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WORD COUNT: 79, 591
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Frequently used terms:

NH              Nag Hammadi
NHL             Nag Hammadi Library
NHC             Nag Hammadi Codices
CII             Nag Hammadi Codex II
BG              Codex Papyrus Berolinensis 8502
NT              New Testament
OT              Old Testament
Pach.S          Pachomian Sources

Ancient Sources:

BO              The Bohairic Life of Pachomius
G               The First Greek Life of Pachomius
Paral.          The Paralipomena
LH              Palladius’ Historia Lausiaca (Lausiac History)
Ep. Amm.        The Letter of Ammon
Test. Hors.     The Testament of Horsiesius
VA              Vita Antonii (The Life of Anthony)
AH              Irenaeus’ Adversus Haereses (Against Heresies)
ApJohn          Apocryphon of John
GThom           Gospel of Thomas
GPhil           Gospel of Philip
HypArch         Hypostasis of the Archons
OrigWorld       On the Origin of the World
ExSoul  Exegesis on the Soul
ThomCont  Book of Thomas the Contender

Other Abbreviations:

BIFAO  Bulletin de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale
CRAI  Comptes rendus séances de l’Academie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres
ETR  Etudes théologiques et religieuses
HTR  Harvard Theological Review
JA  Journal Asiatique
JAC  Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum
JBL  Journal of Biblical Literature
JECS  Journal of Early Christian Studies
JJP  Journal of Juristic Papyrology
JR  Journal of Religion
JRH  Journal of Religious History
JRS  Journal of Religious Studies
JSNT  Journal for the Study of the New Testament
HR  History of Religions
Mus  Le Muséon
NTS  New Testament Studies
NovT  Novum Testamentum
RHR  Revue de l’histoire des religions
RTP  Review of Philosophy and Theology
SecCent  Second Century
SR  Studies in Religion
ST  Studia Theologica
TJT  Toronto Journal of Theology
TLZ  Theologische Literaturzeitung
References to Nag Hammadi Codex II tractates 2-7, unless otherwise stated, are taken from the two volume critical text edition in the Coptic Gnostic Library series:


References to the *Apocryphon of John*, unless otherwise stated, are taken from the synoptic edition of Michael Waldstein and Frederick Wisse, *The Apocryphon of John: Synopsis of Nag Hammadi Codices II,1; III,1; and IV,1 with BG 8502,2* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

All references to Pachomian literature are taken from Armand Veilleux’s translations in his three volume *Pachomian Koinonia: The Lives, Rules, and Other Writings of Saint Pachomius and his Disciples* (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1980).
ABSTRACT

Scholarship to date on the Nag Hammadi Codices has been predominantly concerned with establishing the compositional history and doctrinal affiliations of each tractate within the collection. Much less attention has been paid to the library as a fourth-century collection of texts, which must have been understood by the compiler/s of the codices as having ideological coherence, and overarching messages. The present thesis is first and foremost an attempt to address this deficiency. Due to the site of the codices’ discovery in the Egyptian desert being in close proximity to the Pachomian monastery at Phbow, the suggestion was made that perhaps these monks were once the owners of the collection, forced to purge their monastery of these texts due to the increasing concern of the Alexandrian Church over the circulation of what it viewed to be ‘heretical’ religious documents. This ‘Pachomian connection’ was substantiated mainly by the apparent promotion of ascetic practice and a value placed on knowledge both in the Pachomian movement and many of the tractates from Nag Hammadi, as well as the presence of some monastic documents in the waste paper used to strengthen the covers of the codices. None are sufficient to conclude a relationship between the two. Moreover, scholarly conception of the Nag Hammadi Library as a representative of ‘Gnosticism,’ which since the critiques of this category by the likes of Williams (1996) and King (2004) has been something of a taboo term, meant that inquiry into connections with Pachomian monastic literature was too invested in searching for so-called ‘Gnostic’ overlap. On the contrary, this work argues that in order to gain a better understanding of why the Nag Hammadi texts were collected and collated in the way that they were, and how and why they might have been utilised by Christian inhabitants of the Egyptian desert, they must be viewed primarily as a fourth-century Christian collection.

The thesis attempts to offer a fresh perspective on the question of monastic usage by viewing the Nag Hammadi texts simply as part of the Egyptian Christian landscape, rather than as a ‘heretical’ invasion of it. In order to conduct a controlled and sufficiently detailed analysis, this thesis examines one sub-collection of the Nag Hammadi Library – Codex II, alongside contemporaneous Pachomian monastic literature, and suggests agreement on various centralised issues. Building on the suggestions of Michael Williams (1996) and James Robinson (2004), that meaningful order can be detected in the arrangement of the Nag Hammadi Codices, the thesis contends that Nag Hammadi Codex II develops certain key themes through the particular sequencing of its tractates. Each of these, it is argued, would have been attractive to a fourth-century Pachomian monastic readership. Firstly, asceticism must be moderated so as not to lose sight of its spiritual value amidst competitive arrogance. Secondly, one’s duty to share and encourage the promulgation of spiritual truths among one’s brethren is of vital importance. Thirdly, identification as an ‘elite’ spiritually superior individual is in no way predetermined, as older definitions of ‘Gnosticism’ have suggested, but based entirely on one’s conscious choice to leave behind worldly pursuits.
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I dedicate this work to my husband, Jack.
INTRODUCTION

The Nag Hammadi Codices after ‘Gnosticism’

Since Michael Williams and Karen King levelled their momentous critiques at the methods and assumptions of scholars associated with what has been long known as ‘Gnosticism,’ studies in this area have been forced to exercise increased scrutiny over their characterisation of and presuppositions about certain ancient texts.\(^1\) The Nag Hammadi Codices (NHC), discovered in Upper Egypt in 1945, continue to occupy arguably the most prominent position in the debate. The codices themselves are fourth century creations, and it has been argued that they were once the property of the Pachomian monastery near to their place of discovery. However, the apparent affiliation of the codices with the ‘gnostic’ pocket of Christianity has meant that studies have largely been dominated by investigations into the compositional origins and theological leanings of individual tractates, the fourth-century identity of the library receiving much less attention.

This thesis is an attempt to remedy this problem in two related ways. Firstly, I will argue in favour of Pachomian ownership of the Nag Hammadi Library (NHL), and through analysis of specific texts, consider how they might have been understood and utilised for spiritual edification to these fourth-century monks. Secondly, I will expand upon a promising line of enquiry highlighted by codicological consideration of the library by Robinson and Williams, who have argued for meaningful ordering of tractates within the NHL. I will

demonstrate that the collection could have been viewed as a useful textual aid to guide monks attracted to the emphasis on individual pursuit of spiritual knowledge and the ascetic leanings of many texts in the collection. Analysis will be limited to Codex II (CII), which Williams has argued imitates the ordering of biblical scripture. I will suggest that CII guides its reader through a mythical explanation of the reasons for human sin and the subsequent need for salvation, before offering support for an ascetic lifestyle, reinforcing the need for spiritual edification of others, and finally looking forward to eschatological fulfilment for the spiritually devoted. This would have resonated with the spiritual outlook of the Pachomians. By way of introduction I will begin with a brief overview of the ‘Gnosticism’ debate that has shaped scholarship on the NHL. I will then deal with the codicological aspects of Nag Hammadi (NH) research, before examining the Pachomian monastic movement in the fourth century and suggesting that particularly in the first half of the century, the community would have been fitting owners of the NHL. The main body of the thesis will demonstrate that CII is ordered not simply mimicking canonical scripture, but more importantly for its monastic audience, thematically.

In his landmark work, *Rethinking “Gnosticism,”* Williams argues that ‘Gnosticism’ is no longer credible as a term to describe texts such as those from NH, or the Christian groups who composed and used them. In order for religious movements to be categorised, he suggests, one is reliant upon *either* ascertaining how groups identify themselves – this is not simply in terms of a name, but also grouping historical religious data in terms of what the group would be happy to be associated with – *or* a phenomenological approach, whereby a variety of traditions are cross-studied for shared characteristics.² There are complications and inhibitions with both methods of course: Christocentric devotion, in whatever form, for example, is surely the minimal ‘requirement’ for one to be considered as a ‘Christian.’

² Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism,* 29-30.
However, as Williams argues, in a context where certain issues, doctrines or ideologies are at stake, one might be considered ‘liberal’ or ‘fundamentalist’. Some may even prefer this characterisation in certain situations, but could just as easily resist it in others. Applying this to the ‘Gnosticism’ question, the problem as Williams sees it is that scholars see ‘Gnosticism’ as a category identifiable both in terms of self-identification and phenomenology/typology, but lack the evidence to ascribe it to either. Williams highlights the problems with various assumptions about gnostic groups – such as hatred of the body, rejection of the Jewish scriptures and God, and predetermined salvatory elitism – suggesting that closer analysis of the texts commonly associated with this label show them to be far from clear cut and consistent on such issues. King’s critique came several years after that of Williams, and sees a methodological failure whereby a preoccupation with situating ‘Gnosticism’ within orthodoxy-heresy discourse has prevented adequate engagement with texts individually, encouraging an insufficiently critical approach that uses heresiological accounts, such as those by Irenaeus and Epiphanius, as an interpretative basis.

The impact of the work of Williams and King has meant that most researchers in the field have been forced to engage with the questions they raised. Of course, Williams and King have attracted some criticism. Buckley, for instance questions whether scholars have indeed been rigidly invested in the category, and Grant does not see why groups needed to call themselves gnostics in order for later scholars to do so. Surely, he argues, some of the heresiarchs testimonies are correct. Grant is correct to raise this issue – it is easy to fall into the trap of rejecting everything negative such writers say about the texts/groups in question, while operating less scrutiny over the validity of the less demeaning comments they make.

Recently, Brakke has suggested retaining ‘Gnosticism’ in a much more limited fashion. Unlike the baggage that it has acquired in modern scholarship, in antiquity, he argues, γνωστικός actually had positive overtones. Irenaeus’ differentiation of the gnostics from the Valentinians in books I and II of his Against Heresies (AH) suggests that it was in fact the name of a school of thought, as does the fact that Tertullian seems to suggest that the Valentinians actually preceded the gnostics (Scorpiace I, On the Soul 18). Moreover, Irenaeus’ insistence that the gnostics are “falsely so called” (AH I.23.4) suggests that he does indeed see the term as something positive that they do not match up to.

Secondly, Brakke argues, ‘Gnosticism’ was a general term that described a spiritually perfected person, but did not entail any doctrinal affiliation. A person would think of themselves as a gnostic because they had achieved the optimum level of spirituality in whatever manner they had been working towards it. The earliest example of this, Brakke argues, is found in the writings of the second century Christian philosopher Clement of Alexandria, who called the ideal Christian a gnostic (Stromata VII.1, 3, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12-14). According to Irenaeus (AH I.25.6), the influential teacher Marcellina also called herself a gnostic, yet apparently belonged to the Carpocratians. Perhaps most relevant for the argument of the present work, is that Evagrius Ponticus, a fourth-century monk, referred to the most advanced ascetic as a gnostic. According to Brakke, when Irenaeus talks about the gnostics he has a very specific group in mind – those that created the demiurgical myth we find in texts such as the Apocryphon of John. Although Irenaeus speaks of Valentinus and others being influenced by this mythological world view, he does not understand them as

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8 Brakke, Gnostics, 31-32.
9 Brakke, Gnostics, 33.
10 Brakke, Gnostics, 48.
11 Brakke, Gnostics, 49.
being part of the same group. ApJohn along with many other NH tractates belongs to a group that is traditionally referred to as ‘Sethian’. Indeed, the division of ‘Gnosticism’ into further subcategories has been one scholarly strategy aimed at attributing the mythologies, theologies and teachings that we find in traditionally ‘gnostic’ texts to specific groups and teachers.

There are three that are particularly noteworthy, all of which are arguably present in CII: the aforementioned Sethianism (ApJohn, HypArch, and OrigWorld), Valentinianism (GPhil) and Thomasine Christianity (GThom and ThomCont). Of course, these categories have often proved to be just as problematic, and perceptions of these subgroups have often coloured the interpretation of certain NH texts. There is not space to discuss in detail the scholarly debates surrounding these categories, but in the course of the thesis certain issues pertinent to the main argument will be discussed. The very fact that different versions of a so-called ‘Gnosticism’ were collected and used meaningfully together in CII, indicates that at least to the producer/s of this codex these distinctions were not mightily significant.

Order and Themes: Alternative Scripture?

In a recent article, Gilhus argues that more work needs to be focused on examining why the texts in each codex were collated in the way that they were. Robinson has argued that the

12 Brakke, Gnostics, 49-51.
entire NH corpus was intended as something of a ‘counter-canonical’ to that of the NT, with the titles of ‘Gospel’ in CII for texts which do not closely resemble the format of those in the NT indicating the collection’s ambition to emulate and claim equal authority with the NT.15

Whilst not going so far as to hypothesise a ‘counter-canonical,’ Williams has argued for “a probable rationale” in each codex. The scribes, he argues, seemed to have some level of concern for the arrangement of the tractates.16 Both Williams and Gilhus follow in a line of argument that has long been upheld by Wisse, who sees evidence of a “syncretistic mystical faith” among the owners of the NHL. ‘Gnostic,’ ‘Sethian,’ ‘Valentinian,’ or ‘Thomasine,’ labels, therefore, meant nothing to them, because the texts represented something more holistic, as Wisse argues, a strong ascetic ethical standpoint that represents the “morality of the elite”; doctrine was largely irrelevant.17

It must also be remembered that the texts in the NHC were written in a different time and place from their eventual resting place in the fourth century.18 Gilhus suggests that CII was compiled with two specific purposes in mind. Firstly, it seeks to intertwine the biblical demiurgical myth with the Jesus tradition, and secondly to endorse an encratic worldview.19 In her view, CII can be read on two levels; one that appeals to the understanding of the ordinary Christian, and another that speaks to the “informed ascetic.”20 Those scholars who have identified coherence within the individual NH codices have noted that an ascetical outlook is a common theme in the texts within CII. Hence, the argument has been made that this codex provides substantial support for the hypothesis that nearby Pachomian monks were

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16 Williams, Rethinking Gnosticism, 241.
18 Gilhus, “Contextualising the Present,” 94.
19 Gilhus, “Contextualising the Present,” 100.
20 Gilhus, “Contextualising the Present,” 106.
the owners of the NHL before its concealment. Following the older assertions of Wisse, King argues that whilst Wisse’s distinction between practice and belief is too sharp, it is likely that the monastic community used these texts along with others as support for their aim of achieving separation from the world and coming closer to the divine realm.

Hedrick has also attempted to draw out some ideological similarities between the Pachomians and so-called ‘Gnosticism,’ partly by appealing to a “flourishing wisdom tradition” and a high value of knowledge over ignorance in the Pachomian monasteries. The latter in particular, however, is not particularly enlightening, as surely any Christian searching for closeness to God would seek to transcend ignorance! The suggestion of ‘gnosticising’ ideologies infiltrating the Pachomian monasteries is not a helpful hypothesis, not least because it works from outdated presumptions about a ‘gnostic’ religion.

Williams is correct in his assertion that too little has been done to establish the selections and purposes within each codex. They are certainly more than Scholten’s suggestion of interesting material for monastic perusal, or Säve-Söderbergh’s examples of heretical material to educate monastic owners. For example, CII along with IV, VIII and IX appear to reflect a “history of revelation,” each beginning with texts devoted to primordial origins before moving onto more Christianised revelations. Moreover, I and II seem to imitate what by the fourth century had become common arrangement of Christian Scripture:

26 Williams, Rethinking Gnosticism, 249.
Gospels – Epistles – Apocalypse. CII appears to follow this, even perhaps mimicking an OT NT arrangement: 27

Williams understands the ordering of CII as follows: ApJohn comes first, offering a mythology of worldly and human origins, followed by the ‘gospels,’ with GPhil placed second because it is closer to an epistle in nature. The next tractate is HypArch due to its quoting of Eph 6:12, which it attributes to Paul. This is followed by OrigWorld and ExSoul, both of which contain apocalyptic material. Finally, ThomCont is an ascetic message intended to offer a way of life that should be adopted in response to the doctrinal and mythological picture presented by the preceding tractates in the codex. 28

Williams concludes that the NHL, (not unlike the NT as a collection) illustrates the degree to which intertextual relationships between works that to us seem theologically conflicting, came to be read as reflecting the same concerns. 29 With ‘gnostic’ labels left aside, we can say four things at least of the producers of the collection: 30

1. They accepted the biblical demiurgical myth.
2. They were interested in the true nature of divinity and the supra-cosmic realms.
3. They were interested in the soul’s transcendence from the created order, and the patterns of spirituality that would help achieve this.
4. They did not see any of these beliefs as being in any way un-Christian.

