

Exhibit C

University of Helsinki : Department of Biblical Studies
GNOSTICISM AND EARLY CHRISTIAN CULTURE
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Defining "Gnosticism"

At present, there is a heated discussion among scholars as to how the term "Gnosticism" should be defined or whether it is precise and useful enough to be used at all. Those who want to abandon it altogether think that the connotations of "Gnosticism" are so generalized as to be more misleading than helpful when individual texts and phenomena, traditionally called gnostic, are studied. Other scholars insist that even if the term "Gnosticism" is not abandoned, the historian should recognize the ideological and apologetic ways in which the term has been used in the ancient and modern discourses of orthodoxy and heresy.

*Research
and So
Gnostic*

In the present website the terms "Gnosticism" and "gnostic" characterize those religious doctrines and myths of late antiquity that maintain or presuppose that the cosmos is a result of the activity of an evil or ignorant creator and that salvation is a process in the course of which a human being receives the knowledge of his/her divine origin and returns to the realm of light after having been freed from the limitations of the world and the body.

Furti

In gnostic Christianity knowledge is not necessarily seen as a reference to the intellect but has a religious significance. The object of knowledge is the divine origin of humanity, which the individual can be reminded of and to which he/she is urged to return. The question is really one of a saving knowledge. In gnostic Christianity knowledge is not necessarily seen as a competitor with faith, but as complementing and deepening faith. One gnostic Christian defined saving knowledge thus:

Salain.

We are not only saved by baptism, but by the knowledge of
Who we were and where we came from,
Where we have been and where we have come to,
Where we are going and from what we have been freed,
What is birth and what is rebirth.

Clement of Alexandria, Excerpts from Theodotus, 78.2

Gnosticism is also referred to in a looser sense as the stress on the

spiritual and seeking for truth within. However, this is an unnecessarily imprecise description of the content of Gnosticism. Such spiritual endeavours were very common in antiquity, as they are today, and it is not meaningful to describe them as gnostic.

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The Origins of Gnosticism

The problem of the relation of Gnosticism to Christianity has for the moment not been the object of consensus. Researchers are divided into two camps on this question. Some consider that Gnosticism was an independent, non-Christian religion which arose at the same time as Christianity and only gradually began to acquire Christian elements. Other researchers suppose that Gnosticism developed under the influence of Christianity and was one of its early interpretations.

Sources: How Do We know about Gnosticism?

Key to the modern study of Gnosticism is the Coptic-language Nag Hammadi library discovered in 1945. A good number of these texts are gnostic writings, on the basis of which we can know more precisely what the gnostics themselves actually thought.

Many of the gnostic texts in the Nag Hammadi library stem from Sethian Gnosticism. As a matter of fact, the centrality of this branch in the history of Gnosticism and our awareness of its main doctrines are the direct result of the study of the Nag Hammadi texts. Another major part of the Nag Hammadi texts are Valentinian writings. The library thus confirms that Valentinian Gnosticism was one of the most important forms of Christian Gnosticism in the second and third centuries.

Prior to the discovery of the library, our knowledge of Gnosticism was largely confined to references by the Church Fathers and a few original documents. When the Church Fathers describe Gnosticism, they mainly present summaries of gnostic doctrines though they also include some direct quotations from the writings of gnostic teachers. The reason why the Church Fathers deal with Gnosticism is in order to condemn it as a Christian heresy. For this reason, their descriptions of Gnosticism are often hostile and tendentious, but that is not to say that they have lost their relevance for the study of Gnosticism after the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library. The texts found at Nag Hammadi have shown that, at least in certain cases, the Church Fathers used original gnostic sources.

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The Key Features of Gnostic Thought

The gnostic writings have a colourful intellectual background in which ideas deriving from Judaism, Christianity and Greek philosophy have been combined. The distinctive element of Gnosticism in antiquity was the idea of an inferior Creator-God, the demiurge (Gr. demiurgos, "the workman"). According to the gnostic viewpoint, the demiurge created the world without knowing the highest God, falsely believing himself to be the only God. Since the demiurge was seen as acting in ignorance, his creation was also considered imperfect. In Gnosticism therefore there is a strict divide between the world of the true God and the visible world.

The demiurge was thought to have come indirectly from the world of the true God, which gnostics often referred to as the "fullness" (Gr. pleroma). This "fullness" was the abode of the true God, the Father of the Universe, as well as a host of eternal beings who lived in perfect harmony with each other. However, this harmony was shattered by one of the eternal beings, Wisdom (Gr. sophia), which was not content with its own position but wanted to imitate the Father of the Universe in creating for itself. Wisdom's creation failed. This unsuccessful creation by Wisdom was the demiurge, who, expelled from God's world, created the material world and his assistant powers.

Humanity has a special role in the creation by the demiurge. The body was created by the demiurge, but it contains a divine spirit which thereby establishes a connection with the highest God. In this way, the human being is superior to its creator, the demiurge. The aim of the body created by the demiurge is to get the human to forget the divine spirit inside. The dormant divine spark within the person can enter human consciousness when a messenger figure wakes the person from its dream of forgetfulness and reminds the human of its divine origin. In gnostic Christian texts the task of Christ is to function as this messenger.

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Schools of Gnostic Thought

Gnosticism was not a monolithic way of thinking. In antiquity different schools and groups of Gnosticism flourished with divergent opinions. These groups had different conceptions of, for instance,

how negative a character the lower creator or demiurge was. The relation of these groups to Christianity also varied: certain groups were clearly more Christian than others. The best known of the schools of gnostic thought are Valentinian Christianity and Sethian Gnosticism.

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Valentinian Christianity

Valentinian Christianity is the clearest example of a gnostic school which stresses Christian elements. The group received its title from a Christian named Valentinus, a native of Egypt, who was a teacher in congregations in Rome in the second half of the second century. It is however unclear to what extent the distinctive doctrines of Valentinianism can be ascribed to Valentinus personally, since at least part of those doctrines developed among his followers in the years subsequent to his death.

The Christian input in the Valentinian school can be seen in the fact that its members searched the New Testament to find supporting arguments. The earliest known commentary on the Gospel of John in fact comes from a member of this school, Heracleon. At least a part of the Valentinians thought of themselves as representing a deeper, "spiritual" version of Christianity. In their view, the majority of Christians belonged to a lower group of "psychic" Christians who needed faith and good deeds to be saved.

This division of Christians into two levels does not mean that Valentinians separated themselves into their own communities. It is told how they participated in normal church services in Rome, and at least one Valentinian is known to have been a close advisor to the bishop of Rome as late as the end of the second century. One of the distinctive features of the Valentinian school is that its followers did not hold the demiurge to be a completely negative figure. They stressed that the demiurge was the mediator for Wisdom in the creation of the world. In addition, they believed that in coming to the world Christ had also turned the demiurge to his side. For this reason, the demiurge was believed to take special care of Valentinian Christians.

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Sethian Gnosticism

Sethian Gnosticism derives its name from Seth, the third son of Adam, who was considered to be the mediator of divine knowledge to

mankind. Sethian gnostics referred to themselves as the "descendants of Seth". Christian material plays a smaller role in Sethian than in Valentinian Gnosticism, indeed part of the Sethian writings contain no reference at all to Christianity. Instead many Sethian texts contain a notable amount of material stemming from Judaism, such as names of Semitic origin.

The Sethian view of the creator god is clearly more negative than that of the Valentinians. In the Sethian writings the creator god is known by the Semitic name Yaldabaoth, but he is also referred to as "the fool" and "the blind god". Yaldabaoth is presented as a demonic figure, the leader of the other spirit beings and as the enemy of humanity. The Sethian writings radically reinterpret the creation story found in the Old Testament, describing, for instance, how Yaldabaoth, tormented by desire, ravished Eve and fathered two sons, Cain and Abel; only Seth is Adam's own son. In the latest research, Sethian Gnosticism is beginning to be considered as one of the earliest forms of gnostic thought, indeed as a certain kind of "classical Gnosticism", from which later forms of Gnosticism such as Valentinianism gradually developed. Certain scholars have even suggested that the word "Gnosticism" should be reserved for Sethian thought alone.

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The Nag Hammadi Jesus

The Nag Hammadi texts probably do not, with the exception of the Gospel of Thomas, provide new material for a reassessment of the life and teaching of the historical Jesus. However, they are an important new link in following the development of the Jesus tradition. The collection contains many different types of documents which differ from each other in their concepts of Jesus and his significance.

The Nag Hammadi writings provide a broad spectrum of interpretation of the figure of Jesus. For example, in the Gospel of Truth and the Letter of Peter to Philip, the death of Jesus on the cross is understood as having an atoning significance. This interpretation contradicts the impression given by the Church Fathers that the gnostics thought that Jesus had not in reality died on the cross.

On the other hand, such a docetic Christology can be found within the Nag Hammadi writings. In the Apocalypse of Peter, Jesus' death on the cross is emptied of meaning by a description of how Jesus left his body before his execution and laughingly watched from the sidelines. If the Gospel of Truth is close to the orthodox understanding of the death of Jesus, then the Apocalypse of Peter contains a clear polemic against the orthodox interpretation.

Many Nag Hammadi writings do not mention the death of Jesus at all. Instead Jesus is presented as a teacher of saving knowledge. It is typical for these texts that discussions between Jesus and the disciples are set in the period after the resurrection.

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Exhibit D

SETHIAN GNOSTICISM: A LITERARY HISTORY

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SETHIAN GNOSTICISM: A LITERARY HISTORY

John D. Turner

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He has served on the Society of Biblical Literature Nag Hammadi Seminar as well as on the Steering Committee of the Nag Hammadi Section of that society. From 1971-72 he was an associate of the Technical Subcommittee for the International Committee for the Nag Hammadi Codices of UNESCO and the Arab Republic of Egypt. Written contributions to Nag Hammadi studies have included numerous articles on the relationship of Gnosticism to Platonic philosophy and the *editio princeps* of the *Book of Thomas the Contender*, *The Interpretation of Knowledge*, *A Valentinian Exposition*, *Allogenes*, and *Hypsiphron*.

PREFACE

The following analysis of the literary dependencies and redactional history of the Sethian gnostic texts from Nag Hammadi and elsewhere allows one to assign them to various periods during the first four centuries of the Christian era. The texts thus dated seem to reflect a coherent tradition of mythologumena that includes: (a) a sacred history of Seth's seed, derived from a peculiar exegesis of Genesis 1-6; (b) a doctrine of the divine wisdom in its primordial, fallen, and restored aspects; (c) a baptismal rite, often called the Five- Seals, involving a removal from the fleshly world and transportation-into the realm of light through the invocation of certain divine personages; (d) certain Christological speculations relating Christ to prominent Sethian primordial figures such as Adam and Seth; and (e) a fund of Platonic metaphysical concepts relating to the structure of the divine world and a self-actuated visionary means of assimilating with it.

The result of the study suggests that Sethianism interacted with Christianity in five phases: (1) Sethianism as a non-Christian baptismal sect of the first centuries B.C.E. and C.E. which considered itself primordially enlightened by the divine wisdom revealed to Adam and Seth, yet expected a final visitation of Seth marked by his conferral of a saving baptism; (2) Sethianism as gradually Christianized in the later first century onward through an identification of the pre-existent Christ with Seth, or Adam, that emerged through contact with Christian baptismal groups; (3) Sethianism as increasingly estranged from a Christianity becoming more orthodox toward the end of the second century and beyond; (4)

Sethianism as rejected by the Great Church but meanwhile increasingly attracted to the individualistic contemplative practices of third-century Platonism; and (5) Sethianism as estranged from the orthodox Platonists of the late third century and increasingly fragmented into various derivative and other sectarian gnostic groups, some surviving into the Middle Ages.

