

# *Valentinian and Sethian Apocalyptic Traditions\**

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The paper reexamines the relationship between “apocalyptic” and “gnostic” traditions, on the assumption that global definitions of these phenomena are problematic. Valentinian and Sethian corpora in the Nag Hammadi collection display different appropriations of apocalyptic literary forms and conceptual schemes. Apart from a few late works with traces of Valentinian positions, this tradition largely ignores features characteristic of apocalyptic literature. Valentinian eschatology seems to be founded primarily on philosophical cosmology and psychology. Sethian texts preserve many features of Jewish revelatory literature, and many details associated with various eschatological schemes familiar from apocalyptic sources. The most extensive use of the characteristic “heavenly ascent” topos in Sethian literature, however, seems to be a third-century development, perhaps responding to contemporary forms of religious propaganda.

It has been almost forty years since R. M. Grant made his famous, and frequently discussed, suggestion that Gnosticism was born out of disappointed apocalyptic hopes.<sup>1</sup> While containing an element of truth, the very formulation seems curiously dated. At the end of the millennium we are much more aware of the difficulties of dealing with each term of

\*A version of this paper was presented to the joint session of the Nag Hammadi and Pseudepigrapha groups at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Orlando, November 22, 1998. The subject of the joint session was the relationship of “apocalyptic” and “Gnosticism.”

1. Robert M. Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959; rev. ed. 1966), 27–38. For other attempts to relate the two entities globally, see George MacRae, “Apocalyptic Eschatology in Gnosticism,” in David Hellholm, ed., *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism Uppsala, August 12–17, 1979* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1983), 317–25. In the same collection, Hans G. Kippenberg, “Ein Vergleich jüdischer, christlicher und gnostischer Apokalyptik,” 751–68, treats *Or. World, Gr. Pow., Asclepius, 1 2 Ap. Jas.*, concentrating on the fall of Jerusalem.

Grant's equation, much more inclined to frame issues in literary and sociohistorical terms rather than exclusively in terms of the history of ideas, more inclined to see diversity rather than unity, and consequently, less ready to deal with the large abstractions.

Research into "Gnosticism," particularly in the wake of Michael Williams' "dismantling of a dubious category,"<sup>2</sup> has made us acutely aware of the diverse phenomena covered by that label. Research into the apocalyptic tradition by Adela Collins,<sup>3</sup> James VanderKam,<sup>4</sup> David Frankfurter,<sup>5</sup> Brian Daley,<sup>6</sup> and others,<sup>7</sup> has highlighted the diversity of early Christian apocalyptic literature and thought. At the same time scholars such as Ithamar Gruenwald,<sup>8</sup> Guy Stroumsa,<sup>9</sup> and Birger Pearson,<sup>10</sup> and others,<sup>11</sup>

2. Michael Allen Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

3. *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism*, JSJSup 50 (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

4. *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity*, CRINT 3.4 (Assen: Van Gorcum; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996).

5. *Elijah in Upper Egypt: The Apocalypse of Elijah and Early Egyptian Christianity*, Studies in Antiquity and Christianity (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993); idem, "Early Christian Apocalypticism: Literature and Social World," in John J. Collins, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, vol. 1: *The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 415–53.

6. *The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), and "Apocalypticism in Early Christian Theology," in Bernard McGinn, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, vol. 2: *Apocalypticism in Western History and Culture* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 1–47.

7. For treatments of individual texts, see Karen L. King, *Revelation of the Unknowable God, with Text, Translation, and Notes to NHC XI,3 Allogenes*, California Classical Library (Santa Rosa: Polebridge, 1995); Theodore A. Bergren, *Sixth Ezra: The Text and Origin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Nils Arne Pedersen, *Studies in the Sermon on the Great War* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1996).

8. *From Apocalypticism to Gnosticism: Studies in Apocalypticism, Merkavah Mysticism, and Gnosticism* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1988).

9. *Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology*, NHS 24 (Leiden: Brill, 1984).

10. "The Problem of 'Jewish Gnostic' Literature," in Charles Hedrick and Robert Hodgson, eds., *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism and Early Christianity* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1986), 15–36; for further bibliography on the point see John Turner, "Typologies of the Sethian Gnostic Treatises from Nag Hammadi," in Louis Painchaud and Anne Pasquier, eds., *Les textes de Nag Hammadi et le problème de leur classification: Actes du colloque tenu à Québec du 15 au 19 Septembre 1993*, BCNH, Études 3 (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval; Louvain: Peeters, 1995), 182 n. 16.

11. See the review of the general issue in Jarl Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord: Samaritan and Jewish Concepts of Intermediation and the Origin of Gnosticism*, WUNT 36 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1985), 1–24.

have rightly insisted that there are strands of continuity between Jewish traditions and various elements of the phenomenon of Gnosticism.<sup>12</sup> David Frankfurter has usefully summarized the state of this question, with strong attention to the Egyptian context.<sup>13</sup> A review of the important recent contributions of Daley and Frankfurter may serve as a useful starting point for this inquiry.

### *Recent Discussion*

*a. Brian Daley.* Many of the treatments either of eschatology in general or of the survivals of Jewish apocalypticism in the early Church use a broad and undifferentiated category of Gnosticism. Thus Brian Daley's treatment of eschatology among the Gnostics<sup>14</sup> offers a catalogue of eschatological opinions, founded upon the notion of "material creation as a prison for the true, immaterial self."<sup>15</sup> The first example is the Valentinian tenet of a "restoration [*apokatastasis*] of heavenly reality to its original state."<sup>16</sup> Daley suggests that "some *Gnostic sects* [emphasis mine] seem to have made free use of apocalyptic traditions about the end of the world," including a notion of a consuming fire in Irenaeus' account of the Valentinians (*Adv. Haer.* 1.7.1).<sup>17</sup> He also calls attention to the more explicit eschatological scenarios in *Origin of the World*, *Concept of Our Great Power*, and the *Paraphrase of Shem*, all of which he dates to the fourth century,<sup>18</sup> rightly labeling them "descriptions of

12. See especially Birger Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990). For the influence of the "myth of the watchers" from Enochic literature, see Birger Pearson, "Jewish Sources in Gnostic Literature," in Michael Stone, ed., *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, CRINT 11.2 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 443–81; Stroumsa, *Another Seed*; John C. Reeves, *Jewish Lore in Manichaean Cosmogony: Studies in the Book of Giants Traditions* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1992), and the convenient summary in James VanderKam, "1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs, and Enoch in Early Christian Literature," in idem and Adler, *Apocalyptic Heritage*, 70–76.

13. "The Legacy of Jewish Apocalypses in Early Christianity: Regional Trajectories," in VanderKam and Adler, *Apocalyptic Heritage*, 129–200, esp. 150–62.

14. Daley, *Hope*, 25–32. Perhaps the earliest version of such a survey is Malcolm Peel, "Gnostic Eschatology and the New Testament," *NT* 12 (1970): 141–65.

15. Daley, *Hope*, 26, citing *Ap. John* 30.25–31.4 (*sic*).

16. Daley, *Hope*, 26. *Treat Res.* 44.31; Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* 1.8.4, 1.14.1 (Marcosians); *Or. World* 127.14–17 (*sic*), *Gos. Phil.* 67.15–18; *Tri. Trac.* 122.19–23. Daley also notes the opinion of Basilides that each would be content with its own: Hippolytus *Ref.* 6.27.1–4.

17. This is another key text. Cf. MacRae, "Apocalyptic Eschatology," 321; Peel, "Gnostic Eschatology," 158.

18. Daley, "Apocalypticism," 35–36. There are indisputable fourth-century features in these texts, such as the reference to the Anomoians at *Gr. Pou.* 40.7, although

this destruction of the universe in the grand apocalyptic style.<sup>19</sup> Such destruction includes thunder and earthquakes,<sup>20</sup> cosmic disturbances,<sup>21</sup> archon-instigated war,<sup>22</sup> disease and depopulation,<sup>23</sup> eventual victory of the Pleroma over hostile powers,<sup>24</sup> and the return of the faithful to eternal light.<sup>25</sup> The passages cited by Daley have played a prominent role throughout the history of the discussion of “Apocalyptic and Gnosticism,” usually serving to make the point that Gnostics did not completely avoid future eschatology.<sup>26</sup>

Daley also notes the attention given to individual eschatology, the post-mortem judgment in *1 Apoc. Jas.* 33.2–36.1 and various descriptions for the state of bliss, rest, light and glory, fellowship with the saved, loving union with the Father, and mystical marriage. Most of the sources for these items are Valentinian, although he does note the themes of light and glory in *2 Seth* 67.10, 68.7 and *Gr. Pow.* 46.8–12.<sup>27</sup> He also notes the post-mortem punishments in *Thomas the Contender* and the *Pistis Sophia*.<sup>28</sup>

By the time he wrote his article for the *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, Daley came to draw a nuanced and concise inference from his review of the data:

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this could be a redactional gloss. Cf. Frederik Wisse and Francis E. Williams, “The Concept of Our Great Power: VI,4:36,1–48,15,” in Douglas M. Parrott, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codices V,2–5 and VI with Papyrus Berolinensis 8502,1 and 4*, NHC 11 (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 291–92. On the *Paraphrase of Shem*, see Frederik Wisse, “NHC VII,1: The Paraphrase of Shem,” in Birger A. Pearson, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex VII*, NHMS 30 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 1–23. Wisse (22) tentatively assigns the text to the second or third century, but notes (21) affinities with Manichaean motifs. For the possibility of redactional layers in *Orig. World.*, see Appendix I.

19. Daley, *Hope*, 26.

20. *Or. World* 125.33; *Gr. Pow.* 44.5; *Para. Shem* 44.11.

21. *Or. World* 126.10–14; *Gr. Pow.* 45.31–46.5; *Para. Shem* 45.9–31.

22. *Gr. Pow.* 43.35–44.31; *Or. World* 126.5–8; *Para. Shem* 44.22–26.

23. *Or. World* 126.3; *Gr. Pow.* 44.6–10.

24. *Or. World* 126.19–21; 126.22–35; *Gr. Pow.* 46.22–47.9.

25. *Or. World* 126.35–127.14; *Gr. Pow.* 47.9–26.

26. See Appendix I for the key texts, the prominence of which in earlier surveys is striking. MacRae (“Apocalyptic Eschatology,” 320–22) cites extensively *Or. World* 125.32–127.14; *Trimorphic Protennoia* 44.12–19, 42.19–21; and the *Paraphrase of Shem* 43.28–45.31. Peel (“Gnostic Eschatology,” 155–59) cast his net more widely in his discussion of “Endzeit’ Speculation,” where he combines patristic testimonies, Manichaean evidence, and Nag Hammadi materials. Nonetheless, his key text is *Or. World*, for most of the examples of “Jewish-Christian apocalyptic imagery” describing the “Endzeit.”

27. Daley, *Hope*, 27.

28. *Thom. Cont.* 141.4–18, 141.32–142.2; *PS* 147. It is misleading to note here the *Apoc. John* 30.25–31.4, which uses the “world is hell” metaphor. Cf. *Tri. Prot.* 36.4, 40.22, 41.4.

Second-century Gnosticism showed little interest in the future of the world or the body and little sense of an impending crisis of judgment.<sup>29</sup> Apart from speculating about a final cosmic conflagration that would consume all matter (see Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.7.1), Valentinian writers seem to have been mainly interested in a future for the enlightened few that lay totally apart from the world and its history, and to have interpreted Christian resurrection hope in entirely spiritual terms (see *Treatise on Resurrection*, Nag Hammadi I, 4).<sup>30</sup> Those texts in the Nag Hammadi collection with strong apocalyptic features are probably of later origin, perhaps as late as the fourth century.<sup>31</sup>

The distinction between the eschatological concerns of Valentinian sources and certain Nag Hammadi texts containing apocalyptic eschatology is useful. Daley's observations raise questions about the appropriation of Jewish "apocalyptic" materials in early Christianity, but the limitation to eschatological *belief* narrows the focus of the inquiry.