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27 Williams, Rethinking Gnosticism, 254.
28 In support of Williams’ thesis are Funk’s observations that linguistically, tractates II-VI are somewhat different from I and VII. Funk identifies that CII is less obviously linguistically heterogeneous, with a prevailing southern Coptic dialect. See Wolf-Peter Funk, “The Linguistic Aspect of Classifying the Nag Hammadi Library Codices,” in Les Textes de Nag Hammadi et le Problème de leur Classification. Actes du colloque tenu à Québec du 15 au 19 septembre 1993 (Louis Painchaud and Anne Pasquier, eds.; Quebec: Laval University Press, 1995), 127, 131-132. It is possible, then, that tractates II-VI were collated separately at an earlier point before being united with tractates I and VII.
29 Williams, “Interpreting the Nag Hammadi Library as ‘Collection(s)’ in the History of ‘Gnosticism(s)’,” in Les Textes de Nag Hammadi et le Problème de leur Classification, 3.
30 Williams, Rethinking Gnosticism, 261.
On the contrary, Robinson suggests that as with the Pauline corpus, perhaps tractate size might have been more influential in ordering than thematic content. However, certainly in the case of CII, I hope to demonstrate that a logical development in subject matter is detectable. More detailed work needs to be done in order to determine more clearly the thematic, doctrinal and mythological outlook of CII as a whole, to enable an insight into what significance, both in terms of social practice and ideological development, the texts held for those who read the codex in its finished state. It is my view that CII can be seen to have both thematic coherence and meaningful order, even without the NT parallel being exact. In the chapters that follow I attempt to move beyond the tentative suggestion of Williams, and examine in more detail the themes propagated in CII, specifically as they might have been of interest to a fourth century Pachomian community.

I contend that the codex flows logically from beginning to end as an enriching companion for its monastic readership who desired to attain to the highest realms of spiritual excellence, both individually and as part of their community, largely through a regime of ascetic devotion. Considering the seven tractates of CII in order, the following four chapters will examine their significance, each of which as we will see below was highly relevant to the Pachomian community of the fourth century:

1. *ApJohn*: A myth of origins, the human condition and salvation, as well as a prologue to other important themes of the codex.
2. *GThom* and *GPhil*: Ethics and lifestyle (esp. asceticism and social responsibility).
3. *HypArch* and *OrigWorld*: Cosmic eschatology and reassurance for the spiritually devoted.

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4. *ExSoul* and *ThomCont*: Individual eschatology and contemplation on the state of the soul.

In a short study seeking to assess the evidence for a monastic (but not specifically Pachomian) connection with ‘Gnosticism,’ Veilleux comes to the rather pessimistic conclusion that the workload would be too great for any immediate answers regarding potential similarities between Egyptian monastic asceticism and that represented in ‘gnostic’ texts. It is such generalism, however, that militates against progress in this area; even if asceticism was an area that all texts considered ‘gnostic’ agreed upon, this single factor would not be enough to identify any specific agreement with Egyptian monasticism, which itself is a huge field. It is for this reason that the present work proposes a more controlled method, limiting itself to a collective unit of NH texts (CII), and comparing them on specific issues to the literature from one representative of Egyptian monasticism, the Pachomians.

More recently, Rousseau has briefly discussed what he sees to be significant parallels between the NHC and the writings of two successors of Pachomius, Theodore and Horsiesius. Rousseau suggests that their understanding and handling of the OT betrays striking coherence with the concepts of creation, redemption and perfection, prophecy and fulfilment, and the ascetic life as an exemplary expression of God’s plan for humanity present in many of the NH texts. Horsiesius and Theodore, he argues, attempt to marry the “Jewish past” with fourth-century “Christian monastic culture,” and could easily have drawn on the ideology in the NHL towards such ends. As we will see throughout the course of the present work, the use of scripture, both OT and NT, in CII is of vital significance for understanding

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34 Rousseau, “The Successors of Pachomius,” 156.
its worldview, ethics, and theology. Rousseau argues that the Pachomian writers, and those who shared their way of thinking, could adapt the material of the NHC to their own use.\textsuperscript{35} What Rousseau hints at, is an environment in the fourth-century Christian Egyptian desert, where texts such as the NHC, and the ideas that they develop, were read alongside Christian scripture, the differences not overshadowed by the similarities. For the ascetic, the NHC could aid transportation “from the warnings and promises of the prophets into the transformation of his own heart and body.”\textsuperscript{36} The approach undertaken by Rousseau is one that requires further attention. The potential areas of overlap between the Pachomian literature and the NHC warrant examination not on a scale of how ‘gnostic’ either are, but to what degree they might have complimented each other’s message in the minds of monks living by the ethos promoted in the Pachomian Koinonia. In what follows, I will highlight some of the key aspects of Pachomian spirituality and practice, which I will argue are strongly supported in CII. Firstly, however, I will discuss the scholarship to date that has attempted – largely through codicological investigation – to prove or disprove a Pachomian connection to the NHL.

\textbf{Pachomian Ownership? Arguments from Codicology}

The field of Pachomian studies is large and complex, as we shall see not least in regard to the sources that we have relating to the movement. There is much to be discussed about the place of Pachomian monasticism in the landscape of fourth-century Egyptian Christianity, from its

\textsuperscript{35} Rousseau, “The Successors of Pachomius,” 156.
\textsuperscript{36} Rousseau, “The Successors of Pachomius,” 156.
relationship in its infancy to the ascetic movement most famously represented by Anthony, to its increasingly Alexandrian identity at the close of the century. My aim here is to construct an image of how the movement might have looked at the time when the NHC were likely in their possession, in order to better understand how they might have been used. We shall discuss below the problematic nature of our Pachomian Sources (Pach.S) for getting to the historical figure of Pachomius himself and the early movement under his rule. By the time of Pachomius’ death from a plague in 346 C.E. there existed nine coenobitic monasteries and two associated women’s houses along the Nile in Upper Egypt.

There were two important Pachomian monasteries at Phbow and Chenoboskia, five and a half and three and a half miles from the site of the NHL respectively. They were Pachomius’ second and third monasteries, and were flourishing by his death in 346 C.E. The majority of arguments for Pachomian ownership of the NHL, however, do not come from detailed examination of the similarities in ideology between the two (apart from the very general identification of asceticism in both), but from codicological investigation. Those in support of the monastic connection have viewed the cartonnage (waste paper used to strengthen the covers of the codices) as the most telling piece of evidence regarding their production. Barns for example, was provisionally happy to conclude that Pachomian ownership was the likelihood. 37 The cartonnage from codex VII contains dated material indicating a production date no earlier than 348 C.E. There is also suggestion that V, for example, is from no earlier than the start of the fourth century. 38 The collection is probably best dated to the middle of the fourth century, which in terms of Pachomian history, places it at the transition period between Pachomius’ rulership and that of his successors. This is

significant, as most of the Pach.S which we possess were written after Pachomius’ death, thereby placing them roughly contemporaneous with the likely date for the production of the NHC. As we shall see from consideration of the Pach.S, the agendas of two of Pachomius’ most influential successors, Theodore and Horsiesius, possibly meant that the NHC couldn’t have enjoyed a particularly long usage, perhaps less than a decade. However, some member/s during this period felt an affinity with them, and I suggest that a closer examination of some dominant themes and the sequencing of texts within CII illuminate a collection which Pachomian ideology would not have found alien.

The numerous documents used as cartonnage in the NHC were described and analysed in some detail, particularly in the work of Robinson, Browne, Barns and Shelton, and the documents in the NH covers are printed in the edited volume of the latter three scholars.39 Interestingly, CII along with III, X, XII and XIII do not contain any cartonnage, but that found in the remaining codices is varied in both genre and theme, and contains a mixture of Coptic and Greek papyri. Codex I contains both contracts and private letters. The contract was originally thought to speak of a “proestos” (the head of a monastery), and also names Chenoboskion. However, further investigation by E. G. Turner indicated that it actually refers to the head of a group of oil workers that were supplying oil to “Diospolis near Chenoboskia.”40 In Codex IV we find rationing documents for wine, wheat and barley, probably from a government office, whilst Codex VI contains taxation lists.41 It is only in Codex VII that we find religious documents (including some fragments of Genesis), and private letters which appear to be from Christians. Alongside these, however, we find more

contracts of sale and loan agreements.\textsuperscript{42} Of all the letters from the collection, only two are almost certainly from monks (72 and C8). The first of these has been sent by a woman to two monks, Sansnos and Psatos, asking them to find chaff for her asses and inform her of the cost. Shelton argues that this weakens the Pachomian connection because the movement would not likely have received such a letter or have been able to help with such an enquiry. Pachomians, he argues, sought to avoid such secular concerns.\textsuperscript{43}

This is one of the major criticisms by those who do not believe the Pachomians to have an obvious connection to the NH cartonnage. Wipszycka is one such scholar, also denying that other nearby coenobites could be responsible, as she claims that our picture of monastic spirituality as a whole does not evidence participation in economic dealings.\textsuperscript{44} However, this notion has been challenged.\textsuperscript{45} Goehring, for instance, argues that references to economic transactions and interactions with society are mentioned often only in passing in the monastic literature of Egypt, in order for the focus to stay centralised on the broader “spiritual truths” of the stories which contain them. Nonetheless, they are still present, and have been glossed over by much scholarship in the past.\textsuperscript{46} For example, Palamon, under whom Pachomius is said to have begun his ascetic career, is described in the Bohairic \textit{Vita (BO)} (9-10) as residing “a little way from the village” of Šeneset. No matter how much they might have liked the ideal of an existence cut off from the distractions of society at large, the harsh reality was that monks still needed to sustain themselves. Indeed, the \textit{BO} has Palamon admit so much to Pachomius, claiming that he undertakes work enough for essential bodily needs.

\textsuperscript{42} Shelton, “Introduction,” 4.
\textsuperscript{43} Shelton, “Introduction,” 7.
\textsuperscript{45} In favour of this argument is the evidence provided by the Dishna papers, discovered near the monastery at Phibow, which contain copies of letters from early Pachomian abbots, tax receipts, maths exercises, classical texts and a Greek grammar, in addition to biblical texts and apocryphal material. This led Robinson to believe that this collection of MSS is the remains of a Pachomian library. See James Robinson, “Reconstructing the First Christian Monastic Library” (Paper presented at the Smithsonian Institution Libraries, Washington D.C., September 15, 1986).
\textsuperscript{46} Goehring, \textit{Ascetics}, 41.
sustenance, giving surplus to the poor (10). These physical necessities were funded by selling goods that they had crafted, such as ropes and baskets, fruit harvested from orchards near to the monastery, and clothes made from shearing goats.47

The Pach.S detail numerous accounts of monks engaging in such commercial activity, often working in the nearby villages as well as out in the fields. Bagnall, drawing on the highly influential observations once made by Peter Brown,48 emphasises that the physical location of the monasteries in cultivated land, often having taken over abandoned villages, was highly significant in Pachomian self-definition.49 Unlike the holy men of Syria, Asia Minor and Palestine, who remained very much on the fringes of society, and interacted frequently with it, Brown once argued that Egyptian monks lived a closed off, inward looking existence, due to the sharp distinction in natural climate and landscape between the desert (ἔρημος) and surrounding inhabited land (οἰκουμένη). In order to survive, the desert monks effectively had to replicate a fortified village.50 Their proximity to the settled world effectively rendered them “alternative villages,” meaning that the Pachomians needed a clear idea of what it was that distinguished them from the rest of the world.51

Bagnall, like Goehring, draws different conclusions to those of Brown. Whilst Brown understood the proximity of the Pachomians to the civilised world as a factor that spurred more radical attempts to remove themselves, Bagnall and Goehring view it as something that aided a closer relationship with their surrounding social environment. The Pach.S which we have access to give a good deal of support to this latter theory, although emphasis still remains on the ideal of leaving one’s obligations to the world behind at the monastery gates. Very relevant here is a tale in both the BO and First Greek (G) Vitae about a young boy who

47 Goehring, Ascetics, 139-140.
51 Bagnall, Egypt in Late Antiquity, 295.
wishes to go and visit his parents. Pachomius insists that it is better he is granted his wish while he is still young and new to the monastic life, lest he become too unhappy and decide to leave altogether. With gradual learning, study and spiritual development he will come to understand why the community sees it beneficial not to engage with family and other aspects of their former life. The process, however, cannot be rushed, and some lenience must be exercised (BO 63, G1 67).

Returning to possible monastic references in the cartonnage, the second letter in question greets “all the brothers” and speaks of “my father Sansnos,” which has naturally led to speculation as to whether the two letters speak of the same person. Two other letters, 77 and 78, are addressed to a fellow presbyter, Sansnos, and the name is mentioned in various other letters, but there is no certainty that it is the same monk as in Letter 72. The name was common enough for this not to be argued too vigorously. The Coptic letters are generally more Christian in nature than the Greek. C4, for example, is a pious letter to Aphrodisios, a possible ascetic. One letter, C6, is from Papnoute to Pahome (Pachomius), and whilst the content is indiscernible, it is addressed to “my prophet and father Pachomius”. Papnoute (Papnuatius) was the name of the first general oeconome of all the Pachomian monasteries, and he and Pachomius lived together at Phbow. However, Pachomius is also not an uncommon name.

Shelton rightly questioned the relevance of these documents for identifying the producers of the codices, suggesting that evidence for a monastic connection is really limited to the papyri in Codex VII. Indeed, there is no compelling reason to connect the scribes of the codices and their binders, or in fact these two parties and the owners. A monastery could

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52 68, 73, 75, 76 and C5
have used its own waste documents for binding, but could also have used material sourced elsewhere for this very purpose, or even acquired the codices already bound. The NHC are written by different scribes, and it appears that no scribe has written the same tractate twice, suggesting that previously separate collections were later combined to form the library which we now have.

There have been various scholars who whilst not denying the potentiality of the monastery once owning the NHC, are unprepared to go so far as to argue that they had ideological affinity with them. According to Söderbergh the Vitae give the impression that Pachomius did not tolerate “unorthodoxy” and was extremely strict when it came to dogma. Moreover, Söderbergh claims that Doresse’s work showed that Theodore ordered the translation and reading of the 367 C.E. Festal Epistle of Athanasius prohibiting ‘heretical’ books throughout the Koinonia. The BO (189) has Theodore marvelling at Athanasius’ work, and warning against such apocryphal books which bore the names of the saints. A Pachomian fragment known as S³ also lashes out at the notion we find in various ‘Sethian’ texts that Cain was not fathered by Adam. The Paralipomena (Paral.) also stresses that Genesis holds the true account of man’s creation.

The credence that Söderbergh gives to the Vitae and other sources written after Pachomius’ death is unwarranted - the image constructed from such sources of an early movement that was rigidly ‘orthodox’ and equally concerned with ‘heresy’ as the developing Alexandrian Church has little reliable evidence. Taking a completely different approach, Krause posited that since the NHC were found buried in a cemetery, an argument can be

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57 Shelton, “Introduction,” n. 4, 2.
made for the documents simply having been buried with their owner, who need not have been Pachomian or even a monk of any community; the story of their concealment might not, then, have involved anything particularly interesting at all! The practice of burying books with their owners was a popular one in late antiquity.63 Indeed, the cemetery where the NHC were discovered was not Pachomian or even Christian, but rather the abandoned burial ground of the nearby Diospolis Parva and Chenoboskion.64

The observations of Goehring and other scholars may well provide further support for the cartonnage material having monastic origin. This said, it is my view that the connection here need not be laboured in order to argue that the NHC were at some point in the possession of the monks near to their eventual resting place. I do not, therefore, find Shelton and Wipszycka’s objections particularly damning. To start with, the Pachomians need not have been the producers of the NHC in order to have them in their possession and make use of them. It is entirely plausible that the codices were brought into the monastery by one or more entering candidates. Before restrictions came about over the reading material that was appropriate for right-thinking Christians, there is every reason to believe that Christian communities such as those in the Egyptian desert would have taken inspiration and guidance from a range of religious texts that in one way or another were seen to support their tenets.