I. THE SETHIAN LITERATURE

Mainly following the lead of Hans-Martin Schenke of the *Berliner* (DDR) *Arbeitskreis für koptisch-agnostische Schriften*,^[1] current scholarship considers the following literature to be representative of Sethian Gnosticism: The Barbeloite report of Irenaeus (Haer. I.29); the reports on the Sethians (and Archontics) by Epiphanius (Pan. 26 and 39-40), Pseudo-Tertullian (Haer. 2) and Filastrius (Haer. 3); the untitled text from the Bruce Codex (Bruce); and the following treatises from the Nag Hammadi Codices and BG 8502: four versions of the *Apocryphon of John* (Ap. John BG8502, 2 and NHC III, 1 [short version]; NHC II, 1 and IV, I [long version]); the *Hypostasis of the Archons*; the *Gospel of the Egyptians*; the *Apocalypse of Adam*; the *Three Steles of Seth*; *Zostrianos*; *Melchizedek*; the *Thought of Norea*; *Marsanes*; *Allogenes*, and *Trimorphic Protennoia*.

II. THE SETHIAN THEMES

So far as I can see, most of the Sethian documents cited above originated in the period 100-250 C.E. They seem to derive their content from five basic complexes of doctrines: (1) a fund of Hellenistic-Jewish speculation on the figure of Sophia, the divine wisdom; (2) midrashic interpretation of Genesis 1-6 together with other assorted motifs from Jewish scripture and exegesis; (3) a doctrine and practice of baptism; (4) the developing Christology of the early church; and (5) a religiously oriented Neopythagorean and Middle-Platonic philosophical tradition of ontological and theological speculation.

A. Sophia Speculation

As appropriated by Sethianism and the Gnostics in general, Sophia is a hypostatized form of *Hokmah* (i.e., the divine Wisdom of Proverbs 8, Job 28, Sirach 24) and is regarded as a female deity, perhaps also connected with the Spirit that moved over the water in Gen 1:2-3. In the gnostic texts, Sophia functions at many levels under various names in a highly complex way. She functions as a creator and savior figure on a higher level as the divine Thought, which increasingly distinguishes itself from the high deity through various modalities, and gives rise to the divine image in which man is made. But she also functions on a lower level as the mother of the ignorant demiurge and the enlightener and savior of the divine image captured by the demiurge in human form. N. A. Dahl, in this regard, stresses the role played by the thought of Philo in this complex of ideas, particularly the notion of Sophia as Mother of the Logos and as the Mother figure in a divine triad of God the Father, Sophia the Mother, and Logos the Son.^[2]

B. Interpretation of Genesis 2-6

Given the existence of an upper (either undeclined or restored) and lower Sophia, conceived as Mother, and her upper and lower sons, the Logos and the Archon, the peculiar Sethian reinterpretation of Genesis 2-6 easily follows: the anthropogony; the inbreathing of the divine Spirit; the sending of Eve or her extraction from Adam; the eating from the tree of knowledge; expulsion from paradise; the birth of Cain, Abel, Norea, and Seth and his seed; the flood and intercourse between women and the angels, with the addition of the story of Sodom and Gomorrah; and a final judgment and salvation. These episodes

are interpreted in terms of a series of moves and countermoves between the upper Mother and Son and the lower Son in a contest over the control of the divine Spirit in mankind. In a very early period, still within the context of a disaffected and heterodox Judaism (and working with Jewish materials and gnosticizing Hellenistic-Jewish principles of interpretation), the peculiar Sethian doctrines concerning the origin, incarnation, subsequent history, and salvation of these Gnostics were worked out in terms of the upper and lower Adam, Seth, and seed of Seth. In particular this involved the doctrines of heavenly dwellings (the four Lights) for the exalted counterparts of the "historical" Sethians, and the tripartitioning of history into four basic epochs of salvation. These epochs could be delineated by events in the lower world, such as the flood, the conflagration, and the final overthrow of the Archons (as in the *Apocalypse of Adam* and the *Gospel of the Egyptians*). Or these epochs could be marked by the three descents from the upper world of a Savior (as Father, Mother and Son) involving (1) the inbreathing of the divine Spirit into Adam, (2) the arrival of the luminous Epinoia (a Sophia figure) in the form of Eve, and (3) the final appearance of Seth as the Logos (or Christ, cf. the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Trimorphic Protennoia*). Other schemes or combinations of these episodes were also worked out. If there is anything peculiarly Sethian in the tractates under discussion, it would show itself here, since these speculations in fact constitute the sacred history of the Sethian Gnostics.

C. The Baptismal Rite

In addition, it is clear that some form of baptismal ritual is peculiar to the Sethians. In whatever baptismal tradition the Sethians stood, it is clear that it was spiritualized as part of a general trend that shows itself throughout the first century in both Christian and probably non-Christian baptizing circles. In particular, the Sethian baptismal water was understood to be of a celestial nature, a Living Water identical with light or enlightenment, and the rite itself must have been understood as a ritual of cultic ascent involving enlightenment and therefore salvation. This could also involve polemic against ordinary water baptism, as in the *Apocalypse of Adam*.

D. Christianization

Gradually, but especially during the second century, Sethianism was Christianized, particularly by the identification of the Logos (the last member of the Father-Mother-Son triad) with Christ. This process could move in a positive direction by adding explanatory Christological glosses as in the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, or even casting Sethian materials into the framework of a revelation dialogue between Christ the revealer and a revered disciple as in the *Apocryphon of John*. Or it could move in a more polemical direction, as in *Trimorphic Protennoia*. So also the reverse movement could occur, in which Sethian materials were built into originally Christian materials circulating among Sethians, as could be the case with *Melchizedek*.

E. The Platonic Contribution

Finally, during the late first and throughout the second and third centuries, Neopythagorean and Platonic metaphysics made a strong impact on Sethianism. They served to structure its world of transcendent beings by means of ontological distinctions, and to explain how the plenitude of the divine world might emerge from a sole high deity by emanation, radiation, unfolding, and mental self-reflection. Neopythagorean arithmology helped to flesh out the various triadic, tetradic, pentadic, and ogdoadic groupings of the transcendental beings. Besides metaphysics, there was also at home in Platonism a by-now-traditional technique of self-performable contemplative mystical ascent toward and beyond the realm of pure being, which had its roots in Plato's *Symposium* (cf. 210A-212A). Interest in this technique shows itself in such figures as Philo, Numenius, the author(s) of the *Chaldean Oracles*, and in Plotinus.

This technique not only supplemented earlier apocalyptic notions of ecstatic visionary ascent (perhaps associated with the spiritualized Sethian baptismal ritual as in *Trimorphic Protennoia*, *Gospel of the Egyptians*, *Zostrianos*, and perhaps in *Marsanes*), but it also created new forms apparently independent of such a baptismal context as in *Allogenes* and *Three Steles of Seth*. Most importantly, though, the older pattern of enlightenment through gnosis "knowledge," conferred by a descending redeemer figure, could be replaced by a self-performable act of enlightenment through contemplative or visionary ascent, whether for individuals (*Allogenes* and *Marsanes*) or for a community (*Three Steles of Seth*).

III. CHRONOLOGY AND REDACTION

On the background of these basic complexes of ideas, the following reconstruction of the composition and redaction of the Sethian treatises is suggested, although it is impossible to know which version of a particular document may have been available at each stage to the composers of the various treatises. Thus one ought perhaps to speak more generally of the redaction and incorporation of doctrines and traditions rather than of the particular extant documents that today serve as their exponents or instances.

A. Before 100 C.E.

One might begin with the (already Christianized) Ophite system of Irenaeus (cf. *Haer.* 1.30), where one finds the triad of beings Man, Son of Man, and Third Male, the first two of whom, as suggested above, may have been conceived as androgynous. There is also a lower mother figure, the Spirit, who emits Sophia-Prunicos, who by gravity descends to and agitates the waters below, taking on a material body. When she is empowered from above to escape this body and ascend to the height, she becomes the father of the Archon Yaldabaoth. The Archon produces seven sons named as in the *Apocryphon of John*, and boasts that he alone is God, to which his mother responds that "Man and the Son of Man" are above him. Then follows the making of the man and the woman both of whom are specially enlightened by Sophia, and the stories of the tree of gnosis, the expulsion from paradise, the birth of Cain, Abel, Seth and Norea, the flood, and finally the incognito descent of Christ, the Third Male, through the seven heavens. He puts on Sophia and rescues the crucified Jesus. Many of these motifs are at home in the Sethian treatises, but especially in Ap. John BG8502,2: 44,19ff.; NHC II,1:13,3ff. (similarly in other versions), which is not paralleled by the Barbeloite system of Iren. *Haer.* I.29. Much of this material common to the *Apocryphon of John* and the Ophites is connected with the interpretation of Genesis 2-6, and one also finds versions of this material in the *Apocalypse of Adam*, *Hypostasis of the Archons*, and summarized in the *Gospel of the Egyptians*. The Ophite system describes repeated salvific acts of Sophia: providing the divine model for the protoplast, enlightening of Eve, protecting her light-trace from conception through the Archon, aiding the conception through the Archon, revealing the significance of Adam and Eve's bodies, and aiding the conception of Seth and Norea and the birth of the wise Jesus. The final salvific act is the deliverance of Sophia and Jesus by Christ.

1. *Early Sethian Eschatology*. The Sethian versions of this activity structure it into four distinct epochs of saving history marked by the flood, the conflagration and the judgment of the powers as in the *Apocalypse of Adam* and *Gospel of the Egyptians*. Or the epochs are marked by three distinct manifestations of a being more exalted than Sophia who descends first in a male mode, then in a female mode as Epinoia, and finally as the Logos (as in the *Apocryphon of John*, *Trimorphic Protennoia* and *Gospel of the Egyptians*). What makes the Sethian versions' adoption of this history of deliverance distinctive is their stress on Seth and their self-identification with Seth's seed, "the unshakable race," who since the flood and conflagration live simultaneously on earth and in the aeons of the four Lights until the judgment of the Archons by a dramatic eschatological manifestation of Seth as the Logos. Between the conflagration and the final judgment of the Archons, the Sethians keep in contact with their heavenly counterparts by means of: (a) revelations Seth left behind inscribed on steles of brick and clay,

or on wooden tablets, or in certain books, all preserved on a special mountain, as well as by means of (b) a ritual of celestial ascent conceived in baptismal imagery, which Seth conferred upon his seed for their enlightenment.

2. *Sethian Tripartitions*. In accord with their tripartition of the history of salvation and of the modes in which the redeemer appears throughout this history, the Sethians structured their transcendent world into Father-Mother-Son triads as a more distinctive way of conceiving the saving work of the transcendent (aspect of) Sophia than was the (more biblical) triad of Man (the high deity), Son of Man (the androgynous heavenly Adam), and a Son of the Son of Man (Seth; cf. the terminology of the non-Sethian Eugnostos and Sophia of Jesus Christ). The androgynous image of God could be conceived either as the heavenly Adam (Adamas, Geradamas) or, stressing its female aspect, Is the Thought (Ennoia) of the high deity who could be conceived as the Mother of the Son of Man. Thus her voice reveals to the Archon the existence of her higher consort, Man or the Father, and of her offspring, the Son of Man. Of course, conceiving the second member of the triad as female, a transcendent Sophia-figure distinguished from the Sophia who worked below, meant a transformation of the second member into a Mother (still androgynous) figure distinguished from Adamas the Son of Man (who now takes third place). This duplication is reflected in the alternate but equivalent designations of the Mother as, for instance, male virgin, womb, Father of the All, first Man, and thrice-male. Note, for example, how the second part of the *Apocryphon of John* in NHC II prefers the designation Mother-Father (II,1:5,7; 19,17; 20,9; 27,33) instead of the designation "merciful Father" or, "merciful Mother" Is in BC8502,2 (but cf. 77,11 which has "Mother-Father"). While this might account for the identification of the Father and Mother portion of the triad, the identification of the Son is a more complex problem. Given the tripartite Sethian history of salvation, the Son would be involved in the third and finally decisive salvific manifestation of the divine into the world. He could be the third manifestation of the Illuminator (*Apocalypse of Adam*) or the Logos which puts on Jesus, which in *Gospel of the Egyptians* is identified with Seth or in *Trimorphic Protennoia* with Christ. Or he could be viewed as the Christ who has appeared to John the son of Zebedee after the resurrection (*Apocryphon of John*). Or he could be simply conceived as the third and finally effective saving manifestation of the divine as in the Pronoia-hymn at the end of the *Apocryphon of John* II,1 (not even distinguished as Son).

