *genos* of these people is very hard to find, since they escape the treacherous, reckless, knavish, dissolute life full of passions (*pathōn*) and evils. For those who have been well-pleasing have been transferred and removed by God from corruptible things, into immortal races (*eis athanata genē*), and they are no longer found among the multitudes" (*Post.* 43). Still later in the treatise, Philo again contrasts Seth and Cain (*Post.* 170–73). His point of departure this time is Gen 4:25: "God has raised up for me another seed (*sperma heteron*) instead of Abel, whom Cain killed." Seth is "another" with respect to Cain because Seth represents a thirst for virtue while Cain corresponds to wickedness. Seth is "another" or "different" (but not *allotrion*, "alien") with respect to Abel, since Abel has already left mortality, while Seth, "since he is a seed of human virtue, will never leave the race of human beings (*to anthrōpōn genos*), but will receive a first increase up to the perfect number 10 at the point at which the righteous Noah arises, a second and better one coming to fulfillment from Noah's child Shem unto another 10, called by the name of Abraham the faithful, and a third, a 7 more perfect than 10, reaching from Abraham to Moses, the man wise in all things" (*Post.* 173).²¹ Now obviously the point of much of what Philo writes would be to encourage the reader to desire membership in the better "family" or "race," and yet Philo knows that it would never happen that *everyone* would achieve membership in the *genos* of Seth, since most persons do not "have what it takes"—i.e., the commitment to virtue.

For Clement of Alexandria the achievement of full human potential means assimilation to "the impassible Human" (*anthrōpos apathēs*), the Logos (*Strom.* 5.94.4; see above, p. 128). Just as some of the gnostic texts which I have discussed call the perfect Human Adamas the "Eye of the Light,"²² so Clement says that the passionless Logos or Son of God is "all mind (*nous*), all paternal light, all eye (*ophthalmos*), seeing all things,

²¹ See further Klijn, *Seth*, pp. 26f; Robert Kraft, "Philo on Seth: Was Philo Aware of Traditions which Exalted Seth and his Progeny?" in Layton, *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, vol. 2, pp. 452f.

²² *SJC* III 105,11f par; BG 108,10; *GEgypt* IV 61,10; cf. *Zost* 13,6; 30,5f; see also *TriProt* 38,5f; *ParaphShem* 28,3f.

hearing all things, knowing all things . . ." (*Strom.* 7.5.5).²³ It is the stamp (*charactēr*) of this ideal Human to which the gnostic wants to be assimilated (7.72.1), and this assimilation, actually achieved by the apostles, is the attainment of *apatheia*, passionlessness (*Strom.* 6.71.3). The ideal of the *gnostikos* which Clement sketches out in *Strom.* 7 is in principle open for all. Yet once again, Clement, like Philo, has presented an ideal which he knows will be realized by only a minority. The *gnostikos* can be distinguished from "believers of a more ordinary sort" (*Strom.* 7.49.3) with whom the *gnostikos* is to share in prayer and in other activities when it is fitting to do so.

Many examples have been presented in the course of this study which illustrate the notion in late antiquity that one of the qualities of ideal Humanity is immovability. One wonders whether the readers of the texts which speak of "the immovable race" could have avoided hearing in the name Adamas the word for the substance adamant (*adamas*). We know for certain that *some* gnostics at least were making exactly that connection. I mentioned in Chapter Two a passage from Hippolytus's account of the Naasene teaching (*Ref.* 5.7.35f) which is an example of this (see above, pp. 64f). Although we do not have the explicit connection between Adamas and adamantine in any of the texts which speak of the immovable race, it is possible that the very use of the term "immovable" applied to a race patterned after the perfect Human could in itself have been enough to call forth for the original readers the connotations of immovability in the name of the perfect Human Adamas. (Of the five works, only *S/C* never uses the spelling Adamas, but only Adam.)²⁴

²³ Cf. *Silv* 113,7f, where the first-born Word or Wisdom of God is called the "seeing (*thorasis*) which always looks toward the invisible Father." The identification of the perfect Human with the "Eye" is evidently a version of the equivalence: true or inner human = mind = eye of the soul. See Ps.-Plato, *Alcibiades I* 130C–133B; Plato, *Rep.* 7.533D; *Soph.* 245A; cf. Jäger, "Nus" in *Platons Dialogen*, pp. 54f. In the later literature, see Philo, *Abr.* 59; *Op. mund.* 66; *Somm.* 1.164; *Spec. leg.* 3.6; *Corp. Herm.* 7.1; 10.4; 13.17; Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 3.44.3; Plotinus, *Enn.* 5.3.11; cf. Wlosok, *Laktanz*, pp. 85, 128, 147. In Lucian, *Vit. auc.* 18, the Platonist informs the buyer (who complains that he cannot "see" the Ideas which the Platonist talks about!) that he is "blind in the eye of his soul"; cf. *Allog* 64,30–33: "He was blind without the still eye of revelation." The Neopythagorean Euryphamus says that the Divine placed the human in the cosmos as the most ingenious (*polyphronestaton*) living being, an eye (*ophthalmos*) for the ordering of existing things (Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 4.39.27, p. 915 Hense).

²⁴ Looking to the larger context of these writings: The identification of an immovable race of passionless ascetics with the immovable, transcendent universal Human Adamas may have been a particular mythological version of a popular association of the steel-willed ascetic with adamant. That ideal ascetic hero of Clement of Alexandria, his perfect *gnostikos*, "is self-controlled and passionless, unyielding to both pleasures and pains, just as they say adamant is to fire" (*Strom.* 7.67.8). In the fourth century, Synesius of Cyrene unfavorably contrasts the rigorous and (to his mind) impatient path to perfection pursued by Christian monks, with the cultured and evenly paced course of Greek intellectual training. The monks

D. The Immovable Race as Open-Ended

We are now in a position to draw some conclusions respecting the significance of the fact that the ideal class of immovable gnostics is referred to as a *genea*, a race, and in some texts is called more specifically the race of Seth. What I have attempted to show is that the immovable *genea* is viewed in these texts as being "open-ended" as far as the recruitment of members from among humanity is concerned.

For a model with which such an open-ended notion of a spiritual class could be contrasted, one could look to the description of the teaching of the "Sethians" given by Epiphanius (*Pan.* 39.1.1–10.7). He says that the Sethians agree with the teaching of the Cainites in saying that two humans originated in the beginning, and that from these two came Cain and Abel. After Abel was killed, an aeonic power called the Mother caused Seth to be born and she placed in him a seed of the divine power. The race of Seth is an elect (*eklogēs*) race and is separated from the "other race" (*allou genous*), i.e., that of Cain. When the Mother brought a flood on the earth to purify the seed humankind, the cosmic angels outwitted her and into the ark along with seven persons of the race of Seth these angels slipped Ham, who belonged to the race of wickedness; and thus the former state of impurity continued in the world.

Now Epiphanius may not have understood the actual teaching of these gnostics whom he describes, but *his* perception of the way these "Sethians" imagine their identity in the race of Seth offers a useful foil against which to view the concepts of *genea* in our texts. Epiphanius's account gives one the impression of completely distinct *biological* ancestries for the races of Seth and Cain. Quite absent is any intimation that one might be converted from one race to the other; here we have one of the examples from ancient literature of the presentation of gnostic identity in terms of fixed, predetermined classes. Without entering into the question of whether Epiphanius is accurate as far as his gnostic sources are concerned, I will only stress how different this picture is from what we find in the texts which speak of the immovable race. The immovable *genea* is not contrasted with a *genea* of Cain, not even in *ApocryIn*, the one text in this group which mentions Cain. And there is nothing in the texts, so far as I can see, which suggests that their authors imagined the ideal of immovability to be excluded at the outset for certain human beings. If in practice

he refers to as "those who walk the other path which is considered adamantine" (*Dion* 8, 47D ed. Terzaghi pp. 253,23–254,1). His wording suggests that he could be alluding to a popular fourth-century label for the monastic life. On the general topic of Synesius' criticism of such monks, see Jay Bregman, *Synesius of Cyrene: Philosopher-Bishop*, The Transformation of the Classical Heritage 2 (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: Univ. of California Press, 1982), pp. 130–33.

only certain persons prove responsive to the gnosis, nevertheless in principle this ideal is open to all.

The way our texts speak of membership in an immovable race is best compared, I believe, with the way in which some other writers could speak of a class or category of people which was indeed special but not closed off *a priori* to all but a predetermined selection. A good example of this, particularly because it happens also to involve the theme of immovability, is to be found in the *Acts of Andrew*.²⁵ I will leave aside the old issue of whether this text, preserved in only fragmentary form, should be labeled "gnostic,"²⁶ since the point which I want to make would be the same no matter what label we use.

The important Greek fragment of the *Acts of Andrew* in Codex Vaticanus 808 contains an account of discourses delivered by Andrew to various people just before his crucifixion. The incident which prompts his execution is the fact that Andrew persuades Maximilla, who is engaged to a certain judge by the name of Aegeates, not to marry him, but instead to remain a virgin. Maximilla heeds Andrew's call to avoid the allurements of sexual intercourse, "a polluted and foul way of life" (ch. 5), and Aegeates has Andrew crucified. It is in the context of this story that the author has Andrew praise the ideal Christian life. Speaking to a group of Christians as the fragment opens, Andrew exclaims:

Happy is our race (*genos*)! by whom has it been loved? Happy is our existence! From whom has it received mercy? We are not cast to the ground, we who have been recognized by such a height. We do not belong to time in order that we may be dissolved by time. We are not a product of movement (*kinēseōs technē*), which is again destroyed by itself. . . . We belong to the noble (*kalou*), through whom we drive away the mean; to the righteous, through whom we drive away unrighteousness; . . . to that which remains (*tou menontos*), through whom we recognize that which does <not> remain."