*b. David Frankfurter.* Frankfurter's contribution to the volume of essays on the apocalyptic heritage edited by James VanderKam and William Adler is more directly related to the topic of the survival or influence of Jewish apocalyptic in Gnostic circles.<sup>32</sup> Frankfurter makes a number of important analytical moves. (1) He organizes data within a geographical matrix, rightly arguing that regional differentiation is an essential component in tracing ancient religious phenomena. (2) He attends to the distinction, long ago drawn by John Collins and the contributors to *Semeia* 14, between apocalypticism as a social phenomenon and apocalypses as a literary phenomenon. In treating Gnostic texts as heirs to Jewish apocalypses, Frankfurter usefully incorporates the work of Francis Fallon from that *Semeia* volume.<sup>33</sup> (3) Frankfurter suggests a number of categories and issues to be considered in tracing the heritage of Jewish apocalypses in Gnostic sources: (a) the authoritative tradition of a legendary seer; (b) the function of the holy book; (c) the self-definition of the community addressed as "elect," "saints," "children of

29. On this point Daley relies on MacRae, "Apocalyptic Eschatology," 319–20. Peel, "Gnostic Eschatology," 150–55, adopts a similar position, with an assembly of data on "Realized Eschatology" and "Ascent of the Pneuma-Self."

30. This is obviously a major concern of Peel, both in "Gnostic Eschatology," 159–62, and in his work on the *Treatise on Resurrection*. See n. 66 below.

31. Daley, "Apocalypticism," 8–9; he refers the reader to "Revival of the Apocalyptic Genre" later in his essay.

32. "The Legacy of Jewish Apocalypses in Early Christianity: Regional Trajectories," in VanderKam and Adler, *Apocalyptic Heritage*, 129–200, esp. 150–62.

33. Francis Fallon, "The Gnostic Apocalypses," *Semeia* 14 (1979): 123–58, modified by Frankfurter, "Legacy," 157. See Appendix II.

light,” etc.; (d) liturgical realization of ascents, transformations, and ecstatic experiences; (e) as well as formal literary relationships.

Frankfurter finds in Egypt a fertile environment that fostered numerous quests for Gnosis, or revealed wisdom. Egyptian priestly and scribal traditions, Hermeticism, various strains of Judaism, urban and rural, form the background for early Christian speculative streams. Frankfurter’s indebtedness to MacRae, Pearson, Stroumsa, et al. is clear.

Yet within his essay lies an urge to generalization similar to what we encountered in Daley. At the beginning of his treatment of Gnosticism as heir to Jewish Apocalypses he notes:<sup>34</sup>

The following section generalizes across Gnostic sects while focusing as much as the data allow upon developments within Egypt (including Alexandria). It should be remembered that the evolution of Gnosticism owes much to religious trends in Syria (Thomas and Johannine traditions) and Rome (Valentinians); however, the speed at which Syrian traditions entered Egypt (Gospel of Thomas; P. Oxy 1; P. Oxy 655; Gospel of John: P. Rylands 457; Manichaean texts) militates against dividing Syrian and Egyptian Gnosticism too strongly.

While Frankfurter’s treatment, like that of Daley, is enormously helpful, we can be more precise about the heritage of Jewish apocalyptic by paying more attention to specific group variation. There are some other issues raised by both essays, such as their use of “sect” as a designation for the social phenomenon behind the literature involved here, that may be problematic, but we shall leave that question aside.

### *Regional and Group Variation*

This essay will focus on two related textual collections and test whether there are specific differences in their appropriation of Jewish apocalyptic elements. Three sorts of data are pertinent: (a) literary accounts of revelatory experiences, (b) eschatological scenarios, and (c) the quest for revelatory experience. Specific motifs derived from Jewish haggadic and apocalyptic traditions (e.g., the Enochic “myth of the watchers”) are relevant, although they will not be at the center of this study.

The argument of this essay can be distilled to two complex propositions that extend and supplement the observations of Daley and Frankfurter. (1) Valentinian teachers eschewed the literary trappings of Jewish and early Christian apocalyptic literature; although occasionally interested in “visions,” they presumed that the major “ascent” was eschatological. In their eschatology, while disposed to interpret apocalyptic

34. Frankfurter, “Legacy,” 150 n. 98.

scenarios in an allegorical or “realized” sense, they maintained a philosophically respectable view of the consummation of history but could occasionally draw upon apocalyptic descriptions of the end, particularly from early Christian texts that had achieved some authoritative status,<sup>35</sup> to give expression to their belief. (2) “Sethians,” much closer to their Jewish literary roots, used apocalyptic literary conventions and apparently did engage in practices designed to provide revelatory experience. Nonetheless, they distanced themselves from their Jewish roots, particularly in texts with evidence of a ritual setting for revelatory experience. Although, like the Valentiniens, their eschatology focuses on the fate of the soul and they use eschatological categories metaphorically, their interest in cosmic or historical eschatology remains and perhaps serves as one basis for several of the late apocalypses from Nag Hammadi.

## I. THE START OF THE VALENTINIAN TRADITION: VALENTINUS

Whatever Irenaeus may have thought of them, the Valentiniens known to us are resolutely Christian. The letter of Ptolemy to Flora<sup>36</sup> even affords us some sense of their attitude toward the scriptural legacy of Israel. This evidence does not give much hope that we will find extensive explicit and direct use of Jewish apocalypses or apocalyptic forms in Valentinian texts and, indeed, such data are rare.

### *The Fragments of Valentinus*

The exiguous fragments of Valentinus himself, which have attracted considerable attention of late, yield little evidence of an apocalyptic literary form. There is, however, a hint of a visionary experience:

For Valentinus says he saw a newborn babe, and questioned it to find out who it was. And the babe answered him saying that it was the Word.<sup>37</sup>

35. For analysis of the use of earlier Christian materials in one Valentinian text, see Jacqueline A. Williams, *Biblical Interpretation in the Gnostic Gospel of Truth from Nag Hammadi*, SBLDS 79 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1988).

36. Text: Gilles Quispel, *Ptolémé, Lettre à Flora: Analyse, texte critique, traduction, commentaire et index grec*, 2d ed. SC 24 (Paris: Cerf, 1966); translation: Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1987), 306–15.

37. Hippolytus Ref. 6.42.2, fr. A in Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 230–31; fr. 7 in Völker; commentary in Christoph Marksches, *Valentinus Gnosticus*, WUNT 65 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1992), 205–17.

Nothing indicates the context in which Valentinus saw the newborn babe (παῖδα νήπιον ἀρτιγέννητον), although a dream experience, whether fictive or real, is certainly possible. There is nothing to indicate that Valentinus claimed to have made a special heavenly journey or to have encountered an *angelus interpretes*.

“Vision” features in the poetic fragment on a “summer harvest.”

I see in spirit that all are hung  
 I know in spirit that all are formed  
 Flesh hanging from soul  
 Soul clinging to air  
 Air hanging from upper atmosphere  
 Crops rushing forth from the deep  
 A babe rushing forth from the womb.<sup>38</sup>

Rather than a heavenly journey or mystical ascent, the vision here seems to be a form of spiritual insight into natural processes.

Whatever the attitude toward the literary genre and to mystical experience, Valentinus did not abandon eschatological categories. Yet the eschatology found in his fragments has an indirect relationship at best to that of Jewish or early Christian apocalypses. The one relevant datum is a comment in a fragment preserved in Clement, *Strom.* 4.89.1–3:

From the beginning you have been immortal, and you are children of eternal life. And you wanted death to be allocated to yourselves so that you might spend it and use it up, and that death might die in you and through you. For when you nullify the world and are not yourselves annihilated, you are lord over creation and all corruption (ὅταν γὰρ τὸν μὲν κόσμον λύητε, ὑμεῖς δὲ μὴ καταλύθησθε, κυριεύετε τῆς κτίσεως καὶ τῆς φθορᾶς ἀπάσης).<sup>39</sup>

This interesting fragment shows a de-eschatologizing process at work. “Destruction of the world” takes place in the lives of the addressees who know that they are immortal, who “nullify the world,” perhaps through a program of ascesis, and who thus, by belief and praxis, overcome death. Such language has precedents in the realized eschatology of early Christians.<sup>40</sup> Whatever its relationship to future hope, Valentinus’ poetic language has a decidedly existential tone.

38. Hippolytus, *Ref.* 6.37.8; fr. H in Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 246–49; fr. 8 in Völker; commentary in Marksches, *Valentinus Gnosticus*, 218–59.

39. Fr. F in Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 240–41; fr. 4 in Völker; commentary in Marksches, *Valentinus Gnosticus*, 143–46.

40. 1 Cor 7.31; 1 John 2.17, treated by Marksches, *Valentinus Gnosticus*, 143.

Instead of traces of Jewish apocalypses or apocalyptic thought in Valentinus, we find hints of a poetic “vision,” and eschatological categories reinterpreted of the life of the enlightened Christian. There are also hints of protological speculation. Valentinus is clearly aware of reflection on the creation of the first human being that ultimately derives from Jewish traditions, as is evident in a citation by Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 2.36.2–4:

And even as awe overcame the angels in the presence of that modeled form because it uttered sounds superior to what its modeling justified, owing to the agent who had invisibly deposited in it a seed of higher essence and who spoke freely: so too in the races of worldly people, human artifacts become objects of awe for their creators—for example, statues and paintings and everything that (human) hands make as representing a god. For Adam, modeled as representing a human being, made them stand in awe of the preexistent human being; for precisely the latter stood in him. And they were stricken with terror and quickly concealed the work.<sup>41</sup>

The involvement of angels in the creation of Adam recalls not so much apocalypses as Philo and haggadic midrash.<sup>42</sup> The latter also offers the best parallels for the notion of the implantation of “a seed of a higher essence” in Adam.<sup>43</sup>

Whatever their relationship to Valentinian tradition, the fragments of Valentinus show at best a secondhand, metaphorical appropriation of the categories of traditional apocalyptic literature and thought.<sup>44</sup>

## II. VALENTINIANS

### a. *Apocalypses?*

Exactly what texts from Nag Hammadi count as Valentinian, and in what sense, has been a matter of some debate. Einar Thomassen’s useful survey of the corpus<sup>45</sup> concludes that certain or very probable Valentinian texts are: *The Tripartite Tractate*, the *Gospel of Philip*, the *First Apocalypse of James*, the *Interpretation of Knowledge*, and the *Valentinian Exposition*.

41. Fr. 1 in Völker; fr. C in Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 234–35; commentary in Marksches, *Valentinus Gnosticus*, 11–53.

42. Marksches, *Valentinus Gnosticus*, 18–24.

43. Marksches, *Valentinus Gnosticus*, 32–37, citing, e.g., *Op. mun.* 137.

44. The picture would change little if we accepted the attribution of the *Gospel of Truth* to Valentinus or the relevance of Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.11 to the teaching of Valentinus himself.

45. Einar Thomassen, “Notes pour la délimitation d’un corpus valentinien à Nag Hammadi,” in Painchaud and Pasquier, *Textes de Nag Hammadi*, 243–59.

Probable Valentinian texts are the *Treatise on Resurrection*, the *Gospel of Truth*, although its final form may contain interpolations. Possible Valentinian texts are the *Exegesis on the Soul* and the *Authoritative Teaching*. Thomassen finds the possibility of Valentinian redaction in the *Prayer of Paul* and *Eugnostos*. Some scholars add, at least as texts with Valentinian elements, the *Gospel of Philip*,<sup>46</sup> or one of the tractates that features prominently in the catalogues of apocalyptic eschatology, *On the Origin of the World*.<sup>47</sup>

The literary form of apocalypse is largely absent from these Valentinian texts. The corpus consists of sermons (*Gospel of Truth*), dogmatic treatises (*Tripartite Tractate*, *Valentinian Exposition*, *Treatise on Resurrection*, *Authoritative Teaching*), and an exegetical exposition (*Exegesis on the Soul*); nary an “apocalypse” among them. The two major surveys of the formal apocalyptic literary elements in the corpus, by Francis Fallon<sup>48</sup> and Martin Krause<sup>49</sup> confirm that observation. The only text with any Valentinian elements presented in some form of apocalypse is the *First Apocalypse of James* (5.3).

This possibly Valentinian work<sup>50</sup> consists of a revelation dialogue<sup>51</sup> in

46. For the *Gospel of Philip* see Martha Lee Turner, *The Gospel According to Philip: The Sources and Coherence of an Early Christian Collection*, NHMS 38 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 184–204.