This divine triad could be conceived in two fundamental ways: as a vertically schematized ontological hierarchy that gives rise to and structures the transcendent world, or else as a horizontally schematized succession of three divine manifestations. In the latter case, the three manifestations might be conceived as three manifestations of a single being in three modes such as the Father-Voice, Mother-Speech, Son-Logos (*Trimorphic Protennoia*), or as three separate beings in some sense identical with but mythologically distinguished from a higher being, such as the Autogenes, the Epinoia of Light, and Christ, all sent by the (Mother-)Father in the *Apocryphon of John*. The vertical scheme is illustrated in the Invisible Spirit, Barbelo, and the Autogenes in *Allogenes*, *Zostrianos*, *Three Steles of Seth* and *Marsanes*. In the Christianized Sethian theogonies, the third level is called either Christ (Iren. Haer. 1.29, *Apocryphon of John* and the first part of *Trimorphic Protennoia*) or the Thrice-Male Child of the Great Christ (*Gospel of the Egyptians*).

3. *Hymnic Accounts of the Savior's Descent*. A careful reading of the *Apocryphon of John* (longer version) reveals that *Trimorphic Protennoia* is, in part, an expansion of the concluding Pronoia hymn (Ap. John II,1:30,12-31,25). The hymn contains a brief aretalogical self-predication of the divine Pronoia speaking in the first person singular (31,12-16) followed by the narration of her three descents into Chaos or Hades taking on the form of the seed to save them (30,16-21; 30,21-31; 30,31-31,25). In the third stanza there is a sudden shift from a third person plural to a third person singular designation for her seed, introduced by a gloss in 31,4 identifying the prison of Hades as the prison of the body. This seems to introduce material originally foreign to the hymn (reflected once earlier in Ap. John II, 1:23,30-31) employing the topos of awakening sleepers (cf. Eph 5:14) ensnared in the bonds of oblivion by reminding them of their predicament (31,4-10 and 31,14-22). It seems likely that the third stanza of the original hymn must have concluded:

And I entered into the middle of their prison and I said: "I am the Pronoia of the pure light; I am the thinking of the virginal Spirit, he who raised you (plural) up to the honored place." And I raised them up and sealed them in the light of the water with Five Seals in order that death might not have power over them from this time on.

One finds a very close equivalent of this hymn in the second half of the Naasene Psalm (Hipp. Ref. 5.10.2), where Jesus says:

Look Father: this prey (the fallen soul) to evils is wandering away to earth, far from thy Spirit, and she seeks to escape the bitter Chaos but knows not how to win through. For that reason send me, Father. Bearing Seals I shall descend; I will pass through all the Aeons; I shall reveal all the mysteries and I shall deliver the secrets of the holy way, calling them Gnosis. [3]

Clearly these two hymns have been influenced by the same complex of ideas: the descent of a revealer bearing seals into Chaos, and its bitterness, to rescue the soul below. While the Naasene Psalm also tells of the descent of the soul and displays the male Jesus as savior, the Pronoia hymn tells only of the threefold descent of the feminine Pronoia (or remembrance thereof), the last of which succeeds in raising up Pronoia's members, who are viewed as consubstantial with her.

4. *A Descent Hymn Elaborated: Trimorphic Protennoia.* The Pronoia hymn, or something much like it, then underwent expansion in its first stage as an aretalogy of Protennoia as Father-Voice, Mother-Speech, and Son-Word now found in *Trimorphic Protennoia*. Furthermore, another stage of composition was devoted to spelling out the 'mysteries' communicated by the revealer as well as the nature of the (Five) "Seals" brought by him or her. A final stage saw to its Christianization.

Assuming that *Trimorphic Protennoia* finds its basis in the hymnic ending of the longer version of the *Apocryphon of John*, a closer analysis shows the following approximate compositional history for *Trimorphic Protennoia*. The underlying basis of the tractate can be seen in the consistent *egô eimi* "I am" self-predications of Protennoia which are structured into an introductory aretalogy (XIII,1:35,1-32) identifying Protennoia as the divine Thought (35,1-32) followed by three *egô eimi* aretalogies of about forty lines each in the same style. The second and third of these aretalogies form separate subtractates in *Trimorphic Protennoia* (Protennoia is the Voice of the Thought who descends first as light into darkness and gives shape to her fallen members [35,32-36,27; 40,29-41,11; Protennoia is the Speech of the Thought's Voice who descends second to empower her fallen members I) v giving them spirit or breath [42,4-27; 45,2-12; 45,21-46,31; and Protennoia is the Word of the Speech of the Thought's Voice who descends a third time in the likeness of the powers, proclaims the Five Seals, and restores her seed [members] into the Light [46,5-7; 47,5-23; 49,6-23; 50,9-201). If this, or something like it, is what the author started with, it can be seen that he has expanded this tripartite aretalogy with six doctrinal insertions (36,27-40,29-, 41,142,2; 42,27-45,2; 46,7-47,top; 47,24-49,top and 49,22-50,9). Three of these insertions are "mysteries" which Protennoia is said to have communicated to her sons. The first and longest insertion (36,27-40,29) narrates the story of the Autogenes Christ and his four Lights. The last of these Lights (Eleleth) emits Sophia (his Epinoia) to produce the demon Yaldabaoth who steals the Epinoia's power to create the lower aeons and man. It concludes with the restoration of Epinoia-Sophia who is regarded as completely innocent of fault. It is constructed in third person narrative. The first of the "mysteries" (41,1-42,2) narrates the loosening of the bonds of flesh by which the underworld powers enslave Protennoia's fallen members. This mystery is announced in direct discourse to a second person plural audience. The second mystery (42,27-45,2), called the "mystery of the (end of) this age" (42,28), is addressed to a similar group in the second person plural. It narrates an apocalyptic announcement of the end of the old age and the dawn of the new age with the judgment of the authorities of chaos, the celestial powers, and their Archigenetor. The third mystery (47,24-49,top), called "the mystery of Gnosis" (48,33-34) is again addressed to a second person plural audience, now called the "brethren." It narrates the descent of Protennoia as the Word who descends incognito through the various levels of the powers and strips away the corporeal and psychic thought from her brethren and raises them up to the Light by means of a baptismal celestial ascent ritual identified as the Five Seals.

It is clear that *Trimorphic Protennoia* has been secondarily Christianized. Three glosses identifying the Autogenes Son with Christ in the first subtractate (37,[31]; 38,22; 39,6-7) probably derive from the traditional theogonical materials common to the *Apocryphon of John* and *Iren.*, *Haer.* 1.29, upon which the author has drawn. But in the third subtractate the situation is much different, and seems to suggest that *Trimorphic Protennoia* has undergone three stages of composition. First, there was the triad of aretalogical ego eimi self-predications of Protennoia as Voice, Speech, and Word. Second, this was supplemented by doctrinal insertions based upon traditional Sethian cosmological materials similar to those of *Apocryphon of John* and *Iren. Haer.* 1.29, as well as upon (apparently non-Sethian) traditional materials treating the harrowing of hell and the eschatological overthrow of the celestial powers, and again upon Sethian traditions about the baptismal ascent ritual of the Five Seals. After circulation as a Sethian tractate in this form, the third stage of composition seems to have been the incorporation of Christian materials into the aretalogical portion of the third subtractate.

Specifically, the narrative of the incognito descent of Protennoia as Word, hidden in the form of the Sovereignities, Powers, and Angels, culminating in the final revelation of herself in her members below, seems to have undergone a Christological interpretation. In 47,14-15, it is said that as Logos, Protennoia revealed herself to "them" (i.e., humans?) "in their tents" as the Word (cf. John 1:14). In 49,7-8 it is said that the Archons thought Protennoia-Logos was "their Christ," while actually she is the Father of everyone. In 49,11-15, Protennoia identifies herself as the "beloved" (of the Archons), since she clothed herself as Son of the Archigenetor until the end of his ignorant decree. In 49,18-20 Protennoia reveals herself as a Son of Man among the Sons of Man even though she is the Father of everyone. In 50,6-9, Protennoia will reveal herself to her "brethren" and gather them into her "eternal kingdom." In 50,12-16, Protennoia has put on Jesus and borne him aloft from the cross into his Father's dwelling places (cf. John 14:2-3). In this way traditional Christological titles such as Christ, Beloved, Son of God ("Son of the Archigenetor") and Son of Man are polemically interpreted in a consciously docetic fashion. By implication, the "orthodox" Christ is shown to be the Christ of the "Sethian" Archons; the "orthodox" Beloved is the beloved of the Archons; the "orthodox" Son of God is the "Sethian" son of the ignorant Archigenetor; and the "orthodox" Son of Man is only a human among the sons of men, while for the Sethians, the true Son of Man is Adamas, the Son of the supreme deity Man (the human form in which the deity revealed himself as in Ap. John 11,1:14,14-24 and Gos. Eg. 111,2:59,1-9), or perhaps he is Seth, the Son of Adamas as in Ap. John 11,1:24,32-25,7. Therefore, the Protennoia-Logos is in reality the Father of everyone, the Father of the All who only appears as the Logos "in their tents" (*skênê*; a gloss on "the likeness of their shape" in *Trim. Prot.* XIII,1:47,16 in what seems to be conscious opposition to John 1:14). That is, he appeared in the "likeness of their shape" but did not become flesh as the "orthodox" believe. In only disguising himself as the "orthodox" Christ, the Logos indeed had to rescue Jesus from the "cursed" (not redemptive!) cross and restore him to the "dwelling places of his Father." In what seems a conscious reference to John 14:2-3, Jesus did not prepare a place for his followers: instead, the Logos, invisible to the celestial powers who watch over the aeonic dwellings (i.e., the four Lights?), installs Jesus into his Father's dwelling place (*Trim. Prot.* XIII,1:50,12-16; perhaps in the Light Oroiael as in Gos. Eg. III,2:65,1617).

Most of these polemical Sethian reinterpretations of "orthodox" Christology in *Trimorphic Protennoia* seem to depend on key texts from the Gospel of John in order to score their point in any acute fashion, although this has been a matter of scholarly dispute.[4] It seems that the key to the resolution of this dispute lies in the recognition that *Trimorphic Protennoia*, in its first two stages of composition, was a product of non-Christian Sethianism, drawing its Logos-theology from a fund of oriental speculation on the divine Word and Wisdom as did the prologue to the Gospel of John in a similar but independent way. But both the prologue and *Trimorphic Protennoia* later underwent Christianization in a later stage of redaction; the prologue in Johannine Christian circles, and *Trimorphic Protennoia* in Christianized Sethian circles. Indeed, *Trimorphic Protennoia* may have undergone Christianizing redaction in the environment of the debate over the interpretation of the Gospel of John during the early second century. This debate is reflected in the Johannine letters, and a bit later in western Valentinian circles is concerned with the interpretation of the Logos (e.g., The Tripartite

Tractate of NHC I) and of the Gospel of John (e.g., Ptolemaeus in Iren. *Haer.* 1.8.5 and the Fragments of Heracleon).