Several times in the fragment there are references to persons being spiritually akin (*suggenēs*) to one another or akin to the words which Andrew preaches (chs. 5; 11; 15). Toward the end of the fragment the Christian community is called the saved race (*to sōzomenon genos*—ch. 18). Manfred Hornschuh correctly observes that this language about a special race, or spiritual kinship to the message that is proclaimed, does not connote in the *Acts of Andrew* a *praedestinatio physica*; it is not a matter of some deterministic dualism of natures, but rather a matter of a contrast

²⁵ Text in Lipsius-Bonnet, *Acta apostolorum apocrypha*, part 2, vol. 1, pp. 38–45. With some modifications, I employ here the translation by E. Best in Hennecke-Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 2, pp. 408–16.

²⁶ See the Introduction to the English translation in Hennecke-Schneemelcher, by Manfred Hornschuh, esp. pp. 392–95.

between those who accept the message and those who do not.²⁷ What the author understands by salvation is the restoration of a state of humanity before Adam's fall: "For it is ordained that everyone should correct his own fall" (ch. 5). This restoration of perfect humanity entails the remembering of what being human is all about: "... that you are holy, light, akin to the unbegotten, intellectual (*noeros*), heavenly, translucent, pure, superior to powers, superior to authorities, etc." (ch. 6). And important in this restoration of perfect humanity is the reestablishment of contact with what "remains at rest." The hearers are admonished to "press toward the things that are permanent (*ta monima*) and to take flight from all that is transient (*rheustôn*). For you see that no one of you stands firm (*histamenon*), but everything, even to the ways of men (*êthôn anthrôpôn*), is changeable (*eumetabola*)" (ch. 15). This last statement about the instability of human affairs echoes what apparently had become by the period of late antiquity a common sentiment about existence in the cosmos,²⁸ and the *Acts of Andrew* is still another example, to be added to others mentioned in this study, of the equally common attraction to methods for transcending instability. The hero Andrew and the heroine Maximilla, like Moses for Philo, demonstrate this potential themselves and therefore offer the readers concrete models of the ideal. Andrew both admonishes and reassures his hearers:

I therefore command you, beloved children, to build firmly on the foundation which has been laid for you, for it is immovable (*asaleutô*) and no evil person can assail it. Be rooted in this foundation. Be established (*stêrichthete*), remembering what 'you saw' and what happened while I was living among you all. (ch. 16)

²⁷ Hornschuh, p. 393. However, Hornschuh's further comment: "... the frequent usage [in the *Acts of Andrew*] of the concepts *suggenês* and *allotrios* ('alien') should not be explained gnostically," would be more helpful if it were more precise, since it is not clear to me that all or even very many gnostic texts which have been preserved from antiquity actually do contain the sort of deterministic *praedestinatio physica* which Hornschuh seems to be contrasting with the usage of the term *suggenês* in the *Acts of Andrew*. Hornschuh's passing remark is still another example of the labor-saving caricature of gnostic determinism from which scholarship must cut itself loose.

²⁸ Aristotle, *Protr.* Frag. 10a Ross (from Iamblichus, *Protr.* 8): "Nothing in human experience is firm" (*to mēden einai bebaion tôn anthrôpinôn*); Plutarch, *Vita Numae* 14.5, in discussing an enigmatic precept from Numa about "turning as you worship," suggests that this change of posture could be intended to teach that "nothing in human affairs stands firm" (*oudenos hestôtos tôn anthrôpinôn*); Philo, *Somn.* 1.245: "nothing of human things truly stands firm" (*hestêke gar tôn anthrôpinôn pros alêtheian ouden*); cf. *Op. mund.* 151; *Leg. all.* 3.38; Marcus Aurelius, *Med.* 5.23: existence is like a ceaseless river, with constant change, "and hardly anything stands firm" (*kai schedon ouden hestôs*); Gregory of Nyssa, *De virg.* 4.7: "Human life is forever in movement, ... and nothing of its pursuits stands firm" (*ouden hestêke tôn en autô spoudazomenôn*).

Among the other examples which might be compared, there is Plato's discussion of the difference between contemplation of the Forms and mere True Opinion. The forms are perceptible to Nous alone. Opinion, on the other hand, is subject to change by persuasion, and deals only with things which are constantly being carried out (*pephorēmenon aei*—*Tim.* 52A). Nous is immovable (*akinēton*) with respect to persuasion, and of Nous only the gods and a small "race" or "class" (*genos*) of humans partake (*Tim.* 51E). Plato is not talking about a deterministic dualism of natures, but is intending to emphasize the *difficulty* of achieving that degree of concentration and application which leads to noetic insight.²⁹ Or one could also compare the Stoic division of humankind into two *genē*: that of the wise (*tōn spoudaiōn*) and that of the common sort (*tōn phaulōn*).³⁰ I have already mentioned Philo's tendency to speak in terms of persons belonging to "families" in the sense of "categories" or "types."³¹ And there are familiar instances in early Christian literature of references to the Christian community as a *genos* or new *genos* (e.g., *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 3.2; *Ep. Diognetus* I; *Kerygma Petrou* 2, etc.), which traces its ancestry (*genealogein*) to Christ (*Aristides, Apol.* 15.1). Perhaps an even closer parallel in some ways to the use of *genea* in our texts is in the Hermetic tractate *Poimandres*, where the seer is admonished: "Having received all these things, should you not become a guide to the worthy, so that through you the race of humanity (*to genos tēs anthrōpoiētos*) might be saved by God?" (26); and a few lines later the seer, now sent on a mission to awaken sleeping humanity from the drunkenness of ignorance, says that "some of them mocked and turned away, having given themselves over to the way of death, while others begged to be taught, throwing themselves at my feet; and raising them up I became a guide of the race (*tou genous*), teaching them how and by what means they might be saved" (29). He is to be a guide of the human race, yet this finally means a guide to "the worthy"; through his preaching the whole "race of humanity" is to be saved, yet in practice the mockery from and rejection by the foolish are no real surprise.

²⁹ Cf. *Rep.* 6.490A-B, and Jäger, "Nus" in *Platons Dialogen*, pp. 47f and 144f.

³⁰ H. von Arnim, *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta*, vol. I (Leipzig: Teubner, 1921), p. 52, no. 216.

³¹ E.g., *SAC* 7. persons who have left behind human instruction and have become disciples of God are translated into "the incorruptible and most perfect race" (*to aphtharton kai teleōtaton genos*); on Philo's use of *genos*, cf. further Goodenough, *By Light, Light*, pp. 156, 226. Although Philo can use *genea* in the sense of a successive "stage" or "generation" (e.g., *her.* 293–99), Fallon, "The Gnostics: The Undominated Race," pp. 280f, has pointed out Philo's use of *genea* in *Fug.* 126–31 "to refer to all those whom the virtues have taken as their heritage, to refer to the pious as opposed to evil men"—that is, to a kind of spiritual family.

In spite of the different cast of mythological characters in the texts which contain the immovable race designation, we have here a fundamentally similar perspective on human potential. Belonging to the "immovable race," to be sure, is something which not every individual on earth is expected to achieve. But it is membership in the ideal Human family, for which therefore all humans are potential candidates. It is true that in some of these texts the imagery used to describe the alteration in self-image accompanying the process of conversion implies or directly states that one has not assumed a *new* identity but rather has recovered a preexistent one: one discovers one's roots (*ApocryJn* II 31,15f), one awakes from sleep (*ApocryJn* II 31,5f), one had come into this world as a "drop from the light" (*SJC* III 106,24–107,2), etc. But conversion is not predetermined for certain ones and excluded *a priori* for others. Some persons simply do not respond positively, they fail to awake from sleep, or they awake to the gnosis and then reject it (*ApocryJn* II 27,21–30), or they remain too long "unconvinced," do not mature quickly enough, and are led away to destruction (*Zost* 131,20–132,5). The achievement of immovability is viewed as a human potential, where the term "human" of course refers not to flesh and bones or the animal passions, but to that which is most truly human—the mind or spirit. The beings in the cosmos who *would* be ineligible *by nature* for membership in the immovable race would be non-humans, including of course, the archontic powers who do their best to prevent legitimate human candidates from realizing their potential perfection.