47. For the possibility of both Valentinian and anti-Valentinian redactions, see Louis Painchaud, *L'Écrit sans titre: Traité sur l'origine du monde (NH II,5 et XIII,2 et Brit. Lib. Or. 4926[1])*, BCNH, Textes 21 (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval; Louvain: Peeters, 1995), 110–42, and idem, “La classification des textes de Nag Hammadi et le phénomène des réécritures,” in Painchaud and Pasquier, *Textes de Nag Hammadi*, 51–85. On the anti-Valentinian layer, see also Louis Painchaud and Timothy Janz, “The ‘Kingless Generation’ and the Polemical Rewriting of Certain Nag Hammadi Texts,” in John Turner and Anne McGuire, eds., *The Nag Hammadi Library After Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration*, NHMS 44 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 439–60. They argue that an anti-Valentinian layer of redaction is visible in “kingless” motif, at least in *Apoc. Adam* and *Orig. World*.

48. See Fallon, “Gnostic Apocalypses,” 126–47, with a convenient chart on p. 148. For a summary of the classifications of Fallon and Krause, see Appendix II.

49. Martin Krause, “Die literarischen Gattungen der Apokalypsen von Nag Hammadi,” in Hellholm, *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World*, 621–37. This is a much less satisfactory literary analysis.

50. The primary evidence is the correspondence between *1 Apoc. Jas.* 33.11–35.25 with the Valentinian liturgical material in Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.21.5, noted by A. Veilleux, *Les deux apocalypses de Jacques*, BCNH, Textes 17 (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval; Louvain: Peeters, 1986), 87–88. See also William Schoedel, in James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, 2d ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988 = NHLE<sup>2</sup>), 260. The identification is accepted by

which Jesus speaks to his brother and reveals to him knowledge of “Him who is,” the fate of Jerusalem, and the hostile supernal powers. He also reveals that the key to salvation lies in knowledge of what to say to the supernal powers as the true self ascends through the heavenly spheres. In what sense does this represent the heritage of Jewish apocalyptic? The frame adopts conventional revelatory devices, with a Christian hero, not a figure from the Hebrew Bible, as the lead character. The choice of the chief interlocutor, reflecting early Christian traditions about the appearance of Jesus to James (1 Cor 15.7), may represent a stage in the development of Jacobean traditions, when the hero of the Jerusalem community and of Torah-observant Christianity became the warrant for the authenticity of a particular revelation.<sup>52</sup> None of this is particularly Jewish. Some details may suggest Jewish traditions, such as the speculation on the number of the supernal powers, twelve archons in seventy-two heavens (= 12 x 7), but such numbers, a fixed part of early Christian traditions, are peripheral to the teaching of the text.

Intriguing, because of its connection with issues raised by “Sethian” texts, is the recent suggestion by April De Conick<sup>53</sup> that behind the stipulations for the ascent of the soul (1 *Apoc. Jas.* 33.11–35.25), which has clear Valentinian elements (e.g., the reference to Achamoth, the fallen Sophia), lies an ancient, non-Gnostic Jewish tradition about ascent mysticism, paralleled in *Gos. Thom.* 50. Even if she is correct, it is striking that such ascent mysticism lies in the background to the “ascent” accounts in the 1 *Apocalypse of James* and the related patristic testimonies to Valentinian rituals for the dead. The text does not prescribe or describe a means of mystical ascent.

Did Valentinians, then, eschew apocalypses? Nothing in the accounts of the heresiologists or at Nag Hammadi, with the possible exception of the *First Apocalypse of James*, associates Valentinian teachers with the

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Thomassen (“Corpus,” 248), who notes certain other Valentinian themes, redemption (24.12); the “name” (27.8–12); the ignorant, but not hostile, archon (39.10). Veilleux considers the 2 *Apoc. Jas.* Valentinian as well. Thomassen (“Corpus,” 246 n. 4) criticizes the judgment on the basis of the negative view of the Demiurge in that text, a trait not characteristic of Valentinians.

51. Classified as such by Fallon. For Krause, this was an improperly labeled apocalypse.

52. Schoedel, NHLE and “(First) Apocalypse of James,” in Parrott, *Nag Hammadi Codices*. Cf. also *Gos. Thom.* 12–13.

53. *Seek to See Him: Ascent and Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas*, VC Sup 33 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 51–55. She also notes the parallel in Epiphanius, *Pan.* 36.3.

production or use of apocalypses of the sort found at Nag Hammadi or among Jewish pseudepigrapha. Along with the absence of the literary form, Valentinian sources generally lack accounts of ascents to heaven to receive a vision. Both in literary form and in their concern with revelatory experience, the Valentinians stand at some distance from apocalyptic traditions.

*b. "Apocalyptic" Eschatology*

Sources later than the fragments of Valentinus himself show a development of the eschatological elements noted there. A full survey of Valentinian eschatology is unnecessary, since it is familiar and adequately discussed elsewhere.<sup>54</sup> A few points are worth noting.

*The Testimony of Irenaeus: Cosmic Conflagration.* The scholarly discussion of apocalyptic eschatology in Valentinian sources has focused on a few slender testimonies displaying cosmic eschatology. The cornerstone, as already noted, is Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* 1.7.1:

When this has taken place, then (they assert) the fire that is hidden in the world will blaze forth and burn; when it has consumed all matter it will be consumed with it and pass into nonexistence.<sup>55</sup>

The notion that the end time or the period of eschatological woes would be marked by a conflagration is certainly known to Jewish and early Christian<sup>56</sup> as well Sethian sources.<sup>57</sup> But the notion that a conflagration would consume all *matter*, rendering it nonexistent, is not attested in Jewish or early Christian texts. The testimony is obviously a combination of several strands of the intellectual heritage of the Valentinian school. It combines the notion of a decisively destructive fire posited by Stoics for

54. The discussion of Valentinian eschatology has not been without controversy, but debates about the soteriology of the psychics is a matter of inner-Valentinian dogmatic and ecclesiological development. These debates are not relevant to the issue at hand.

55. As noted above, the text is regularly cited by scholars treating the topic, from MacRae, "Apocalyptic Eschatology," 321, and Peel, "Gnostic Eschatology," 158, through Daley, "Apocalypticism," 8–9.

56. For punishing, eternal fire, cf. Matt 5.22, 18.8; Mark 9.43; Rev 20.14, 21.8. For eschatological fire that judges or purifies, cf. *Apoc. Elijah* 5.22–24; *Sib. Or.* 2.196–213, 4.171–78, 7.117–31, 8.225–30; Heb 12.18, 29; 2 Pet 3.7; Rev 14.10, 17.16.

57. *Tri. Prot.* 43.4–11, where the eschaton is realized in the coming of the revealer. See below on the Sethians. For the theme of fiery destruction cf. also *Gr. Pow.* 36.3–8, 46.29–32.

the periodic renewal of the world<sup>58</sup> with an eschatological conviction that such conflagrations would not be endlessly repeated. That conviction, and the implication that there is a goal and direction to history, may represent one important Valentinian concession to their Jewish and early Christian apocalyptic forebears. Yet the conviction is stated in characteristic Valentinian terms, reflecting its radically Platonic cast: it is “matter” that will finally be destroyed.

In this brief hint of its cosmic eschatology, traditional apocalyptic notions are vestigial. The combination of metaphysics and soteriology, with the typically Valentinian interest in psychology and ecclesiology, governs the discourse.

*The Gospel of Truth.* Like Valentinus, this Valentinian homilist,<sup>59</sup> knows of the “abolition” of the “world” through the revelation of the Father:

And the father uncovers his bosom—now, his bosom is the holy spirit, and reveals his secret—his secret is his son, so that out of the father’s bowels they might learn to know him, and the aeons might no longer be weary from searching for the father, might repose in him and might know that he is repose, for he has supplied the lack and *nullified the realm of appearance*. The realm of appearance, which belongs to it, is the world, in which it served.<sup>60</sup>

58. Diogenes Laertius, *Vit. phil.* 7.141–42. Although Jewish and Christian scenarios also depict a fiery “end,” the notion in the Valentinian testimony that the fire comes from within creation points to its Stoic roots.

59. For the case that the work was composed by Valentinus, see Benoit Standaert, “‘Evangelium Veritatis’ et ‘Veritatis Evangelium’: La question du titre et les témoins patristiques,” *VC* 30 (1976): 138–50; idem, “L’évangile de vérité: critique et lecture,” *NTS* 22 (1976): 243–75. See also Jan Helderermann, “Das Evangelium Veritatis in der neueren Forschung,” *ANRW* II.25.5 (1988): 4054–106. Marksches (*Valentinus Gnosticus*, 339–56) gives reasons to be cautious about such an identification. Thomassen, “Corpus,” 251–52, offers a brief review of the dogmatic congruences between the text and other Valentinian literature (duality and identity between Father and Son; Son as Name of the Father; Son as equivalent to the Totality; symbolism of the Book of the Living as the church; Error equivalent to *enthymesis*) and entertains the hypothesis that the text was composed by Valentinus himself but does not exclude a non-Valentinian composition redacted by Valentinians. Citing Raoul Mortley, “The Name of the Father is the Son,” in R. T. Wallis and J. Bregman, *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), 239–52, he notes the possibility of interpolation in the final form of the text.

60. Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 257. Marksches (*Valentinus Gnosticus*, 143, 354), following Robert Haardt (“Zur Struktur des Plane-Mythos im Evangelium Veritatis des Codex Jung,” *WZKM* 58 [1962]: 241–69, on this, pp. 33–34 n. 32) calls attention to this text and (p. 144) suggests other passages dealing with the “destruction of the world”: *Gos. Phil.* 53.20–22: “Light and darkness, life and death, right and left, are

The metaphorical use of the image of cosmic destruction is obvious, whatever the text's eschatological doctrine. The *Gospel of Truth* in fact operates with an eschatological scenario involving the restoration of spiritual essences to the Father's spiritual realm. It deploys a variety of images for that restorative process, including inhalation<sup>61</sup> and, above all, rest.<sup>62</sup> The complex roots<sup>63</sup> of that image may involve some Jewish apocalyptic traditions,<sup>64</sup> but they have long been embedded in general Christian discourse.<sup>65</sup>

*Treatise on Resurrection.* A combination of early Christian tradition and second-century philosophy is evident in the fourth treatise of the Jung Codex.<sup>66</sup> Although the emphasis shifts among various analysts, the overarching strategy of the text is clear. Pauline elements are combined with Platonic philosophy in order to highlight the current experience of "resurrection" while holding out an attenuated hope for a corporeal resurrection experience.

*The Tripartite Tractate.* One text contains a hint of what might be considered apocalyptic eschatology. The long and difficult systematic

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brothers of one another. They are inseparable. Because of this neither are the good good, nor the evil evil, nor is life life, nor death death. For this reason each one will dissolve into its earliest origin. But those who are exalted above the world are indissoluble, eternal"; *Thom. Cont.* (II.7) 141.4–18: "The Savior said, ' . . . And it is good for you (pl.) since things visible among men will dissolve—for the vessel of their flesh will dissolve, and when it is brought to naught it will come to be among visible things, among things that are seen. And then the fire which they see gives them pain on account of love for the faith they formerly possessed. They will be gathered back to that which is visible. Moreover, those who have sight among things that are not visible, without the first love they will perish in their concern for this life and the scorching of the fire. Only a little while longer, and that which is visible will dissolve; then shapeless shades will emerge and in the midst of tombs they will forever dwell upon the corpses in pain and corruption of soul.'" Cf. 142.12. Less clearly relevant are 2 *Apoc. Jas.* (5.4) 49.6; *Noema* (6.2) 49.6, *Soph. Jes. Chr.* BG 104.10.

61. *Gos. Truth* 33.33–34.33.

62. *Gos. Truth* 41.3–42.36.

63. For general discussion, see Jan Heldermaun, *Die Anapausis im Evangelium Veritatis*, NHC 18 (Leiden: Brill, 1984).

64. Cf. 4 *Ezra*.

65. Cf. Heb 3.1–4.11, and the discussion in H. W. Attridge, *Hebrews*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 126–28.

66. See Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Treatise on Resurrection from Nag Hammadi*, HDRT 12 (Missoula: Scholars, 1979); Malcolm Peel, "The Treatise on the Resurrection" in Harold W. Attridge, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex)*, 2 vols., NHS 22, 23 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 1:123–57; 2:137–215.

summary of Valentinian theology<sup>67</sup> comprising the fifth tractate of Nag Hammadi Codex I is devoted to various protological issues and their implications for ecclesiology and soteriology. Its final pages contain eschatological reflections, which, alas, are very fragmentary. Two points, however seem clear. As in Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* 1.7.1, the text proclaims a destruction of all things “hylic” (“while the hylics will remain until the end for destruction” 137.9–10), and there is an “apocalyptic” scenario that seems to go beyond what we find in other Valentinian sources:

and [with the sound of] a trumpet he will proclaim the great complete amnesty from the beauteous east, in the bridal chamber which is the love of God the Father [...] according to the power which [...] of the greatness [...] the sweetness of [...] of him, the praise, the dominion, [and] the [glory] through [...] the Lord the Savior, the Redeemer of all those belong to the one filled with Love, through his Holy Spirit from now through all generations forever and ever. Amen.