64 See, for example, Doresse, Secret Books, 131-134, and Säve Söderbergh, The Pagan Elements in Early Christianity and Gnosticism (Laval: Laval University Press, 1981), 78. Dorresse, Secret Books, 131-132, describes the caves in the cliff face at the site of the NHC discovery, including one part way up the cliff face where a Coptic monk has painted chapters from Psalms in red on the walls. This is the only visible Christian trace in the area. However, Dorresse ponders whether these caves might have been among the tombs that the Vitae claim Pachomius retreated into to endure temptations.
The work of Williams and King has been significant in that it highlighted the dangers of studying the early centuries of Christianity with rigid perceptions of ‘orthodoxy’ and ‘heresy.’ Study of Pachomian monasticism must also be subject to the same caution. Much more detailed analysis needs to be undertaken of the NHC alongside specific Egyptian monastic sources, as far as possible free from the generalising preconceptions of ‘Gnosticism’ which are so inhibiting. Both sets of texts need to be viewed first and foremost as expressions of fourth-century Christianity. This is what I will aim to do through analysis of CII alongside that of the Pach.S.

The biographical tradition of Pachomius was specific to the Koinonia. It was characterised by an anxious desire to keep an endangered memory alive in times of controversy.65 The Vitae are somewhat more reliable than the Rule, which Jerome translated into Latin in 404 C.E., as the scripts that Jerome used were part of a stage of development in “Pachomian legislation” that was more than a generation after Pachomius’ death.66 Although we have a wealth of sources relating to the Pachomian movement, the reliability of most of them for their portrayal of the historical Pachomius and the coenobitic movement in his day is highly suspect. This will be discussed in more detail below. The literature that we possess

66 Rousseau, Pachomius, 48.
can be divided into three rough periods, helpfully illustrated by Goehring,\(^{67}\) two of which are of relevance to the present thesis:

**Period One** - Pachomius’ lifetime from the institution of the Tabennese monastery to his death (ca. 323-346 C.E.):

*Letters of Pachomius*

*Instruction of Pachomius*

**Period Two** – The movement under Theodore and later Horsiesius’ authority (ca. 346 – 400 C.E.):

*Vitae*

*Paralipomena*

*Letter of Ammon*

*Pachomian Rule*

*Letters of Theodore*

*Letters of Horsiesius*

*Instructions of Horsiesius*

*Regulations of Horsiesius*

*Testament of Horsiesius*

The *Vitae* survive in various Coptic (both Sahidic and Bohairic), Greek, Arabic and Latin versions. The translation of the *Vitae* and the Pachomian *Rule* into Greek and Latin

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\(^{67}\) Goehring, *Ascetics*, 164.
hints at their wide distribution and testifies to the prominent position which the Pachomians occupied in the growing coenobitic movement. Debates over the priority of the numerous versions of the Vita have been active since the work in the nineteenth century by scholars such as Émile Amélineau and Georg Grützmacher, both who favoured the Coptic. The intricacies of the source analysis into the Vitae are too complex to summarise here. The helpful summaries given by Rousseau and Veilleux, including genealogical tables, outline the current conclusions, which view Sahidic to be the language of the most primitive Vita. In addition to the Vitae we have the Rule of Pachomius, which survives in Coptic and Greek fragments, and was translated into Latin by Jerome, as well as the Rule of Horsiesius, and letters and instructions from Pachomius, Theodore and Horsiesius. Other consulted sources are the Paral., a series of Greek anecdotes, which are integrated into nearly all the Greek Vitae, and Palladius’ Lausiac History (LH), which refers to the Tabennesiotes (i.e. monasteries which used the Pachomian Rule) at several junctures.

Scholars wishing to access historical details about Pachomius himself, and the early movement that bore his name, have a difficult task. Hagiographical writings suffer as much from polemical overtones as does the heresiographical literature that long coloured scholarship on Gnosticism. As we shall see, this is a characteristic detectable in the Pach.S, and is telling of the movement’s growing relationship with Alexandria during the second period as listed above. The comparison by Goehring of one particular ‘heresy’ pericope in several versions throughout the Pachomian source material has well illustrated the trajectory of this development. Each of these sources relates a vision experienced by

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69 See the second chapter of Rousseau, Pachomius, 37-55, and Veilleux’s introduction to volume 1 of his Pachomian Koinonia: The Lives, Rules, and Other Writings of Saint Pachomius and his Disciples, (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian, 1980), 1-21, for detailed discussion of the MSS traditions.
70 These are BO, the Arabic Vitae that appears to be translated from the Coptic, G, Ep. Amm., and Paral.
Pachomius, in which he sees some monks being led astray from the true light of the gospel by a few defectors. The BO (103) explains these men as heretics and schismatics, including some bishops, who erroneously claim that theirs is the true dogma.\textsuperscript{71} The account and interpretation in the G\textsuperscript{1} (102) is briefer, but largely similar to the Coptic, viewing heresy as a force of darkness in the world, obscuring the ‘lamp’ which is faith in Christ.\textsuperscript{72}

\textit{Ep. Amm.} (written by a monk who arrived at Phbow in around 352 C.E., six years after the death of Pachomius), has Pachomius tell the story of his vision to Theodore, in response to Theodore’s own claim that after being visited by someone from Alexandria who had warned him of the dangerous beliefs of the Arians, he himself had a vision of three identical pillars, which contrary to Arian teachings, represented the undivided Trinity (11). Pachomius then explains that as a young monk he was approached by followers of Melitius the Lycopolitan as well as those of Marcion, compelling him to join them. After appealing to God in his confusion, he is granted the vision. This time, voices from various regions all profess to have the truth, and each of the voices has many followers. It is only the eastern region of the world, however, in which a lamp shines. Pachomius hears a voice advising that this is indeed the true Gospel of Christ. The heretical voices are specifically related to Arian wiles, while the true Gospel of Christ is identified with Alexander, bishop of the holy church of Alexandria (12).\textsuperscript{73}

Finally, we have \textit{Paral.} (17), in which Pachomius is given a vision of a divided monastic community. On the one hand, his monasteries have expanded and many monks are “perfected.” On the other, however, there are many monks walking through a dark valley, lacking the ability to climb out. The fortunate few who do manage to emerge from the depths

\textsuperscript{71} Goehring, \textit{Ascetics}, 144-145.
\textsuperscript{72} Goehring, \textit{Ascetics}, 146.
\textsuperscript{73} Goehring, \textit{Ascetics}, 147. See also Goehring, \textit{The Letter of Ammon and Pachomian Monasticism} (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1986).
of the darkness are greeted with a light. The explanation of this vision is that there will be some monks who neglect their spiritual duties to their brethren, leading to great error and failing among the community. Unfortunately, these negligent ones will be greater in number than the attentive ones and will come to control the monasteries and persecute the good. There is no explicit reference to false dogma here, however, or to outside ‘heretics’ causing ructions, rather, Pachomius is concerned about the possibility of neglectful leaders forcing the community to lose its way.⁷⁴

The *BO* account relates the vision specifically to the Pachomian community – after Pachomius has been instructed as to its meaning, he gathers those particular brothers whom in his vision he saw being led astray and tries to compel them to remain steadfast. Unfortunately, his attempt is unsuccessful, and they are eventually lost. Goehring points out, however, that the interpretation of the latter part of the vision seems to move away from the specifics about the Pachomian community and instead refers more broadly to bishops and heretics! This, he argues, suggests a later addition to the account which aims its rhetoric towards problems which would later develop.⁷⁵ The shorter *G¹* account makes a more general point about heresy and seeks to bring the monastery under Alexandrian ‘orthodoxy.’ When Theodore, who himself had connections with Alexandria, became abbot at Phbow in 351 C.E., this relationship took a firmer hold. Indeed, when we are introduced to Theodore the Alexandrian in *G¹*, his closeness to Athanasius is much more prominent than it is in *BO* (*BO* 89, *G¹* 94). The concern with Arian ‘heresy’ is prominent in both, however, one interesting example being the story of an Imperial general, Artemios, who comes to the monastery in search of Athanasius. When the general asks to have someone pray with him, Theodore’s

⁷⁴ Goehring, *Ascetics*, 148. Goehring misses an interesting comparison here with a pericope in *BO* (66) in which Pachomius sees a vision of the community in turmoil, some are trapped in a deep ravine, unable to get out. Pachomius interprets this as the struggle that the community will face after his death, with no suitable leader to guide them.

⁷⁵ Goehring, *Ascetics*, 155, suggests this could be post-Chalcedonian tension in the fifth and sixth centuries between Monophysite and Melchite communities.
second in command, Psahref explains that all the brothers have been forbidden from praying with strangers until the Church is set right from Arian heresy (BO 186, G\textsuperscript{I} 137-138)!

As time went on and the climate of Egyptian Christianity changed, the Pachomian movement was forced to adapt. The original unrest in the community which probably inspired the vision account in the first instance is unknown to us. Whatever the case may be, we should take from a comparison of these accounts that ‘orthodoxy’ was something that came to be identified with Pachomius by his later biographers, and as such they reveal much more about these individuals than the community founder himself.\textsuperscript{76} When the Vitae were taking shape at the end of the fourth century, debates were also underway over Origen’s writings, and it is, therefore, unsurprising that we find reference to the evils of this author’s works. Pachomius is said to throw a work of Origen into the water in G\textsuperscript{I} (31), and Paral. (7) has him advise some visiting anchorites whom he suspects of reading Origen’s work to do the same. That these pericopes were a later addition might be indicated in that Palladius (a follower of Origen) describes the monks of Pachomius’ first monastery at Tabennese in very positive terms in his HL. Surely Pachomius would not have been so hospitable to Palladius had they differed on this crucial matter.

Brakke sums up the issue, arguing that Athanasius’ own interest in the Pachomian movement increased with its growth in numbers and significance within the Egyptian church. In 330 C.E., the Vitae record a visit of the bishop to the monastery at Tabennese during which the bishop of Tentyra, Sarapion wished to ordain Pachomius as a priest. We shall return to this incident below, but essentially, Pachomius refuses on the grounds that it would conflict with his desire for a community of equals. Athanasius supports him, which for Brakke indicates that at this early stage, at least, the bishop of Alexandria did not see any urgent need

\textsuperscript{76} Goehring, Ascetics, 159.
to force the monastery to become officially tied to the Alexandrian episcopate. By 368 C.E., however, the situation was very different, and we see Athanasius involved in the leadership transition from Theodore to Horsiesius (BO 204, G^1 145).77

The questionable historicity of the Pachomian Vitae are less troublesome for the present work, in that the period with which we are chiefly concerned is that of the mid-fourth century, rather than the origins of the Pachomian movement. This being the case, the attitudes and agendas of Pachomius’ biographers, stemming from precisely this period, can actually be of some use in constructing an image of how the movement perceived itself, and wished to portray itself at the point when the NHC might have been a) present in the monastery, and b) beginning to be of concern to those in charge.

*Pachomian Ideology and Practice*

As we have seen, the codicological evidence for the NHC dates them roughly to the middle of the fourth century. It seems that the movement suffered a crisis of leadership after the death of Pachomius in 346 C.E. He had named Petronios as his successor (BO 120, G^1 114), despite a desire among the monks to appoint Theodore. As it happened, Petronius enjoyed authority for only two and a half months before his life was claimed by the very plague that killed Pachomius. Before his death, however, he named Horsiesius from the monastery at Chenoboskion as his successor (BO 130, G^1 117). He lasts only just over a year before the monks revolt against him in an attempt to voice unmistakably their continued preference for Theodore. Horsiesius is forced to step down, and Theodore is installed (BO 139, G^1 127-130).

It is Theodore, ruling for eighteen years, who brings the Pachomian movement more closely in line with the church in Alexandria.

The NHC were in all likelihood removed from the monastery during Theodore’s time as abbot. As was suggested many years ago by Doresse, this may well have been in response to Athanasius’ letter of 367 C.E. 78 Theodore died in 368 C.E. (BO 206, G\textsuperscript{l} 148), just one year after Athanasius’ letter, so whether it was indeed him or his successor Horsiesius (who is reinstated in his former role – BO 208, G\textsuperscript{l} 149) who made the possible damning decision is uncertain. Precisely at which point the NHC entered the monastery also remains unclear; if their dating to the mid-fourth century is correct, it must have been some time between Pachomius’ death and the probable purging of such ‘dangerous’ texts after Athanasius’ letter. This of course means that they quite possibly only enjoyed a position in the Pachomian library for around a decade.

The above discussion indicates that it is unhelpful to use assumptions about Pachomian ‘orthodox’ belief to militate against the possibility that texts such as the NHC might have been of appeal to some members of the community at some point. Far more useful would be a consideration of what the sources tell us about the character of the movement, in terms of practice and community aims. As we have seen, the sources betray certain changes as the movement developed and came under the leadership of different individuals. However, leaving aside the ‘heresy’ debates that were evidently ensuing, and with an awareness that information about Pachomius himself in particular is of dubious historical value, we can glean from the sources some elements of the Pachomian community ideal that offer clues as to why the NHC might have chimed very clear with its members. I will demonstrate in what follows that the picture we can gather from the sources mentioned

78 Doresse, Secret Books, 135.
above is that the Pachomian movement had at its heart the idea of mutually supportive, yet individual and self-aware spiritual development, largely achieved through asceticism, and a basic denouncing of the distractions, both material and those more directly affecting the body’s desires.  

The Pachomians viewed themselves as ἀποτακτικοί (renouncers), and constructed their spiritual identity accordingly. The Coptic recensions of the Vita and the Greek Excerpta of the Rule use this term to identify the monks and to describe the objective for new members to strive towards. However, their renunciation took on a form different from that of the anchoritic hermits in that the Pachomians practiced their ascesis within a community of likeminded comrades. The movement was one of mutual concern, and the responsibility of each brother to edify those around him and take care not to lead them astray was frequently reinforced. These key aspects of Pachomian ideology find support within the NHC, and in particular, in CII. That ascetic practice was an important feature of Pachomian life cannot be denied. Even before his conversion the Vitae cement the image of Pachomius as averse to sexual and other earthly pleasures. We read of one occasion in Pachomius’ youth when he is sent out by his parents to deliver meat, and of his disgust when the daughter of the house he visits propositions him to sleep with her (BO 5). Later on when conscripted in the army, he rebukes his fellow soldiers when they compel him to join with them in “worldly pleasures” in the cities (BO 7, GI 5).

Throughout the Vitae, we read of the ascetic feats of Pachomius himself in precisely the manner one would expect a hero of hagiography to be portrayed. When John, Pachomius’

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79 Rousseau, Pachomius, 119. Although, see above discussion – they did not entirely remove themselves from societal affairs. See the discussions which follow below also, which show that the Pachomians did operate and in fact value a degree of moderation as regards ascetic vigour.

80 Goehring, Ascetics, 58, who also notes that two Coptic sources, a catechesis attributed to Pachomius and an epistle attributed to Athanasius use this term as part of a tripartite description of Egyptian monasticism: παρθένοι (female ascetics), ἄναχωρηταί (solitary ascetics), and ἀποτακτικοί (those commonly known as coenobites, if we adopt the use of the term by Cassian and Jerome).
older brother arrives after Palamon’s death, they exist on two loaves and a small amount of salt each day, wearing only hair garments and praying in extremely hot places to test their bodies to the limit. BO tells us that they would not kneel during the night causing their feet to swell, and gnats would bite their hands until they bled (19). Later on in his career, when the Koinonia is established, Pachomius practices such excessive ascesis that he makes himself ill to the point of death. When he is brought to the infirmary, however, he encounters another ill brother who had been asking his carers for a little meat. They would not give it to him, and his condition was severe. Pachomius is furious, and insists that they do whatever the ill monk asks (BO 48, G^1 51-53). The impression that we get from this story is that while Pachomius is perfectly happy to push himself to physical limits, a degree of lenience is operated with others. His biographers, of course, wish to portray him as an exemplar in every respect, so documenting his ascetic triumph alongside compassion for a weaker brother does not seem out of place. However, it seems that this example which Pachomius sets is not intended to be copied by the entire community. On the contrary, the Pach.S as a whole advocates a very balanced approach to bodily asceticism, and is damning of those who abuse it.