5. *The Early Sethian Baptismal Rite.* The spiritualized conception of baptism as a saving ritual of enlightenment reflected in the Sethian texts must also have been current in the first century, to judge from the complex of ideas in Col 2:8-15, where circumcision (regarded as a stripping off of the body of flesh) is connected with a baptism conceived as a dying and rising, and Christ's death is interpreted as a disarming of the principalities and powers. To judge from the Sethian baptismal mythologumena, the Sethians, wherever they derived their original rite, must have developed it in close rapprochement with Christianity. They must have sustained their initial encounter with Christianity as fellow practitioners of baptism, indeed a baptism interpreted in a very symbolic and spiritual direction. For example, the Sethian name for their Living Water, itself a conception found also in Johannine Christianity (John 4:7-15), is Yesseus Mazareus Yessedekus, which seems very much like a version of the name of Jesus into which Christians were baptized, perhaps in a threefold way. Yet to adopt this name did not necessarily mean understanding oneself principally as a Christian, as the rather cryptic and concealed form of this name suggests. Indeed it was adopted by the redactor of the (apparently in all other respects) non-Christian *Apocalypse of Adam*.

In many respects, the baptismal rite seems to have provided the context or occasion for many of the principal Sethian themes to coalesce in various combinations. This is quite obvious in the case of the Sethian rite of cultic or individual ascent, and also in the theme of the descent of the redeemer bearing the Five Seals. Yet the web of interlocking themes could be even more complex, as in the case of *Apocalypse of Adam*, part of which seems to draw on an old mythical pattern to illustrate thirteen versions of the descent of the Illuminator. It exhibits a myth which could be developed in various ways to portray the origin of mankind, the origin of the Savior, and perhaps the origin of both water baptism and celestial baptism as well.

In a very illuminating article, J. M. Robinson[5] drew attention to a series of striking parallels between the structure and motifs of the thirteen kingdoms, i.e., thirteen opinions concerning the coming of the Illuminator "to the water," and a similar mythical structure to be found in the NT Apocalypse of John (Rev 12:1-17) and reflected in the baptism and "temptation" stories of Mark 1:9-13, and in some fragments from the *Gospel of the Hebrews*. As can be seen from Robinson's study, there underlies Mark 1, Revelation 12 and *Apoc. Adam* V,5:77,26-82,19 a basic mythical structure concerning a divine child and his divine mother who are threatened by an evil power, but who are rescued and find safety in the wilderness until the evil power is destroyed. This general pattern could be made to apply not only to Adam and his divine mother or to Seth and his mother Eve, but also to the birth of Jesus, to Mary and their flight to Egypt from Herod, and perhaps more remotely to certain aspects of the Isis-Osiris-Horus cycle.

For our immediate purposes, however, it is important to see that facets of such a myth were applied to baptism not only in Mark (where wilderness is also ultimately a place of safety) and in the fragments of Gospel of the Hebrews but also in *Apocalypse of Adam*. In Mark the Savior is baptized in the (ordinary) water to which he comes, after which the Spirit descends to the Savior together with a Voice that pronounces him Son of God. The parallel in Matthew agrees, but has reservations about the baptism in water by John. Luke omits explicit mention of Jesus' baptism by John, and has the Spirit descend on Jesus during his post-baptismal prayer. The Fourth Gospel suppresses Jesus' explicit baptism by John in mere water, demoting John to the Voice of one crying in the wilderness, whose only subsequent function is to witness to the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus. Instead, the Fourth Gospel (John 4:7-15) understands Jesus as the source of Living Water, which to drink means eternal life, and as the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit, which the author identifies with the Living Water (John 7:37-39). Likewise, the second compositional stage of *Trimorphic Protennoia* regards the Logos, who descends with the Five Seals at the conclusion of the first-stage aretalogy, as the Logos-Son. He pours forth Living Water upon the Spirit below out of its source, which is the Father-Voice aspect of Protennoia, called the unpolluted spring of Living Water. So also *Gospel of the Egyptians* understands the descent of

Seth as Logos to be the bestowal of a holy baptism, probably in Living Water. These baptismal descents of the Logos or Seth are initiated by Barbelo, the Father-Mother, an exalted Sophia figure, who communicates to those who love her by Voice or Word (the Johannine prologue, *Trimorphic Protennoia*), Jewish wisdom texts portray the exalted Sophia as the fountain or spring (cf. Sirach 24; Philo, *Fuga* 195) from which comes the Word like a river (Philo, *Somn.* 2.242; cf. *Fuga* 97), the Mother of the Word through whom the universe came to be (*Fuga* 109; cf. *Trimorphic Protennoia* and the Johannine prologue). To be baptized in her water is to receive true gnosis. Thus her Voice (*bath qol*) is the revelation of the truth: e.g., "Man exists and the Son of Man" in the *Apocryphon of John* or the *Gospel of the Egyptians*; "This is my beloved Son" in Mark 1:11 (cf. 9:7), where the heavenly Voice comes down to water; similarly the Voices in *Trim. Prot.* XIII,1:40,8-9; 44,29-32 and Apoc. Adam V,5:84,4. Indeed it is likely that *Trimorphic Protennoia* derived its scheme of Voice, Speech, and Logos from such a complex of notions.

The conclusion to be drawn from these clusters of ideas is that the Sethian soteriology involving the saving descent of Barbelo, or of her Voice, or of Seth or of the Logos was most likely worked out in a baptismal environment characterized by speculation on the significance of words spoken and waters involved (cf. Zost. VIII,1:15) during the first century.[6] In this environment it rubbed shoulders with Christianity, but probably did not fully take the step of identifying their savior with Christ or Jesus, which it would soon do, but in a rather polemical fashion.

6. *The Earliest Sethian Compositions.* Thus I would suggest that by the end of the first century, Sethians possessed at least the following sacred texts. First, several versions of a possibly hymnic narrative of the threefold descent of the divine Mother like the one contained at the end of the longer version of *Apocryphon of John* according to which the third descent was finally effective and was understood to be the mythical origin of a Sethian baptismal rite called the Five Seals. This might also have existed in the form now embedded as source B in C. W. Hedrick's redactional theory of the *Apocalypse of Adam*,[7] in which three men (!) appear to Adam in a dream to awaken him from the sleep of death (V,5:65,24-66,12; 67,12-21). They speak of the third descent of the Illuminator who performs acts that disturb the God of the powers. He cannot recognize the power of this "man" and punishes his flesh only after he has caused his elect to shine and he has withdrawn to the holy houses (the four Lights?) in the great aeon from which he had come (V,5:76,8-11; 76,14-82,17; 82,19-83,4). Indeed, the redactor leads us to believe that prior to his withdrawal, he imparted to his elect a secret gnosis which is "the holy baptism of those who know the eternal knowledge through those born of the word and the imperishable illuminators (the four Lights?) who came from the holy seed (of the celestial Sethians): Yesseus, Mazareus, Yessedekus, [the Living] Water" (V,5:85,22-31). Furthermore, the tripartite narrative attributed above to the first redactional stage of *Trimorphic Protennoia* would belong here.

B. 100-125 C.E.

The first quarter of the second century must have seen the development of a theogonical account of the successive begettings of the tried Father-Mother-Son conceived as the Invisible Spirit, Barbelo, and their Son. Such an account underlies the Barbeloite system in Iren. *Haer.* 1.29. By now, the basic triad has been embellished by the addition of an elementary set of hypostatized divine attributes, which themselves could form pairs so as to produce further beings, such as the four Lights which were probably objects of vision in the spiritualized Sethian baptismal rite of the Five Seals. The first quarter of the second century seems to have been a period of vigorous arithmological speculation on the first ten numbers, but especially the first four numbers, comprising the Pythagorean tetraktys (the sum of the first four numbers). This was carried on by such Pythagoreanizing Platonists as Theon of Smyrna and Nicomachus of Gerasa, who in turn depend in part on similar arithmological and mathematical theories produced by such early first century Platonist figures as Dercyllides, Adrastus of Aphrodisias (a Peripatetic commentator on Plato's *Timaeus*) and Thrasyllus, a court philosopher under the Emperor

Tiberius. The harmonic ratios produced by these first four numbers and the geometric entities of point, line, surface, and solid had been applied to the structure and the creation of the world soul long before by Plato and his successors in the Old Academy, especially Speusippus and Xenocrates. Thus it is not necessary to assume that the Barbeloite system of Iren. *Haer.* 1.29 is dependent upon Valentinus or his successors, Polemy and Heracleon, or vice versa, since this arithmological lore was by now readily available in the handbooks employed in the dense network of urban schools where anyone who wished to become literate might study them alongside the, *Timaeus* itself. Although this Sethian "Barbeloite" theogonical material exists in a number of treatises each of which adds its own special touches (e.g., Iren. *Haer.* 1.29, *Apocryphon of John*, *Gospel of the Egyptians*, *Allogenes*, *Zostrianos*, *Three Steles of Seth*, Marsanes and *Trimorphic Protennoia*), it seems that the material common to the *Apocryphon of John* and Iren. *Haer.* 1.29 represents the earliest form.

In the early second century the principal emphasis of gnostic speculation on the beyond seems to be the explanation of how the current world came to be and how and whence the savior originated and descended with enlightening gnosis. This speculation seemed to require a Father and Mother who produced and sent the Son. The peculiar exegesis of Genesis 1-6 with its emphasis on the primordial origins of the heavenly and earthly Sethians was the only obvious aetiology by which the Sethians could maintain any sense of separate identity as the elect ones. This mythology, presented in narrative as a temporal succession of successive human generations, required to be matched by a similar but less temporally conceived succession of the unfolding hypostases and offspring of the high deity.

1. *The Apocryphon of John*. To judge from Iren. *Haer.* 1.29 and the four versions of the *Apocryphon of John* (which represent already Christianized versions of the Sethian myth of Barbelo the Mother and the sender of both the primordial saviors, Autogenes and Epinoia [Sophia, Eve] and also the eschatological savior, the Autogenes [Christianized as Christ]), the *Apocryphon of John* first exhibited the following profile. The Father, the invisible virginal Spirit, emitted his female aspect conceived as his Thought (Ennoia) which took shape as his First Thought (or Forethought) named Barbelo, who in Jewish tradition was probably a manifestation of the divine Name. Since (as her name suggests) God is in four, she requests the Invisible Spirit to realize four of her attributes as separate hypostases: Foreknowledge, Incorruptibility, Eternal Life and Self-begotten or Autogenes. The last of these is later identified with her Son Adamas, or Christ. Since Barbelo is the self-begotten divine Mind and wisdom of God, her Son should likewise possess similar powers and so his own attributes (Mind, Will, Logos and Truth) are manifested. At this point, there remains to be explained the origin of the four Lights, the celestial dwellings of Adamas, Seth, the celestial seed of Seth, and the future home of the historical Sethians. They are a traditional part of the Sethians' baptismal lore as shown in *Gos. Eg.* III,2:64,9-65,26 and in the baptismal prayer in Melch. IX,1:16, 16-18,7. The four Lights are explained by forming a tetrad of pairs composed of the hypostatized attributes of both Barbelo and her Son so that the "Autogenes" attribute of the Son and the Incorruptibility aspect of Barbelo produced the four Lights: Harmozel, Oroiael, Davithe, and Eleleth. At that point, to judge from the current versions of the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, Barbelo caused a further pairing of her attribute of Eternal Life and her Son's attribute of Will (*Thelêma*). They give rise to four further feminine attributes, Grace, Will (*Thelêsis*), Understanding, and Wisdom (the upper Sophia, perhaps called Phronesis; cf. *Hyp. Arch.* II,4:93,18-19 and 94,2-4). This sets the stage for the fall of Sophia, a lower aspect of the Mother. After giving rise to the Archon, she projects the image of the Son, Adamas. Later still, she causes the conception of Seth and his seed, whom she also rescues, either by herself or, as in the *Apocalypse of Adam*, by angelic beings, perhaps the servants of the Lights. In order to provide even more primordial spiritual prototypes of these beings, a further pairing of attributes, the Mother's Foreknowledge and the Son's Mind, must have produced the archetypal patterns for Adam, Seth, and his seed. They are then placed in the first three of the four Lights, leaving the fourth as a dwelling for the restored lower Sophia.