The sounding of the eschatological trumpet is a tried and true apocalyptic motif, long at home in Christian sources.<sup>68</sup> That motif, along with the eastern epiphany, presumably, but not explicitly of Christ, is orthodox Christian eschatology. Its roots may lie in Jewish apocalyptic eschatology, but the immediate source of the scenario is the millennialism of third-century Christian Egypt.<sup>69</sup>

One final element of the text deserves comment. The note that the eschatological figure brings “complete amnesty” (ἡ ἄνεξιχνίασις ἁμάρτην) is curious and perhaps suggestive of the point of view of this last paragraph. One might trace its roots to Jubilee eschatology and the promise of eschatological release, forgiveness of debts and the like attributed to such figures as Melchizedek.<sup>70</sup> The notion that, because of Christ’s death, sins would be “forgotten” was also a part of early Christian discourse.<sup>71</sup> How “complete” the amnesty is supposed to be is unclear. If, as some commentators suspect,<sup>72</sup> the tractate shows the influence of Origen, his optimistic eschatology could be at work.

67. See Harold W. Attridge and Elaine Pagels, “The Tripartite Tractate,” in Attridge, *Nag Hammadi Codex I*, 1:159–337, 2:217–497, and Louis Painchaud and Einar Thomassen, *Le Traité Tripartite (NH I, 5)*, BCNH, Textes 19 (Québec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval; Louvain: Peeters, 1989).

68. Matt 24.31; 1 Thess 4.16; 1 Cor 15.52; Rev 8.2.

69. See Frankfurter, “Legacy,” 163–74.

70. 11QMelch 2 2–7; cf. Paul Kobelski, *Melchizedek and Melchiresa*, CBQMS 10 (Washington: Catholic Biblical Association, 1981), 7–8.

71. Heb 8.12 and 10.17, citing Jeremiah 31.

72. See Painchaud and Thomassen, *Traité*, 18–19.

One perhaps should not make too much of this half page, in a tractate of almost ninety pages. At most it could be construed as part of the program of the whole text which seems to be to present a revisionist form of Valentinian theology emphasizing its proximity to the theology of the “Great Church” of the third, or possibly early fourth, century.<sup>73</sup> It may even be that this eschatological sketch is not part of the tractate proper, but continues the scribe’s exasperated comment of 137.23–26, often repeated by readers of the text: “For though I continually use these words, I have not understood his meaning.” If the scribal comment does continue in the following fragmentary apocalypse, we could see the work of a more or less pious monk of the fourth century correcting or supplementing the eschatological hints at the end of the text. If so, these comments would be a tribute to the success of the program of the text rather than part of the program itself. In either case, an “orthodox” apocalyptic scenario, with its roots squarely in early Christian apocalyptic expectations, can be used to give expression to Valentinian convictions.

*On the Origin of the World?* As already noted, discussion of “apocalyptic eschatology” in Gnostic sources has long given prominence to the depiction of the world’s end at the conclusion of the untitled tractate from Codex 2, known as the *On the Origin of the World*. Louis Painchaud has suggested that the central part of the eschatological tableau belongs to a layer of Valentinian redaction.<sup>74</sup> After an initial reference to the destruction of the archons and their minions, which is probably part of the earliest layer in the text and is paralleled in the Sethian *Hypostasis of the Archons*,<sup>75</sup> the text continues:

Then the age will begin, and they will be disturbed. Their kings<sup>76</sup> will be intoxicated with the fiery sword, and they will wage war against one another, so that the earth is intoxicated with bloodshed. And the seas will be disturbed by those wars. Then the sun will become dark. And the moon will cause its light to cease. The stars of the sky will cancel their circuits.  
(*Or. World* 16.4–12)

In his redactional analysis of this passage, Painchaud distinguishes it from its context, not by any literary seam, but through its heavy allusion to Scripture, a characteristic of the “Valentinian” redaction that he detects

73. Attridge and Pagels, “Tripartite Tractate,” 1:177–90.

74. See Appendix I for the context.

75. *Hyp. Arch.* 97.6–20. See below under Sethian eschatology.

76. Painchaud, *Écrit*, 511 reads  $\mu\epsilon\alpha\tilde{\rho}\rho\omega\omicron\gamma$ , “his kings,” rather than  $\mu\epsilon\gamma\tilde{\rho}\rho\omega\omicron\gamma$ , “their kings” of Bethge and Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codes II,2–7 together with XIII,2\**, *Brit. Lib Or.* 4926(1) and *P. Oxy.* 1, 654,655, NHS 21 (Leiden: Brill, 1989).

in the text. The elements of the scenario are familiar: kings at war (Hag 2.22; Matt 24.7; Rev 16.14–21), a fiery sword (Gen 3.23; Isa 34.5), the earth drunk with blood (Isa 34.7), all of this culminating not simply in a generic reference to the sweeping aside of the heavens,<sup>77</sup> but in a specific allusion to the concatenation of scriptural passages cited in Mark 13.24–25 and Matt 24.29. Painchaud is certainly correct to call attention to the scriptural allusions, whatever the ideological affiliations. If the Valentinian hypothesis is sustainable, we find here a phenomenon analogous to the brief apocalyptic tableau at the end of the *Tripartite Tractate*. Like that passage, the apocalyptic eschatology, whatever its ultimate inspiration, has its immediate roots in *Christian* scriptures. Yet also like that passage, it may be testimony as much to Egyptian millennialism as to a particular Valentinian concern.

Thus, Valentinian sources can deploy hints of classical “apocalyptic” eschatology. Those that do appear are vestiges embedded in a dogmatic eschatological synthesis that focuses on the liberation of the pneumatic and psychic element(s) from their entrapment in hostile matter. That dogmatic framework accepts a philosophically respectable eschatology in which the realm of inimical matter and all that belongs to it will eventually be destroyed. Apocalyptic passages from scripture, especially the New Testament, can be used to give expression to that conviction.

### III. SETHIANS

While the apocalyptic heritage is attenuated in Valentinian circles, it is stronger in another body of “Gnostic” literature. The delimitation of a corpus of “Sethian” texts within the Nag Hammadi collection was an early and important development in the study of the library. The list of Sethian texts identified by H.-M. Schenke has become virtually the “canon”: Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.29 (“Barbeloite”); Epiphanius, *Pan.* 26, and 39–40 (“Sethians” and “Archontics”); Pseudo-Tertullian, *Haer.* 2; Filastrius, *Haer.* 3; the Untitled Text from the Bruce Codex, and the Nag Hammadi tractates: *Apocryphon of John*, *Hypostasis of the Archons*, *Gospel of the Egyptians*, *Apocalypse of Adam*, *Three Steles of Seth*, *Zostrianos*, *Melchizedek*, *Thought of Norea*, *Marsanes*, *Allogenes*, and the *Trimorphic Protennoia*.<sup>78</sup> There is, by and large, a family resemblance

77. As at Luke 21.25; Hag 2.21; 4 Ezra 5.4; 1 Enoch 80.1–7; *Sib. Or.* 3.796–808, 5.158. Painchaud (*Écrit*, 512 n. 382) notes these passages and the various commentators who have adduced them as parallels.

78. Hans-Martin Schenke, “Das sethianische System nach Nag-Hammadi-Handschriften,” in Peter Nagel, ed., *Studia Coptica*, Berliner Byzantinische Arbeiten 45 (Berlin: Akademie, 1974), 165–73; idem, “The Phenomenon and Significance of

among these texts, with overlapping details of cosmogony, soteriology, and what appears to be liturgical praxis.<sup>79</sup> Doubts persist, however, about the kind of social phenomenon that generated the texts.<sup>80</sup>

Two fixed points anchor the Sethian trajectory. (1) The correspondence between Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 29 and the *Apocryphon of John* indicates that their characteristic cosmogonic speculation had developed prior to 180. (2) Porphyry's naming of several texts, including works apparently identical with those surviving at Nag Hammadi (*Allogenes*, *Zostrianos*) evidences the interest, among adherents of Roman Platonist circles, in the kind of esoteric speculation represented by *Marsanes*, *Allogenes*, and *Zostrianos*. Those texts were being read in Rome in the middle of the third century by sophisticated people interested in mystical experience and hoping for post-mortem reintegration into the divine realm. There have been more elaborate attempts to trace the history of Sethians or at least of their literature, based first on these observations and then on analysis of the compositional history of Sethian texts.<sup>81</sup>

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Gnostic Sethianism," in Bentley Layton, ed., *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, vol. 2: *Sethianism Gnosticism*, SHR, NumenSup41 (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 588–616, where he adds *Marsanes* and *Allogenes* to his earlier list. Close to Schenke's Sethians are the members of the "Gnostike haireisis" identified by Bentley Layton in his *Gnostic Scriptures: Apocryphon of John, Hypostasis of the Archons, Thunder, Trimorphic Protennoia, Gospel of the Egyptians, Zostrianos, Allogenes, Three Steles of Seth*, Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.24; 1.29, 1.30, Epiphanius, *Pan.* 25–26, 39–40. He thus leaves aside the minor, and probably derivative, Patristic testimonies of Ps.-Tertullian and Filastrius, the Untitled work from the Bruce Codex, and from Nag Hammadi, *Melchizedek* and *Marsanes*. He adds the *Thunder*, and the testimony of Porphyry, *Vit. Plot.* 16. See the review of the corpus in Turner, "Typologies," 170–72.

On the enigmatic *Thunder*, see Paul-Hubert Poirier, *Le tonnerre, intellect parfait* (NH VI, 2), BCNH, Textes 22 (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval; Louvain: Peeters, 1995), esp. 120–41 on its textual affinities, especially with the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World*, and 141–53 on its conceptual parallels. Poirier notes attempts to identify the text as Simonian as well as Sethian, but reserves judgment on the matter.

Jean-Marie Sevrin, *Le dossier baptismal Séthien: Études sur la sacramentaire gnostique*, BCNH, Études 2 (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1986), 5, adds to Schenke's list *On the Origin of the World* and the *Paraphrase of Shem*, although he does not find them of use in investigating baptismal practice (p. 7).

79. See especially Sevrin, *Dossier*.

80. Frederick Wisse, "Stalking Those Elusive Sethians," in Layton, *Rediscovery*, 2:563–78. Yet even Williams (*Rethinking "Gnosticism,"* 13), despite his skepticism about scholarly constructs, finds the evidence of shared mythemes and sacramental practice significant in delineating a religious group behind the Sethian texts.

81. The most comprehensive attempt to develop a trajectory of Sethian literature (and doctrine) is by John Turner ("Sethian Gnosticism: A Literary History," in Hedrick and Hodgson, *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and Early Christianity*, 55–86),

a. *Sethian Apocalypses*

Of the “Sethian” texts in the Nag Hammadi library, the classification scheme devised by Fallon would count as apocalypses the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, *Zostrianos*, *Melchizedek*, *Marsanes*,<sup>82</sup> and *Allogenes*, the frameworks of which consist of narratives of a revelatory experiences.<sup>83</sup> Fallon distinguishes two types of “apocalypse”: texts without an “otherworldly journey” (*Apocryphon of John*, *Hypostasis of the Archons*, and *Melchizedek*), and those in which a journey features prominently (*Zostrianos*, *Marsanes*, and *Allogenes*).