Because of the considerations which I have discussed in this chapter, I am not at all convinced that a sharp distinction should always be made between a "disclosure and perfection of the natural abilities and potentials" in human beings by Greek ethics, and an "overcoming of the natural in the human being" in gnosticism; between a "freedom of choice of the natural human being" assumed by Greek philosophers such as Numenius, and a denial of the freedom of the natural will in gnosticism.³² The border is not so distinct between Numenius's or Plotinus's view of the perfection of "natural abilities and potentials" common to humans on the one hand, and on the other hand the picture in *ApocryJn* of a consciousness awakened to one's possession of the divine seed naturally akin to the Human Adamas and the subsequent pursuit of human perfection. In both cases we are talking about a potential, actually achieved by only a certain number of people, but not excluded *a priori* for everyone else. This is not to say that there were not significant differences between the philosophical position of a Numenius or a Plotinus and the understanding of reality reflected in gnostic writings such as those which I have been

³² Elsas, *Neuplatonische und gnostische Weltabkehrung*, pp. 244f.

discussing, for there were. Some of these differences have in fact been touched on from time to time in the preceding chapters, and some will be mentioned in the next chapter. It is just that the differences do not really have to do with the issues of free choice, the universality of the potential for perfection, or the necessity to take action oneself in order to attain perfection.³³

³³ The important study by A. A. Long, "Freedom and Determinism in the Stoic Theory of Human Action," in *Problems in Stoicism*, ed. A. A. Long (London: Athlone Press, 1971), pp. 173–99, criticizes the way in which many caricatures (ancient and modern) of Stoic determinism fail to do justice to the role of free choice in Stoic concepts of human action, and therefore fail to understand Stoicism. The caricatures of gnosticism on this topic have, if anything, been even more overdrawn and even more of an obstruction to an adequate understanding of gnostic myth and practice.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE IMMOVABLE RACE AND THE QUESTION OF SECTARIAN *SITZ IM LEBEN*

In the preceding chapters I have tried to recover something of *what* might have been heard in the phrase "the immovable race" by the authors and readers of the texts which employ this designation. I now turn to the question of *who* such authors and readers may have been. I approach this issue with considerable apprehension, and confess at the very outset that I have far more unanswered questions in my mind on this problem than I do proposed solutions. To provide the fullest and most satisfactory reconstruction would require an analysis of more gnostic texts than merely the five I have been discussing and a more detailed examination of other features of such texts than the stability/instability motifs which have been the primary focus here. Such an enterprise reaches well beyond the limits of this study, and I will therefore confine myself to a much more modest set of hypotheses, which will incorporate some of the results of the preceding chapters.

A. Community Theology or Individual Speculations?

The fact that the phrase "the immovable race" was not a commonplace in antiquity, but rather has been found thus far only in a small selection of texts, all of them gnostic, which happen to share several other distinctive features in common—all of this could have suggested that in this designation we have a promising index for classifying texts as the products of the same gnostic group. The peculiarity of the designation seems reason enough to assume *some* type of historical relationship among the texts in which it is found.

As is well known, most of the texts in which the immovable race designation appears have been tentatively, or in some cases rather confidently, cataloged by many scholars under the category "Sethian,"¹ or "Barbelo-
gnostic."² Hans-Martin Schenke, for example, would identify four of

¹ E.g., Schenke, "Das sethianische System"; *idem*, "Gnostic Sethianism."

² E.g., Turner, "The Gnostic Threefold Path," who is interested in comparing features of five writings, including three of the texts in which the immovable race designation occurs—*ApocryPh*, *3StSeth*, and *Zost*—and who suggests that all of these texts "seem to belong to a single gnostic group or sect, the so-called Barbelo-Gnostics described in book I., ch. 29 of Irenaeus' *Against the Heresies*" (p. 325).

these five texts as Sethian, with only *SJC* being definitely non-Sethian.³ Schenke has cataloged an impressive array of interlocking common features found among the texts which he identifies as Sethian—the appearance and function of Seth himself, the four luminaries and their four aeons, along with many features shared by two or more texts within this group:

Especially characteristic are the self-designation and self-understanding of our Gnostics as the “seed of Seth,” which runs throughout these texts, either verbatim or in the form of synonyms (“the unshakeable race,” “the great race,” etc.). In my opinion the most fitting way to express the essence of the texts in our group is to designate them as “Sethian.”⁴

Schenke observes that a much more difficult question than what to *call* the text group is the question of the *social identity* of the persons whose views are expressed in the texts, but he is convinced that there was a social coherence underlying the theological similarities:

The phenomenon and structure of our text group, its extent, the unity behind its variety, the varying density of what is essential, all this gives the impression that we have before us the genuine product of *one and the same human community of no small dimensions*, but one that is in the process of *natural development and movement*. That is, I cannot think of our documents as having no basis in *a group of human beings*, nor do I think of this basis as being artificial and short-lived. Now if, from this perspective, we can conclude from the relevant terms of the texts that it is precisely *this group* of human beings who understood themselves to be the seed and offspring of Seth, the obvious question about the origin of *this social group* and about its traditions is brought into focus.” (emphasis mine)⁵

Schenke’s interest is obviously primarily directed toward theological features which these texts have in common, and he seems content for now to leave less precisely defined the exact nature of the “social group” referred to as “Sethians”—except to emphasize that we do need to speak of a single group, while at the same time to recognize that this group had a history of development, and that differences among Sethian gnostic texts may reflect the existence of various branches of Sethian gnosticism and/or stages in the developmental process.

On the other hand, Frederik Wisse would approach our texts from a different perspective.⁶ Wisse is convinced that the nature of the original gnostic documents now at our disposal tends to disconfirm the too-

³ Schenke, “Gnostic Sethianism,” p. 596.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 591.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 592.

⁶ Frederik Wisse, “The Nag Hammadi Library and the Heresiologists,” *VigChr* 25 (1971): 205–23; *idem*, “Stalking those elusive Sethians,” in Layton, *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, vol. 2, pp. 563–76.

schematized picture of gnostic sects presented by ancient heresiologists, that such ancient testimony was probably often based on no more than is available to us (that is, that Irenaeus, for example, may have concluded the existence of a special group of "Barbelognostics" simply because he had before him a document containing speculations about a certain "Barbelo"), and that although there probably were gnostic sectarian groups in antiquity, we cannot reconstruct them and distinguish between them by lumping into various categories texts supposedly containing common mythological "systems"—the argument being that what might look to us (and to ancient heresiologists) like a roughly coherent mythological system did not in fact function like some creedal statement that provided boundaries for a structured sect with definite "beliefs" and practices, but rather represents the employment of "free-floating theologoumena" in diverse ways by *individuals* with common speculative interests. Wisse is therefore less impressed by an argument for any common theological "system" in these works, and see the content of the writings as being often quite *unsystematic*. There are common elements in the writings, in his view, but this does not reveal a common sectarian theology but rather common concerns about visionary and ascetic praxis:

The original purpose of these writings must be sought in private meditation. The intended readers would have been the esoteric group of "like-minded" Gnostics, not in the sense of members of a sect, but as *individuals* with a similar attitude towards this world, otherworldly vision, and ascetic lifestyle. These books helped them to understand themselves in their estrangement from this world and oneness with their heavenly home to which they longed to return.⁷

With respect to the relation of these issues to the specific group of texts which have been the focus of this study, I remain unconvinced by Wisse's arguments that we ought not to see *any* sectarian groups underlying these texts, and that instead each text presupposes only an *individual's* speculations rather than community theology. It seems to me that at least some of these texts do presuppose what we can call a "sect" with definable boundaries. (I will return to this point later.) On the other hand, it also seems to me that to speak as Schenke does of four of our texts as the products of a single "social group" is probably to stretch the term "social group" further than is required by the data. Any statement to the effect that some or all of these texts were produced by a single gnostic "group" will have to be rendered more precisely, I would say, in order to be of any real help.

The limitations of using the many theological and philosophical connections among the documents as criteria for *social* continuity have to be measured cautiously. We might compare, for example, the use of

⁷ Wisse, "Stalking," p. 576.

common terminology and concepts by figures such as Philo, Clement, or Iamblichus, who are separated from one another chronologically and also in terms of "social group." To be sure, in a case like this we might ought to speak of a certain kind of social continuity, because of their use of common "school tradition." And where we have persons who were less separated in time, the link of having heard lectures from the same teacher would be a common denominator of genuine importance in any description of their social involvements: For example, it is possible that both the Christian Origen (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.19.5–10) and Plotinus (Porphyry, *Vit. Plot.* 3) had listened to lectures from the same Ammonius, and that the two therefore belonged in their day to a relatively elite "social group" of such students.⁸ If I understand Schenke's position, then he would have us see at the very least a social continuity among Sethians that was of a "school" type.⁹ But even if we determine that several persons are drawing in varying degrees on a common "school tradition," this still leaves open many questions about their social involvements and commitments. And this is especially true when we cannot be sure that the use of common school tradition has been the result of study under the same teacher. When the possibility lies open, as it does with some of our gnostic texts, that common elements are due to literary borrowing from documents that either had been written generations earlier, or in any case written for circles with whom the later borrowers were never in contact, then it is also possible that in the process tradition has passed between social groups that were very different in type. Even in cases where individuals might have had a common teacher, as with Origen and Plotinus, it would often be misplacing the emphasis to speak of their having belonged to the same "social group." Then, as now, persons could have multiple social involvements, and yet some of these involvements will have been more definitive than others. We might be accurate in saying that the Christian Origen was a Platonist to the bone, but he had certain commitments as a Christian that are probably more important in defining him socially.

⁸ See Karl-Otto Weber, *Origenes der Neuplatoniker: Versuch einer Interpretation*, Zetemata 27 (München: Beck, 1962), pp. 34–40; but cf. Heinrich Dörrie, "Ammonios, der Lehrer Plotins," *Hermes* 83 (1955): pp. 468–71, who argues that there were two Ammonii. On the use of common "school tradition" by figures like Philo and Clement, cf. Wilhelm Bousset, *Judisch-christlicher Schulbetrieb in Alexandria und Rom*, FRLANT 23 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1915).

⁹ In the discussion of Schenke's paper at the Yale conference, Carsten Colpe relayed to the seminar on Sethianism the opinion of Schenke (himself unable to attend) that the mutual relationships among "Sethian" texts "are on several different levels and that the 'Sethian' texts could point to a loosely constructed 'school' with distinctive doctrines but rather indistinct boundaries" (see Layton, *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, vol. 2, p. 635).