Pachomius states explicitly that the lowliest in the Koinonia, who do not practice excessive ascesis will be much greater in God’s kingdom that the anchorite. These individuals who follow the rules and don’t attempt to outdo them will be rewarded (BO 105). Moreover, the anchorite misses out on the great opportunity which the coenobite is afforded; that is, an arena not only to develop one’s own spiritual life, but to positively impact upon that of those around him. Ascesis for its own sake is strongly discouraged, a monk should not view his feats as a competition with himself or others; this leads only to vainglory, and has not God at its centre. BO 64 tells the story of one monk who has fallen into this trap, and is subsequently chastised by Pachomius who insists that he must eat and do as the other brothers do. The brother ignores his advice, and when Pachomius and Theodore visit his cell
later, his vainglory manifests itself as a devil which compels him to try and kill Theodore with a rock!

There is another aspect to such arrogance over physical feats, however, which is expressed in two similar tales. The first occurs while Pachomius is still residing with Palamon. One day, a boastful monk visits them at their cell, and compels them to walk on hot coals to prove themselves as holy men. Disgusted at the monk’s desire to test God, Palamon curses the demon that is filling the man’s heart with such thoughts. Undeterred and eager to impress, the monk himself walks over the coals unscathed, much to the awe of the young Pachomius. Palamon, however, explains that his marvelling is unwarranted – it was the Lord who allowed this act through the intervention of a demon (BO 14, G1 8). The act serves only to show that God, rather than the monk himself, was in control of this situation. Paral. (33) tells a similar tale whereby some monks come to the monastery and try to convince Pachomius to walk on water with them. Whilst learning to suppress the body’s base desires was seen as very much a part of building a closer relationship to God, using one’s body for vainglory, practicing ascesis beyond what has been deemed beneficial by the community Rule, then, is met with reprimand. The Rule does in fact prescribe instructions for those who wish to practice slightly greater abstinence, in that smaller loaves may be requested for this purpose. This must be sanctioned by the housemaster, however; regulation is the key - no monk must take it upon himself to design his own regime.

The daily routine prescribed in the Rule aimed to produce a discipline within which the monk, with guidance from his superiors, could learn to master his mind and body. Unlike the solitary ascetics and the Syrian stylites that came a century after Pachomius, his

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81 On the role of demons and spiritual conflicts in the Pach.S see Rousseau, Pachomius, 134-142. The notion of God’s allowance of evil thoughts and actions through demons occurs more than once in the Vitae.
82 Pachomius, we are told, does in fact expel some monks from the monastery when he discovers that they have “carnal mind[s]” (BO 24, G1 38).
movement did not look to pursue physical hardship and competition for the sake of it. As Rousseau puts it, “moderation and practicality seem to have been the hallmark of ascetic practice.” In *Ep. Amm.*, Theodore is said to advise the brothers not to fast excessively and “beyond [one’s] strength” (21). Palladius writes that in terms of food, the Pachomians were relatively lenient (*LH* 32.11), with a variety of foods and more than one meal each day.\(^\text{84}\) Clothing was simple, but perfectly adequate. Disproportionate discomfort was not viewed as beneficial to the health of individuals or the community. The body and the inner self were viewed as closely related, and in fact Theodore is said to have rebuked one monk who was teaching that the flesh doesn’t rise, and is wholly evil (*Ep. Amm.*, 26). The most significant goals were achieved inside, not in the visible world. This is why visible, bodily asceticism needed to be valued appropriately – it was a means to a much greater end, not an end in itself.

Towards the end of the Pachomian *Rule*, which we should note was not translated by Jerome until sixty years after Pachomius had died, there are some prescriptions that seem to be aimed at minimising physical contact between monks. As the movement grew, it would have attracted a range of monks – some likely had to endure puberty in the monastery, some had left wives or entered after becoming widowed. The very end of the *Rule* even states that a monk might be permitted to visit the women’s house if it contains the mother of his children (*Precepts* 143). The ability that such individuals had to cope with sexual abstinence would likely have often caused issue, leading to the need for stronger regulations over such issues. Overall, however, moderation in ascetic practice best characterises the prescription of the Pach.S.

The attitude of balance and lenience stretched to other areas of community life as well. The sick were relieved from work and the routine of the community, and the other

\(^{83}\) Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 122.

\(^{84}\) Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 120.
brothers would watch out for their needs at night. The monasteries received constant visitors who were to be welcomed and received gladly. Relatives were also visited, and allowed to visit especially if someone was ill. Central was the notion that each monk must do only what was appropriate to his skill level and ability, be this with regard to fasting, work or study (*HL* 32.2). The community sought to foster a nurturing environment where as Palladius states, the *Rules* ensure that even “the little ones” might have a chance at spiritual fulfilment. However, he also states that the “perfect” do not need such legislation (HL 32.7). G further claims that order is a good thing, but the perfect will still triumph even in disorder. Rousseau questions whether the “order” (τάξις) that G speaks of is specifically in reference to the Rule’s *Praecepta*, and concludes that it is probably not. Rather, originally these were simply written for the monks at Phbow as a reminder on how to best conduct themselves, but were not intended to incite rigid conformity. Only in the later sources do we begin to see a division between those brothers who were “perfected” and those who weren’t. In the earlier material, “perfect” likely just referred to the final stage of one’s spiritual growth, rather than a designation of a higher class of ascetic.

The organisation of the monastery did, of course, involve various superiors - housemasters, stewards, ministers etc. who are referred to throughout the Pachomian corpus. Leadership was certainly a factor, but such standing came with responsibility to edify one’s charges and be a model for their behaviour - the brothers must be allowed to develop at their own pace. Indeed, when Theodore’s mother and brother come to visit him, he at first refuses to see them. His brother weeps and begs to join the monastery. Theodore treats him harshly, which is met by chastisement from Pachomius, who tells Theodore that new members required extra special care and instruction until they become firmly rooted in the

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86 Different from the Theodore who later succeeds Pachomius as leader.
community (BO 37-38, G\(^I\) 37, 65). Pachomius seemingly wished to promote as far as possible equality amongst the brothers, so that each can develop to his own potential without feeling the need to outdo another and risk becoming vainglorious. For this reason, Pachomius ideally did not want clerics in the monastery lest superior rank caused arrogance, or jealousy on the part of other brothers should arise. He wanted to avoid schism in the community, and prescribes that any clergy wishing to be a part of the monastery must embrace the rules in the same way as anyone else – their ecclesiastical rank was worth nothing inside the monastery walls (BO 25, G\(^I\) 27). When Athanasius visits following his appointment as archbishop of Alexandria, Serapion, bishop of Nitentori asks him to appoint Pachomius into the priesthood so that he might rule over all the monks in his diocese. Fearful that he himself might be forced to act against his opposition to such rank, Pachomius hides. Athanasius sympathises, however, and lets him be excused, out of respect for his humility (BO 28, G\(^I\) 30).

Interestingly, however, Palladius refers to a classification system by which Pachomius divided his monks (HL 32.4-5). According to Palladius there were 24 classes, each referred to by a Greek letter. Pachomius and the senior monks seemingly used this as a type of coded language when talking about the brothers with each other. Palladius is not too specific about what constituted each class, however. Veilleux suggests that it may be that this system is what Jerome refers to in his Preface (2) to the Pachomian Rule when he speaks of “tribes” that houses of monks are divided into, and also the “classes” referred to in BO’s description of the monastery organisation.\(^87\)

The monks were encouraged to be responsible for not only themselves, but one another as well. BO (105) offers a telling tale in this respect, of a monk who “scandalises” the soul of another brother. This is deemed worse than any damage that he could do to himself.

As we saw earlier, the advantage of the coenobitic life was the opportunity it provided to encourage others. The danger which comes attached, however, is that one risks leading others astray. The *Rule* is equally damning of an individual who perverts the soul of a simple brother, or implores the other brothers with dangerous words. This individual will receive a harsh punishment of beating before the gates, and fed only bread and water if he doesn’t repent when first admonished (*Precepts and Judgements* 4).

The above discussion of the Pach.S outlines some lines of inquiry for the rest of the thesis. The tendency of many scholars in the fields of Egyptian monastic studies, NH studies and even codicology, to evaluate the potential Pachomian connection to the NHC with unhelpful constructions of ‘Gnosticism,’ ‘orthodoxy’ and ‘heresy’ must be left behind if the question is to be adequately considered. The Pach.S pertaining to doctrinal affiliations should be treated with a critical awareness of the movement’s changing position in the Egyptian Church’s emerging schismatic identity. Equally, those who study the NHL must widen their scope of interpretation and be more prepared to understand the texts not simply in their immediate context as a tractate in an eclectic collection, but in terms of what they might tell us about the fourth-century Egyptian Christian mind. As Mark Goodacre states in his recent monograph on the *GThom*, ‘words like ‘orthodoxy’ are firmly out of favour. Talk of ‘Christianities’ is in.’\(^88\) The NHL and the Pach.S must, then, both be viewed as expressions of Egyptian Christianity in the fourth century. Their similarities and differences can then be explored without the ineffectual concern that points of harmony may drag Pachomius and his later followers into the realms of ‘heresy,’ or that the NHL might be elevated to new levels of accord with the Alexandrian Church. Through exegetical engagement with CII, considered alongside the Pach.S discussed here, I hope to approach the question of a connection between the two afresh. Moreover, I shall argue that the ordering of tractates in CII is significant in

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enhancing its overarching messages; messages that would have rang clear with a Pachomian readership.
THE APOCRYPHON OF JOHN AS A THEMATIC PROLOGUE

The Significance and Prominence of the Apocryphon of John

The themes sketched out in the introduction as identifiably present in both CII and the Pach.S, I suggest are present from the very outset. I hope to demonstrate in this chapter that by beginning with a multi-faceted myth of the situation of mankind, and more specifically, the soul in search of completion, the foundational ethics and doctrines laid out in Genesis are challenged and adapted by ApJohn in a manner that allowed its fourth-century monastic readers to develop their self-understanding as souls on an active search for betterment. The ApJohn’s perspective, which sees the true God as the zenith of knowledge, goodness and rationality not tainted by desiring passions, spoke to their ascetic ideology. By committing themselves to a coenobitic life, these individuals went against the grain of wider Greco-Roman socio-political life, which saw material wealth, and human institutions of power as divinely granted privileges. The institution of marriage and production of children ensured that hierarchical order penetrated every aspect of life. The quiet method of resistance practiced by the Egyptian coenobites had no use for such things. As we shall see, ApJohn’s critique of sexuality attacks impulsive, violent, lusts, rather than sexual union altogether. Its portrayal of the malevolent archons emphasises their ignorance and stresses that ultimately, with the help of the Spirit, humanity will overcome them due to its primal connection to the Divine Realm. Christ’s revelation to John inspires its readers to focus their minds on the
individual battle of overcoming base passions, looking always to strengthen the influence of the Spirit’s presence.

*ApJohn* appears in four different versions, three of which are from NH (NHCII, III and IV – the text appears in the primary position in each of these). The fourth is found in Codex Berolinensis Gnosticus (BG) 8505 (now often referred to as the Berlin Codex). The version in NHC IV appears to be copied from the same version as CII, and so will not be specifically referred to unless it offers a possible textual reconstruction in the case of lacunae or homoioteleuton in CII.¹ The MSS of II and IV represent a longer version than those of BG and III. Waldstein and Wisse state that the scribes of II and IV were primarily copyists rather than redactors,² but II does contain some noteworthy variations from the shorter versions in III and BG which we will see to have relevance for the Pachomian argument. The fact that the text appears in three separate codices at NH is testament to its significance. However, what is of chief interest here is its significance and role within CII, and even more so, whether the variations between the versions of the text can provide any evidence of an overall agenda/s in CII.

Williams suggests that *ApJohn* works as a type of ‘Genesis alternative’; however, I hope to show that *ApJohn*’s function in CII is not restricted to providing a creation myth and elaborating on the moral consequences that follow. It also forms part of a larger picture in CII that reflects the way its monastic readers viewed their place in the world as spiritually advanced Christians, and also how they should understand and behave both among their own brethren and wider society. One of the most significant traits of the version in CII, which not only sets it apart from others, but makes it even more relevant for its Pachomian audience is its position on sexuality, which as we shall see in the course of this thesis, is consistent with

² Waldstein and Wisse, *Synopsis*, 5.
that portrayed in other CII texts. In order to see how and why ApJohn could have been viewed by its fourth century monastic audience as perfectly readable alongside Genesis, this chapter will highlight three prominent topics, all of which we have seen to be of import to the Pachomians, which I will argue can subsequently be traced in the progressive development of CII as a whole:

1. Overcoming worldly ties and passions, particularly sexual desire.
2. The essentiality of sharing salvific knowledge.
3. The struggle of the individual soul.

CII contains two other texts that also offer material relating to creation and the cosmic powers, OrigWorld and the HypArch. However, as we shall see in chapter three, these texts are valued in CII for reasons other than this, hence their later placement. ApJohn seems a logical choice to open the codex, with its lengthy and detailed description of the origins of the universe, and perhaps even more importantly its reference to each of the abovementioned topics, all of which will be expanded upon throughout the codex. Moreover, it seems to be well established in certain early Christian circles. The fact that we have four copies can tell us this at least. One of ApJohn’s most commonly cited uses is that by Irenaeus (AH I.29), where he appears to quote it in explanation of Valentinian cosmic understanding. There is still no certainty, however, that this is indeed Irenaeus’ source.³

³ Zlatko Pleše, Poetics of the Gnostic Universe: Narrative and Cosmology in the Apocryphon of John (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 1, argues against the Irenaeus section being from ApJohn. Although it presents a similar cosmogony, he argues that Irenaeus’ version differs in both theological and linguistic detail from ApJohn. It may be that he had a different Greek version, or another ‘gnostic’ document.
The Narrative

The text embeds its mythical narrative of the Divine Realm and re-interpretation of Genesis within a revelatory speech given by the Saviour to his disciple, John. 4 The text begins with John being questioned in the temple by a Pharisee named Arimanios. He asks John where his master, Jesus, has gone. John replies that the Saviour has returned to the “place from whence he came.” The Pharisee, however, insists that Jesus has led John into error, tempting him away from the traditions of his fathers. John becomes upset at this accusation, and leaves the temple for the mountain. Here, he begins to question why Jesus was indeed sent into the world, who the Saviour’s true father is, and where it is that mankind will ultimately end up. As he ponders these issues, the heavens open and creation shines with a heavenly light. The earth trembles, and before John’s eyes appears a child, manifested as an old man and embodying many other forms. The figure addresses John as follows:

‘Do not [be] faint-hearted! I am the one [who is with you] always. I am [the Father]. I am the mother. I am the son. I am the undefiled and the uncontaminated One. [Now I have come to teach you] what is, [and what was,] and what will come to [pass]…’ (II 2:12-18)

The Saviour offers John an alternative interpretation of much of what is written in Genesis, including the origins of the universe and the make-up of the spiritual realms. We are introduced to various beings that inhabit the Pleroma, the highest and most blessed of all being the transcendent Father of the All. The Saviour lists the Father’s attributes at length, portraying him as an eternal, immeasurable being that is beyond the constraints of time and boundaries. He is the source and giver of life, knowledge and goodness, always merciful and

charitable. This being is the primal power, and as such, enjoys ruling authority. As has been noted by most scholars who have studied the text, such theology aligns the text with Middle Platonic philosophy, which was perfectly comfortable with the idea of mixing a variety of theological concepts into its notion of the Deity.