In the first group, the *Apocryphon of John* narrates an encounter between John and a Pharisee, whose challenge distresses the disciple. In his consternation he receives a vision of the Savior, changing forms within a heavenly light. The Savior teaches John all he wants to know then departs. The *Hypostasis of the Archons* contains a story of the appearance of an angel, Eleleth, to Norea, Seth’s sister, who receives teaching about the origin of the world. The lacunose tractate *Melchizedek* recounts visions received by the biblical figure, who passes on his esoteric teaching about the coming of Christ. These revelatory dialogues have obvious generic affinities with such Jewish apocalypses as *4 Ezra*.<sup>84</sup>

Fallon’s second group of texts form a coherent set in many ways. The generic feature uniting them is the motif of heavenly ascent. *Zostrianos* offers a first-person narrative of the experience of the seer for whom the text is named. Like the disciple in the *Apocryphon of John*, *Zostrianos* has a vision of a polymorphous child (*Zost.* 2.9), leading to the seer’s

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who sees, prior to 100 C.E., early layers of a descent of the mother hymn, now found in the *Apocryphon of John*, a portion of the *Apocalypse of Adam*, and an early stratum of the *Trimorphic Protennoia*, emphasizing ascent and baptism. His second stage 100–125 C.E. involves the development of Barbeloite cosmogony evidenced in the short form of the *Apocryphon of John* and the speculation represented in Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.29 and the second stage of the *Trimorphic Protennoia*. Turner further develops his diachronic approach to Sethian literature in “Typologies of the Sethian Gnostic Treatises from Nag Hammadi,” in Painchaud and Pasquier, *Textes de Nag Hammadi*, 169–217. He traces several lines of development, yielding (217) the sequences: 1. *Apoc. Adam*, *Iren. Haer.* 1.30 (also influencing *Ap. John*), *Hyp. Arch.*, *Norea*, 2. *Irenaeus*, *Adv. Haer.* 1.29, *Ap. John*; 3. *Pronoia Hymn* (also influencing *Ap. John*), *Tri. Prot.*, *Gos. Egypt.*, *Melchizedek*, *Zostrinos*, *Allogenes*, 3 *Steles of Seth*, *Marsanes*.

82. Fallon actually does not list *Marsanes*, which as Frankfurter notes (“Legacy,” 157 n. 127), should be included.

83. Krause’s roster is not so generous, listing only the *Apocalypse of Adam* and the *Trimorphic Protennoia*.

84. Frankfurter, “Legacy,” 160.

consternation and dismay. Relief comes from an angel who appears to Zostrianos and lifts him up into “a great light cloud,” (*Zost.* 4.23) where he puts off his mortal body and joins the angelic realm. *Marsanes*, also badly damaged, also contains first-person accounts of a seer, who, like Zostrianos, experienced a heavenly ascent. *Allogenes* relates the appearance of an angelic figure Youel (*Allog.* 57.25) who reveals mysteries to the seer, who then enjoys a vision of another mysterious child (*Allog.* 58.15) and then an ascent to the realm of light (*Allog.* 58.29–59.3). Once again, obvious generic affinities connect these texts and Jewish apocalypses such as *1 Enoch*, *2 Enoch*, the *Apocalypse of Adam*, and other tales of ascents to the heavens by ancient seers.<sup>85</sup> Despite the generic similarity, it is striking that the texts involving the motif a heavenly ascent, unlike other Sethian texts such as the *Apocalypse of Adam* or *Melchizedek*, do not involve biblical figures. Exotic or mysterious visionaries, Zostrianos, Marsanes, and the like, here enjoy the visionary experience. Whether the phenomenon has any special significance remains to be seen.

Jewish literary influence is evident in other parts of the Sethian corpus, particularly the *Apocalypse of Adam*, and *Allogenes*, with their testamentary motifs.<sup>86</sup>

### *b. Cosmic Eschatology*

The legacy of Jewish apocalypses in the Sethian texts is, nonetheless, much more apparent and much richer than it is among the Valentinians, but the character of that legacy requires further exploration. The eschatological focus is regularly the fate of the individual soul, e.g., in the catechetical section of the *Apocryphon of John*, which discusses the fate of various kinds of people.<sup>87</sup> The texts also have significant elements of cosmic eschatology.

The *Apocalypse of Adam* manifests a clear *salvation-historical framework*, in which Adam predicts to Seth the history of his “race” (69.2–76.6), the advent of a Savior (76.8–23), and a final sorting of the saved and the damned (83.4–84.3). Such a framework pervades the Sethian texts, although the details vary. In fact, one of the defining characteristics of the Sethian corpus is the division of history into ages in each of which the Savior appears.<sup>88</sup>

85. Frankfurter, “Legacy,” 158–59.

86. See Frankfurter, “Legacy,” 158, relying on MacRae, Fallon, Pearson, and PHEME PERKINS.

87. *Ap. John* 2.1: 25.16–27.30.

88. Turner, “Sethian Gnosticism,” 60; idem, “Typologies,” 171.

The *Apocryphon of John* displays a particularly important element of a salvation-historical scheme in its notion that history involves a *struggle between cosmic spiritual forces*, formally similar to the doctrine of the two spirits of the Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>89</sup> The “counterfeit spirit” is something that can descend upon souls and beguile them (*Apoc. John* 2.1: 26.20–21). This spirit first came from the activity of the powers who dallied with human women (*Apoc. John* 2.1: 29.14–30.9). It is particularly in this teaching about the sexual proclivities of the inimical spirit that the Enochic heritage is felt.<sup>90</sup> While the notion of the opposing spirit is not as prominent in all Sethian texts as it is in the *Apocryphon of John*, the notion that there are hostile spiritual powers at work is ubiquitous.

Although the *Apocryphon of John* focuses on the fate of the individual soul, one passage (2.1: 27.21–30) offers a hint of an eschatological judgment on apostates:

And I said, Sir, where will the souls go of those who have gained acquaintance and then turned away? Then it said to me, They will be taken to the place where the angels of poverty go—it is the place where no act of repentance is performed—and they will be kept *until the day* when those who have uttered blasphemy against the spirit will be tortured and punished with *eternal punishment*.<sup>91</sup>

Two texts offer brief descriptions of the *final judgment and destruction* of inimical powers, reminiscent of the cosmic cleansing of traditional apocalyptic scenarios. *Gos. Egypt.* 74.17–19 contains an almost credal reference to eschatological events in a description of the mission of the thrice-incarnated Seth:

to live through the three advents of which I have already spoken, the flood, the conflagration, and the judgment of the rulers, authorities and powers; to save that which went astray, by [destruction] of the world and baptism of the body. . . .<sup>92</sup>

The categories of apocalyptic eschatology are present, although the connection of destruction of the world and baptism may indicate that they refer to events prior to some final consummation.

*Hyp. Arch.* 97.6–20 offers a clearer reference to a final consummation:

89. 1QS 3.13–4.1.

90. See Stroumsa, *Another Seed*; VanderKam, “1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs, and Enoch,” 70–76.

91. Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 49.

92. Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 119.

Then they (members of the “undominated generation”) will be freed of blind thought: And they will trample under foot death, which is of the authorities: And they will ascend into the limitless light, where this sown element belongs.

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

Then all the children of the light will be truly acquainted with the truth and their root, and the father of the entirety and the holy spirit: They will all say with a single voice, “The father’s truth is just, and the son presides over the entirety”: And from everyone unto the ages of ages, “Holy—holy—holy!” Amen!<sup>93</sup>

One feature that complicates any assessment of eschatology in these Sethian texts is the use of *eschatological motifs as metaphors* for events in salvation history or perhaps as timeless symbols for “eschatological” events in the life of the enlightened reader.

The *Apocalypse of Adam*, in describing the salvation of the race of Seth at 75.17–76.6, hints at a salvific rapture:

And great luminous clouds will descend, and from the great aeons still other luminous clouds will descend upon them. Abrasaks, Sablo, and Gamaliel will descend and remove these people from the fire and wrath and take them above the aeons and the realms of the powers, and [take] them [...] living [...] and] take them [...] the aeons [...] dwelling place (?) of the great [...] there and the holy angels and the aeons. The people will come to resemble those angels, for they are not alien to them: rather, it is at the incorruptible seed that they labor.<sup>94</sup>

Although similar to Paul’s eschatological scenario for the Thessalonians (1 Thess 4.17), this episode is not part of an eschatological tableau in the *Apocalypse of Adam*, but an interim episode, before the arrival of the Savior. The fact that “fire, brimstone, and asphalt” fall on the enemies of the Sethians just before their rapture (*Apoc. Adam* 75.9–15) suggests a typological allusion to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The text concludes, however, with a separation of the seed of Seth and their opponents, who face a dire judgment. They hear (*Apoc. Adam* 84.8–16) the voice of the heavenly powers who stand guard over the waters of baptism saying to them:

Why were you crying out against the living god with lawless voices, unlawful tongues, and souls full of blood and foul [deeds]? You are full of

93. Translation by Layton, NHLE<sup>2</sup> 169. Elements of the scenario appear in the first stratum, in Painchaud’s analysis, of *On the Origin of the World*. See Appendix I.

94. Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 59.

deeds that do not belong to truth; instead, your ways are full of revelry and enjoyment.<sup>95</sup>

Their judgment on themselves is harsh:

Indeed, now we know that our souls are going to die with death.<sup>96</sup>

Use of an apocalyptic motif to describe an event in the life of the “seed of Seth” finds parallels in the appropriation of similar imagery for pre-eschatological events, although at times the temporal referent is obscure. A central scene of the *Trimorphic Protennoia* (43.4–44.27) records the reaction of the powers that be to the Savior’s coming. The introduction (43.4–11) recalls the language of apocalyptic eschatology:

Now, when the great authorities knew that the time for fulfillment had come—as when labor pains are felt by a lying-in woman—and that it was near the door, and that just so, destruction had drawn nigh, all the elements together shook. And the foundations of Hades and the ceilings of chaos moved. A great fire broke out in their midst. And the rocky cliffs and the earth moved as a reed is moved by the wind.<sup>97</sup>

The passage concludes with a lament of the powers, evocative of Rev 18.9–19, inspired in its turn by Ezekiel 26–27.

So, then, let us weep, let us mourn with great mourning! Finally, let us complete our escape before we are forcibly trapped and taken down into the bowels of Hades. For the undoing of our bonds has already come, spans of time are falling short, days have dwindled; our time has been fulfilled, and weeping over our destruction has come upon us, so that we shall be taken to a place that we do <not> recognize.

For our tree from which we sprouted bears fruit of ignorance, and also there is death in its leaves; darkness dwells in the shadow of its branches; and we have harvested it deceitfully and with desire. It is by this that ignorant chaos has come to be our dwelling place. For behold, it, too—the first begetter of our birth, of whom we boast—it too, does not know about the voice!

Among Sethians, then, it is clear that apocalyptic eschatology survives, sometimes as metaphor for the transformation that comes with revelation, but also as part of the temporal horizon within which salvation takes place.<sup>98</sup>

95. Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 63, modified.

96. *Ibid.*

97. Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 95–96.

98. The judgment of Frankfurter, “Early Christian Apocalypticism,” 418–19 may need modification: “The *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II,1; III,1; IV,1); *Allogenes*

The relationship between the eschatology in these Sethian texts and the explicit eschatology in the apocalypses of uncertain affinity (*On the Origin of the World*, *Paraphrase of Shem*,<sup>99</sup>*Concept of our Great Power*) remains an open question. At the very least, the presence of these works in the Nag Hammadi codices indicates an interest in eschatological issues, as well as apocalyptic forms, among those who finally gathered the Sethian texts. It may have been the eschatology of the Sethian texts, as much as their protology or cosmology, that aided their preservation in a larger corpus.

### *c. Sethians and an Ongoing Quest for Vision*

A comparison of the generic classification of the Sethian texts and an analysis of their eschatological elements shows an intriguing dichotomy in the corpus. Texts cast in the form of narratives of “ascent” experiences have less apocalyptic eschatology, as well as less direct connection with biblical figures and themes, than the rest of the Sethian tradition. What explains the difference?

Frankfurter finds in the ascent texts an important link with Jewish apocalyptic traditions, which have numerous accounts of ascent experiences.<sup>100</sup> Yet precisely what the connection might be merits further exploration. This is particularly so not only because of the limited scope of ascent texts in the Sethian corpus but also because of the ongoing discussion about the extent to which literary depictions of visionary ascents in Jewish apocalypses have an experiential basis.<sup>101</sup>

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(NHC XI, 3), and a Coptic *Apocalypse of Paul* (V, 2) *Pistis Sophia*, and the *Books of Jeu* are all part of this Gnostic corpus of Egyptian Christian apocalypses. Cosmic eschatology is of little importance; but revelation itself, the notion of the revelatory book, and the nuances of ascent in a rather frightening cosmos are all of paramount interest.”

99. A possible connection to the “Sethian” stand of Gnosticism has been considered on the basis of the connection with the *Paraphrase of Seth* known to Hippolytus, *Ref.* 5.19–22, but the relationship is, as Wisse (“Paraphrase of Shem,” 15) argues, “at best distant.”