The systems of Irenaeus and the *Apocryphon of John* each contain subtle departures from this hypothetical arrangement, either by way of simplification, confusion, or more likely, in the case of the

Apocryphon of John, to enhance the position of Christ instead of Adamas as the Son in the wake of Christianization. As van den Broek has pointed out,[8] the birth of Autogenes from Ennoia and Logos found in Irenaeus is suppressed in the *Apocryphon of John* because Autogenes is identified with the Christ who has, in the extant versions of the Barbeloite system, become identified as the Son of the Father and Barbelo. He points out that while in the *Apocryphon of John* Christ the Son is identified with his Autogenes aspect, in Iren. Haer. 1.29, this Autogenes and his son Adamas are lower beings produced by Ennoia and Logos. They receive, however, great honor in a way that would suit a much higher being. He shows convincingly that, since Irenaeus says all things were subjected to Autogenes, the Barbeloite system originally considered him little less than God, crowned with glory and honor and given dominion over all things, an application of Ps 8:4-6. Originally, therefore, Autogenes had a higher rank. This would be the rank that Christ the Son now holds in the Christianized system, although this presupposes a stage still prior to the Father-Mother-Son triad in which there was Man and the Son of Man, little less than God. Thus the development of the bisexual nature of the Son of Man into Mother and Son demoted the Son, the Autogenes Adam, one notch. The Barbeloite system preserved the rank of Autogenes by identifying him with Christ (*Ap. John* BG8502,2:30,6; but not in NHC 11,I) but demoted Adamas. On the other hand, Irenaeus' version demoted both Autogenes and Adamas, leaving only Christ as the supreme Son.

The *Apocryphon of John* results from a combination of this theogony with the Sethian story of Yaldabaoth's creation of the protoplasts and the subsequent struggle between him and the Mother depicted in terms of Genesis 2-6. The entire work is then construed as the final revelation of the Mother who in the form of Christ reveals the whole thing to his disciple John. The source upon which the longer and shorter versions seem to depend may possibly have been produced during the first quarter of the second century. The long negative theology of the Invisible Spirit at the beginning seems quite in keeping with the interests of such thinkers of this period as Basilides, the Neopythagorean Moderatus and, farther afield, of Albinus. As E. R. Dodds showed in 1928,[9] this negative theology is only a natural development of Plato's doctrine of the Good "beyond being in power and dignity" in the *Republic*, 509B and of the speculations about the non-being of the One in the *Parmenides*, 137Cff.

Perhaps by the end of the first quarter of the second century, the shorter recension (BG8502,2 and NHC III,1), supplemented by the short excursus on the soul (BG8502,2:64,9-71,2) came into existence in the form of a dialogue between the resurrected Christ and his disciple John, son of Zebedee, together with the appropriate Christian glosses substituting Christ for the Autogenes Adam (cf. the similar phenomenon in the case of Eugnostos and the Sophia of *Jesus Christ*).

2. *Trimorphic Protennoia*, Perhaps at this time the second compositional stage of the *Trimorphic Protennoia* was also achieved by the addition of the four mysteries to the triple descent aretalogical narrative, as discussed above. The first of these mysteries indeed seems dependent on the already Christianized system common to the *Apocryphon of John* and Iren. Haer. 1.29, and the fourth draws on the Sethian baptismal tradition of the Five Seals.

C. 125-150 C.E.

Toward the end of the first half of the second century, *Trimorphic Protennoia* may have reached its present (polemically) Christianized form. This period may also have seen the redaction of the longer version of the *Apocryphon of John* in Codices II and IV by the addition of a long section on the many angels that contributed parts to the body of the protoplastic Adam, claimed to be derived from a "book of Zoroaster" (II,1:15,29-19,11) and the inclusion of the Pronoia hymn at the end (II,1:30,11-31,25; discussed above).

1. *The Apocalypse of Adam* (Source B). The redactional combination of a triple descent narrative culminating in the Sethian rite of baptismal enlightenment with a major version of the Sethian history of

salvation derived from an exegesis of Genesis 1-6 in the case of the *Apocryphon of John* may have occurred at about the same time that part of a similar triple descent narrative (fleshed out with the opinions on the thirteen kingdoms) in source B of the *Apocalypse of Adam* was connected by its redactor with the Genesis-inspired Sethian salvation history of source A. At the same time he also incorporated Sethian baptismal tradition, but in a polemical way. Although the *Apocalypse of Adam* was not Christianized in an obvious way by the redactor, it is at least arguable that Source B contained concepts that originated in close contact with Christianity such as the punishing of the flesh of the man upon whom the spirit has come (V,5:77,16-18) and the (unsatisfactory) speculations on the origin of the Illuminator as the son of a prophet, or son of a virgin or son of Solomon attributed to the second, third, and fourth kingdoms (V,5:78,7-79,19). Just as is the case with the Christological motifs in the third subtractate of *Trimorphic Protennoia*, such concepts seem to be introduced in a polemical vein, suggesting that the triple-descent motif may have been developed in connection with an attempt to distinguish Sethianism from Christianity with its increasing stress on the once-for-all nature of Christ's redeeming activity. For Christianity, the period of Israel was one only of preparation for the advent of salvation in Christ, while for the Sethians, salvation had been in principle already achieved in primordial times, with the raising of Seth and his seed into the Aeon. Thus the first and second descents of the redeemer had actually already performed the fundamental work of salvation in primordial times and left witnesses to it on inscribed steles and in books. The third descent of the redeemer is therefore only to remind the earthly Sethians of what had been accomplished for them in the past, and to grant them a means of realizing this in the present through the baptismal ascent ritual.

That this third descent of the redeemer is identified with the preexistent Christ who brings salvation as gnosis rather than salvation through his death on the cross should occasion no surprise. There were tendencies toward such views in Johannine Christian circles as well. One should bear in mind that also during this period (140-160 C.E.) Valentinus likewise developed the notion of a pneumatic Christ coming to waken the sleeping spirit in humankind, a notion which lies at the core of his system. Valentinus and his successors made Christ the focus of their system and thus were allied principally with Christianity. 'rite Sethians, however, seemed to find their sense of uniqueness in opposition to the Church on the grounds just mentioned. Since various groups were not isolated from one another but freely made use of texts and ideas borrowed from other groups, the adoption of Christ into their system was only natural, but did not fundamentally change its basically non-Christian nature and inner cohesion.

2. The *Hypostasis of the Archons*. Finally, it is also probable that in the mid-second century or slightly later, *Hypostasis of the Archons* reached its present Christianized form, perhaps derived from a hypothetical "Apocalypse of Norea," posited by H.-M. Schenke[10] as the source common to *Hypostasis of the Archons* (II,4) and *On the Origin of the World* (II,5). The prominence in this work of Norea as sister of Seth and offspring and earthly manifestation of Sophia through Eve may have inspired the short treatise *Norea*, which conceives Norea in two levels. She is the upper Sophia who cried out to the Father of the All (i.e., Adamas conceived as Ennoia) and was restored to her place in the ineffable Epinoia (perhaps the Light Eleleth to whom she cries in *Hypostasis of the Archons*) and thus in the divine Autogenes. Yet she is also the lower Sophia manifested as daughter of Eve and wife-sister of Seth who is also yet to be delivered from her deficiency, which will surely be accomplished by the intercession of the four Lights, or their ministers. It is interesting that here Adamas is himself the Father of the All, yet is also called Nous and Ennoia as well as Father of Nous, a set of identifications which recalls the bisexual nature of Adamas as both Father and Mother, or Man and Son of Man (which are perhaps the two names that make the "single name" Man).

In this presentation, I have urged an early dating (125-150 C.E.) for the *Apocalypse of Adam*, *Hypostasis of the Archons*, *Norea*, *Trimorphic Protennoia*, and the longer recension of the *Apocryphon of John*; earlier yet (100-125 C.E.) for the shorter recension, the first two compositional stages of *Trimorphic Protennoia* prior to its Christianization, and source B of the *Apocalypse of Adam*; and a still earlier date (prior to 100 C.E.) for the traditional materials they include: the Sophia myth, the exegesis of

Genesis 1-6 and other OT traditions, and an already spiritualized Sethian baptismal rite. Christian influence was at work in all these periods and explicitly so in the last two, while Neopythagorean speculation becomes influential around 100-125 C.E. On the other hand, the polemical use of Christological motifs appears in the last period, 125-150 C.E., when explicit heresiological summaries and refutations of the gnostic systems begin to appear, e.g., Justin's lost *Syntagma*. All these documents stress the movement of salvation from above to below by means of descending redeemer revealers appearing at certain special points in primordial and recent history, bearing gnosis and not infrequently conferring a baptismal rite (not in Norea or *Hypostasis of the Archons*).

D. 150-200 C.E.

Aside from *Allogenes*, *Zostrianos*, *Marsanes*, and *Three Steles of Seth*, there are two of the Sethian works which I have not placed in this period: *Melchizedek* and *Gospel of the Egyptians*. The latter seems to me to have taken shape a bit later, somewhere in the second half of the second century, since it seems to presuppose the existence of the extant versions of the *Apocryphon of John*, *Trimorphic Protennoia*, and the baptismal nomenclature (especially Yesseus Mazareus Yessedekus) known to the redactor of *Apocalypse of Adam*. Melch. IX,1:16,16-18,7 and 5,17-6,10 also seem to presuppose, especially in its baptismal doxology, the five doxologies in Gos. E.g., IV,2:59,13-29; 111,2:49,22-50,17; 53,12-54,11; 55,16-56,3; 61,23-62,13. The key element is the mention of Doxomedon as first-born of the Aeons, a name apparently unattested elsewhere except in *Gospel of the Egyptians* and *Zostrianos*.

1. The *Gospel of the Egyptians*. As H.-M. Schenke has suggested, the emphasis of *Gospel of the Egyptians* seems to lie upon baptismal traditions and prayers which conclude it (cf. III,2:64,9-68,1), while the preceding sections seem to function as a mythological justification for them. Indeed the first part of the *Gospel of the Egyptians* seems to be built almost entirely on these five doxologies or presentations of praise which enumerate the origins of the principal transcendent beings of this treatise. These are the great Invisible Spirit, the male virgin Barbelo, the Thrice-Male Child, the male virgin Youel (a double of Barbelo), Esephech the Child of the Child (a double of the Triple Male Child), the great Doxomedon Aeon (containing the last three beings; cf. Zost. VIII,1:61,15-21 and Gos. Eg. 111,2:43,15-16: the great aeon, where the Triple Male Child is), and various other pleromas and aeons. Apparently *Gospel of the Egyptians* understands the Invisible Spirit, Barbelo and the three beings (Thrice-Male Child, Youel and Esephech) contained in the Doxomedon aeon to constitute the Five Seals. This suggests a baptismal context for these doxologies, perhaps also suggesting Schenke's^[11] notion of a divine pentad (cf. *Ap. John* II,1:6,2 and *Steles Seth* VII,5,120,20) of names (cf. *Trim. Prot.* XIII,1:49,28-32; "the Five Seals of these particular names") which are invoked in the course of the baptismal ascent (in five stages: robing, baptizing, enthralling, glorifying, rapture into the light, XIII,1:48,15-35). Thus the Son figure of the Father-Mother-Son triad of the *Apocryphon of John* has been subdivided into another Father-Mother-Son triad, leaving the Autogenes Logos dangling in this system, although still produced by the (Invisible) Spirit and Barbelo ("Pronoia") and still establishing the four Lights by his Word. It would appear that the *Gospel of the Egyptians* has combined two traditions. They are the Invisible Spirit-Barbelo-Autogenes triad from the system of the *Apocryphon of John* and *Trimorphic Protennoia*, and another tradition of a pentad, derived from the Sethian baptismal tradition. Strikingly, *Gospel of the Egyptians* also seems to move towards the postulation of another triad (which is possibly developed, for example, by *Allogenes* into the Triple Power) between the Invisible Spirit and Barbelo, namely "the living Silence," an unspecified Father and a Thought (Ennoia, which in turn becomes the Father in the triad, Father/Ennoia, Mother/Barbelo, and Son/Thrice-Male Child). Finally, Adamas seems to occupy a still lower rank, as in the *Apocryphon of John* (where he is produced by Foreknowledge and Mind): Adamas follows and is separated from the Autogenes Logos, and is produced by "Man" (perhaps the Invisible Spirit) and a lower double of Barbelo, Mirothoe. In turn Adam conjoins with Prophania to produce the four Lights and Seth, who conjoins with Plesithea to

produce his seed.