Turner has published extensively on this subject,\(^5\) and more recently Plešë has argued that Jesus’ identification speech in particular is extremely Platonic in character.\(^6\) As Plešë sees it, the text is effectively “the Saviour’s reading of the *Timaeus,*” with the two texts presenting a similar order of cosmogony. There are of course differences, such as the structuring of the Pleroma.\(^7\) In addition, however, Plešë also argues that *ApJohn* can be understood as an interpretative key to the fourth gospel, supplying a narrative and building upon the gospel where it lacks in polemic. He argues that the narrative transforms names into symbols and history into paradigm. For example, the account of the encounter between the Pharisee and John is transformed into a cosmic conflict between the “children of light” and the dark powers.\(^8\) For Luttikhuizen, *ApJohn* represents an intra-Christian debate about the value of the OT. The critique of the Mosaic books is a Christian feature; however, the author is not turning a pre-Christian Jewish text into a Christian revelation from the Christian saviour, but rather adding Christ’s authority to a “Gnostic-Christian” text.\(^9\) By utilising in its description both the language of devotional religious piety as well as intellectual terminology, *ApJohn* is able to stretch across the borders of the diverse range of its contemporary spiritual and intellectual movements. As King notes, the text as a whole is not afraid to blend


\(^{6}\) Plešë, *Poetics*, 47.

\(^{7}\) Plešë, *Poetics*, 47-49.

\(^{8}\) Plešë, *Poetics*, 21, 24.

\(^{9}\) Luttikhuizen, *Gnostic Revisions*, 19.
philosophy, numerology, mythical narrative and theological musings in order to tell its story.\textsuperscript{10}

We are told how the Father created his female consort, Barbelo/Pronoia (also called Ennoia and Protennoia), the great virginal spirit and mother of all, in his image. A variety of names and pronouns are used to refer to Pronoia, such as Mother, Father, First Human, Spirit, Mother-Father etc. The transcendence of the Divine Realm above the constraints of gender is exemplified here, in addition to Pronoia’s multiple roles.\textsuperscript{11} Those figures in the Divine Realm whose gender is more concrete, namely Sophia and the male and female pairs of aeons are in all likelihood represented as such in order to stress deeper truths of the Divine household. The fact that Sophia is specifically female fits with other parts of the longer version that have females more closely associated with sexual desire. This will be elaborated upon below. As the narrative proceeds, Sophia’s promiscuity becomes apparent. The male and female pairing of aeons, as we shall see, represents the ideal pairing in the divine world, where the union of the genders is not borne out of lust or uncontrollable desire, but out of recognition of one’s own likeness in another. Creation is effectively the product of Divine beings emanating themselves in an “orderly and authorised process” sanctioned by the one, true, originating principle – the Father.\textsuperscript{12} The Divine Realm is a unified one, hence it being referred to as “The All,” and provides the model for everything that will later come to be formed in the realms below. Nothing in these lower places can match the greatness of the Divine Realm, but instead will exist as imitations.

This image of perfection in the All, however, is followed by something much less idealistic, as we are given the text’s explanation for the root and creation of evil. Problems begin when Sophia desires to creates offspring without the cooperation and involvement of

\textsuperscript{10} King, Secret Revelation, 86.
\textsuperscript{11} King, Secret Revelation, 136.
\textsuperscript{12} King, Secret Revelation, 88.
her male consort. Her aim is to conceive a thought that resembles her own likeness. She is successful in her attempt at creation, but because she acts alone, while her creation has within it something of the divine nature of the Spirit and Foreknowledge, her image is far from represented (II 10:3-7).

Her child, Ialdabaoth (also known as Saklas and Samael, and frequently referred to as the Demiurge), is an abomination, who becomes the ignorant, and hedonistic creator of the world, referring to himself as “God” in abject defiance of the true Deity. Despite her actions, Sophia is not represented as malevolent. Rather, it is her female sexual desire that drives her to act out of accordance with the ways of the Divine realm. Gilhus has argued that ApJohn views femaleness and sexuality as interconnected and condemned, as opposed to maleness, which along with androgyny is considered to be tied to knowledge and salvation.13 By leaving her male consort out of the process, the ideal unity that male and female union embodies is tarnished.14 This notion will form part of the discussion later in this chapter. This tearing apart of the oneness embodied by the Divine household tragically paves the way for injustice in the form of Ialdabaoth’s rulers. The Deity is the ideal representation of just rule; the attempt of Ialdabaoth and his minions to replicate this below, results in a deformed parody.15

The many faces and forms that Ialdabaoth has make him easily visible and subject to semantic description.16 His despicable appearance accurately reflects his inner character as an ignorant, violent being. Unfortunately, however, while the Demiurge has nothing of the depth and breadth of power and knowledge of the Deity, he does have some power. Due to the spark of glorious light that remains inside him due to his mother, he fancies himself a “God”.

14 King, Secret Revelation, 90.
15 King, Secret Revelation, 95.
He attempts to mimic the Deity by creating his own flawed version of the Divine Realm.

King notes that it is significant that one of the first things the Demiurge creates is an aeon illuminated by fire, a primal element of the material world. This is contrasted to the vastly superior pure light of the Divine Realm.\(^{17}\) In *ThomCont* we find fire strongly associated with sexual desire – I will return to this below.\(^{18}\) Maintaining no loyalty whatsoever to the small spark of light within him, Ialdabaoth creates twelve authorities under himself. Ialdabaoth orders that seven of these ‘kings’ rule over the heavens and five over the chaos of Hades.\(^{19}\) To each of them he imparts some of his destructive fire, yet keeps back the power of pure light, stemming from his mother, Sophia.

Sophia now begins to move around in frustration,\(^{20}\) as she realises what her selfish actions have resulted in. On seeing her repentance, the Pleroma takes pity, and the Holy Spirit imparts something of their being onto her. Her consort still does not come to comfort her, and she is brought to the ninth heaven, above her offspring, to wait. A voice then comes to her from the eternal heavenly realm (II 14: 14-15):\(^{21}\)

\[\text{prwme άνω πωςρε πρwμε άνωττι} \] The human exists and the child of the human

King has pointed out that this verse almost directly quotes Gen 1:3, “let there be light,” in its LXX translation. “Light” is translated from Hebrew into Greek as φως, which, depending on the accenting can mean either “light” (φως) or “human” (φώς). The lack of accenting in most

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\(^{17}\) King, *Secret Revelation*, 93.

\(^{18}\) *OrigWorld* equates the creation of Eros, whose existence leads to sexual intercourse, with fire (109:2-30). Perkins, “On the Origin of the World (CG II,5): A Gnostic Physics,” VC 34 (1980), 38, argues that Eros’ representation mirrors that in Zeno’s allegory of Hesiod, where Eros is the third being to come into existence. *OrigWorld* has Eros as the third lower world being, below Ialdabaath and his group of offspring.

\(^{19}\) On the specifics of Ialdabaath’s offspring, see Andrew J. Welburn, “The Identity of the Archons in the ‘Apocryphon Johannis,’” VC 32 (1978), 241-254. Welburn argues that contrary to the assertions of some of the heresiologists, the cosmological hierarchy in *ApJohn* is purposefully ordered, 241.


\(^{21}\) Here I follow the translation of King, *Secret Revelation*, 51, who favours this over “Man exists and the child of man,” given by Wisse and Waldstein, *Synopsis*, 85, which doesn’t overtly suggest the gender neutrality of the statement.
ancient MSS means that we have an ambiguous situation here, which ApJohn exploits, employing a pun that identifies the image of the first human with the primordial light of Gen 1:3. Rasimus also identifies this in *OrigWorld* 103:20 in its description of the immortal ‘man of light’ (Ῥωμείον ἔμαντος Ἑπιφανείας). Unlike the Mosaic account, however, ApJohn does not place these words on the lips of the creator, but on those of Autogenes-Christ. We shall see in the proceeding text that ApJohn forms links with the light of the world discourse in the prologue of John’s Gospel. I suggest that this statement, then, can be read on one level as the linking of Christ the revealer to the pure light of Deity. His words are the light that penetrates Ialdabaoth’s ignorance.

The Deity now reveals himself in the likeness of a male form. This revelation shakes the foundations of the Demiurge’s realm, causing the waters, which lie underneath the matter he has created, to become illuminated. Ialdabaoth and his archons gaze upon the waters and catch a glimpse of the image, proceeding immediately with an attempt to replicate not only this likeness of the Deity, but also that of themselves, in a created human being:

> And of the waters which are above matter, the underside was illuminated by the appearance of this image (21ΚΩΜ) which had been revealed. And when all the authorities and the Chief Ruler looked, they saw the whole region below illuminated. And through the light, they saw in the water the form (Τύπος) of the image (21ΚΩΜ). And he said to the authorities which attend him, ‘Come, let us create a man according to the image (21ΚΩΜ) of God and according to our likeness (τῆς ἕνε), that his image (21ΚΩΜ) may become a light for us.’ (II 14:26-15:4)

What ApJohn makes quite clear, however, is that the divine “image” is wholly incapable of being copied by the incompetent archons. All that they are capable of creating is a mere “likeness” or “resemblance.” In their attempt to replicate their own likenesses, each of the archons use their specific attributes to fabricate the soul-body (ゞΗΧ) of the human whom

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they name Adam, mimicking the perfect human that they have seen. Because the archons do not exist as material matter, but rather as psychic (יִצְח) essence, so too the primary body of their created being is a soul body; he later gains a material body.  

Next, the angels create his physical form. The text gives a lengthy list here ascribing each internal organ, limb and fleshly part to a named angel. Angels are also established over the senses, temperatures and passions, virtues and vices. The finished result is a motionless, psychic body.

The similarity of this type of representation to that of Plato’s *Timaeus* (73B-76E), and also to ancient medical lists has frequently been noted. There is also a commonly observed connection with the ancient notion of “melothesia,” that understood the parts of the body to be linked to the planets. That the human body consists of 365 parts, as attested by *ApJohn*, is present also in the magical papyri. By naming the demons responsible for each part of the body, the text effectively exposes their identity, making overcoming them possible through healing practices which involved reciting their names out loud. In addition, we also find similar melothesia in the *Testament of Solomon* (dated to the early third century). This section is present only in the longer version of *ApJohn*, making it entirely possible that the influence of texts such as the *Testament of Solomon* had become more prominent at the time of its redaction. It is also important to note that the psychic body is here listed in *ApJohn* along with passions and material qualities (II 16:1-18:34). In addition, the first human is also

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described in CII text as having not only a penis and testicles, but also a womb (16:29-30, 17:20); the implication being that the first human was androgynous.\(^\text{28}\)

The inclusion of these details also fits well with the wider aim of the text, and the codex as a whole, stressing the association of the malevolent rulers with the distracting passions, and downplaying the sexuality associated with the separation of male and female, idealising instead a holy unity where the lustful passions associated with gender difference are non-existent. Moreover, Van den Broek notes, but does not elaborate on the fact that the creating of Adam is actually attributed to the female aspects of the androgyne planetary rulers.\(^\text{29}\) This is not specific to CII (all version use a combination of the Coptic feminine 生产总, ‘power’ and the feminine Greek loan word ΔΥΝΑΜΙΣ, II 15:5, 13 III 22:7, 10-11, 18, BG 48: 18, 49:10), but offers further support for the argument that the author of ApJohn associates carnality more closely with females.

Eventually, Sophia decides that she wishes to retrieve the power that she had given to her son, and so appeals to the Deity for help. He responds by sending five Lights down to masquerade as the Demiurge’s angels. They succeed in tricking him into extracting his mother’s power from himself, by telling him to breathe his spirit into the face of Adam, who still lies motionless at this point. In his ever ignorant ways, Ialdabaoth does as they ask, and the power of his mother is imparted into Adam’s body. With this, the psychic body gains the ability to move, and shines luminously. This catches the attention of the archons who become bitterly jealous. When they realise that Adam is more knowledgeable than them they seize him and cast him into the lowest region of matter. Seeing this, the Deity steps in to assist Adam, sending him a helper, a light filled Epinoia, called Life. It is here that we are introduced to the notion of the elect “seed” that has given the text its ‘Sethian’ identity.

\(^{28}\) Michel Tardieu, Écrits gnostiques (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1984), 330-331, suggests that the lists of the passions are rooted in Stoic discourse.

Epinoia teaches Adam about the descent of “the seed” and their ascent back to their place of origin. She hides in Adam so that the archons do not know of her presence. When the archons see that Adam is superior to them, they enclose Adam in the shadow of death, in order that they might cause him to forget his true divine nature.

Human beings must learn to distinguish the truth from the deceptive lies of Ialdabaoth’s “despicable spirit,” which clouds human judgement by causing evil things to bear the names of what is good. This imitation, the ‘despicable spirit’ (Ὧ ἢ ἔ ὁ ὕ ὀ ὄ Ὂ ὃ), is for Pearson, the most significant invention of the mythologisers behind ApJohn. This is exemplified in the double naming of the archons themselves, and more so by that of Cain and Abel, who are the result of Ialdabaoth’s raping of Eve. Cain and Abel are also called Eloim and Yave respectively, in an attempt to deceive humanity of their true demonic identity.

As we shall discuss in more detail later on, the most serious of the archons’ trickery is that which is associated with the physical body and materiality, i.e. the passions associated with food, wealth, vanity and worst of all, sexual lust. King has observed that the linguistically similar terms “food” (τρόφιμον) and “delight” (τροφή) are cleverly punned in the allegory of the trees of paradise (II 21:21), to express the indulgent desire associated with food. The use of food to represent such vices was a popular technique of ancient rhetoric. OrigWorld makes the association between wine and sexual desire, describing the creation of Eros, the entity responsible for the instigation of sexual intercourse as swiftly followed by that of the grapevine; all those who drink of it are drawn into sexual desire (109:25-29). King does not discuss explicitly the frequently made link between the appetite for food/drink and sex, but it is pertinent for our understanding of CII. In OrigWorld (for reasons which are entirely

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30 Birger Pearson, “Jewish Sources,” 454.
32 King, Secret Revelation, 132.
obvious), wine is not simply a metaphorical representation of other vices, but one that directly results in something much worse. *ApJohn* almost certainly has this association in mind – the ΤΡΥΦΗ (delight) experienced by Adam and Eve when they eat of the trees in Paradise can be understood as their carnal union.

Sandnes has argued that the notion of enslavement to the belly’s desires is rooted in moral philosophy and its discussions of mastering the passions. Whilst Hellenistic-Jewish writers such as Philo saw the Law as the means of overcoming the passions, for Paul this was insufficient.  

Rom 6 makes clear that the only way to fight passions and desires is to become crucified with Christ. Similarly, Gal 5:24 claims that those who have accepted Christ have crucified the flesh along with its πάθημα (passion) and ἐπιθυμία (desire).  

What Paul does have in common with the moral philosophical tradition of his contemporaries was the notion that ‘serving the belly’ (Phil 3:19, Rom 16:18) designated a reversion into past sins. For Paul, this was not consistent with a Christ-like lifestyle.  

As we shall discover in the proceeding chapters, NH tractates such as *GPhil* and *HypArch* place much authority in the teachings of Paul. A disdain for Jewish Law, on the other hand, might be implied by *ApJohn*’s low opinion of the Mosaic books; *GPhil* even directly equates the Law with death (74:5-12).  

*ApJohn* narrates that such temptations from the archons ultimately lead humanity onto an erroneous path. The archons continue to procreate with the women of earth, bringing about generations of children whose “hearts are hardened,” unaware of the truth of God. II 29:26-30:11 is loosely based on Gen 6:1-4, where giants are said to have had intercourse with human women. By *ApJohn*’s time this story had been elaborated in the Enochic traditions.  