B. Signs of Communal Commitments

Before we can speak of persons belonging to a common social group we have to have some means of gauging the degree of social interaction and commitment involved. We do in fact have indications in the texts which contain the immovable race designation that commitments are expected, and that in some cases we can speak of fairly defined sectarian boundaries. It is here that I would disagree with Wisse's contention that these tractates "must not be seen as the teaching of a sect or sects, but as the inspired creation of individuals who did not feel bound by the opinions of a religious community."¹⁰ I believe that he is correct not to assign them all to the *same* sect, but wrong in ruling out the possibility that *ApocryIn*, for instance, may represent the teaching of one sectarian *community* and the *GEgypt* that of another. That commitment to defined communities (although with varying degrees of definition) is presupposed by some of the texts is suggested by several factors:

First of all, most of the texts contain some indication that "identity-altering experiences" and "bridge-burning acts" are expected on the part of those who are receptive to the teaching presented. I am borrowing language used by Luther P. Gerlach and Virginia Hine, in their 1970 study of the commitment process in movements such as modern Pentecostal groups and Black Power groups.¹¹ Gerlach and Hine distinguish between this alteration of self-image and act of commitment to a movement, and traditional *rites de passage* which mark simply transitions to new social roles:

Our data suggest an important difference between these rites and the commitment act and experience involved in movements. The latter leads to a view of the self that is *not* in accord with social expectations. The bridge-burning act of commitment to a movement takes the individual *out* of the larger society in some significant way and symbolizes his rejection of certain social norms. An initiation rite merely marks the passage of an individual from one accepted, traditional role within the society to another equally acceptable one. The result of *rites de passage* in primitive or complex modern societies may be a changed view of self and changed role behavior on the part of the individual, but such initiation involves no change in the social system or in the individual's basic value orientation. Commitment by means of a transforming experience and a bridge-burning act, on the other hand, involves changed behavior based on a value system different from that accepted by society at large: it may involve participation in an organization opposed to established institutions.

¹⁰ Wisse, "Stalking," p. 575.

¹¹ *People, Power, Change: Movements of Social Transformation* (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970), esp. pp. 110-58.

... The commitment experience may or may not involve a mystical element, but it must produce an altered view of self and some degree of cognitive restructuring. The commitment act may be a real or symbolic destruction of the old way of life, or a real or symbolic achievement of the new, or a combination of both.¹²

In *Zost* the identity-altering experience which is expected is in fact a mystical experience, the mystical ascent and transcendental "standing" during which there is a vision of the transcendent realm. In *3StSeth* there is an ascent very similar to that in *Zost*, although in *3StSeth* it is not a matter of a description of a paradigmatic ascent by a single individual, as in *Zost*. Instead, the plural "we" which dominates most of the text suggests that the tractate contains a liturgy for a *community* doxology, a fact which itself is already supportive of the hypothesis that such a text was composed with a definable community in mind.¹³ Schenke is probably correct in referring to this "mystery of cultic ascension" as "repeatable."¹⁴ And in my discussion of transcendental standing in *Zost* I pointed to the possibility that the practice which may be presupposed by the text could be analogous to repeatable mystical ascents and "stands" attested from other sources in late antiquity. But the *first* such ascent which a given gnostic experienced would have been his/her first "vision" of the Transcendent, and would have effected what Gerlach and Hine call the alteration in self-image.

In *ApocryJn*, the identity-altering experience is that of being "set right." The longer version in II/IV contains a picture of the gnostic awakened from deep sleep, weeping, wiping away the tears and asking after the identity of the revealer who "calls my name" and brings "hope" (*elpis*—II 31,5–10). This awakening parallels the awakening of Adam and Eve described earlier in both recensions as a setting right of Sophia's deficiency (II 22,3–23,35 par). The experience of "awakening" is also how *SJC* describes the transformation of self-image (III 107,15f, etc.). *GEgypt* speaks of the initiate's sense of mystical union with the divine (III 66,22–67,4).

As far as "bridge-burning acts" are concerned, several possible examples exist in connection with these texts. Gerlach and Hine, in their study of Pentecostal groups, focus on glossolalia as an act which often tends to burn individual social bridges. Though not to be confused too quickly with these modern forms of glossolalia, certain forms of divine, esoteric speech may be alluded to in two of our texts, *Zost* (127,1–5; cf. 52,15ff) and *GEgypt* (66,8–22; cf. 44,1–9), where there are found various combi-

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 135.

¹³ Cf. Schenke, "Gnostic Sethianism," pp. 601f.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 602.

nations of vowels and consonants.¹⁵ Plotinus mentions that his opponents compose "magic chants" (*epaoidas*) and that they claim that their "songs" (*melē*) and "cries" (*ēchous*) and "aspirated and hissing sounds" (*prospneuseis kai sigmous tēs phōnēs*) have magical power in the transcendent realm. The engaging in such chanting will probably not have been quite the same as ecstatic glossolalia, but for many persons the practice of it will have been "unconventional behavior" elicited "from people who would not, under other circumstances, exhibit it."¹⁶ Among other things, associating oneself with such practices may sometimes have run the risk of being accused of dabbling in magic, widely suspect in this period.

A baptismal sacrament may have been employed by some of the gnostics reading these texts, and this could have constituted a "bridge-burning act"—a "symbolic destruction of the old way of life," as Gerlach and Hine put it. In *GEgypt* it is said that the "holy ones" or "saints" are begotten by the Holy Spirit by means of invisible, secret symbols (*GEgypt* III 63,13–15). The references which follow in the text to "the holy baptism which surpasses heaven" (III 63,24f; 65,24f), "the invocation" (*epiklēsis*, in III 66,2), the "renunciations (*apotaxeis*) of the five seals in the spring-baptism" (according to III 66,3f; the parallel in IV 78,3–6 has "the baptisms of the renunciation (*apotagē*) and the ineffable seals of [their] baptism"), all suggest that some type of initiation ritual was involved, which could have provided a clear boundary between members and non-members. Whether this included a *literal* baptism or was an entirely non-literal, spiritualized mystery is admittedly a moot question.¹⁷ The longer version of *ApocryIn* also refers to what might have been a communal baptismal sacrament, immediately after this recension's depiction of the "awakened" gnostic: "I have raised him and sealed him in the light of the water with five seals, in order that death might not have power over him from that moment on" (II 31,22–25). Frequent mention is made in *Zost* of "baptisms," but at least at one place in the text the washing that is being referred to is an internal, "mental" event, so that the individual is "baptized" in the baptism of the Hidden One" by "knowing" certain things about the origin and structure of invisible, aeonic

¹⁵ Böhlig-Wisse, *The Gospel of the Egyptians*, p. 198, who suggest that the groups of letters in *GEgypt* 66,8ff "either represent glossolalia as is also found elsewhere in gnostic writings, or secret symbols or abbreviations. The latter possibility is more likely . . ." Cf. *Allog* 53,32ff; *Marsanes* 28,1ff; 31,19ff.

¹⁶ Gerlach and Hine, p. 126.

¹⁷ Cf. Schenke, "Gnostic Sethianism," p. 606, who views even "the most sublimated and speculative" Sethian statements about baptism as references to "a strong, deep-rooted, and obviously already traditional practice of water baptism." Wisse, "Stalking," p. 584, on the other hand, is inclined to view the authors and readers of these works as "individuals leaving the church and, like the desert fathers, trying to spiritualize the sacraments to remove any dependence on the church. A number of tractates even polemicize against baptism."

realities (*Zost* 23,7–17); the other references to “baptisms” in *Zost* could lend themselves to a similar interpretation—that is, as a way of talking about the passage through stages in a mystical ascent, not literal washing. Although the possibility cannot be entirely ruled out that there were also literal washings which sacramentally imitated the stages in the mystical ascent, I see no reason to assume this to have been the case, based upon what the text actually says.

A bridge-burning act for which we can probably have more certainty in the case of these texts is the practice of asceticism, at least some degree of asceticism. *ApocryJn* and *SJC* are the most explicit of the group in their rejection of sexual intercourse (see Chapters Four and Six), but I have pointed to reasons for assuming a similar demand for continence in *Zost* and *GEgypt* (see Chapters Three and Five). It would be helpful if we had more information about how the taking up of a life of sexual continence impacted the lives of gnostics reading these specific texts. Plotinus seems quite aware of ascetic demands upon the part of his gnostic opponents, who were probably reading *Zost*. He differed sharply with them over the question of whether “hatred of the body” was indispensable for true contemplation which could lead to transcendence of the body (see above, Chapter Three, p. 99). It is evidently the case that ascetic denial in this instance was a very visible act of commitment emphasized by the gnostic opponents. In the absence of any more direct reports, we may imagine what impact as a bridge-burning act the practice of sexual continence may have had on the readers of these texts by looking at the stereotyped stories in the apocryphal second- and third-century Acts of Apostles which portray some of the consequences of the rejection of sex with spouses or future spouses by persons converted to lives of virginity. Although these are mostly or entirely fictional and are highly stylized, nevertheless they probably do provide some accurate reflections of the social frictions which could follow in the wake of such conversions.