100. Frankfurter, “Legacy,” 158. For the Jewish texts, see Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), who offers an analysis of *1 Enoch* 1–36, the *Testament of Levi*, *2 Enoch*, the *Similitudes of Enoch* (*1 Enoch* 37–71), the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*, the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, the *Ascension of Isaiah*, and *3 Baruch*. Cf. also the purely literary analysis of Mary Dean-Otting, *Heavenly Journeys: A Study of the Motif in Hellenistic Jewish Literature* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1984), who treats *1 Enoch*, *3 Baruch*, *Test. Abraham*, *4 Ezra*, *Apocalypse of Abraham*.

101. Among recent treatments emphasizing the mystical practice behind literary depictions, see Alan Segal, “Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, Early Christian-

Frankfurter finds in *Allogenes* a “typically apocalyptic pattern,”

he (*scil.* the seer) prepares himself (57.29–39; cf 4 Ezra 5:20–22), he receives a visit from a heavenly mediator (58.7–27), he is transfigured and “taken up to a holy place whose likeness cannot be revealed in the world” (58.27–33), he participates in a heavenly liturgy (58.34–38), he encounters heavenly beings and is reassured that “although it is impossible for you to stand, fear nothing” (59.1–19; cf. Apocalypse of Abraham 17), and there he gains gnosis, “a revelation of the Indivisible One and the One who is at rest” (60.35–37 and following). While the heavenly revelation itself is Gnostic, the stages of ascent were evidently meant to evoke the readers’ or audiences’ respect for traditional Jewish apocalyptic ascent narratives (1 Enoch 14; 71; 2 Enoch 1; 3-42; Apocalypse of Abraham 16–17).<sup>102</sup>

Following Scopello,<sup>103</sup> Frankfurter also sees the direct influence of 2 *Enoch* on the frame of *Zostrianos*, in the portrait of the seer’s despondency (2.24–3.13), in an angelophany combining rebuke and consolation (3.23–28), in the transformation of the seer into an angelic state (6.17–7.22), and in the concluding transcription of the revelations (129.26–130.4). He concludes:

But the tremendous length of this text signals the degree to which the genre apocalypse has been appropriated and subordinated to the broader Gnostic ideology; and likewise the pseudonym “Zostrianos”, which is used throughout the text’s dialogues, indicates the author’s or editors’ desire to ground the revelations in Greco-Roman traditions of authority other than Jewish. Resembling the Jewish appeal to Sibylline tradition in the Sibylline Oracles, the ecumenical intentions of the pseudonym Zostrianos are evident in the title: “Zostrianos, Oracles of the Truth of Zostrianos, God of Truth, Teachings of Zoroaster.” (132.6–10)<sup>104</sup>

Ascent is a matter of literary form, used to cloak a “Gnostic” teaching. The form has close Jewish parallels, and perhaps even direct Jewish inspiration, and the venerable character of the form serves the rhetorical function of “evoking readers’ respect.” At the same time the cultural connections of the form have been deliberately obscured.

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ity, and their Environment,” *ANRW* II.23.2 (1980): 1333–94 and De Conick, *Seek to See Him*, 28–39, with further literature. For a critical assessment, see Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, especially chapter 5 (pp. 95–114).

102. “Legacy,” 158–59. He is critical (159 n. 136) of Antoinette Wire, who in the *NHLE*<sup>2</sup> 490, connects the ascent pattern with Hermetic traditions evident in the *Poimandres*, *Cor. Herm.* 1.24–26.

103. M. Scopello, “The Apocalypse of Zostrianos [Nag Hammadi VII.1] and the Book of the Secrets of Enoch,” *VC* 34 (1980): 376–85.

104. Frankfurter, “Legacy,” 160–61.

Frankfurter entertains the possibility that the parallels in literary form are rooted in some continuity of praxis. Noting the liturgical elements in the *Gospel of the Egyptians* (2.2, 4.2), one of the Sethian texts, and the ascents in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, the *Ascension of Isaiah*, *2 Enoch* and the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*, he suggests “we might well see the Jewish apocalypses’ idealization of heavenly liturgy as a principal contribution to Gnostic literature and ritual, and the Gnostics’ emphasis on secret liturgies as a context for studying apocalypses.”

#### IV. CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY

If this suggestion is correct, an important vehicle for the transmission of apocalyptic literary and conceptual elements from Jewish sources to the Sethians is liturgical. Literary parallels are to be explained, at least in part, by the social and cultic situation of the texts.

John Turner’s ongoing engagement with the Sethian corpus offers different assessments of the links between Jewish apocalyptic traditions and Sethian texts. In his earliest typology of the corpus he argued, in a way that would be compatible with Frankfurter’s suggestions, for a primitive Sethian baptismal ritual of ascent, grounded in Syrian baptismal practice.<sup>105</sup> Most Sethian theology would have coalesced in that kind of environment. His more recent work distinguishes between the dominance of “descent” and “ascent” patterns of revelation.<sup>106</sup> Thus the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Trimorphic Protennoia* describe a process by which a heavenly revealer brings enlightenment and salvation, whereas the “Platonizing” texts, *Allogenes*, *Three Steles of Seth*, *Zostrianos*, and *Marsanes*, focus on the ascent of the mind to heavenly realities. Turner even goes so far as to posit two related groups who produced the texts. On the one side the descent oriented “Sethites” are in touch with “the rather more apocalyptically oriented<sup>107</sup> form of speculation on the traditions concerning the primordial figures of Adam and Seth that gave rise to the sacred history of

105. Turner, “Sethian Gnosticism,” 61 discussing “ritual of celestial ascent conceived in baptismal imagery, which Seth conferred upon his seed for their enlightenment,” and 66–67 and 68–69 n. 8. Sethian baptismal practice would be early, paralleled in Col 2.8–15, and perhaps influential on John 4.

106. John Turner, “The Gnostic Threefold Path to Enlightenment: The Ascent of Mind and the Descent of Wisdom,” *NT* 22 (1980): 324–51; idem, “Typologies,” 188–95.

107. Turner does not here define the sense in which he uses the term “apocalyptic.” The kinds of salvation-historical motifs noted above in connection with the *Apocalypse of Adam* are a major element in his use of the category.

the Sethians.”<sup>108</sup> On the other side are the “Barbeloite” Sethians, oriented toward an ascent pattern, in conversation with contemporary Platonism.<sup>109</sup> He now sees a different connection between baptism and ascent, finding the roots of the “ascent” tradition in Platonic theory and practice stemming from Plato’s *Symposium*. The baptismal rite, explicit in *Zostrianos*, was the setting in which was placed “the apparently non-baptismal visionary ascension in texts like *Allogenes* and the *Three Steles of Seth*.”<sup>110</sup>

For Turner, then, a shift in the development of Sethianism grafted a new Platonic theory, a new literary expression, and a practice of “ascent” onto old ritual forms. Turner’s dichotomy offers an explanation of the differences in the Sethian corpus that we have noted, but it makes problematic the connection between Jewish apocalypses and Sethian literature stressed by Frankfurter and posited by Turner’s earlier work.

*A Parallel Phenomenon: The “Elchasaite Apocalypses” of the Cologne Mani Codex*

The Sethian ascent apocalypses thus raise in an acute form the question of continuity and discontinuity in the transmission of apocalyptic literary forms, conceptual schemes, and perhaps even ritual practices. They are not, however, unique and consideration of a parallel case may shed some light on the Sethian situation.

The Cologne Mani Codex (= CMC), tells of the Elchasaite forbears of Mani and reports that they were nurtured on Jewish revelatory literature. If the report of the CMC is to be believed, it would provide evidence for kind of connection that Turner originally posited and that Frankfurter defended for the Sethians, an early Syrian baptismal sect, using an apocalyptic form, that later inspired and influenced the literature and practice of a Gnostic group. In fact, Ithamar Gruenwald argues that the CMC provides precisely this kind of evidence. Taking his cue from the ascetical, and, he would argue, ascent-inducing practices of the CMC itself, Gruenwald suggests that such practices lie behind the apocalyptic texts and have their ultimate roots in Jewish apocalyptic and Merkavah circles.<sup>111</sup>

108. Turner, “Typologies,” 207.

109. Curiously, the text with the closest association with Irenaeus’ Barbeloites, namely the *Apocryphon of John*, does not describe an “ascent.”

110. For another attempt trace “psychanodic” ecstasy with due attention to Greek traditions, see Ioan P. Culianu, *Psychanodia: A Survey of the Evidence Concerning the Ascension of the Soul and its Relevance*, EPRO 99 (Leiden: Brill, 1983) and idem (but spelled Couliano), *Expériences de l’extase: Extase, ascension et récit visionnaire de l’hellénisme au moyen âge* (Paris: Payot, 1984).

111. Gruenwald, *From Apocalypticism*, 253–77.

John C. Reeves gives a thorough account of the data, noting connections with Nag Hammadi materials.<sup>112</sup> The CMC reports on five texts.<sup>113</sup>

1. An *Apocalypse of Adam*, in which Adam has a vision from a supernal being, “Balsamos, the greatest angel of Light.” Reeves argues that the text is probably not simply a Jewish pseudepigraphon, nor an example of early Christian Adam literature, which usually portrayed Adam after the fall. The phrase that Adam “was made superior to all the powers and angels of creation” suggests to Reeves (77–78) rather something like the creation of a supernal Adam, above the demiurgic angelic forces, a scenario like that of *Apoc. Adam* 64.16–19. This particular “apocalyptic” text, therefore, hints at the protological speculation analogous to that of Sethian texts, but exactly what cosmogony was involved cannot be determined.

2. An *Apocalypse of Sethel*, in which the visionary becomes transformed into an angelic state. Reeves finds particularly significant parallels in the account by Epiphanius (*Pan.* 40) of the “Archontics,” as well as the Audians known to Bar-Konai, and important parallels with “Sethian literature.”

3. An *Apocalypse of Enosh* which includes a first-person account of a visionary experience in which an angel appears to the seer while he is contemplating the mystery of creation. The angel takes Enosh up a lofty mountain and then along for a journey to the northern regions. He promises to reveal to Enosh the answers to his cosmological questions, which Enosh is to record.

The closest parallels that Reeves uncovers are Mandaeen sources, especially the *Right Ginza*. The figure of Enosh enjoyed particular popularity in such Syro-Mesopotamian circles. Yet Reeves finds (153) in the insistence on “writings” in which the revelation was to be preserved a Manichaean touch, despite both classical and Jewish precedents for tablets in the wilderness. He concludes:

These features collectively create a suspicion that the “apocalypse” of Enosh, at least in its extant form, is not an authentic remnant of Second Temple era Jewish pseudepigraphic expression, but instead an artificial composition constructed to enhance the status of this forefather *vis-à-vis* his more illustrious colleagues.<sup>114</sup>

112. John C. Reeves, *Heralds of that Good Realm: Syro-Mesopotamian Gnosis and Jewish Traditions*, NHMS 41 (Leiden: Brill, 1996). See also his “The ‘Elchasaite’ Sanhedrin of the Cologne Mani Codex in Light of Second Temple Jewish Sectarian Sources,” *JJS* 42 (1991): 68–91; idem, *Jewish Lore in Manichaean Cosmogony*. On the connection with Jewish apocalypses see Gruenwald, *From Apocalypticism*, 256–71.

113. Translations of the relevant portions of the CMC are provided in Appendix III.

114. Reeves, *Heralds*, 154.

4. An *Apocalypse of Shem*, who is also the recipient of a literally spine-tingling rapture to a lofty mountain where Shem has a vision of God's throne room.

5. Finally, an *Apocalypse of Enoch*, whom the angel Michael fetches on a chariot of wind to view the heavenly mysteries.

In none of these cases does Reeves find evidence of Jewish *texts* being read by Elchasaites or Manichees, but abundant use of *traditions* at home in Jewish apocalypses.<sup>115</sup> Since the testimonia in the CMC provide information primarily about the revelatory frame of the apocalypses, real or alleged, a detailed comparison with Sethian literature from Nag Hammadi is not possible. The fact that several of the fictional seers are, like their Egyptian counterparts, contemplating the mysteries of creation when they receive their vision is, however, tantalizing. If there were actual texts rather than apologetic fictions of Mani's biographer, it might be appropriate to ask what kind of cosmological answers the seers received during their heavenly journeys. Unfortunately the CMC is silent, and if the florilegium was not based on real texts, it is purely the fiction of ancient written sources of revelation, rather than the content of revelation, that serves any function.