The addition of the despicable spirit, of course, highlights the conflicting interests of the

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Deity and the demiurge in humankind. The archons’ first attempt fails because their human targets are not taken in by their trickery. In order for their despicable plan to be put into effect, the demiurge has to resort to creating an imitation of the Divine Spirit, who causes the malicious angels to appear in the likeness of the men of earth. The creation account is a spiritual tug of war between the Divine Realm and Ialdabaoth, in which the latter is inevitably always the weaker puller of the rope.\footnote{Søren Giverson, “The Apocryphon of John and Genesis,” \textit{ST} 17 (1963), 74.}

Perhaps the most significant example of this comes in the account of Pronoia’s triple descent into the lower realms, relevant particularly here in that it is unique to the longer version in CII (30:11-31:31). The ‘Pronoia Hymn,’ as it is commonly known, is thought to be an independent literary unit composed in the late first or early second century, and added into \textit{ApJohn} at a later date.\footnote{Bernard Barc and Louis Painchaud, “La réécriture de l’Apocryphon de Jean à la lumière de l’hymne final de la version longue,” \textit{Mus} 112 (1999), 317-333.} On seeing the plight of humanity, Pronoia now intervenes, and descends on three occasions to the dark abyss where the unfortunate souls are held prisoner. The hymn appears at the end of Christ’s revelation, and indeed the change of person from third to first puts the words of Pronoia directly on the lips of the Saviour. The identification of Christ as Pronoia manifested in one form reiterates at the end of the revelation the Saviour’s statement at its opening, “I am the Father, I am the Mother, I am the Son”. Pronoia transcends the constraints of gender and sex, as these boundaries do not exist in the immaterial Divine Realm; the names of “mother”, “father” and “son” show the multi-functionality of Pronoia, the terms acting more as metaphorical descriptions of her/his role than assertions of sexual identity.\footnote{King, \textit{Secret Revelation}, 135.}

Barc and Painchaud view Pronoia’s three descents as tripartite in representational significance. The aim of the first descent (II 30:11-21), in which Pronoia describes herself as
“the richness of the light…the remembrance of the Pleroma,” who descends into “the realm of darkness,” they argue, is to strengthen the identification of Pronoia with the light that shines at the appearance of the First Human (II 14:24-34). CII elaborates on the appearance of the first human in much more detail than do III or BG, which simply relate that the Deity reveals his appearance to the rulers in the waters, in the form of the first man. The event is distinctively more epic in CII and IV, with the entire abyss shaken to its core, and most significantly, the emphasis on light.

The light motif is present throughout the entire descent sequence in CII, but when the second descent (II 30:21-32) is read alongside II 20:14-24, allusions can also be seen to the Epinoia of light that is within Adam, offering him guidance about the descent of his seed. Pronoia describes herself as “coming out (ἐι ἐβολαίς) from those who belong to the light” in order to complete her task (οἰκονομία), that is to guide her “seed” through the darkness of the abyss. The same term is used in II 20:18; Epinoia “comes out” (ὤ ξέβολος) of Adam to assist him. The third descent (II 30:32-31:31) has Pronoia enter the “prison of the body,” and summon the receptive souls by calling out to them, and once again identifying himself/herself, where a clear reminder of Christ’s opening revelation can be observed.

In an article exploring the scholarly construct of “cosmic pessimism” in the Late Roman period, Denzey has challenged the hugely influential assertions of Dodds, Cumont and Festugiére, who argued that the ancient Roman mind was plagued by irrationality and a fear of their “enslavement to fate.” Specifically relating to so called gnostic texts, under which ApJohn has traditionally fallen, Denzey believes such scholarly assumptions to be

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largely owing to Jonas’ association in of Gnosticism with nihilistic tendencies, which envisages such groups as understanding themselves to be dominated by fate.\(^\text{40}\) Rather, when we encounter such attitudes in texts, she suggests, it expresses a feeling from individuals within specific groups; astrologers, Christians and Jews, for example, who viewed themselves as in some way removed from wider socio-political systems.\(^\text{41}\) Her observations seem to gain support in the ApJohn’s understanding of Pronoia’s role, but also in the text’s general outlook as to the position of humanity in relation to the archons and the Deity. Far from being doomed to suffer the miserable fate offered to them by the demiurge and his minions, human beings are not only always under the watchful eye and attentive care of Pronoia, but also individually capable and responsible for the liberation of their own soul, through the receiving of knowledge and the conquering of the passions. This is the view also taken by Luttikhuizen, who argues that ApJohn does not see salvation as closed to only a few, but rather the reward for anyone who makes the choice to awaken the divine “potential” that is instilled in each man and woman through their lineage from Seth.\(^\text{42}\)

Seth’s birth account is vitally important for understanding the soteriological outlook of ApJohn. After Seth is begotten by Adam, the Spirit descends to awaken “the essence” in Seth, who is modelled on the perfect image of the Son of Man. This “essence” lies dormant in Seth at his birth, and must be awakened by the Spirit.\(^\text{43}\)

And when Adam recognised the likeness of his own foreknowledge, he begot the likeness of the Son of Man. He called him Seth according to the way of the race in the aeons. Likewise the Mother also sent down her spirit…the seed remained for a while assisting (him) in order that when the Spirit comes forth from the holy aeons, he may rise up and heal him from the deficiency. (II 24:35-25:14)


\(^{41}\) Nicola Denzey, “‘Enslavement to Fate,’ ‘Cosmic Pessimism’ and other Explorations of the Late Roman Psyche: A Brief History of a Historiographical Trend,” SR 33 (2004), 277-299.


\(^{43}\) Luttikhuizen, “Eve’s Children,” 211.
Importantly for our purposes, this is not only the case for Seth himself, but for his
descendants as well – they must be awakened from the “gloomy darkness” brought about by
Ialdabaoth (24:8), which refers to their state of ignorance as to their true origins. The text
claims that all humanity are the descendents of Seth, the “power” has descended on “every
man” (26:13). By rights, every human being possesses this potential to awaken their “divine
spark,” however, not all of them do, and the fate of those who remain in their forgetful state
is explained in a discussion between Christ and John about the various fates of souls (I

John enquires as to whether all souls will eventually be brought into the “pure light,”
and is informed that the “perfect” will be those who cease their “involvements in evil” and
care no more for anything other than their focus upon transcending the fleshly state into that
which is imperishable and eternal (25:29-26:3). These souls endure and bear all things
towards this end, and are contrasted to those who do “not do these works (ἐργασία)” (26:4-9),
but who owing to their divine origins, are saved, to a certain degree, being taken to the
“repose” of the aeons (26:31-32). However, those in whom the despicable spirit has gained a
stronger foothold, causing them to revel excessively in the works of evil, will be handed to
the archons and chained in prison. Even these souls, however, still have the chance at
salvation, if they will only acquire knowledge of their origins (27:6-12). The only individuals
who are truly damned are those who actively turn away from salvific knowledge, these have
no option of repentance, and must endure eternal punishment (27:23-30).

_ApJohn_, then, views the “chosen” race as something that all humanity has the
potential to be a part of. Entry to this soteriologically privileged group is not predetermined,
but based upon the choices of the individual to actively oppose the ways of life instigated by
Ialdabaoth and his archons. As such, the text supports a worldview which the dedicated,
spiritually aware Christian could strongly identify with, where worldly ties and the desires of the body must be abated in favour of the pursuit of spiritual instruction and study. The soul can hence begin a process of purification that will allow the recognition of one’s true, divine self. This individualised attitude towards the health of the soul would have great appeal to Pachomian readers, who as we have discussed were encouraged to push themselves to ensure its purity at an appropriate pace of development, particularly regarding ascesis.\textsuperscript{44} The notion that one can determine one’s own salvific fate is something that we will see recurring in CII throughout the course of this thesis.

I stated at the start of this chapter that the \textit{ApJohn} acts as a prologue to the issues and worldview which is subsequently perpetuated in the rest of CII. The remainder of the chapter will, therefore, examine the issues and messages in the \textit{ApJohn} which would have spoken most clearly to a Pachomian audience, beginning with one of the most significant, its attitude towards sexuality.

\textbf{Sexual Complexity: Asceticism and Anti-Feminism?}

Buckley maintains that scholarship has frequently and incorrectly viewed ‘gnostic’ sources as displaying an anti-feminine attitude, especially in relation to sexuality and marriage.\textsuperscript{45} Indeed, in a recent article, which develops much of her earlier work, King strongly argues that in its attitude to sex and gender, \textit{ApJohn} alone is extraordinarily complex.\textsuperscript{46} I agree with both of the above mentioned, and my argument that CII advocates avoidance of sexuality should not be

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\textsuperscript{44} This said, ‘individualism’ would not be an accurate description of the overall ethos of the Koinonia, which as I have argued, had at its heart a supportive, communal morale.
\textsuperscript{46} Karen King, “Reading Sex and Gender in the Secret Revelation to John,” \textit{JECS} 19 (2013), 519-538.
\end{flushright}
understood as a continuation of such generalising interpretations. As I hope I shall demonstrate, CII in many places opposes the violent impulses associated with sexual desire, rather than the entire institution of marriage and sex. As my introductory discussion of the ‘Gnosticism’ debate hinted at, the texts traditionally gathered under this label possess a wide variety of views and attitudes, making it impossible to understand them all in the same hermeneutical framework. Moreover, the association between women and sexual sin that I shall argue is present in ApJohn is at least in part owing to the agenda of the redactor of the longer version. This attitude probably does not accurately reflect that of those initially responsible for the text’s composition, but is highly relevant for its fourth-century context.

We saw in the introduction to this work that the Pachomian attitude towards sex was one of avoidance, yet with awareness that many entrants to the movement would have been sexually active previously. One aim of the Pachomian ‘programme’ was for each monk to eventually vanquish the power that desirous thoughts held over his mind and body, deviating his focus from God. ApJohn’s attributing of all destructive temptations to the wicked Demiurge provides a vivid condemnation of base thoughts and desires, and distinguishes this from the creative perfection of the true God. In fact, the stark contrasts that the ApJohn goes to great lengths to emphasise between the beauty and truth of the Deity and the vindictive, yet ignorant character of Ialdabaoth and his archons is perhaps no more evident than in the text’s representation of sexuality and reproduction. What we are presented with is not an outright attack on sexuality and the creation of offspring, but rather the ideal scenario under which this should occur, accompanied by a warning against the most dangerous aspect of sexuality – uncontrollable, violent lust. It is precisely this aspect that a Pachomian audience would have also seen as the most treacherous to the soul. Reproduction was a fact of life, but the act

47 The next chapter will further illustrate that what has commonly been viewed as an anti-marital attitude in one such text, the GPhil is actually much less clear cut.
that is associated with it was not something that those in pursuit of a pure soul should engage in. The way ApJohn relates the generation of offspring in the Divine Realm is one without any trace of licentiousness.

*Carnal Union and Spiritual Unity*

When the Deity wishes to create another being, he projects his pure thought (Ennoia) in an act of self-reflection, thus creating a perfect image of Himself, Pronoia:

For it is he who contemplates him[self] in his light which surrounds [him], namely the spring of living water… And in every direction he [perceives] his image by seeing it in the spring of the [Spirit]…And [his thought (ΤΕΝΝΟΙΑ) became] actual and she came forth… (II 4:19-28)

The birth of the pure Light, the only-begotten One of Barbelo is also of interest here. In BG (29:19-30:2) and III (9:10-12), we read that Barbelo gazes into the pure light of the Father and “turns to him” (ἌΣΤΚΑΤΟ ΕΩΥΗ ΕΡΟ\\). Barbelo as a result “gives birth” to the spark of light (the Saviour). In CII (6:12-13), Barbelo simply conceives of the light. This could be an indication that II has minimised the sexual imagery. Williams has suggested that by producing a son for her consort, Barbelo effectively fulfils a social gender role of wife and mother.48 Sophia, on the other hand, as we shall discuss below, is portrayed as embodying female deviance, by producing offspring without paternal consent or indeed involvement. However, Williams further comments that the notion of a female gender role as “husband oriented” and child bearing is not in line with the author’s renunciation of sexual intercourse in 24:27. It is not likely, then that he/she necessarily held this view of marital

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gender roles. I think Williams is correct here – it can clearly be seen from the discussion already, that the descriptions the text gives of birthing, begetting and male-female partnerships are more concerned with the dichotomy between the purity of the Divine Realm and the lower world, and particularly in CII, sexual desire and deviance as a female attribute. The text has no concern with ‘marital ethics’ as such. Indeed, as Buckley observes, Christ’s birth here is the first one which is syzygogical – Adam’s birth from Pronoia doesn’t mention a “father” as such. Pronoia is effectively his father and mother. Conception only happens to produce Christ. A syzygogical pair, then, does not need to be of opposite genders. In the text’s view, a legitimate pair can be one which simply combines the upper and the lower images of itself.

This connection between the upper and lower worlds can be seen in the account of Seth’s birth, outlined above. CII, along with BG and IV depict Seth’s creation as the result of Adam gaining understanding of his true image. Eve is not directly mentioned here, but a connection is implied by the reference to Adam’s “image,” which recalls the creation of Eve, where Adam recognises her as “his image” (τεκνίε) (II 23:9). Seth is the “image” (εἰκός) of his father, Adam (Gen 5:3). Here again, reproduction is not the product of lust. A comparison might be drawn here with Paul’s viewpoint in 1 Cor. Dale Martin has convincingly argued that here, Paul is more concerned with desire than sexual intercourse itself. Paul’s statement in 7:9 that it is “better to marry than to burn” is best understood in the context of the chapter, which is concerned with the controlling of desire, and, therefore, the fire of passion. According to Martin, Paul believes that sex without passion is entirely

49 Williams, “Gnostic Perspectives on Gender,” 17.
50 Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley, “The Apocryphon of John: Sophia, Adam and Ialtabaoth,” in Female Fault and Fulfilment in Gnosticism (Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley, ed.; London, University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 40-41. This has also been noted by King, “Sophia and Christ in the Apocryphon of John,” in Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism, 167. BG has the Mother produce the Son alone, whereas CII emphasises the role of the Father – the Son is his offspring.
possible within marriage. Desire is never acceptable for Paul; it is a Gentile trait (1 Thess 4:3). In fact, the only reason that he permits sex at all is because he thinks that it can be void of desire! The enquiry in 1 Cor 7:1 as to whether “it is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman,” indicates that to the ‘Strong’ sector of Corinth, who would likely have seen sex as an admission that desire had won, Paul’s viewpoint would have seemed very odd. The comparison is especially interesting given that the argument has been made in the past that the ‘Strong’ members of the Corinthian congregation have affinities to ‘gnostic’ teachings – the *ApJohn* would not support such a notion here, agreeing more with Paul’s position!

The account of Sophia’s conception of Ialdabaoth is also of interest here. In the versions of *ApJohn* found in Codex III and BG, the Spirit, her consort whom she disobeys is referred to as the “masculine/male, virginal Spirit” (III 14:22, BG 37:6), while in II he is described as “the person/face of her maleness” (ΠΡΟΚΟΨΕΩΝ ἩΤΕΩΝ ΦΩΩΥΤ) (9:31-32). The description in CII arguably gives a more ‘intertwined’ impression of Sophia and her partner – the Spirit is effectively the male part of her. III and BG refer to the Spirit in terminology that portrays him as a separate being, which arguably makes more emphatic her act of feminine defiance in CII. However, King notes that the shorter recension explains Sophia’s conception as borne out of ΠΡΟΥΗΚΩΝ (BG 37:11, III 15:3), which carries more sexual connotations than the phrase chosen by the redactor of CII’s version, ΤΕΟΜ ΗΔΑΤΧΡΟ (“invincible power”) (10:1). This could be an attempt to minimise the sexualised language attached the Divine Realm.

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54 King, *Secret Revelation*, 333, n.10. Anne Pasquier, “Prouneikos: A Colourful Expression to Designate Wisdom in Gnostic Texts,” in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*, 47-66, has argued that in the Coptic, ΠΡΟΥΗΚΩΝ does not carry the sexual overtones that it does in the Greek. Rather, what *ApJohn* is attempting to convey with it is Sophia’s uncontrollable power that renders her unable to be held back. If this reading is
When it comes to Ialdabaoth’s begetting of his archons, CII is not too clear on the precise manner in which this occurs. His reproductive process is described as an act of “seizing,” using his Mother’s “luminous spark” to create aeons, inspired by the arrogance (ἈΠΟΝΟΙΑ) within him (II 10:19-28). The role of his all-consuming ignorance in the creation of his archons sets him worlds apart from the Deity, whose creative act was characterised entirely by careful contemplation. Even the shared phonetics of ΠΡΟΝΟΙΑ (purposeful foresight) and ἈΠΟΝΟΙΑ (arrogance/madness/loss of sense) highlight this disparity. The inability of Ialdabaoth to exercise the required reflective thought plagues him yet again when he fails in his attempts to extract Epinoia from Adam. He is described as trying to “grasp/attain” (ταξανοί) Epinoia, which has connotations in the Coptic not only of physical obtaining, but also of mental understanding, comprehensibility. The rash, thoughtless instincts of the demiurge next comes to be mirrored in the lustful passions that human beings experience.