Other forms of world-renunciation may also have been practiced in some cases. The *ApocryJn* describes the perfect as those who, though still in the body, are completely purified from all involvements in evil and all envy or desire or greed (II 25,25–26,7 par). When an individual was committed to such an attitude of world-renunciation, even though it may not have involved some of the more radical forms of askesis which appeared in fourth- and fifth-century Christian monasticism, nevertheless it will probably have been visible to his or her contemporaries. Therefore, it would be a commitment which will have taken “the individual *out* of the larger society in some significant way,” and will have symbolized “his rejection of certain social norms” (see the quotation from Gerlach and Hine above). Rather than some loneliness and anonymity in the urban life of late antiquity, where such stances of world-renunciation might have gone unnoticed, Peter Brown has underscored what he suspects was a

claustrophobic character of urban life, "a world with very little privacy, where the non-participant was only too readily recognized."¹⁸

Now except for the possible evidence for communal ritual to which I have referred, the examples of "identity-altering experiences" and "bridge-burning acts" would not *in themselves* have to point to commitments to a *community*. For example, ascetic denial was also practiced by "free-lancers" in this period. Yet, in addition to the indications of communal ritual present in some of the texts, there are other factors which suggest that commitment to definable communities is involved.

One of these is the evidence that *recruitment activity* is presupposed. We do not have texts all of which contain merely private, speculative musings regarding the nature of things, which individuals have simply offered to interested readers "for what it's worth." There are clear signs of persuasive intent, and signs of the assumption that failure to be persuaded will have disastrous consequences.

As I discussed in Chapter Seven, *Zost* concludes with a kind of rousing sermon which urges the hearers to accept quickly the offered salvation, and issues a severe warning about the punishment of the "unconvinced" (130,14–132,5). If we may draw inferences about at least some of the readers of *Zost* by looking at Plotinus's criticism of his gnostic opponents, then there is confirmation of a picture of some type of recruitment activity. Despite Plotinus's occasional insinuation that his opponents audaciously exclude everyone but their own select group from access to truth, we find in Plotinus's own remarks evidence that the message of his opponents amounted to a kind of popularization of an experience which Plotinus reserved for a more limited number of *spoudaioi* (cf. *Enn.* 2.9.9,7ff). He attacks his opponents for seeking public reputation by criticizing ancient philosophers and claiming their own teaching to be superior (2.9.6,43–53), and he criticizes them for trying to impress *the masses* (*hoi polloi*) by curing illnesses through the exorcism of demons (2.9.14,17–21). Plotinus says that they address the humble and modest common person (*idiôtēs*) with the promise: "You are a child of God, but the others whom you once held in awe are not children of God, nor are the beings which they revere according to ancestral tradition; you, without making any effort, are even better than heaven" (2.9.9,56–59). Plotinus is aware of the popularity and persuasive appeal of his opponents' teaching; it is a deception, he remarks in one place, "which is pouring forth upon men" (2.9.6,55f). In comparing this data with the conversion model set out by Gerlach and Hine, we may identify the performance of exorcisms by the gnostic opponents as belonging to one of the earlier stages in the commitment process, which Gerlach and Hine call the focusing of needs through demonstration—the redefinition of the potential

¹⁸ Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity*, p. 4.

convert's needs, desires, or discontents in terms of the specific ideology of the movement, by means of "the 'bait' of demonstrable power relevant to one's discontents."¹⁹ The valuation of "power" is explicit in several of the gnostic texts, but one passage in *Zost* sums up the concern for power with beautiful succinctness when it asks pointedly: "How much power does (the person who is saved) have?" (44,4f).

One feature of the sermon of Zostrianos which may be revealing is the apparent assumption that there will be various levels of conviction on the part of the hearers or readers. "Why are you hesitating?" he pleads at one point (131,16f). While sectarian groups are characterized by a high level of self-consciousness, a strong sense of "us"/"them," nevertheless it is common to find *less* committed "adherents" who are not yet fully socialized into the group.²⁰ In any kind of reconstruction of what gnostic groups who were reading our texts may have been like, there must be room for such a spectrum of commitment. Oftentimes the less committed play a very important role in sectarian groups, as Gerlach and Hine have noted:²¹ the less committed provide a kind of "buffer zone" between the hard core and the rest of society; they often facilitate the recruitment of those who would be offended by the intensity of the hard core; and they can provide a certain organizational stability, since often a higher percentage of hard core members tends to produce organizational fission. We will see below that *ApocryJn* even more directly addresses the question of the less committed. Many of the less committed will have been at the stage in the commitment process which Gerlach and Hine call the stage of "re-education through group interaction."²² In the case of the gnostic circles known to Plotinus, this "group interaction" seems to have included the reading of texts such as *Zost*, and the discussion of these texts in an attempt to persuade the still "unconvinced" or "hesitating." Plotinus refers to their attempts at persuasion, although he reviles what he considers to be their high-handed methods, accusing them of seeking public reputation by their criticism or ridicule of ancient philosophers and their boast of the superiority of their own teaching. Porphyry may provide a directly contemporary analogy for this process of persuasion, since he gives us a picture of the atmosphere of debate in the Plotinian school. A student of Plotinus, Amelius, wrote a forty-volume refutation of "the book of Zostrianos," and Porphyry himself wrote several refutations of "the book of Zoroaster" (*Vit. Plot.* 16). Neither Amelius nor Porphyry, in other words, was convinced by the arguments of the gnostic readers of

¹⁹ Gerlach and Hine, pp. 111f.

²⁰ Bryan Wilson, *Religious Sects: A Sociological Study* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970), pp. 26ff.

²¹ Gerlach and Hine, p. 157.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 112-17.

these works. On the other hand, Porphyry was also initially unconvinced by Plotinus's teaching, and wrote refutations of his lectures. Plotinus had Amelius compose a response to Porphyry. The latter was still unconvinced and wrote another refutation, to which Amelius responded in a second work. Only then, says Porphyry, was he brought to change his mind, "after which," he says, "I believed in the books of Plotinus" (*Vit. Plot.* 18). Now a writing such as *Zost* is not a philosophical refutation but an apocalypse. Nevertheless, it was evidently employed along with other literature, oral discussion, and demonstrations of power, in attempts to win over converts.

That recruitment is presupposed in *ApocryJn* may be indicated by the extensive attention which it gives to the significance of various responses to gnosis (see above, pp. 166f). Especially significant for a measurement of community self-consciousness is the fact that this text has developed a theory regarding the "lapsed" (II 27,21–30 par). When one finds a teaching that includes a clearly negative judgment on the future of apostates who have rejected this teaching—especially when, as in *ApocryJn*, apostates from the truth are understood to be worse off than those who have never even known the truth—then frequently observed patterns of social behavior suggest that one should look for a social group with more clearly defined sectarian boundaries.²³ *ApocryJn* is calling for "repentance," like the repentance of Sophia. Apostates are assigned in this work to a place "where there is *no* repentance" (II 27,26f). Also possibly indicative of the communal consciousness is the attention given to the less committed, whose profile shows up even more clearly here than in *Zost*. Not everyone is expected to belong to the ideal class of passionless persons described in II 25,23–26,7. There are people for whom perfection does not come so easily, who seem to have more of a struggle in overcoming evil. As I mentioned above, the role of the less committed can be quite significant in sectarian groups. The attention paid to this category and the assurances made to such individuals will likely have been a comforting reassurance to many persons who had sympathy with the teaching of the sect, who had a degree of genuine admiration for the spiritual heroes capable of complete transcendence of the passions, but who possessed insufficient spiritual strength of their own to live up to that heroic model, or who in some cases will still have harbored some doubts or uncertainty about the teachings of the group. That there is interest in *ApocryJn* in defining the nature and destiny of such persons who "only repent later" presupposes a process of interaction and persuasion. Admittedly, *ApocryJn* does end on an esoteric note, with the instruction to John

²³ I am grateful to my colleague, Prof. Rodney Stark, of the University of Washington, who suggested the possible usefulness of this criterion to me, and whose many other insights based on his own work in the sociological analysis of modern sects have been quite helpful.

to pass on the contents of this work "secretly" to his "fellow spirits" (II 31,30–32 par). However, this secrecy about the higher gnosis does not demonstrate that there is no recruitment activity presupposed, for in the first place it may be largely a literary device to explain how this revelation of Christ to an apostle generations ago could have been unknown to previous generations. And in any case, it may tell us very little about the degree of *recruitment initiative*, and instead may be primarily an indication of the limited *amount of information* given to potential converts during the earliest stages in the conversion process.

We have less to go on in *SJC*, *GEgypt* and *3StSeth* as far as evidence for recruitment is concerned. The fact that *SJC* concludes with the comment that the disciples, after receiving the instruction from Christ, began to preach the gospel of God, might point to the continuing missionary consciousness of the author and readers. At least it is to be observed that not even a command to secrecy as a literary device is employed in the conclusion of this text.

We are unable to observe empirically whatever groups may have read the texts which contain the immovable race destination, but given what evidence we do have in the writings themselves I would suggest that here and there one finds elements which are most easily explained if one envisions some kind of definable community—evidence of recruitment initiative, identity-altering experiences and bridge-burning acts which could have provided clear boundaries marking passage into a special community, possible allusions to sacramental initiations, developing theory with respect to the place of the half-committed or apostates, hymnic material suggestive of a communal liturgical setting. Such factors are most naturally explained by presupposing that an author expects commitment to a *community* which is in sympathy with teaching found in the text. There is reason to speak of "commitment to the teaching of a sect" in the case of at least some of these texts.