Obviously, the CMC is also silent about the question of our immediate concern in treating Gnostic apocalypses, whether accounts of visionary experience were purely literary motifs or reflections of some mystical practice. As Martha Himmelfarb has argued against Gruenwald,<sup>116</sup> the repetition of standard emotional responses in the visionary accounts suggests that the ascent motif in the "texts" of the CMC is largely literary convention rather than cloaked personal experience. While different assessments by Gruenwald and Himmelfarb of the relationship between mystical practice and the literary motifs in the CMC's apocalypses reflect different general theories about the practices of apocalypticism and Merkavah mysticism,<sup>117</sup> the weight of probability lies on the side of those who would see the "texts" of the CMC as a clever literary fiction serving apologetic needs of the Manichaeans.

115. David Frankfurter comes to a similar conclusion in, "Apocalypses Real and Alleged in the Mani Codex," *Numen* 44 (1997): 60–73.

116. Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, 102–14, with reference to the work of D. J. Halperin, *The Merkabah in Rabbinic Literature*, American Oriental Series 62 (New Haven: AOS, 1980), idem, *The Faces of the Chariot* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1988); Peter Schäfer, *Hekhalot Studien* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1988).

117. See also De Conick, *Seek to See Him*, 30, also noting the work of Halperin and Schäfer, and relying on C. Morray-Jones, "Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition" (Diss. Cambridge, 1988); idem, "Hekhalot Literature and Talmudic Tradition: Alexander's Three Test Cases," *JSJ* 22 (1991): 1–39.

In the final analysis, the tantalizing “Elchasaite” evidence does not provide a secure parallel for the kind of hypothesis suggested by Frankfurter and the early Turner. The extant remains do not support a connection between such rituals as baptism, construed as a means of procuring visionary experience, and the literary form of an ascent. The CMC does, however, at least attest the appropriation of the framework of ascent apocalypses involving biblical figures. It thus offers a window on one important apologetic device current in the third century.

### *Sethian Ascent Apocalypses and Jewish Apocalyptic*

Two models are possible to explain the connection between the Sethian ascent texts and their Jewish cousins. One emphasizes a steady stream of continuity from Jewish apocalyptic visionaries, who sought ecstatic visionary experiences and cloaked their experience in a pseudepigraphical guise, through Jewish and eventually Christian baptists who located their experiential quest for vision in a ritual setting. The Sethians would stand squarely in that trajectory. The bifurcation of their literary corpus between nonascent texts such as the *Apocryphon of John* or the *Gospel of the Egyptians* and ascent texts such as *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes* would simply suggest a choice of genre, not a fundamentally new religious option.

The alternative model suggests a more complicated process. Jewish ascent apocalypses are not direct evidence of mystical practice. Neither are their Jewish-Christian, Elchasaite, or Gnostic descendants. In Sethian literature there is a decided shift both in ritual practice and in the choice of literary form. The baptismal ritual of “the five seals” was part of the Sethian tradition from the outset, but it became a vehicle for mystical ascent practices only when the tradition became associated with Platonic circles. At that point an old form, the Jewish ascent apocalypse, gained new currency as a literary expression for the new form of piety, but the form was evacuated of its specifically Jewish elements in order to enable it to have more general appeal.

The relationship between ritual experience and literary expression is a key element in assessing the development of Sethian traditions. The Platonizing texts that use a “heavenly journey” form, *Zostrianos*, *Allogenes*, strongly hint at a baptismal ritual that was experienced as revelatory, but, whatever the baptizand’s experience, the final content of the revelation is philosophical doctrine. Other Sethian baptismal passages lack any explicit reference to a mystical ascent of the baptizand and appear in tractates without an ascent framework. *The Apocalypse of Adam* 84.4–85.30 mentions baptism that has been defiled by the unwor-

thy. The *Trimorphic Protennoia* 47.35–49.11 provides an elaborate description of a baptismal ritual, including robing, washing, enthroning, and glorifying. Although the text is lacunose at a crucial point, there seems to be no reference to an “ascent” or a visionary experience associated with the ritual.

The one important exception, mentioned by Frankfurter, is the *Gospel of the Egyptians*. The key passage, *Gos. Eg.* 3.2: 63.22–65.5 = 4.2: 75.11–78.6 provides a lengthy list of angels who preside over the baptismal ritual.<sup>118</sup> The conclusion of the list (66.5–8 = 78.8–9) indicates the results of the ritual, that those who have been instructed about those angels do not taste death. Yet the text offers several hints at the experience that the ritual was designed to induce. (a) That some sort of visionary or ecstatic experience is involved is the suggestion that the baptizand is “instructed by” (3.2: 66.6–7: ΕΒΟΛ ΖΗΤΟΥΤΟΥ, partially restored in 4.2: 75.8–9) as well as “about” these angelic beings. (b) The initiand offers a hymn to the “existent one” and then celebrates the transformation that the rite produces;

Having myself become acquainted with you, I have now mixed with your  
unchangeableness,  
And I have girded myself and come to dwell in an armor of loveliness and  
light, and I have become luminous. . . .  
I have been formed within the orbit of the riches of the light.  
For it is within my bosom, bestowing form upon the various engendered  
beings by unapproachable light.  
I shall truly declare your praise,  
for I have comprehended you:  
(It is) yours, O Jesus! Behold, O eternally omega, O eternally epsilon, O  
Jesus!  
O eternity! Eternity!<sup>119</sup>

The text evokes the experiential transformation of the initiand in a ritual context, the experience of joining through baptism the world of light and life, the experience of encounter with the eternal Jesus. *Yet it does not use the language of ascent.*

More praxis may lurk behind the various “Sethian” texts than is at first sight apparent, and there probably were early and continuing baptismal rituals in the Sethian tradition that induced some form of “revelatory”

118. See Alexander Böhlig and Frederik Wisse, *Nag Hammadi Codices III,2 and IV,2: The Gospel of the Egyptians*, NHS 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 102–47; Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 117.

119. Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 118–19.

experience.<sup>120</sup> Nonetheless, Turner's later position on the use of "ascent apocalypses" seems to be correct and offers a useful corrective to the hypothesis of continuity between Syrian baptists and Sethians in Egypt and Rome. Whether or not it is appropriate to posit, as Turner does, two distinct groups, it is highly probable that there is an important shift in the Sethian tradition, involving both form and content.

The shift takes place within the context of a ritual tradition of transforming initiation but the doctrinal content imparted by that initiation receives a new, quasiphilosophical definition. New wineskins were sought for the headier new wine. The choice of the new form was subject to several competing influences. The third century saw a renewed interest in appeals to visions, particularly out-of-body visions, to authenticate religious claims. Jewish apocalypses provided a model of such visionary account, convenient perhaps for a group such as the Manichaeans, but not particularly suitable for Sethians with philosophical pretensions. They instead detached the literary form of heavenly ascent from its Jewish moorings and made it serve a more "ecumenical" agenda.

## CONCLUSION

That "Gnostics" of various sorts drew on the heritage of Jewish apocalyptic texts and traditions is clear. In that regard they shared an important trait with others who shared a Jewish heritage. Their appropriation of that heritage did not, however, develop smoothly and simply. Group ideology, social setting, and contemporary fashion were all influential in the process. Even in very traditions with a certain allergy to apocalyptic forms and beliefs, such as the Valentinians, literary and conceptual elements do appear at late stages. Sethians display the heritage of apocalyptic eschatology in much of their work, although it is not the element of their conceptual system that receives the greatest attention. Under pressure from various developments in the third century they appropriated anew apocalyptic literary forms with their roots in Jewish literature, but they were careful to disguise those roots.

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120. For more on that possibility, see Harold W. Attridge, "On Becoming an Angel: Rival Baptismal Theologies at Colossae," in Lukas Bormann, Kelly Del Tredici, and Angela Standhartinger, eds., *Religious Propaganda and Missionary Competition in the New Testament World: Essays Honoring Dieter Georgi*, NTSup 74 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 481–98.

## APPENDIX I: "APOCALYPTIC" ESCHATOLOGICAL PASSAGES FROM NAG HAMMADI

## I. On the Origin of the World 2.5: 125.14–127.17

The translation (NHLE<sup>2</sup> 188–89) has been formatted to display the redactional hypothesis of Painchaud.<sup>121</sup> The "apocalyptic" section is usually taken to begin at 125.35. To illustrate the hypothetical layering, I begin with the immediately preceding "Valentinian" and "anti-Valentinian" redactions.

*Now the Word that is superior to all beings was sent for this purpose alone: that he might proclaim the unknown. He said "There is nothing hidden that is not apparent, and what has not been recognized will be recognized."<sup>122</sup> And these were sent to make known what is hidden, and the seven authorities of chaos and their impiety. And thus they were condemned to death.*

SO WHEN ALL THE PERFECT APPEARED IN THE FORM MODELED BY THE RULERS AND WHEN THEY REVEALED THE INCOMPARABLE TRUTH, THEY PUT TO SHAME ALL THE WISDOM OF THE GODS. AND THEIR FATE WAS FOUND TO BE A CONDEMNATION. AND THEIR FORCE DRIED UP. THEIR LORDSHIP WAS DISSOLVED.

Before the consummation [of the age], the whole place will shake with great thundering. Then the rulers will be sad, [...] their death. The angels will mourn for their mankind, and the demons will weep over their seasons, and their mankind will wail and scream at their death.

*Then the age will begin, and they will be disturbed. Their kings will be intoxicated with the fiery sword, and they will wage war against one another, so that the earth is intoxicated with bloodshed. And the seas will be disturbed by those wars. Then the sun will become dark. And the moon will cause its light to cease. The stars of the sky will cancel their circuits.*

And a great clap of thunder will come out of a great force that is above all the forces of chaos, where the firmament of the woman is situated. Having created the first product, she will put away the wise fire of intelligence and clothe herself with witless wrath. Then she will pursue the gods of chaos, whom she created along with the prime parent. She will cast them down into the abyss. They will be obliterated because of their wickedness. For they will come to be like volcanoes

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KEY: *italics* = the first, Valentinian, redaction. CAPS = the final, anti-Valentinian, redaction.

121. Painchaud, *Écrit*, 142–43.

122. Mark 4.22 par.

and consume one another until they perish at the hand of the prime parent. When he has destroyed them, he will turn against himself and destroy himself until he ceases to exist.

And their heavens will fall one upon the next and their (the rulers') forces will be consumed by fire. Their eternal realms, too, will be overturned.

*And his (the prime parent's) heaven will fall and break in two. His . . . will fall down upon the [...] support them; they will fall into the abyss, and the abyss will be overturned.*

The light will [...] the] darkness and obliterate it: it will be like 127 something that has never been. And the product to which the darkness had been posterior will dissolve. And the deficiency will be plucked out by the root (and thrown) down into the darkness. And the light will withdraw up to its root. And the glory of the unbegotten will appear. And it will fill all the eternal realm.

WHEN THE PROPHECY AND THE ACCOUNT OF THOSE THAT ARE KINGS BECOMES KNOWN AND IS FULFILLED BY THOSE WHO ARE CALLED PERFECT, THOSE WHO—IN CONTRAST—HAVE NOT BECOME PERFECT IN THE UNBEGOTTEN FATHER WILL RECEIVE THEIR GLORY IN THEIR REALMS AND IN THE KINGDOMS OF THE IMMORTALS: BUT THEY WILL NEVER ENTER THE KINGLESS REALM. FOR EVERYONE MUST GO TO THE PLACE FROM WHICH HE HAS COME. INDEED, BY HIS ACTS AND HIS ACQUAINTANCE EACH PERSON WILL MAKE HIS NATURE KNOWN.

## 2. Concept of the Great Power 6.4: 43.26–47.32 (NHLE<sup>2</sup> 315–17)

Then your (sg.) seed and those who wish to follow our great Logos and his proclamation—Then the wrath of the archons burned. They were ashamed of their dissolution. And they fumed and were angry at the life. The cities were <overturned>; the mountains dissolve. The archon came, with the archons of the western regions, to the East, i.e., that place where the Logos appeared at first. Then the earth trembled, and the cities were troubled. Moreover, the birds ate and were filled with their dead. The earth mourned together with the inhabited world; they became desolate.

Then when the times were completed, then wickedness arose mightily even until the final end of the Logos. Then the archon of the western regions arose, and from the East he will perform a work, and he will instruct men in his wickedness. And he wants to nullify all teaching, the words of true wisdom, while loving the lying wisdom. For he attacked the old, wishing to introduce wickedness and to put on dignity. He was incapable, because the defilement <of?> his garments is great. Then he became angry. He appeared and desired to go up and to pass up to that place.