Feminine Wiles: The Placement of Sexual Desire in Codex II

The Saviour teaches John that he enabled Adam and Eve to eat of the tree of knowledge which the archons attempted to obscure from them. This allowed them to recognise their true identity and the deficient state that they are currently in (II 22: 3-9). To a confused John, he further explains that the serpent did indeed teach them to eat as Genesis claims, but not from correct, then arguably “sexual knowledge” does not accurately reflect the intent of the redactor/s of the shorter version of ApJohn. See 56-61 in particular.

55 King, Secret Revelation, 94. King, 323, n. 14 also draws upon the argument made by Kate Cooper, The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Later Antiquity (Harvard University Press, 1996) - that male status in antiquity was partly determined by the sexual reputation of their female - suggesting that this attitude is reflected in the stark contrast between the pure conception of Pronoia from the Deity, and Ialdabaoth’s lustful reproduction from Aponoia.

56 King, Secret Revelation, 105.
the tree of knowledge. Rather, the serpent is responsible for teaching them to eat of the
“wickedness of sexual desire” (ΣΩΡΑ ΝΙΠΠΙΘΥΜΕ ΙΔ) (II 22:13-14). The versions differ here,
however, on who the blame initially lies with. CIII reads as follows:

‘Lord, was it not the serpent [that] taught him?’ He smiled and [said], ‘The serpent appeared to them
[for] sexual desire.’ (III 28:18-21)

BG is slightly different:

‘Christ, was it not the serpent that taught her?’ He smiled and said, ‘The serpent taught her about
sexual desire.’ (BG 58:2-6).

CII is almost identical to III, but replaces “him” in John’s question with “Adam”:

‘Lord, was it not the serpent that taught Adam to eat? The saviour smiled and said. ‘The serpent
taught them to eat from wickedness of sexual desire.’ (II 22:10-14)

It is BG at this point which is unique, implicating woman alone. CII, then, suggests that
sexual desire is at first introduced to both Adam and Eve equally. Later on, however, Eve
takes on the greater amount of responsibility for this, beginning with an episode unique to CII
where Ialdabaoth sees her “preparing herself” (which seems to imply a seductive act) for
Adam, and becomes desirous of her:

And he found the woman as she was preparing herself for her husband. He was Lord over her though
he did not know the mystery which had come to pass through the holy decree. And they were afraid to
blame him. And he showed his angels his ignorance which is in him. (II 23:37-24:6)

Ialdabaoth proceeds to cast Adam and Eve out of paradise, and wishes to defile Eve after
seeing the light of Epinoia that shone from within her. Pronoia anticipates his vile thoughts,
and hastily removes Epinoia (Zoe, Life) from Eve before Ialdabaoth promptly rapes her,
resulting in the birth of Eloim and Yawe (Cain and Abel) (II 24:12-25).

The first piece of text, which has Eve “preparing herself,” raises several questions; it
is not always clear from the use of pronouns who is meant at various points in the episode.
Who is the one who doesn’t understand? Who is revealing his ignorance? Who is lord over Eve? Is she in fact being seductive? As I have stated, BG and III do not include Ialdabaoth’s viewing of Eve “preparing herself,” but skip straight to a condemnation of the subordination of woman under man, as instructed by Gen 3:17. BG, III and II all narrate that Ialdabaoth curses the earth because man and woman have distanced themselves from him. His cursing in BG and III, however includes the order for man to rule over woman:

Now Ialdabaoth noticed [that] they withdrew from him [and he cursed them]. In addition, he added about the [woman,] ‘Your husband will rule over you’ [for he does] not know the mystery which [came to pass] through the holy decree from on high. (III 30:23-31:1)  

*ApJohn* condemns this as an ignorant depreciation of holy decree. Ialdabaoth does not understand the holy ideal of a relationship between man and woman, and has thus defiled it (c.f. BG 61:10-15). CII also describes a lack of understanding of holy decree, as we can see from the relevant clause from the above passage, “He was Lord over her though he did not know the mystery which had come to pass through the holy decree.”

Based on the reference to Epinoia awakening Adam and Eve’s consciousness of their identity, which is what causes them to withdraw from Ialdabaoth (II 23:33-35), Barc and Painchaud understand this passage as an allegory representing Ialdabaoth’s ignorance regarding Epinoia, who is preparing herself to unite with the Saviour, and thereby correct the disruption of unity caused by Sophia’s actions. The Demiurge does not understand Epinoia’s function and believes himself to have authority over her because her light resides in Eve.  

I wonder, however, whether this passage in CII is deliberately ambiguous and multi-layered, referring to both Eve and Epinoia. King takes this view, suggesting that Eve is preparing herself for Adam in the knowledge that the “mystery” of union through intercourse will

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57 BG’s wording is slightly different, but identical in meaning (BG 61:8-15).
correct the deficiency of Sophia.\textsuperscript{59} This would fit with an important concept in the text as a whole - that the mysteries of the divine are reflected in humanity. CII leaves the identity of the “he” who “was Lord over her” unclear, but an argument can be made for understanding Adam to be implicated here, rather than Ialdabaoth as Barc and Painchaud do. Because he has been deceived by the archons to the point of losing sight of the true meaning of union between a man and woman, he has subordinated woman to him according to the paradigm of Genesis, and indulged in sexual lust. We then read that “they were afraid to blame him,” and “he showed his angels his ignorance.” This makes most sense when applied to Adam and Eve, who are scared of aggravating Ialdabaoth. There is an alternative, however. Perhaps just as I suggested for Epinoia and Eve, both Adam and Ialdabaoth can be read as the “he” who does not understand the “mystery” (ΜΥΣΤΗΡΙΟΥ) of the holy decree. Adam fails by mistaking union for rulership, and Ialdabaoth cannot understand either the depth of the divine truth, or how it is mirrored in the created beings that he has tried to lead astray.

So, by CII’s logic, both Adam and Eve are initially implanted with sexual thoughts. Moreover, through Ialdabaoth’s defilement of Eve the text narrates that “sexual intercourse continued” (II 24:26-27). It is at this point that we find perhaps the most significant deviation in CII from the other accounts:

Now up to the present day sexual intercourse continued due to the Chief Ruler. And \textbf{he planted sexual desire in her who belongs to Adam}. And he produced through intercourse the copies of the bodies, and he inspired them with his counterfeit spirit… (II 24:26-31)

Here, sexual desire is specifically implanted in Eve, unlike the first mention of sexual desire, where as we saw, CII actually implicates both Adam and Eve, while it is BG that solely blames Eve. CIII and BG at the present juncture both have sexual desire planted “in Adam.” Apart from this, there are no major differences. As CII sees it, this sexual impulse does not

\textsuperscript{59} Karen King, “Reading Sex and Gender,” 31, n. 60.
stir up in Adam as much as his partner; it is woman who proceeds to lead man astray. ApJohn is not alone in CII, however, in its attribution of sexual desire to woman; we find the same notion in OrigWorld:


We will see in chapter four that ThomCont also specifically relates both femininity and fire to sexuality.60

Waldstein and Wisse’s suggestion that the adaptation of the longer version to place fault specifically in Eve betrays its later monastic context is appealing, and I argue likely, especially given the evidence presented in the current work.61 If, as I suggest, the codex was utilised at some stage by Pachomian coenobites who were encouraged to avoid sexual practice and overcome desire for it, then emphasising this loathsome trait first and foremost in males would not be as conducive as identifying it with the female species. Inside the monastery, females could be pretty much avoided, temptation in this respect being much less accessible. We saw in the introduction that later regulations by Horsiesius seemed to be addressing issues surrounding close physical contact between monks – if this was a problem, and in such closed, socially limited quarters it is quite probable that it was, then perhaps this message would have been even more poignant; the need to downplay male sexual desire would certainly be useful in this instance. Indeed, the Rule threatens severe punishment for any monk caught playing or having friendships with boys of a young age (7). Various other precepts seem also to have in mind the minimisation of physical contact between monks. For

60 On this see Frederick Wisse, “Flee Femininity: Antifemininity in Gnostic Texts and the Question of Social Miletu,” in Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism, 303.
61 Waldstein and Wisse, Synopsis, 6. King, “Sophia and Christ,”168-169, notes that CII appears to fill the salvific role undertaken by Ennoia in BG with Christ; 22:3-10 and 23:21-37 both seem to see Christ taking over Ennoia’s function. The Pronoia hymn, exclusive to CII, is also put on Christ’s lips, as he claims to be “the Pronoia of the pure light”. Although Ennoia is a female entity, it is probably a push too far to suggest that this fits into an anti-feminine agenda in CII. More likely, it displays ApJohn’s Christianisation.
example, monks should not speak to each other in the dark (94), sit together on a single mat or clasp any part of another brother. Moreover, a forearm’s width must be kept between each monk when standing or walking (95). Even bathing a sick monk with oil is strictly forbidden unless ordered to do so (93)! Blaming the “weaker vessels” (see Rule of Pachomius 52, 119 where this term is used of women with a probable reference to 1Pet 3:7) for sexual temptation may well have served to highlight that males were more than capable of overcoming such desires.

Sex: Despicable or Distorted?

It would be easy given the above discussion to read the ApJohn in CII as radically against sex altogether. For example, in III Sophia’s production of Ialdabaoth is described in terms that imply birthing and pregnancy (III 15:2-3), whereas CII, agreeing with BG at this point, has him “brought forth” and “created” (II 10:3, 5), omitting any sexualised images. A surface reading of the text would probably conclude that sex is strongly associated with the lower world, and totally removed from the Divine Realm. Epinoia’s removal from Eve before her rape, for example, seems to stress the effort to maintain a distance between the purity of the Divine and the pollution of lust (II 24:14-15). Gilhus has argued that a consequence of the text’s mimetic structuring of the higher and lower realms is that they inevitably trickle into one another – sexual intercourse is the deficient model of divine reproduction, which

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62 Waldstein and Wisse, Synopsis, 60, translate that as a result of her “sexual knowledge” (πεφούνηκον) she “was perfect” (ṃεθαλεγμένη), but note that it can also mean “be full,” connoting pregnancy.
63 King, Secret Revelation, 127.
introduces sexuality into the Divine Realm; it is a two way process.\textsuperscript{64} It is relevant also in this connection that it is the separation of Eve from Adam, the distinguishing of the two genders, which results in Adam’s illuminated thinking. Seeing her standing beside him, he recognises his own image, and Seth is begotten (II 25:1).\textsuperscript{65}

This episode is preceded by Adam’s quoting of Genesis: ‘This is indeed bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh’ (II 23:10-11). Williams sees Adam’s quoting of Genesis here as a “blessing on the innocent companionship of the first man and woman.” Only later does Ialdabaoth bring sexual intercourse into the equation.\textsuperscript{66} After all, a strictly anti-feminine attitude is not entirely true of the text. ApJohn has Adam’s divinely sent helper as not simply a human partner, but a manifestation of Epinoia (intelligence) called Zoe. She teaches Adam and helps him towards his restoration. ApJohn, then, interprets Gen 2:24-25 not as a representation of carnal marriage, but as a restoration to primordial union with one’s spiritual partner. Eve is not seen as a negative influence, therefore, but very much in a positive light as Adam’s earthly representation of his divine consort.\textsuperscript{67} Buckley emphasises that the primary female Pleromatic figure, Pronoia, is Adam’s spiritual partner, and is separate from his earthly partner Eve.\textsuperscript{68} Even so, Epinoia’s residence in Eve indicates that Eve’s femininity is not viewed as an obstacle to purity and truth.

Buckley thinks that Adam’s quoting of Genesis might mean more. Adam says they will be a “single flesh,” which is an odd inclusion if the text hates flesh and intercourse. Also,

\textsuperscript{65} King, Secret Revelation, 128.
\textsuperscript{66} Williams, Rethinking Gnosticism, 156.
\textsuperscript{67} Elaine Pagels, “Pursuing the Spiritual Eve: Imagery and Hermeneutics in the Hypostasis of the Archons and the Gospel of Philip,” in Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism, 190.
\textsuperscript{68} Buckley, “Sophia, Adam and Ialtabaoth,” 40.
Christ’s comments on the passage seem to suggest that union between Adam and Eve (in whom Epinoia dwells) rectifies Sophia’s deficiency:

> For his consort will be sent to him, and he will leave his father and his mother. And our sister Sophia (is) she who came down in innocence in order to rectify her deficiency. Therefore she was called ‘Life,’ which is ‘the Mother of the living,’ by the Providence of the sovereignty of heaven… (II 23:14-25)

Following Giverson’s translation, which sees γὰρ translated as “namely,” she suggests that Adam comes to recognise Sophia, who has come to rectify her mistake, as his consort:

> “because they namely (γὰρ) shall send him his fellow and he shall leave his father and his mother […] namely our sister Sophia who came down in innocence.”

The text does not so much see sex as Ialdabaoth’s pollution, but rather as his failure. Even after Ialdabaoth rapes Eve, Adam still recognises his image in her and begets Seth. Ialdabaoth has not polluted Eve despite his actions. Sexual union, then, is represented as a model of how the perfect reproduce via recognising one’s spiritual essence in another. According to Williams, ApJohn views the ideal union of male and female not as one of uncontrolled lust, but of thoughtful recognition of one’s counter-image. Sexual union is not universally damned, but should not be characterised by violence and impulse. Ialdabaoth’s raping of Eve, and the archons’ deceptive intercourse with the women of the earth embodies everything that is despicable about sexual union. Lust is a poor mimicry of the divine generative process. Luttikhuizen observes that along with Gen 6:1f, which recounts the intercourse between men and angels, ApJohn views sexual union between humans and supernatural beings as the instigation of “moral decay.” It is unnatural and, therefore, only

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69 Buckley, “Sophia, Adam and Ialtabaoth,” 54.
70 King, Secret Revelation, 128.
demeans male-female union. This is a concept shared with *GPhil*, which affirms the natural order of sexual partnerships between beings of the same sort:

> The human being has intercourse with the human being. The horse has intercourse with the horse, the ass with the ass. Members of a race usually have associated with those of like race. So spirit mingles with spirit, and thought consorts with thought, and light shares with light… (*GPhil* 78:25-32)

More broadly, *ApJohn* does not see the body as a completely evil vessel; it has the capacity for spiritual perfection through the instilling of the Spirit. Whilst the physical body is a tool of the archons, salvific knowledge and the triumph of the mind over the passions is something that is achieved whilst in the body. As we saw earlier in the rooting of sexual desire in Ialdabaoth’s “despicable spirit,” *ApJohn* does not see the greatest battle as between the body and the Spirit, but between the *true* Spirit and this despicable spirit of Ialdabaoth. The body represents in a tangible form the cosmic battle between good and evil, and is the image of God in the world. Truth is contained within the fleshly prison, if one is prepared to search for it. One can manipulate their body to their advantage, and use it as a weapon in the search for knowledge, just as the archons attempt to use it as a tool for deception and malice. Indeed, the fact that Seth is born from union between Adam and Eve supports this. This is also, of course, a notion which the text has in common with that which we saw in the *Pach.S.*

The function of asceticism was to transform the body from a base object into a vehicle for spiritual furthering. It would be a gross misunderstanding of the text, in not only CII, but the other MSS too to claim that it hates all things associated with the flesh. The text favours “appropriately spiritual sexuality.” One must recognise God’s essence in another. Sex even acts as part of salvation, as Adam and Eve’s union to produce Seth rectifies Sophia’s deficiency. This would place the text in line with a Christian ethic that sees sexual intercourse

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72 King, *Secret Revelation*, 129.
as something for reproduction only, not the satisfaction of lust. In the next chapter, we will see that this line of thought is prevalent elsewhere in CII, namely in the *GPhil*.