C. Indications of More Than One Social Group

But if one may speak of sectarian commitment, is it necessary to speak of a "single sect" or a "single community" or "group" behind all these texts? As I have mentioned, the hypothesis of such a single Sethian "social group" has been argued by Schenke. Not even Schenke, however, includes *SJC* in this group, but rather he labels it as definitely not Sethian. And with respect to the texts which he does label "Sethian," he leaves room for development and variation, and can speak of the gnostics who were known to Plotinus, for example, as "a particular *branch* of

Sethians" (emphasis mine).²⁴ While recognizing that there are significant theological features which these texts have in common, and while agreeing that one may talk of community ideology underlying some or all of the documents, I do think that some of the differences among the texts which Schenke calls "Sethian" are most easily explained by assuming the existence of several different "sects." That is to say, in spite of common *theological* elements involved, when employing sociological categories such as "social group" or "sect" we will be employing these with greater precision and therefore more usefully here if we picture a plurality of "groups" or "sects," with a probably complex pattern of interrelations whose full nature will likely never be known.

Schenke already excluded *SJC* from the Sethian group because of its lack of enough "Sethian" elements. I would underscore the distinction by suggesting that while *SJC* may point to a Christian gnostic sect which recognized only one legitimate revealer, some of the other texts containing the immovable race designation may have been used by sects in which many sources of wisdom were openly tapped. Although *SJC* is in fact probably an adaptation of non-Christian speculation (cf. *Eugnostos*), this adaptation gives the appearance of an attempt to funnel all revelation through the only source accepted as legitimate, i.e., Christ: "Matthew said to him, 'Lord, no one can find the truth except through you. Therefore teach us the truth'" (*SJC* III 93,24-94,4). In contrast, Porphyry says that the gnostics who were Plotinus's opponents "possessed many treatises of Alexander the Libyan and Philocomus and Demostratus and Lydus, and they brought forth apocalypses of Zoroaster and Zostrianos and Nicotheos and Allogenes and Messos and other such persons" (*Vit. Plot.* 16). This indicates the use of a wide range of "holy books" and speculative treatises upon the part of these gnostics. If we imagine a community for whom *SJC* was originally composed and compare it with the circle of gnostics to whom Porphyry refers, there is a theological difference which probably also exhibited itself in a sociological difference: commitment to a single revealer producing a Christian gnostic sect with more rigidly defined boundaries, as compared with something like a philosophical school more open to various sources of revelation.

I think we need to respect a similar distinction between two texts such as *ApocryIn* and *Zost*, which Schenke is inclined to assign to the same gnostic social group. Schenke sees *ApocryIn* as "the most 'Christian' of all Sethian writings," and yet he wants to minimize the "Christianness" of the writing by observing that the distinctly Christian elements are confined to the framework and have "no clearly discernible continuation

²⁴ Schenke, "Gnostic Sethianism," p. 612.

in the interior of the writing."²⁵ He argues that Irenaeus (*Adv. haer.* 1.29) knew a version of *ApocryJn* that did not have the frame story and that had only "a weak sign of contact with Christianity."²⁶ On this latter point he may be quite correct. Yet it is interesting to observe that Irenaeus also reveals no awareness at all of the use in his source in *Adv. haer.* 1.29 of the phrase "immovable race," which is so prominent in all the manuscripts of *ApocryJn* which we have. Since here we are addressing the question of the profile of the persons who used this designation, it has to be said that the only known versions of *ApocryJn* that certainly contained the designation are versions which also have the distinctly Christian frame story. For these versions, it seems the most natural conclusion that their producers considered themselves to be "disciples" of "the Savior," like John. Thus, the only users of the immovable race designation whom we can with some confidence reconstruct from *ApocryJn* are Christians. And as I argued in the preceding section, the text suggests a community with a notable consciousness of boundaries—requirements for admittance and a theory about the fate of those who fall away once admitted.

On the other hand, *Zost* contains hardly anything which would have to be explained as a Christian element.²⁷ That Christ may be completely absent from the soteriology of *Zost* has to be seen as a significant difference from *ApocryJn*. But along with this is the difference between on the one hand the mystical visionary ascent and transcendental standing of *Zost*, and on the other the soteriological model of *ApocryJn* which knows no presently experienced ascent but only a reorientation toward the Transcendent and the cultivation of spiritual prowess in the war against the archons. There is therefore a difference in the locus of religious authority and a difference in praxis, two elements which in most sectarian groups are not to be winked at as far as sectarian self-consciousness is concerned.

Any model for visualizing the relationships among the "real people" who were writing and reading these texts has to do justice to several factors at several different levels. It has to do justice both to the evidence for communal commitment as well as to the signs that in some cases

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 611.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 612.

²⁷ Schenke includes *Zost* among those Sethian texts which "contain barely Christian motifs" ("Gnostic Sethianism," p. 607). He mentions *Zost* 48,26–28 as containing a possible Christian allusion: "In that place there was also that one who suffers although he is unable to suffer." I am not convinced that this must be an allusion to Jesus, since this "place" being described in *Zost* also contains a number of other "paradoxical" elements: "indestructible bodies, unbegotten begetting, immovable sense-perception" (48,23–26). Passionless passion could be only another of these features which indicate how transcendent this realm is. Because Coptic does not distinguish between masculine and neuter, we cannot be certain that the wording is not intended more abstractly than in the above translation: "that which suffers though it is unable to suffer."

commitments to rather *different* social groups may have been involved. A point which was made more than once at the Sethian seminar in the 1978 Yale conference on gnosticism was that one need not assume the existence of a special "group" behind every piece of ancient religious literature—behind every separate Jewish apocryphal writing, for example.²⁸ And yet we are not addressing the question abstractly here, but rather I have tried to show that there are signs of communal self-awareness in some of these specific texts. Naturally, some variations among texts might be due to the idiosyncrasies of individual writers, to their varying intellectual abilities and perspectives—but not *all* differences. And when the number of writings which has survived probably amounts to a small fraction of all writings produced, one must respect the integrity of each text, which in some cases may contain what were originally the deeply held convictions of a small group of people who did, in fact, have a theological "system." We need not view the wide and often bewildering diversity in gnostic mythology as a sign that there was *never* any interest in some degree of systematization. The variety which confronts us among even a somewhat coherent selection of texts such as the Sethian group may point only to the fact that few such sectarian groups were very successful in so establishing their particular version that later users of their ideas felt bound not to make radical revisions. Even if one originally had a sect of, say, only fifty people whose form of Christianity is reflected in *ApocryJn*, that would still have been a "sect," whose peculiar features as a social group would have to be considered, over against whatever other social groups later may have made use of some of the ideas found in *ApocryJn*. As a group with a rather clearly defined program congruent with the patterns implemented by the group's originator or originators, such a sect may have had a very transient life-span. There may have been early fission sparked by any number of possible factors, or there may also have been fusion, with some similar circle of gnostics. Over the period of many generations probably represented by these texts, the multitude of possible interrelationships among their authors and readers has to be sobering for even the most enthusiastic historical detective.

A model for visualizing these interrelationships has to take into account the possibility that in some cases the connection may have been a matter of literary dependence, with no really direct contact between social groups or individuals. Books must have passed from one circle to another in a number of ways. The *ApocryJn* concludes with a curse on anyone who exchanges the contents of the work for any gift or food or drink or clothing or anything else (II 31,34–37 par), and this warning was probably added with the awareness that many such writings were traded off in just this manner. In spite of this command to secrecy at the end of *ApocryJn*,

²⁸ See, e.g., Layton, *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, vol. 2, pp. 583f, 636f.

books such as this were not always protected by their readers from outsiders (not successfully, at any rate). Plotinus assumes that his non-gnostic students can read further in the books of his gnostic opponents if they are interested in so doing (*Enn.* 2.9.14,37ff); Porphyry seems to have had access to at least some of these writings (*Vit. Plot.* 16); and the bishop Irenaeus seems to have had a copy of something similar to *ApocryJn* on his library shelf (*Adv. haer.* 1.29). *ApocryJn* contains a passage (II 3,19–24 par) that so closely parallels a passage in *Allog* (62,28–63,7) that literary dependence of some type is quite possible, especially in view of other similarities in vocabulary between the two works.²⁹ If we have to take seriously the possibility that there may have been at some stage a definable sect whose teachings matched what is found in *ApocryJn*, it is also altogether likely that this writing was later appropriated by individuals and groups with some similar interests but with some very different theological views and belonging to quite different social contexts. There are plenty of analogies among groups and movements more accessible to view, where there is “recycling” of earlier sectarian material by new sectarian groups or individuals with significantly different social profiles. When there are continuities in doctrine or practice to be observed, one can speak of related sects, or more abstractly in some cases of a “single movement” or a single “-ism.” But given the diversity possible in social structures and commitments, it might be more misleading than helpful to encumber the analysis at the outset with language about a single “community.”

For these reasons, I find Schenke’s term “Sethianism” more useful than his discussion of a single “community” or “social group.” Among the gnostic writings which use the term “the immovable race,” there are certain important theological links. In the case of *GEgypt*, *3StSeth*, and *Zost*, where considerable prominence is given to the soteriological role of Seth, “Sethianism” may be as useful a label as any other for the ideological connections among the writings. But the authors of these three writings may have belonged to different types of social groups; and the inclusion of *SJC* and *ApocryJn* expands the number of possibilities. Even if the authors of all these five writings belonged to “sects,” these sects could have been significantly different as social units.

Bryan Wilson has attempted a typology of sects, distinguishing seven different ideal types: (1) conversionist; (2) revolutionary; (3) introversionist; (4) manipulationist; (5) thaumaturgical; (6) reformist; (7) utopian.³⁰ Since these are *ideal* types, and since the typology was primarily

²⁹ Cf. Turner, “The Gnostic Threefold Path,” p. 329.