The *Gospel of the Egyptians* seems also to know the myth of Sophia from the version found in *Trimorphic Protennoia*, according to which a voice from the fourth Light Eleleth urges the production of a ruler for Chaos, initiating the descent of the hylic Sophia cloud, who produces the chief archon Sakla and his partner Nebruel, the makers of twelve aeons and angels and of man. After Sakla's boast and the traditional voice from on high about the Man and Son of Man, a double of Sophia (Metanoia) is introduced to make up for the deficiency in the Aeon of Eleleth due to Sophia's descent. She descends to the world which is called the image of the night, perhaps reflecting an etymology of Eleleth's name, perhaps Lilith or *lēylā* "night," and suggesting that Eleleth is ultimately responsible for the created order.

The *Gospel of the Egyptians* also mentions the three parousias of flood, conflagration and judgment through which Seth passes, which seems to show awareness of the scheme of *Apocalypse of Adam* in its presently redacted form. Again this tradition is set in a baptismal context, since the third descent of Seth serves to establish a baptism through a Logos-begotten body prepared by the virgin (Barbelo?). And indeed this Logos-begotten body turns out to be Jesus, whom Seth puts on, as in *Trim. Prot.* XIII,1:50,12-15 (cf. the Ophite version of this theme in *Iren. Haer.* 1.30.12-13).

Finally there is the lengthy list of the various baptismal figures (*Gos. Eg.* III,2:64,9-65,26) and the two concluding hymnic sections (*Gos. Eg.* III,2:66,8-22, and 66,22-68,1) which Böhlig-Wisse have adroitly reconstructed in the form of two separate hymns of five strophes each, perhaps again reflecting the tradition of the Five Seals. In this regard, the Five Seals tradition may even have given rise to the fivefold repetition of the doxologies (enumerated above) constituting the basis of the theogony in the first part of *Gospel of the Egyptians*. The concluding baptismal hymns are strongly Christian in flavor, especially the first one, mentioning Yesseus Mazareus Yessedekus and, very frequently, Jesus. The list of baptismal figures preceding the prayers reveals a multitude of new figures (most of which show up in the baptismal sections of *Zostrianos*) alongside the more traditional ones, such as Micheus, Michar, Mnesinous, Gamaliel and Samblo (in *Apocalypse of Adam* and *Trimorphic Protennoia*), and Abrasax and Yesseus Mazareus Yessedekus (in *Apocalypse of Adam*). Also included are Adamas, Seth and his seed, and Jesus residing in the four Lights Harmozel, Oroiael, Davithe, and Eleleth (as in *Apocryphon of John* and *Trimorphic Protennoia*).

Before passing on to the *Allogenes* group of treatises, one should also note the occurrence of Kalyptos in *Gos. Eg.* IV,2:57,16, a name which may be present in translated form also in *Trim. Prot.* XIII,1:38,10 as a cognomen for Barbelo. Likewise in *Gos. Eg.* IV, 2:55,25 there seems to occur the phrase "the First One who appeared," likely a translation of Protophanes (here apparently a cognomen for the Thrice-Male Child), a term occurring also in *Ap. John* II,1:8,32 as a cognomen for Geradamas, further suggesting an original connection between Adamas and the Triple Male Child. Perhaps also Prophania, who in *Gospel of the Egyptians* functions as Adamas' consort in the production of Seth and the four Lights, is a feminine variant of Protophanes, again suggesting the bisexual Adamas, the Son of Man, as the first to appear, doing so in Sethian terms as both female (Mother, Barbelo, the Ennoia of the First Man) and male (the Autogenes Son).

2. *Allogenes* and *Zostrianos*. *Zostrianos* is heavily indebted to the Sethian *dramatis personae* especially as they occur in *Gospel of the Egyptians*, and collects these into three rather distinct blocks (*Zost.* VIII,1:6; also pp. 29-32 and 47). But the bulk of *Zostrianos* is cast in a truly new scheme and conceptuality, which seems to have been developed independently by the author of *Allogenes* and adopted by *Zostrianos* in a somewhat confused way. This new scheme is the Sethian practice of visionary ascent to the highest levels of the divine world, which seems to be worked out for the first time by the author of *Allogenes* utilizing a large fund of philosophical conceptuality derived from contemporary Platonism, with no traces of Christian content, *Zostrianos* appears to be based on the scheme of visionary ascent and the philosophical conceptuality in *Allogenes*, but it makes a definite attempt to interpret this ascent in terms of the older tradition of baptismal ascent and its own peculiar *dramatis personae*, especially as they occur in *Gospel of the Egyptians*.

The metaphysical structure of both *Allogenes* and *Zostrianos*, as well as *Three Steles of Seth*, appears to be centered on the triad Father-Mother-Son as is the case with the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, *Apocryphon of John*, and *Trimorphic Protennoia*. In *Zostrianos* this triad is conceived as a vertical hierarchy of beings. The Father at the metaphysical summit (perhaps himself beyond being) is the Invisible Spirit and is accompanied by his Triple Powered One. Below him, the Mother member of the triad is named Barbelo, who herself subsumes a triad of hypostases. The highest of these is Kalyptos, the Hidden One. The next lowest is Protophanes, the First-Appearing One, who has associated with him another being called the Triple Male (Child). The third of the triad is the Son called the divine Autogenes.

So also the various levels of the Aeon of Barbelo, the divine Mind (Nous), are described in terms of their content, again expressed in terms of the Platonic metaphysics of the divine intelligence ("noology"). As the contemplated Mind, Kalyptos contains the paradigmatic ideas or authentic existents; Protophanes, the contemplating Mind, contains a subdivision of the ideas ("those who exist together"), i.e., universal ideas, perhaps "mathematics," distinguished from the authentic existents by having "many of the same" and being combinable with each other (unlike the authentic existents; cf. Plato, according to Aristot. *Metaph.* I. 6 and XIII. 6), and also distinguished from the ideas of particular things ("the perfect individuals"). The particular ideas ("the [perfect] individuals") are contained in Autogenes, a sort of demiurgic mind (the Logos) who shapes the realm of Nature (physis) below. Since the distinction between the "individuals" in Autogenes and "those who exist together" in Protophanes is rather slight for the author of *Allogenes*, the Triple Male Child fits nicely as a sort of mediator between them. This mediating function of the Triple Male also qualifies him for the title of Savior (*Allogenes* XI,3:58,13-15).

The doctrine of the Triple Powered One found in *Allogenes* also occurs in *Three Steles of Seth*, *Marsanes*, and *Zostrianos*. It is clearly the most intriguing feature of these treatises and perhaps the crucial feature by which they can be placed at a definite point in time (and in the Platonic metaphysical tradition). In *Allogenes*, *Three Steles of Seth*, and *Zostrianos*, the Triple Powered One of the Invisible Spirit consists of three modalities: Existence, Vitality or Life, and Mentality or Knowledge (or Blessedness). In its Existence modality, the Triple Powered One is continuous with (i.e., potentially contained within) and indistinguishable from the Invisible Spirit. In its Vitality modality, the Triple Powered One is the boundlessness of the Invisible Spirit proceeding forth in an act of emanation both continuous and discontinuous with the Invisible Spirit and its final product, Barbelo, the self-knowledge of the Invisible Spirit. In its Mentality modality, the Triple Powered One has become bounded as Barbelo, the self-knowledge of the Invisible Spirit. It has taken on form and definition as perceiving subject with the Invisible Spirit as its object of perception.

This is the same doctrine as is found in the anonymous Parmenides commentary (Fragment XIV) ascribed by Hadot to Porphyry,^[12] where the Neoplatonic hypostasis Intellect unfolds from the absolute being (to einai) of the pre-existent One in three phases. In each phase the three modalities of the Intellect (namely Existence, Life, and Intelligence) predominate in turn. First as Existence (hyparxis), Intellect is purely potential, resident in and identical with its ideas, the absolute being of the One. In its third phase, Intellect has become identical with the derived being (to on) of Intellect proper (the second Neoplatonic hypostasis) as the hypostatic exemplification of its paradigmatic idea, the absolute being of the One. The transitional phase between the first and third phase of Intellect is called Life and constitutes the median modality of Intellect (boundless thinking). The same idea is also found in Plot. *Enn.* 6.7. 17,13-26:

Life, not the life of the One, but a trace of it, looking toward the One was boundless, 1)111 once having looked was bounded (without bounding its source). Life looks to the One, and determined by it, takes on bound, limit, form... it must then have been determined as (the Life of) a Unity including multiplicity. Each element of multiplicity is determined multiplicity because of Life, but also is a Unity because of limit... so Intellect is bounded Life.

What is really original in *Allogenes*, besides the importation of Platonic metaphysics into Sethianism, is the scheme of visionary ascent experienced by *Allogenes*. Certainly Sethianism was familiar with

accounts of the ecstatic visionary ascents of Enoch, Elijah, Abraham, Jacob, Paul and others contained in Jewish and Christian apocalyptic. *Allogenes*, however, is distinguished by a Platonically inspired visionary ascent of the individual intellect in which it assimilates itself to the hierarchy of metaphysical levels with which it was aboriginally consubstantial but from which it had become separated. [13] In *Allogenes*, one undergoes the ascent according to a prescribed sequence of mental states: earthbound vision; ecstatic extraction from body and soul involving a transcending of traditional gnosis; a silent but unstable seeking of oneself; firm standing; and sudden ultimate vision characterized as an ignorant knowledge devoid of any content that might distinguish between subject and contemplated object. Each stage is characterized by increasing self-unification, stability and mental abstraction, a movement away from motion and multiplicity to stability and solitariness.

The prototype of such an experience is found already in Plato's *Symposium* 210A-212A, where Socrates recounts his path to the vision of absolute beauty into which he had been initiated by Diotima. In such mysteries, ultimate vision or epopteia was the supreme goal, also expressed as assimilating oneself to God insofar as possible (Plato, *Theaetetus*, 176B). This was a traditional quest of religious Platonism not only in Plato, but also later in such figures as Philo (who, however, shunned the notion of total assimilation to God), Numenius, Valentinus, perhaps Albinus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and many others besides. In the period under discussion, this tradition culminates in Plotinus.

In such a way, *Allogenes* achieves a vision of the Aeon of Barbelo and the beings comprising it (*Allogenes* XI,3:57,29-58,26), then transcends his earthly garment and even his own knowledge by means of a vacant ignorance and sees the Mentality, Vitality, and Existence aspects of the Triple Powered One of the Invisible Spirit (XI,3:58,27-60,37). At this point, *Allogenes* is suddenly filled by a primary revelation of the Unknowable One and his Triple Power (*Allogenes* XI,3:60,37-61,22). The rest of the treatise is mostly devoted to an interpretation of his visionary experience in terms of a negative theology (*Allogenes* XI,3:61, 32-62,13; supplemented by a more positive theology, XI,3:62,14-67,20). This negative theology contains a nearly word-for-word parallel with the one found in the beginning of the *Apocryphon of John*: *Allogenes* XI,3:62,28-63,23=Ap. John 11,1:3,18-35=BG8502,2:23,3-26,13. *Allogenes* is thus likely to have borrowed from the *Apocryphon of John*.