Then the appointed time came and drew near. And he changed the commands. Then the time came until the child had grown up. When he had come to his maturity, then the archons sent the imitator to that man in order that they might know our great Power. And they were expecting from him that he would perform for them a sign. And he bore great signs. And he reigned over the whole earth and

<over> all those who are under heaven. He placed his throne upon the end of the earth, for "I shall <make> you (sg.) god of the world." He will perform signs and wonders. Then they will turn from me, and they will astray.

Then those men who will follow after him (i.e., the imitator) will introduce circumcision. And he will pronounce judgment upon those who are from the uncircumcision, who are the (true) people. For in fact he sent many preachers beforehand, who preached on his behalf.

When he has completed the established time of the kingdom of the earth, then the cleansing of the souls will come, since wickedness is stronger than you (pl.). All the powers of the sea will tremble and dry up. And the firmament will not pour down dew. The springs will cease. The rivers will not flow down to their springs. And the waters of the springs of the earth will cease. Then the depths will be laid bare and they will open. The stars will grow in size, and the sun will cease.

And I shall withdraw with everyone who will know me. And they will enter into the immeasurable light, (where) there is no one of the flesh nor the wantonness of the first to seize the. They will be unhampered (and) holy, since nothing drags them down. I myself protect them, since they have holy garments, which the fire cannot touch, nor darkness nor wind nor a moment, so as to cause one to shut the eyes.

Then he will come to destroy all of them. And they will be chastised until they become pure. Moreover their period, which was given to them to have power, which was apportioned to them, (is) fourteen hundred and sixty years. When the fire has consumed them all, and when it does not find anything else to burn, then it will perish by its own hand. Then the [...] will be completed 47 [...] the [second] power [...] the mercy will come [...] through wisdom [...] Then the firmaments [will fall] down into the depth. Then [the] sons of matter will perish; they will not be, henceforth.

Then the souls will appear, who are holy through the light of the Power, who is exalted above all powers, the immeasurable, the universal one, I and all those who will know me. And they will be in the aeon of beauty of the aeon of judgment, since they are ready in wisdom, having given glory to him who is in the incomprehensible unity; and they see him because of his will, which is in them. And they all have become as reflections in his light. They all have shone, and they have found rest in his rest.

And he will release these souls that are being punished, and they will come to be in purity. And they will see the saints and cry out to them, "Have mercy on us, O Power who art above all powers." For 48 [...] and in the tree [of] iniquity that exists [...] to him their eyes. [And they] do not seek him because they do not seek us nor do they believe us, but they acted according to the creation of the archons and its other rulers. But we have acted according to our birth of the flesh, in the creation of the archons which gives law. We also have come to be in the unchangeable aeon.

3. The Paraphrase of Shem 7.1: 43.28–45.31 (NHLE<sup>2</sup> 359–60)

After I cease to be upon the earth and withdraw up to my rest, a great, evil error will come upon the world, and many evils in accordance with the number of the forms of 44 Nature. Evil times will come. And when the era of Nature is approaching destruction, darkness will come upon the earth. The number will be small. An a demon will come up from the power who has a likeness of fire. He will divide the heaven, (and) he will rest in the depth of the east. For the whole world will quake. And the deceived world will be thrown into confusion. Many places will be flooded because of envy of the winds and the demons who have a name which is senseless: Phorbea, Chloerga. They are the aeons who govern the world with their teachings. And they lead astray many hearts because of their disorder and their unchastity. Many places will be sprinkled with blood. And five races by themselves will eat their sons. But the regions of the south will receive the Word of the Light. But they who are from the error of the world and from the east—A demon will come forth from the belly of the serpent. He was 45 in hiding in a desolate place. He will perform many wonders. Many will loathe him. A wind will come forth from his mouth with a female likeness. Her name will be called Abalphe. He will reign over the world from the east to the west.

Then Nature will have a final opportunity. And the stars will cease from the sky. The mouth of error will be opened in order that the evil Darkness may become idle and silent. And in the last day the forms of Nature will be destroyed with the winds and all their demons; they will become a dark lump, just as they were from the beginning. And the sweet waters which were burdened by the demons will perish. For where the power of the Spirit has gone there are my sweet waters. The other works of Nature will not be manifest. They will mix with the infinite waters of darkness. And all her forms will cease from the middle region.

## APPENDIX II: Gnostic “APOCALYPSES”

A. Based on Francis Fallon, “The Gnostic Apocalypses,” *Semeia* 14 (1979): 123–58

## I. Revelations without a journey:

## a. Discourses

*Apocalypse of Adam* (5.5)\*

*Allogenes* (11.3)\* [N.B. Frankfurter reclassifies]

2 *Apocalypse of James* (5.4)

*Melchizedek* (11.1)\*<sup>L</sup>

## b. Dialogues

*Sophia of Jesus Christ* (3.4 and BG)

*Apocryphon of John* (2.1, 3.1, 4.1, BG)\*

*Gospel of Mary* (BG)

*Hypostasis of the Archons* (2.4)\*

1 *Apocalypse of James* (5.3)

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KEY: \* Sethian (Schenke, Turner); \*<sup>L</sup> = Layton's addition

- Apocalypse of Peter* (7.3)  
*Letter of Peter to Philip* (8.3), an apocalypse embedded in a letter  
 Perhaps *Hypsiphron* (9.4)  
*Pistis Sophia*
- II. Revelations with journeys
- a. Discourses  
*Paraphrase of Shem* (7.1)  
 [Frankfurter<sup>123</sup> reclassifies: *Allogenes* (11.3)\*  
 Frankfurter adds: *Marsanes* (10.10)\*]
- b. Dialogues  
*Zostrianos* (8.1)\*  
*Apocalypse of Paul* (5.2)
- III. Related Types (i.e., Revelations without a revelatory frame)
- a. Discourses  
*Thunder* (6.2)\*<sup>L</sup>  
*Concept of Our Great Power* (6.4)  
*Second Treatise of the Great Seth* (7.2)  
*Trimorphic Protennoia* (13.1)\*
- b. Dialogues  
*Book of Thomas the Contender* (2.7)  
*Dialogue of the Savior* (3.5)  
*First and Second Jeu*
- B. Martin Krause, "Die literarischen Gattungen der Apokalypsen von Nag Hammadi," in David Hellholm, ed., *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism Uppsala, August 12–17, 1979* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1983), 621–37:
- I. Explicitly titled apocalypses,
- a. Properly so titled:  
*Apocalypse of Adam* (5.5),  
*Apocalypse of Paul* (5.2),  
*Apocalypse of Peter* (7.3) and
- b. Improperly titled  
*First Apocalypse of James* (5.3) and  
*Second Apocalypse of James* (5.4);
- II. Apocalypses without an explicit title  
*Concept of the Great Power* (6.4),  
 Perhaps *Paraphrase of Shem* (7.1) and
- III. Apocalyptic portions of other texts  
*Asclepius* (6.8: 70.3–74.17),  
*Origin of the World* (2.5: 126.32–127.17);  
*Trimorphic Protennoia* (13.1: 43.4–44.29).

123. Frankfurter, "Legacy," 157 nn. 127, 128.

APPENDIX III: ELCHASAITA APOCALYPSES  
(FROM THE COLOGNE MANI CODEX)1. *Apocalypse of Adam*

[Thu]s has [the] first Adam [clear]ly said [in] his [apocalypse: “I saw an a]ngel [...] [before] your ra[diant] face which I do not recognize.” Then he said to him: “I am Balsamos, the greatest angel of Light. Therefore receive (and) write these things just as I reveal them to you on exceedingly clean papyrus which is unspoiled and which has not harbored worms.”

Moreover there were many other things which he revealed to him in the vision. Very great was the glory that surrounded him. He beheld [...] angels an[d high officials [and] mig[h]ty powers]... (5 lines lost) ... Adam and was made superior to all the powers and angels of creation. Many other similar things to these are in his writings.<sup>124</sup>

2. *Apocalypse of Sethel*

Also Sethel<sup>125</sup> his son has similarly written in his apocalypse, saying that “I opened my eyes and beheld before me an [ang]el whose [radiance] I am unable to (adequately) represent ... .. [lig]htning ... .. to me ... (3 lines lost) ... [Wh]en I heard these things, my heart rejoiced and my mind changed and I became like one of the greatest angels. That angel placed his hand upon my right (hand) and took me out of the world wherein I was born and brought me to another place (that was) exceedingly great. Behind me I heard a loud uproar from those angels whom [I] left behind [in] the world which the[y] pos[sessed] .... (at least 2 lines missing) ...”<sup>126</sup>

3. *Apocalypse of Enosh*

“In the tenth month of the third year I went out to walk. In the wilderness, considering mentally [he]aven and earth and [al]l works [and deed]s (wondering) b[y whose will] they exist. [Then there appeared to me an angel. He taught me about the worlds of de]ath. He took me up with great silence. My heart became heavy, all my limbs trembled, and the vertebrae of my back shook violently, an my feet could not stand upon their joints. I went forth to a flat plain and saw there lofty mountains. The spirit seized me and brought me with silent power to a mountain. There num[erous awes]ome [visions were rev]ealed to me.”

Moreover [he says that “the an]gel ... [and brought me to the] northern region] where I beheld immense mountains and angels and many places. He spoke to me and said: ‘The Pre-Eminent Almighty One has sent me to you so that I might reveal to you the secret (things) which you contemplated, since indeed you have chosen truth. Write down all these hidden things upon bronze tablets and deposit (them) in the wilderness. Everything which you write recor[d most p]lainly. For [my] revela[tion, which shall not] pass away, is ready [to be] reve[aled to] al[l the breth]ren...’”

124. Reeves, *Heralds*, 67.

125. For discussion of the form of the name, see Reeves, *Heralds*, 113–14.

126. Following Reeves, *Heralds*, 111.

[Many other] things similar to these are in his writings (which set forth his ascension and revelation, for everything that he heard and saw he recorded (and) left behind for the subsequent generations, all those belonging to the spirit of truth.<sup>127</sup>

#### 4. *Apocalypse of Shem*

Similarly also Shem spoke this way in his apocalypse: “I was thinking about the way that all things came to be. While I pondered (these things), the Living S[pirit] suddenly to[ok] me and [lift]ed me with great f[orce], and se[t] (me) on [the summit] of a lof[ty] mountain, [and] spoke [to me thusly, say]ing [‘Do not be afraid; rather,] give praise to the Great King of Honor.’”

Moreover he says that “silently doors were opened and clouds were parted by the wind. I beheld a glorious throne-room descending from the heights and a might angel standing by it. The image of the form of his face was very beautiful and lovely, more than the brig[ht rad]iance [of the su]n, even more than [lightning]. Similarly [he radiated light like]sunlight, [and his robe . . .] of diverse hues (?) like a crown plaited with May blossoms. Then the feature(s) of my face changed so that I collapsed upon the ground. The vertebrae of my back shook, and my feet could not stand upon the joints. A voice bent over me, calling from the throne-room, and having approached me took my right hand and raised (me and) blew a breath of life into my nostrils, increas[ing my] power [and] glory.”

Numer[ous] other [simil]ar things are in his writings, including that which the angels revealed to him saying, “Write these things for a memoir!”<sup>128</sup>

#### 5. *Apocalypse of Enoch*

Moreover Enoch also speaks in a similar manner in his apocalypse: “I am Enoch the righteous. My sorrow was great, and a torrent of tears (streamed) from my eyes because I heard the insult which the wicked ones uttered.”

He says: “While the tears were still in my eyes ad the prayer was yet on my lips, I beheld approaching me s[even] angels descending from heaven. [Upon seeing] them I was so moved by fear that my knees began knocking.”

He says moreover: “One of the angels, whose name was Michael, said to me: ‘I was sent to you for this purpose—in order that I might show you all the deeds and reveal to you the place (appointed) for the pious, and to show you the place (appointed) for the impious and what sort of place of punishment the lawless are experiencing.’”

He says also: “They seated me upon a chariot of wind and brought me to the ends of the heavens. We traversed worlds—the world of [dea]th, the world of [dar]kness, and the world of fire. And after these (worlds) they brought me into a world of extraordinary richness which was resplendently luminous, even more beautiful than the heavenly luminaries which I (also) beheld.”

All these things he says, and he questioned the angels, and that which they told him he recorded in his writings.<sup>129</sup>

127. Reeves, *Heralds*, 141–42.

128. Reeves, *Heralds*, 163–64.

129. Reeves, *Heralds*, 183–84.