³⁰ Wilson, *Religious Sects*; *idem*, “A Typology of Sects,” in *The Sociology of Religion*, ed. Roland Robertson (London: Penguin, 1969), pp. 361–83. Cf. Michael R. Welch, “Analyzing Religious Sects: An Empirical Examination of Wilson’s Sect Typology,” *Journal for the*

abstracted from more recent historical examples, the application of these particular categories to the analysis of our ancient gnostic groups is problematic—and all the more so since we cannot empirically observe the workings of the ancient gnostic groups. But Wilson's analysis illustrates that there are significantly different types of *social* groups among sects which often share many things in common *theologically*. The *ApocryJn* may have been used early on by a Christian group, heavily emphasizing the experience of the divine "setting right" through the reception of the Spirit; an emotional (II 31,6f: bitter tears, etc.) personal reawakening; repentance; strict ascetic withdrawal from the world; paraenetic concern for the less committed but sharp rejection of the once-enlightened apostates; renunciation of alternate interpretations of scripture ("Not as Moses said . . .") and competing contemporary theologies, and a reaffirmation of and submission to the truth of the teaching of a single Revealer/Savior; a sharp consciousness of the continual battle against unseen demonic forces. Whereas, if we think of the circle of gnostics known to Plotinus who probably were using *Zost*, we might have to imagine a more loosely constructed "school" in which boundaries for the community are perhaps less clearly defined and the gatherings of the converted tend more to be associations of individuals convinced of a common technique for personal transcendence. John Turner has correctly emphasized the contrast between the "self-performable technique" for personal mystical *ascent* in *Zost*, *3StSeth* and *Allog*, and the *descent* of the redeemer who rescues souls from the bonds of oblivion in *ApocryJn*.³¹ Although it would not be possible to place these texts very precisely within Wilson's typology, there are aspects of his characterization of "conversionist" and "manipulationist" sects which seem to match the characterizations I have just offered for *ApocryJn* and *Zost*, respectively. "Conversionist" groups tend to emphasize the necessity for the "born-again" experience, a highly emotional sense of the redemption of the fallen human being by a personal God; although more individualistic than some other types (e.g., "introversionist"), "conversionist" sects do tend to represent more cohesive communities, with a premium on affective values and primary relationships (examples: certain Fundamentalist and Pentecostalist Christian groups). "Manipulationist" groups tend to see deity not so much in terms of a personal redeemer, but more abstractly as a great power which humans can be taught to tap to their own benefit in this world; they tend to see the community more in instrumental terms, rather than as an end in itself; the community is the place in which

Scientific Study of Religion 16 (1977): 125–41. For a review of Wilson's work, see Donald E. Miller, "Sectarianism and Secularization: The Work of Bryan Wilson," *Religious Studies Review* 5 (1979): 161–74.

³¹ Turner, "The Gnostic Threefold Path," pp. 331f.

individuals can be taught the esoteric techniques for transcending evil experiences by means of divine intelligence (example: Christian Science).

There is admittedly a certain danger of analytical myopia here which has to be guarded against. It would be foolish to become so absorbed with the distinctions among these texts that one loses sight of the larger fact that there are only five of them and that they certainly do not span a very large portion of the philosophical-theological spectrum of late antiquity. The immovable race designation remains a technical term that is so far attested in only this minute sampling of ancient literature, a sampling which of course is in relative terms rather homogeneous when compared with everything else from late antiquity. But in my view the dangers in the other direction are just as real. We might be so struck by all the genuine similarities which we can actually see among a small group of documents that we are tempted to minimize the importance of visible differences and in addition to forget how much is *not* exposed to view as far as the origin and transmission of the documents is concerned.

Historians of religion usually understand their responsibility to be not only to make broader comparisons and to categorize religious phenomena into larger boxes representing major types, trends or traditions, but also, where possible, to discriminate between significantly different religious options, ideas, practices, historical communities, etc. For all of the similarities among the five texts discussed here, there are also real differences between some of them which make it possible, perhaps necessary, to imagine significantly different communities which were responsible for their production and subsequent transmission. There are indeed signs of greater sectarian continuity between *some* of the texts which use the title. *3StSeth* and *Zost*, for instance, are so closely related—in terms not only of theological vocabulary but also of the type of commitment, experience and praxis which they seem to reflect—that it is possible that they could have been produced by members of the very same group. But the same thing cannot be said for all five texts. Therefore, the immovable race designation ought not to be viewed as the unmistakable footprint of a particular gnostic species.

D. "Sethian" or "Extra-Sethian" Origins of the Designation?

Once we begin thinking of the designation as having been employed by different gnostic groups, this naturally raises the question of the *history* of the designation. How did it come to be used by several groups? I begin by citing a comment about the designation made a few years ago by George MacRae, in the course of a discussion of gnostic traditions about Seth: "The designation *asaleutos*, Coptic *atkim*, is a frequent self-description of Gnostic groups, and it is not at all clear that it originated

with those gnostics who may properly be called Sethian.”³² My own view is that the wisdom in MacRae’s caution is confirmed by the closer inspection of the material which has been attempted here. While there may have been groups whom we ought to call “Sethian” because of the shape of their speculation about their relationship to Seth, (a) they are not the *only* ones who used the designation, and (b) it is not clear that they were the *first* to do so.

This is not to say that there is no evidence at all which might be used to argue for the origination of the phrase “the immovable race” in connection with speculation about Seth. We might look again, for example, to Philo’s discussions in *Post.* 22ff, 40ff, and 170ff, where we find (a) Cain as the type of the unstable person subject to *salos*, “tossing”; and (b) the race (*genos*) of Cain contrasted with the race of Seth made up of people who have escaped the passions and belong to the seed of human virtue (see above, pp. 177f). Now one might be tempted to conclude that since for Philo Cain is a type of the man tossed by passions, Philo must already in the first century C.E. be thinking of Seth as the father of an “immovable race.” But there are difficulties with such a conclusion. Philo never does actually connect Seth with immovability like he connects Cain with instability. When he talks about Cain’s instability and wants to present heroes illustrating the opposite type, he thinks of Abraham and Moses,³³ and in *this* connection he does not think to identify Abraham and Moses as belonging to the *genos* of Seth. Instead, their stability is related to other exegetical traditions. It could be argued that all the “pieces” for a notion of Seth as the father of an immovable race are here, but that Philo’s reticence to place more emphasis upon Seth himself is intentional, in reaction to speculations about Seth in Philo’s day.³⁴ Yet I do not see

³² George W. MacRae, “Seth in Gnostic Texts and Traditions,” *Society of Biblical Literature, 1977 Seminar Papers* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars press, 1977), p. 22.

³³ *Post.* 27–31; cf. *Cher.* 18f; *Somn.* 2.226f; *Gig.* 49; *Conf.* 31f; *SAC* 8.

³⁴ Cf. Kraft, “Philo on Seth,” and the pertinent remarks by Burton L. Mack, in a response to a paper by Birger Pearson, “Philo and the Gnostics on Man and Salvation,” published in *The Protocol of the Twenty-Ninth Colloquy, 17 April 1977, of the Center for hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture* (Berkeley: Graduate Theological Union and the Univ. of California, 1977): “Philo does not seem interested in the kind of *genos* speculation which wants to trace a genealogy of election through the prominent figures of the early epochs of salvation-history. But there are many scattered indications that such views were already beginning to develop in some Jewish circles. . . . In the case of Seth, a figure about which Philo is curiously cautious, there is evidence of some advanced speculation in this direction to the effect that he is the ‘seed of human virtue’ who will not leave the human race but will increase to perfection. . . . How far this kind of interpretation had developed and whether it already intended a claim to election based on a primal revelation to or origination with Adam (as found, for instance, in the *Apocalypse of Adam*) is very difficult to ascertain. What seems clear is that exegetical traditions are reflected here which Philo knows but which he is apparently not concerned to explore” (pp. 28f). Again, I am separating here the question of whether there was speculation in Philo’s day, or earlier, about the race or seed of Seth from

any evidence of a polemical edge in Philo's references to the seed or race of Seth. Philo talks about the race or seed of Seth only in contexts where the exploitation of an exegetical opportunity happens to call for it, and this never seems to be called for when he is addressing the theme of immovability. On the other hand, Philo clearly is interested in the theme of the human potential for participation in the immovability of God, and in the demonstration of that potential in certain heroes. Philo's conception of this human potential is rooted in Platonic philosophical presuppositions about the contrast between the stability of Being (= God) vs. the instability of Becoming, and in the conviction that the "humanity" which is most genuine shares in the stability of Being. Philo therefore gives us early evidence for the ideal of the immovable Human, and early evidence for the employment of the "race of Seth" as a spiritual type, but no certain evidence for any linking of the two themes.

Another argument for a "Sethian" origin of the immovable race designation might take its cue from the use of the phrase in "Sethian" texts themselves. Three of the texts, *GEgypt*, *Zost* and *3StSeth*, state that Seth is the father of the immovable race. If the gnostic notions of a *race* of Seth have an ancestry reaching far back even into an early non-gnostic Sethianism—which seems quite possible—then could not a title such as the "*immovable race*" have come out of that prehistory? Naturally it *could* have done so, but it may also have been only borrowed by later "Sethian" texts from other traditions which had used it first. Why assume that *SJC*, for example, has borrowed the phrase from "Sethian" tradition? Obviously some other criteria are needed, involving probable relative dating of these texts and probable directions of tradition-history.