E. 200-300 C.E.

When one realizes that *Allogenes* and *Zostrianos* are probably to be included in the "apocalypses of Zoroaster and Zostrianos and Nicotheus and Allogenes and Messos and those of other such figures" (Porph. *Vit. Plot.* 16) whose stance was attacked by Plotinus and whose doctrines were refuted at great length by Amelius and Porphyry himself in the period 244-269 C.E., one may date *Allogenes* around 200 C.E., with *Zostrianos* coming a bit later around 225 C.E. (Porphyry certainly recognized it as a spurious and recent work). *Allogenes* is also to be included among the various Sethian works under the name of *Allogenes* mentioned by Epiphanius around 375 C.E. (*Pan.* 39.5.1; 40.2.2). Furthermore, Plotinus, in his antignostic polemic (*Enn.* 3.8; 5.8; 5.5 and 2.9, tractates 30-33 in chronological order, which constitute the original complete antignostic tractate recognized by Harder[14]), probably has these tractates in view.

1. *Zostrianos*. While *Allogenes* (like *Three Steles of Seth*) takes no interest at all in the realm of Nature below Autogenes (mentioned only once at *Allogenes* XI,3:51,28-32 as containing failures rectified by Autogenes), *Zostrianos* and *Marsanes* do treat this realm. They seem to enumerate six levels of being below Autogenes, called the thirteen cosmic aeons (i.e., the world), the airy earth, the copies (Antitypoi made by the Archon) of the Aeons, the Transmigration (paroikêseis); the Repentance (metanoia) and the "self-begotten ones" (plural). Although it is unclear in *Zostrianos* as it now stands, the *Untitled Text* of the Bruce Codex (Schmidt-MacDermot, *Bruce Codex*, 263,11-264,6) allows us to conjecture that "the self-begotten ones" constitute the level at which *Zostrianos* is baptized in the name of Autogenes. It contains the Living Water (Yesseus Mazareus Yessedekus), the baptizers Micheus, Michar (and

Mnesinous), the purifier Barpharanges, a figure called Zogenethlos and, besides these, the four Lights Harmozel, Oroiael, Daivithe, and Eleleth, together with Sophia. In *Zostrianos*, Adamas is found in Harmozel; Seth, Emmacha Seth and Esephech the Child of the Child, in Oroiael; and the seed of Seth, in Davithe. In addition, certain triads of beings are either residents in or cognomens of the four Lights (*Zost.* VIII,1:127,16-128,7). It is unclear whether the repentant souls (of the historical Sethians?) are contained in Eleleth, as would be expected, or in the level of Metanoia immediately below the self-begotten ones. It appears also that the figures of Meirothea (*Zost.* VIII,1:30,14-15) and Plesithea (*Zost.* VIII,1:51,12) and Prophania (*Zost.* VIII,1:6,31) also belong to the self-begotten ones. It seems that in comparison to *Allogenes*, *Zostrianos* really is guilty of multiplying hypostases, but these are no doubt derived from the Sethian baptismal tradition, not only from free invention. It seems fair, then, to see *Zostrianos* as a derivative from *Allogenes* and *Gospel of the Egyptians*.

2. The *Three Steles of Seth*. The *Three Steles of Seth* clearly represents the same system as *Allogenes*; yet it is constructed as a triptych of presentations of praise and blessing to Autogenes, Barbelo, and the pre-existent One in connection with a communal practice of a three-stage ascent and descent. After an initial revelation and various blessings rendered by Seth (*Steles Seth* VII,5:118:25-120,28) who praises the bisexual Geradamas as Mirothea (his mother) and Mirotheos (his father), the rest of the treatise uses the first person plural for ascribing praise to (1) the Triple Male, (2) to Barbelo who arose from the Triple Powered One (characterized by being, living and knowing, and is also called Kalyptos and Protophanes), and (3) to the pre-existent One who is characterized by the existence life mind triad. The whole concludes with a rubric (*Steles Seth* VII,5:126,32 127,22) that explains the use of the steles in the practice of descent from the third to the second to the first; likewise, the way of ascent is the way of descent. The fact that the method of descent is mentioned first is strange (one notes that Jewish Merkabah mystics called themselves *Yordê Merkabah*, "descenders to the Merkabah"). Another instance of the interdependence of these texts is a common prayer tradition: *Steles Seth* VII,5:125,23 126,17, *Allogenes* XI,3:54,11 37 and *Zost.* VIII,1:51,24 52,24; 86,13 88, bottom.

3. *Marsanes*. Last of all, *Marsanes* and the *Untitled Text* of the Bruce Codex should be mentioned as probably the latest of the Sethian treatises that we possess. Like *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes*, *Marsanes* records the visionary experience of a singular individual, probably to be regarded as one of the many manifestations of Seth. B. A. Pearson in his fine introduction to this tractate,^[14] suggests that the name Marsanes, mentioned in the *Untitled Text* of the Bruce Codex (Schmidt MacDermot, *Bruce Codex*, 235,13 23) in connection with Nicotheos (and Marsianos by Epiphanius [*Pan.* 40.7.6] in his account of the Archontics), reflects a Syrian background for its author, and dates Marsanes in the early third century. But one might argue for dating it to the last quarter of the third century since it indeed posits an unknown Silent One above even the Invisible Spirit, in much the same way as Iamblichus during the same period posited an "Ineffable" beyond even the One of Plotinus.

As mentioned previously, the first ten pages of *Marsanes* present a visionary ascent to, and descent from, the highest level of the divine world. They depict the same basic structure as *Allogenes*, but with the omission of the Triple Male and the addition of at least the Repentance (perhaps in unrecoverable parts of the text one would find mention of the Transmigration and Antitypes) and the "cosmic" and "material" levels. From page 55 onward one notes the occurrence of a few baptismal terms, such as "wash," "seal," and perhaps "[Living] Water" (*Marsanes* X,1:65,22). Indeed the entire perceptible and intelligible universe is structured according to a hierarchy of thirteen seals. Aside from the narrative of the unfolding of Barbelo from the Triple Powered One (of the Unknown Silent One, or of the Invisible Spirit?) and the plentiful occurrence of Platonic metaphysical terms such as "being," "non being," "truly existing," "partial," "whole," "sameness," "difference" (esp. *Marsanes* X,1:4,24 5,5), one learns that Marsanes has not only come to know the intelligible world, but also that "the sense perceptible world is [worthy] of being saved entirely" (X,1:5,22 26), an idea quite in line with *Allogenes* as well. These texts, *Allogenes*, *Zostrianos*, *Three Steles of Seth*, and *Marsanes*, which I call the "*Allogenes* group," all exhibit a tendency not only toward an ontological monism, but also, save perhaps in the case of

Zostrianos with its Sophia myth, a rather positive attitude toward the sense perceptible world, the realm of Nature. Even *Zostrianos*, which affirms the existence of the demiurgic work of the Archon, its artificiality and its death threatening bondage, concludes: "Release yourselves, and that which has bound you will be dissolved. Save yourselves, in order that it may be saved" (VIII,1:131,10-12).

4. *The Untitled Text of the Bruce Codex*. Finally, as previously mentioned, the *Untitled Text* of the Bruce Codex also belongs among the Sethian treatises, and seems to have affinity mostly with *Zostrianos* and *Gospel of the Egyptians*. It is almost entirely devoted to an elaborate cosmology involving the transcendent Sethian *dramatis personae* arranged into various levels and groups called "fatherhoods" and "deeps" consisting of myriads of powers. It narrates the descent of the light spark and Christ through Setheus, bearing a salvation which seems to be effected by the baptismal rite already discussed. It is by all standards a most complex work defying any simple analysis. I can do no more than state that Schmidt [15] has dated it to the end of the second century, although I would be inclined to put it a bit later, around 350 C.E., but for no reason other than its extraordinary prolixity in comparison with the other Sethian treatises.

IV. Conclusion

It may be that the Sethians' gradual shift away from their original communal baptismal context, interpreted by means of a rich history of their primordial origins and salvation, towards the more ethereal and individualistic practice of visionary ascent contributed to the eventual decay and diffusion of those who identified with the Sethian traditions. Around 375 C.E., Epiphanius has difficulty recalling where he had encountered Sethians, and says that they are not to be found everywhere, but now only in Egypt and Palestine, although fifty years before they had spread as far as Greater Armenia (*Pan.* 39.1.1-2; 40.1). Perhaps the burgeoning pressure of officially sanctioned Christianity after Constantine drove them away from their former community centers. Their initial rapprochement with Christian ideas, alternating between positive in the case of *Apocryphon of John*, *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *Melchizedek*, and more negative and polemical in the case of *Trimorphic Protennoia*, *Gospel of the Egyptians*, and the *Apocalypse of Adam*, may have proved a liability. While Christological concepts could clearly depict the eschatological advent of Seth in their own era, to adopt these meant also to reinterpret them in a Sethian way and thus challenge a more "orthodox" Christological interpretation. Although this preserved for a time their separate conscious identity as an elect body, in the long run it must have earned the hostility of the increasingly better organized, institutional, "orthodox" church. Certainly influential church fathers holding powerful positions in the church singled out the Sethians along with many others for attack. At first, this attack was perhaps rather pedantic, sarcastic, and theoretical, but in the case of a Tertullian or later an Epiphanius, it could become brutal and libelous. Though thrust away by the church, many Sethians no doubt held on to their own version of Christianized salvation history, but concentrated more and more on spiritualizing it along a vertical, transcendent axis. Such an emphasis on vertical transcendence at the expense of a sense of primordial history must have weakened their sense of traditional historical grounding and communal solidarity.

The final stage seems achieved in the *Allogenes* group, where the Sethians, if they thus identified themselves any longer, moved into rapprochement with pagan Platonism. Epiphanius tells us that the Archontic branch of Sethianism had rejected baptism and the sacraments associated with the church. This happened possibly around the inauguration of the Sassanide era, the time of the vision and mission of Mani, who also rejected baptism. Without some cultic or communal form of this rite, individual Sethians were left to their own devices. An increasing emphasis on self-performable techniques of spiritual ascent with its attendant possibilities for individualism possibly entailed a further weakening of communal awareness traditionally grounded in ritual and primordial history. While initially welcomed into Platonic circles, their insistence on enumerating and praising their traditional divine beings with

hymns, glossolalia, and other forms of ecstatic incantation must have irritated more sober Platonists such as Plotinus, Porphyry and Amelius. Although the Platonists initially regarded the Sethians as friends, soon they too, like the heresiologists of the church, began writing pointed and lengthy attacks upon them for distorting the teaching of Plato which they adapted to depict their own spiritual world and the path toward assimilation with it. This rejection, coupled with the official sanction of Christianity under Constantine and the attendant pressure against the very paganism the Sethians had turned to, may have contributed to the fragmentation of the Sethian community into a multitude of sectarian groups (e.g., Audians, Borborites, Archontics; perhaps Phibionites, Stratotici, and Secundians), some of which survived into the Middle Ages—a true scattering of the seed of Seth!

[1] H.-M. Schenke, "Das sethianische System nach Nag-Hammadi-Handschriften" in *Studia Coptica* (ed. Peter Nagel), 165-174 and "The Phenomenon and Significance of Gnostic Sethianism" in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut, March 28-31, 1978* (ed. Bentley Layton; 2 vols.; Studies in the History of Religions 41; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), vol. II, 588-616.

[2] Dahl, "The Arrogant Archon and the Lewd Sophia." in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut, March 28-31, 1978*. Vol. 2: *Sethian Gnosticism* (ed. Bentley Layton; Leiden: Brill, 1981), vol. II.689-712; in particular pp. 707-8, and n. 44 (p. 708).

[3] See Marcovich, "Naasene Psalm," whose translation I adopt.