My own view at present is that there may be just as much, if not more, evidence that the formulations of the designation found in *ApocryIn* and *SJC*, where Seth is not the father of the immovable race, could represent an earlier and broader form of speculation about an immovable human family, of which the versions where Seth is the Father of the race are secondary variations. I do not view the case as closed by any means, but I would offer the following arguments:

the question of whether Philo already knows of traditions about Seth as the father of an *immovable race*. In an earlier study dealing primarily with the motif of "standing at rest" (*hestanai*) in gnostic and other traditions (Williams, "Stability as a Soteriological Theme"), I argued that in his portrait of Moses' stability Philo is drawing upon a motif which had likely already been developed in Jewish wisdom circles before his day, under the influence of Platonic philosophical presuppositions. That is still a part of my hypothesis here, but my subsequent research has not provided me with any confirmation of my further conjecture in that article that: "If Philo can find in Cain the prototype of instability, perhaps others were already seeing Seth as the father of the 'immovable race'" (p. 838).

1. The designation "immovable" applied to the "race" cannot really be called "characteristically Sethian." It is not in *all* "Sethian" texts. In fact, in *most* of the gnostic writings which Schenke labels "Sethian" this designation does not appear at all. Significantly, it does not appear in a "Sethian" text such as the *Apocalypse of Adam* which might be one of the oldest of the "Sethian" corpus. And it is not *limited* to "Sethian" texts. *SJC* is the clearer example of this. But even though *ApocryJn* is counted as Sethian by Schenke, I would include it here as a non-Sethian example, at least in the sense that there is no identification of Seth as the father of the immovable race in this text.

2. The relative dating of these gnostic texts is faced with serious if not insuperable obstacles at this time. I would suggest, however, that arguments for the dating of *ApocryJn* and *SJC* earlier than the three texts which have Seth as the father of the immovable race are at present as convincing as any arguments to the contrary.

Taking first of all the case of *SJC*, there is no obvious evidence of dependence on *GEgypt*, *Zost*, or *3SiSeth*. The document on which it probably *is* dependent (a document that would have been very similar to, if not identical with, *Eugnostos*) could have come from an early, perhaps even pre-Christian period. In other words, if we consider the period of, say, 100–300 C.E., *SJC* can as easily be dated toward the beginning of this period as toward the end of it, based on the evidence presently available.

In the case of *ApocryJn*, the dating of some form of this document as early as the mid-second century C.E. is inferred from the close correspondence between the contents in the first part of *ApocryJn* and the mythology which Irenaeus, in *Adv. haer.* 1.29.1–4, describes as the teaching of the "Barbelognostics." Admittedly, this evidence is only of limited value with regard to the "immovable race" designation in *ApocryJn*, since Irenaeus does not mention the use of this designation by "Barbelognostics." There is always the possibility that he was looking at a version of *ApocryJn* which did not yet contain the designation. But at least a prototype for our Coptic versions seems to have been around in Irenaeus' day, and a version containing the immovable race designation might also have appeared as early as the second century.

We seem to have a *terminus ad quem* in the mid-third century C.E. for *Zost*, if this document corresponds to the apocalypse of Zostrianos used by Plotinus's opponents. We do not know how much earlier this work can be dated. However, in my view the burden of proof at present is on those who would want to push the date back earlier than the first half of the third century, since the philosophical terminology and formulations found in *Zost* find their closest parallels in third-century Platonism.

For the same reasons, a third-century date may be the best guess for *3SiSeth*, which seems very closely related to *Zost*.

And finally, there is the problematic case of *GEgypt*. Substantial arguments are being put forth that *GEgypt* is a superficially Christianized work.³⁵ If a non-Christianized form of *GEgypt* once existed, then we would have a Jewish Sethian document whose earliest possible date of composition is not certain. And if it could be determined that this non-Christianized form of *GEgypt* already used the immovable race designation to refer to the race of Seth (i.e., if it could be shown that the adjective "immovable" was not first introduced in the Christianizing redaction), then we would have a Sethian usage of the designation that *might* be dated at least as early, if not earlier, than the more generalized formulations in *SJC* and *ApocryJn*. But it can be seen that such a case rests on several uncertainties.

Thus, what evidence we do have for the relative dating of our five texts does not really settle the question of whether it was first in "Sethian" texts that the phrase "immovable race" came to be used.

3. The internal evidence of the various usages of the designation among the five texts is compatible with the hypothesis that the earliest forms of the designation are the more generalized versions in *ApocryJn* and *SJC*. In *Zost*, the phrase "the immovable *genea*" seems to be a fixed piece of terminology which has been taken over, and where the author is not using that fixed expression he or she actually seems to prefer a different terminology for "race." The term *genos* seems to be preferred to *genea* (e.g., 7,6; 20,2; 24,23; 26,5; 57,24; 85,14; but see 4,15f). The same is true of *3StSeth* (see *genos* in 120,1–14). It is as though these two texts have picked up the expression "immovable *genea*" along with other tradition and have surrounded it with their own more characteristic vocabulary. It is likely that they have received the expression from sources for whom *genea* was a more natural expression for a spiritual race.

Two of our five texts, *ApocryJn* and *GEgypt*, use *genea* almost exclusively (cf. exceptions in *GEgypt* IV 55,3.7; *ApocryJn* II 29,32 par—but this latter instance is not really pertinent to the question of spiritual races). Now as I mentioned above, it is not impossible that some form of *GEgypt* could constitute the earliest surviving instance of the immovable race designation. But even if that is true, there would be certain difficulties in trying to derive forms of the designation in the other documents from the forms found in *GEgypt*. Although *GEgypt* refers to the "immovable race" of Seth, it does not use this designation consistently, and in fact more often refers to it as the "great, incorruptible race" or some other variation on this (see above, pp. 2f), without using the adjective "immovable." If, for the sake of argument, we were to assume that *GEgypt* does reveal the most primitive surviving forms of the "immovable

³⁵ Charles W. Hedrick, "Christian Motifs in the *Gospel of the Egyptians*: Method and Motive," *NovT* 23 (1981): 242–60.

race" designation, then should we not have expected to find some trace in the other four gnostic documents of the variety encountered in *GEgypt*? For example, would we not have expected to find at least one of them referring at least once to the race as the "incorruptible, immovable race"?

On the other hand, there is the consistent usage found in *ApocryJn*, where "the immovable *genea*" appears in an almost completely fixed formulation. There is no reason to assume that this consistent usage was originally more "Sethian"—i.e., that originally Seth was more specifically identified as the father of the immovable race. It is in fact the case that *all* of the instances of the designation in *ApocryJn* are in the dialogue sections at the beginning and the end, and therefore not in that portion of *ApocryJn* which contains the most mythological parallels with other "Sethian" texts. There is every reason to ask in this case whether the notion of the "immovable race of the Perfect Human" is not a quite "extra-Sethian" addition. If so, then the same "extra-Sethian" motif may have been appropriated by other texts such as *Zost* or *3StSeth* or *GEgypt*, where it was then tied more particularly to Seth. The phrase as found in *SJC* would represent another instance of the designation in its non-Sethian form.

4. Finally, there is the fact that one can construct as plausible a case for the emergence of the theme of the immovable race out of a broader speculation about ideal Human immovability, as for its emergence in connection with specifically Sethian speculations—perhaps a *more* plausible one. We can look, for example, at the association of *asaleutos* with the perfect Human Adamas in the Naasene teaching (see above, pp. 32f, 64f). There is no Sethian element here, only the notion of the rock-solid Adamas in whose image is formed the originally *asaleutos* human, who is aroused to movement and thus becomes enslaved. If Hippolytus knew of such a tradition of primordial Human immovability from the late second century or earlier, so might the authors of *ApocryJn* and *SJC*. If they do not specify Seth as the father of the immovable race, there may be no "de-Sethianization" in this, but only a reflection of their knowledge of the phrase in a more generalized form, which could also have been its *more original* form. "Sethian" texts manifest the ability to pick up and adapt tradition from a number of quarters. The three texts which speak of Seth as the father of an "immovable race" may also be borrowing and adapting *this* epithet from other sources where Seth did *not* play so central a role—or any role at all.

Obviously we cannot be certain of this, and anyone who is speaking candidly would probably have to admit that the *actual* historical relation among these texts is probably much more complex than we will ever have guessed. But the hypothesis I have offered may at least have the virtue of pointing somewhat more emphatically beyond the boundaries of a single

sectarian tradition for the usage and origins of the immovable race designation. The bringing into higher relief of ideals of human immovability in late antiquity, and the exploration of some of the relations between immovability in these five gnostic writings and that larger context, are goals which I hope have been accomplished in some measure in the preceding chapters. What I hope I have shown is that although the particular phrase "the immovable race" was probably not a commonplace, it was a phrase used to articulate aspirations which were shared far more broadly than the confines of some peculiar sectarian conventicle. Although I have concluded that the designation was probably employed by various groups whom we could call "sects," I hope that the preceding chapters have consistently shown their respect for the fact that such sects belonged to the warp and weft of a larger world apart from which they will not be understood and about which they themselves may have much to tell us.

If this study has contributed something to the understanding of the historical significance of a sparsely attested gnostic designation within the wider flow of late antique spirituality, then perhaps I will be forgiven for the presumption of devoting an entire monograph to the topic. In part my courage for doing so has been drawn from the conviction that when members of a religious movement call themselves something we ought to pay at least as much attention to that designation as we do to things other people call them or to the devising of our own designations and categories, for frequently such self-designations condense in compact form the most important dimensions of a religious community's self-understanding.

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