[4] Cf. the discussions of G. Schenke, "Protennoia"; Helderman, "Zelten"; H.-M. Schenke, "Sethianism," 607-12; and summarizing the debate, Robinson, "Sethians." My own position is that *Trimorphic Protennoia* underwent superficial Christianization in its second stage of redaction, but specific and polemical Christianization in its third stage of redaction. The superficial resemblances to the Johannine prologue scattered throughout *Trimorphic Protennoia* are to be explained by the emergence of both texts from gnosticizing oriental sapiential traditions at home in first-century Syria and Palestine, as suggested by Colpe, "Überlieferung," 122-24. The Christological glosses in the first subtractate are to be explained by the influence of the theogonical section of the *Apocryphon of John*. But the more striking parallels to the Gospel of John discussed here, as well as the explicit application of apparent Christological titles to Protennoia-Logos, seem to me to constitute deliberate "Christianization," although in a strictly polemical vein. Whether the redactor of the third compositional stage hypothesized by me is really Sethian or heterodox Christian is impossible to tell; in any case he is certainly not an "orthodox" or "apostolic" Christian, though perhaps he might be a "super Johannine" (heretic) of the sort suggested by Brown, "Sheep."

[5] Robinson, "Gattung of Mark," 119-29.

[6] Gnostic Sethianism must have originated among the numerous baptismal sects that populated Syria and Palestine, especially along the Jordan valley, in the period 200 B.C.E. 300 C.E.: the Essenes/Dead Sea sect, the pre-Christian Nasareans of Epiphanius, John the Baptist and his followers, the Jewish-Christian Nazorenes, the Ebionites, Pauline and Johannine Christians, Naasenes, Valentinians/Marcosians, Elkasaites, Sabaeans, Dositheans, Masbotheans, Gorothenians, Hemero-baptists, Mandeans, and the groups behind the Odes of Solomon, *Acts of Thomas*, Pseudo-Clementines, Justin's Baruch, etc. (cf. Thomas, *Le mouvement baptiste en Palestine et Syrie 150 av. J.-C. -300 ap. J.-C.* [Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1935]). These baptismal rites, often representing a spiritualizing protest against a failing or extinct sacrificial temple cultus (so Thomas), are mostly descendants of ancient Mesopotamian New Year enthronement rituals in which the king, stripped of his regalia, symbolically undergoes a struggle with the dark waters of chaos, cries for aid, is raised up and nourished by water or food, absolved and strengthened by a divine oracle, enthroned, enrobed, and acclaimed as king, acquiring radiance and authority (e.g., tablets III and IV of "I will praise the Lord of Wisdom," *ANET* 434-36). Similar imagery of struggle and exaltation can be found in Psalms 18, 30, 69, 80, 89, 110, 114 and 146 (cf. 1 Kgs 1:38-47; it may be that suffering in the water and baptism [or drink] are two aspects of the function of water in these rites). In 2 Esdr 13:1-6 the rising of the Son of Man is accompanied by

the issuance of his cosmic voice. In 2 Enoch 22, Enoch is raised up before God by Michael, stripped of his earthly garments, anointed and enrobed in glory so that he shines. In the Maccabean period, T. Levi 8:2-10 portrays the priest Levi as "a priest forever" (cf. *Melchizedek*); he is commanded to put on priestly garments (including the garment of truth), but then is invested as a royal figure (anointed, given a staff, washed, fed bread and wine, clad with a glorious robe, linen vestment, purple girdle and crowned). In T. Levi 18:6-7 at the advent of the eschatological priest, a star arises, emitting the light of knowledge; the Father's voice issues from the heavenly temple; the spirit of understanding rests on him in the water; the priest will open the gates of paradise, feed the saints from the tree of life and bind Beliar.

Baptismal and ascensional motifs occur frequently in patristic heresiological reports: the Sethians (Hipp. *Ref.* 5.19.21: washing in and drinking from living water, celestial enrobing); Justin's *Baruch* (Hipp. *Ref.* 5.27.2-3: drinking from and baptism in living water as opposed to earthly water); the Naasenes (Hipp., *Ref.* 5.7.19: washing in living water, anointing; 5.8.14-18: issuance of the divine voice over the flood, passing through water and fire, lifting up of gates; 5.9.18-20: drink of living water) and the Marcosians (Iren. *Haer.* 1.21.3-5 baptism in the name of Achamoth, anointing in the name of Iao, anointing for heavenly ascent). Valentinian baptism is reflected in the baptismal appendices to *A Valentinian Exposition* and in the *Gospel of Philip*. Baptismal motifs occur in the *Odes of Solomon*, especially *Ode* 11:7-16 (drinking living water, stripping away of folly, enrobing with radiance and enlightenment) and *Ode* 24:1-5 (the voice of the Dove above the Messiah and the opening of the abysses; cf. *Ode* 17:1-16 and its parallels with *Trim. Prot.* XIII,1:41,4-42,2 which is interpreted as a baptism). The sequence of acts in the Five Seals of *Trim. Prot.* XIII,1:48,15-35 is very much like the sequence of acts in the Mandaean *Masbûtâ* as summarized by Rudolph, *Die Mandäer: II. Der Kult* (2 vols.; Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments, N.F. 57; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), 2.88-89: entrance into the "Jordan," triple self-immersion, triple immersion by the priest, triple sign with water, triple drink, crowning, invocation of divine names, ritual handshake, and ascent from the "Jordan"). In *Trimorphic Protennoia*, the one baptized is enrobed before baptism as seems to be the case among the Qumran sectaries, the Mandaeans, and later Christian rites (apparently only Elchasaites were baptized naked).

It is quite likely that the early Sethian baptismal milieu was the setting for the baptismal mythologumena in the Sethian treatises, and especially for the hymnic materials in *Gos. Eg.* III,2, pp. 66-67, *Apoc. Adam* V,5, pp. 78-82, *Melch.* XI,I, pp. 5-6 and 16-18, and in the baptismal material of *Trimorphic Protennoia*. These materials seem to envision the descent of the savior into the world, corresponding to the descent of the king or of the one baptized into water or world of chaos, but also the spiritual visionary ascent of the one baptized out of the water, or world, into the light, corresponding to the enthronement and exaltation of the king, priest, or priest-king. *Allogenes*, *Three Steles of Seth*, and especially *Zostrianos* with its celestial baptism reflect in their visionary ascent scheme only the enthronement-exaltation-glorification aspect of the baptismal rite. There seems to be a close correspondence of the pattern of baptismal immersion and emergence with the humiliation and exaltation pattern of the ancient enthronement rituals. On such grounds certain of the NT Christological hymns employing a similar pattern may also be seen against a baptismal environment, especially the Johannine prologue, Phil 2:6-11, Col 2:9-15, 1 Tim 3:16, and 1 Pet 3:18-22. The portrayal of the deliverer or his forerunner as a light dawning (*anatellein* or *anotolê* or entering the world is associated with the advent of the priest-king of T. Levi 18 and of John the Baptist (of priestly descent) in Luke 1:76-79 (and perhaps in the Johannine prologue if it once applied to the Baptist). Such texts may in part reflect the eschatological advent of the star and scepter of Num 24:17 (often interpreted as referring to a royal and a priestly messiah by the Dead Sea sect; cf. 1 QM 11,6; 1 QSb 5,20-25; 4 QTestim 9-13; CD 7,9-21; also T. Judah 24 and Rev 22:16).

The judgment upon the sons of Seth reflected in Num 24:17, as interpreted in the Damascus Document (CD 7,9-21) and the Samaritan tradition (Asatir II,3), that Seth founded Damascus have been used to show that the Samaritans of Damascus claimed to be the true generation of Seth (the people of the Northern Kingdom) whom the scepter, the prince of the Qumran community, was coming to destroy

(Beltz, "Samaritanertum und Gnosis," *Gnosis und Neues Testament: Studien aus Religionswissenschaft und Theologie* [ed. K.-W. Tröger; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1973], 89-95). Since no orthodox Samaritan traditions reflect this Qumran tradition, Beltz suggests it was a Samaritan sectarian tradition, and that it was the Dositheans who thought of themselves as sons of Seth, an identification perhaps reflected in the mention of Dositheus in *Steles Seth* VII,5:118,10-19. While a connection between the Sethians and Dositheans is only a suggestion, certain Dositheans apparently constituted a baptizing sect of the first and second centuries c.e. (E. Vilmar, *Abulfathi annales samaritani quos ad fidem codicum manuscriptorum Berolinensium, Bodlejani, Parisini edidit et prolegomenis instruxit* [Gotha: n.p., 1865], 151-59; Ps. Clem. *Rec.* 2.8 and *Hom.* 2.24; Origen, *Cels.* 1.57; 6.11; Euseb. *Eccl. Hist.* 4.22; cf. J. Montgomery, *The Samaritans* [1907, reprint New York: KTAV, 1988], 253-63). The Pseudo-Clementines link Dositheus with Simon Magus and John the Baptist (*Rec.* 1:54-63; 2.8; *Hom.* 2.15-24; 3.22); these accounts are of doubtful historical value, but they may reflect an original association of John or Simon or Dositheus with Samaria. A possible connection between John (and Jesus!) and Samaria occurs in the first four chapters of the Fourth Gospel, especially if his baptismal activity at Aïnon near Salim is to be located in Samaria as C. Scobie thinks (*John the Baptist*, [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964], 163-77; 187-202; perhaps this Aïnon=spring has to do with "ainon" in *Gos. Eg.*, IV,2:44,25 and "ainos" in *Trim. Prot.* XIII,1:39,1). These possible links between the Baptist, heterodox Samaritanism, the Fourth Gospel and early Sethianism deserve further investigation. In any case, both John the Baptist and Seth are portrayed as eschatological figures who introduce a baptismal rite, as Jesus also is portrayed insofar as he is identified with Seth in the Sethian literature. The introduction of this rite is connected with a cosmic judgment, involves a passing through water and, in the synoptics, a pending baptism with fire (or the Holy Spirit). These are complexes of ideas which in an early Sethian baptismal environment might have been linked to the Sethian tripartite eschatology marked by flood, fire and final judgment.

[7] C.W. Hedrick, "The Apocalypse of Adam: A Literary and Source Analysis," *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* (1972), 581-590, and more fully, *The Apocalypse of Adam: A Literary and Source Analysis* (Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 46; Chico, CA: Scholar's Press, 1980).

[8] Roelof van den Broek, "Autogenes and Adamas: The Mythological Structure of the Apocryphon of John," *Gnosis and Gnosticism: Papers Read at the Eighth International Conference on Patristic Studies (Oxford, September 3rd-8th 1979)* (ed. Martin Krause. Nag Hammadi Studies, 17. Leiden: Brill, 1981), 16-25.

[9] "The Parmenides of Plato and the Origin of the Neoplatonic 'One'" in *Classical Quarterly* 22 (1928), 129-142, esp. 132-33.

[10] "Sethianism," 596-97.

[11] H.-M. Schenke, "Gnosticism Sethianism," (above, note 1), 603-4.

[12] Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus* (2 vols.; Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1968).

[13] See my "The Gnostic Threefold Path to Enlightenment: The Ascent of Mind and the Descent of Wisdom," *Novum Testamentum* 22 (1980): 324-351 and M. A. Williams, *The Immovable Race: A Gnostic Designation and the Theme of Stability in Late Antiquity*. Nag Hammadi Studies, 29. Leiden: Brill, 1985 and "Stability as a Soteriological Theme in Gnosticism" in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism* (ed. Bentley Layton), vol. II, 819-829.

[14] R. Harder, "Ein neue Schrift Plotins," *Hermes* 71 (1936), 1-10, reprinted in *Kleine Schriften* (ed. W. Marg; Munich, 1960), 257-274.

[14] B. A. Pearson, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codices IX and X* (Nag Hammadi Studies 15; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), 229-50.

[15] C. Schmidt, *Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprachen aus dem Codex Brucianus* (TU 8; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1892), 6-14.