As we discussed earlier, the eclectic religious and philosophical environment within which *ApJohn* was both composed and developed held the body to be bound up with the cosmic forces, as an earthly representation of divine order. This ‘body politic’ is employed by *ApJohn* to heal the disorder caused by Sophia’s rupturing actions. One’s true identity is the Spirit that dwells inside the body, and is beyond the violent, corrupt ways of the world. The body is a host to the true identity, which belongs in the Divine Realm. The challenge is to re-focus the mind away from the temptations of the body and allow the inner self to flourish. The attraction of this worldview to a group of monks living in an isolated community which sought to block out the distractions of society at large, and allow the body to indulge only in what was necessary, is not difficult to conceive of. The slightly greater interest shown in CII’s version with sexual politics perhaps betrays the fact that as a collection, the codex is appreciative of one of the most difficult challenges for its readers to overcome. As we have seen, *ApJohn* does not support a radically ascetic outlook, and does see holy design in male-female union. However, its monastic readers had no use for marriage – “appropriate sexual behaviour” was irrelevant to them. For this audience, only the reunification between man and God was important. The remainder of this chapter, therefore, will examine the vital role that *ApJohn* affords salvific knowledge, and its promulgation.

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73. *King, Secret Revelation*, 129.
Knowledge Revealed and Preserved

As ascetics on a path to greater spiritual goals, the Pachomians would have held in high regard one of the most important aspects of ApJohn’s message; that of knowledge and inspired comprehension. Through study, as well as training the mind to master the passions through ascesis, the monks hoped to become primed vessels for the Holy Spirit’s intervention. The significance of inspired teachings is particularly prevalent in the longer version of the ApJohn; BG and III begin immediately with the narrative of John and Armanios in the temple, whilst CII opens with a statement of its purpose – to document Christ’s revealing of the hidden mysteries (II 1:1-3). The most striking way in which this is expressed is through a strong focus on the motif of light, which comes to be used metaphorically for the “illumination” of the mind and self-realisation. This is particularly noticeable from the inclusion of the Pronoia hymn, which as we saw earlier, attempts through its prominent focus on light to make overt the close relationship between each of the saviour figures.

The partnership of knowledge and light runs throughout ApJohn, often in contrast to that of ignorance and darkness. It is fitting, therefore, that Christ’s first manifestation to John is as a child standing amidst the light. Likewise, Pronoia’s first appearance identifies her as a powerful light, because she is the embodiment of the Deity’s knowledge, and the actualisation of his thought (II 4:27-34). Adam’s superior intelligence to his foolish creators is directly connected to the luminosity of Epinoia’s presence within him, on more than one occasion (II 20:3-6, 29-31). It is the light of Epinoia which awakens Adam and Eve’s thinking, and this right thinking is the reason for their disobedience to Ialdabaoth (II 22:15-18). Adam’s intelligence is so far advanced above the archons that they try to conceal further
knowledge from him by standing in front of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which itself contains the reflection (Epinoia) of light (II 22:6). At the opposite end of the scale, the light which Ialdabaoth takes from his mother, Sophia becomes dim when it mixes with the darkness of the lower realm (this is a feature that is missing from BG and III). It is “neither light nor dark,” but a weak fraction of its former brightness (II 11:8-15). Sophia’s light diminishes even further when she begins to “move to and fro” in her state of regretful frustration, so much so that she becomes dark (II 13:14-16). Darkness becomes the descriptor of her ignorance and shame (II 13:24-25).

Another significant feature of the longer version is the mention of books and apparent interest in the value of writing. CII refers to books twice, where BG and III do not, in addition to the reference to writing in 31:27-34:

And I have said everything for you in your hearing. And I have said everything to you that you might write them down and give them secretly to your fellow spirits…And the saviour presented these things to him that he might write them down and keep them secure.

Firstly, there is the reference to the Book of Zoroaster for further information about the various demonic rulers of the passions (II 19: 8-10). Secondly, the text offers one of its many corrections of Genesis (II 22:22-25): “And he said ‘It is not the way Moses wrote (and) you heard. For he said in his first book, ‘He put him to sleep.’ ” Although as King notes, writing is set firmly in context as the source of the spoken word. The second reference in particular highlights the aural and oral aspect of transmission – “you heard” and “he [Moses] said.”

The immortalising of words in writing does afford them an element of security and the potential for wider sharing of a particular message, even if, as for those initially responsible for ApJohn, this was intended for a specific group/s. Knowledge must be sought after, and shared by those who are party to it. After all, human beings’ sinful state is the fault of the

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Demiurge, but they do have a large part in overcoming it. It is their own fault if they choose to reject or act complacently towards the truth. This is another notion shared with the Pach.S, which we will see appear elsewhere in CII. The value of instruction in ApJohn is highlighted through a curious question that John poses to the Saviour (II 27:12-14). He asks, “Lord, how can the soul become smaller and return into the nature of its mother or into man?” Christ rejoices at John’s question, and replies that the soul “is made to follow another in whom the Spirit of life dwells” (II 27:17-19). The Saviour’s delight at John’s question also reveals just how valuable the ApJohn holds the instruction of others to be. We shall see in the next chapter this theme becomes more apparent in GPhil.

The Struggle of the Soul

ApJohn’s understanding of the ‘self’ differs slightly from that of other ancient thought systems. For Stoics, the body was the ‘self,’ but the soul (ψυχή) was an immaterial thing, which animated the physical body; it might be thought of as its ruling essence. Philo viewed the body only as the lower self, which is in need of mastery and eventual transcendence. ApJohn’s Adam is given two separate ‘bodies’ – one “soul body”, as is frequently translated from “οὐκείον ἴδιον,” and one body constructed of matter “σώμα.” The material body is something temporary, that one ‘uses’ or ‘bears’ for a temporary period of time. The “soul body,” which the archons construct before the material body, is incapable of moving. It is only when Pronoia’s Spirit enters Adam that his soul-body becomes animate. ApJohn makes it clear that it is Epinoia, the Spirit of light sent from

76 King, Secret Revelation, 146.
77 King, Secret Revelation, 141.
Pronoia that awakens Adam to the knowledge of his true identity. This is the divine spark within him, unbound by matter, which makes him capable of understanding his true origins. Pronoia’s Spirit similarly enters into the “seed.” It is the Spirit’s presence in the body, combined with a mindful attempt to achieve ‘apatheia’ that will enable the true self to return to its home among the aeons of light. As Tardieu explains, the process is not one whereby the soul must shift from earth to heaven, or from flesh to a spiritual, resurrection body, but rather, one must recognise their true image, their true self by the triumphing of the Spirit over the despicable spirit.  

The challenge for the individual involves distinguishing between the genuinely truthful, and the lies put in place by the demiurge and his archons. One must overcome reliance upon their trappings – the body, wealth, power, food, lust. The Stoic notion of ‘apatheia,’ an active rooting out and destroying of the passions (πάθος), was likely an influential factor in ApJohn’s conceptualisation of this challenge. By the second and third centuries, many ancient Mediterranean cultures, including Jews such as Philo (Leg. 129) and Christians such as Clement of Alexandria (The Instructor, I. 1, 2), were showing interest in the doctrine of ‘apatheia.’ For Puech, apatheia in ApJohn is expressed through an ‘ethic of resemblance,’ whereby the soul must actively seek to reflect more of the divine realm and less of the earthly.

As I alluded to earlier, in John’s discussion with the Saviour over the fate of human souls, ApJohn distinguishes between human souls according to how far they are able to succeed in this battle over the passions. Till has argued that those responsible for ApJohn had little concern with ethical behaviour as a factor in this process, rather, only knowledge can

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79 Tardieu, Écrits gnostiques, 332.
80 King, Secret Revelation, 140.
bring about the ideal apathetic state. However, as King recognises, the two are not mutually exclusive. If we understand ‘ethics’ to include human choice to act in a fashion promotive of the spiritual over the worldly, then ApJohn certainly sees ethics and knowledge as interlinked. There are those who achieve apatheia completely and restore their divine image, and those who possess the Spirit, but who are led astray by the seductions of the despicable spirit. There are still others who are not fortunate enough to receive any teaching regarding their true origins, and are lost completely to the despicable spirit. The only individuals who are subject to eternal punishment are those who actively ignore salvific knowledge, and blaspheme the Spirit (Mk 2:28).

We find a similar distinction of souls in the writings of the third century desert father, Anthony, in correspondence with fellow monks. The great influence which the Anthony literature had upon the biographical tradition embraced by the Pachomian movement makes it a particularly pertinent comparison. Anthony writes of three types of soul:

1. Those who never deviate from the goodness in which they were created and easily obtain the Spirit’s guidance.
2. Those who repent and put effort into understanding the rewards for those who progress in virtue, and the suffering for the wicked.
3. Those with hard, unreceptive hearts from the beginning, but who repent in the face of adversity. (Letter One 77-78)

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83 King, *Secret Revelation*, 335, n.27.
84 Cited by King, *Secret Revelation*, 336, n. 39 from Samuel Rubenson, *The Letters of Saint Anthony: Monasticism and the making of a Saint* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 197-202. Philo sees humanity as belonging to one of three categories: the earth born (concerned only with the pleasures of the body and avoidance of physical pain), the heaven born (embrace learning, but apply it only to practical aspects of life), and the God-born (embrace learning fully, allowing it to impact their entire being, giving them access to knowledge that transports them beyond the corporeal realm – these are the priests and prophets) (*On the Giants* 60-61).
Antony’s renown as a pioneering ascetic and great influence among the emerging Egyptian monastic movement would have made him a spiritual role model for those who eventually came to read the NHC. These readers would have been aiming to be amongst Anthony’s first category, identifying themselves as those upon whom the Spirit has descended, guiding them along their journey to overcome passions and worldly ties.

*ApJohn’s* function in CII cannot simply be understood as Williams suggests, as an alternative to the Genesis myth for ‘gnostic’ readers. If this were the case then we could equally expect a text such as *OrigWorld* to take the primary position. Rather, *ApJohn* outlines what CII will elaborate upon, mapping out central themes. *ApJohn* makes extremely clear that knowledge, brought to mankind by Pleromatic salvific figures, must be dispersed. While there are some souls who might not possess the capacity to fully overcome their passions, without guidance their cause will be lost completely. We saw in the introduction that the Pach.S are fully accepting of the fact that variety existed among the monastic community. It was for this reason that ascetic practice must be regulated in appropriation to one’s physical skill level. Harsh judgement was brought upon the monk who led another astray, or neglected the privilege he possessed to edify and enrich the spiritual lives of his brethren. In addition, we have seen that most prominent in *ApJohn* is the notion that of all the demonically inflicted passions, sexual desire is the most contemptible and difficult to overcome. Moreover, CII represents a version of the text that associates this desire more directly with the feminine species. For our male Pachomian monks, this would have provided much affirmation that their separation from the opposite sex was necessary, but perhaps also that their maleness gave them a slight edge in the battle to overcome sexual lust. Asceticism (both sexual and otherwise) and responsible behaviour regarding the possession and sharing of knowledge will be the subject of the next chapter. I suggest that the subsequent two tractates enable CII to develop these themes, offering the reader something of a practical ethic.

Defining ‘Asceticism’

In the introduction we discussed the ascetic outlook of the Pachomian movement, finding the prevailing attitude to be one of balance, moderation and appropriation of skill. Vital, was an awareness that ascetic feats should not be undertaken competitively with either oneself or others, or to a level exceeding that which was necessary for training the mind and the spirit. I suggest that \textit{GThom} and \textit{GPhil} can both be seen to hold a similar attitude, and in the course of the chapter we shall examine these texts with a view to highlighting this area of agreement with the Pach.\textit{S}. Moreover, I suggest that contrary to those who have simply seen bodily hatred and denial as a feature of the NHC that could have made them attractive to Egyptian monks, these monks may well have identified better than many modern scholars have done, an ideology of moderation that supported their own.

With this in mind, it will be beneficial to consider how ‘asceticism’ has been understood by scholars of so-called ‘Gnosticism,’ and characterised in the ancient sources. Williams has shown that the polarised view of ‘gnostics’ subscribing to either a radically ascetic or libertinistic lifestyle is severely flawed. He is not the only scholar, or even the first to question the accuracy of these labels. As we saw in chapter one, King has demonstrated with \textit{ApJohn} that sexual ethics in particular do not always conform to such a black and white
division. More recently, Dunning has argued of *OrigWorld*, that sexual difference in human beings should not be interpreted as the result of humanity’s ‘fall’ away from the primordial androgynous state, but rather as a reflection of the divine image. Just as Adam is created in the likeness of Ialdabaoth and the archons, Sophia creates Eve in the image of her own divine light, to mirror the divine mother, Pistis Sophia. Sexual difference is an integral and primal part of creation. By Dunning’s logic, then, those who read *OrigWorld* would have no more reason than other Christians to radically oppose the sexual aspect of human nature. As Williams observes, scholars have traditionally been tempted to read asceticism simply in terms of sexual abstinence, avoidance of meat and wine or even food altogether. However, the intentions of so called ‘gnostic’ authors are likely much more complex than simply advocating lifestyle choices that the archontic powers will despise.

Williams’ argument is essentially that when, for example, texts such as *GPhil* appear to speak of intercourse as ‘defiled,’ we should avoid the rationale that the archons created intercourse, so must be reprimanded through avoidance of it. Rather, we should consider instead that intercourse is by nature a defiling act, which has come about through the archons’ malevolence, thus *demonstrating* why they must be opposed in general. As he continues, it will be more fruitful to understand asceticism as a powerful tool that early Christians used to transform their inherently defiled bodies. The aim was actualisation of human potential, and cleansing oneself of anything that hindered this was considered necessary for the constituent parts of a human self to live harmoniously.

Williams’ characterisation of asceticism as self-transformation and realisation rather than strictly defiance through self-denial echoes the construction of asceticism that Valantasis

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3 Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism*, 143.
Valantasis challenges traditional views of asceticism that largely view it negatively as a practice of denial. He follows scholars such as Miles, who defines asceticism as “the choice to stop temporarily the outflow of the soul’s attention and affection to the objects of the physical world, and to turn this attention and affection to one’s connection with ‘divine power and grace.’” Similarly, Ware’s notion of “transfiguration as opposed to mortification,” and the distinction between “natural asceticism,” which should be understood not as “warfare against the body, but for the body” (my italics) and “unnatural asceticism,” which implies a “hatred for God’s creation,” is also an important one. Asceticism ought to be defined as “performances within a dominant social environment intended to inaugurate a new subjectivity, different social relations, and an alternative symbolic universe.” Moreover, what defines a text as ascetical is to what degree it promotes a) “rejection of the existent self and the conditions for its maintenance” and b) “positive movement toward the construction of a new self and the conditions for its survival.”

Asceticism understood in these terms probably fits better the impression which we get from the Pach.S than does an understanding where extreme denial and mortification mark the goals. We have seen that the Pachomians were encouraged to abide by the programme of ascesis outlined in the Rule, making sure to eat, sleep and allow the body to recover if one became sick. Those who attempted to go above and beyond these prescriptions were met with reprimand. The aim was to cleanse oneself of passionate thought, and become devoted

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6 So, not indulging in luxuries, but allowing the body the minimum it needs to exist.
7 Mortifying the body by deliberately inflicting it with pain and suffering.
8 Ware, “The Way of the Ascetics,” 9-10.
9 Valantasis, “Is the Gospel of Thomas Ascetical?” 63-64.
10 Valantasis, “Is the Gospel of Thomas Ascetical?” 63-64.
entirely to the service of God and one’s fellow brethren. Excessive ascesis was viewed as contrary to these aims in that it breeds arrogance and vainglory, and shifts the mind’s focus away from God. I hope to demonstrate that these worries are also apparent in *GThom*. Also central in Pachomian self-understanding was that the body and spirit cannot be completely separated, hence the benefit of ascetic practice in the first place. Sexual practice in particular was forbidden for the monks, yet particularly as the movement grew larger, that some entrants had had wives and children beforehand had to be accepted. In *GPhil* I will argue that we find a congruous argument that while sexual practice is best avoided by the spiritually focused, in itself it is not intrinsically evil – indeed, marriage is viewed as a viable option for some.

*The Gospel of Thomas*

*Origins of the Text and the ‘Ascetic’ Argument*

As Williams and Valantasis have identified, ‘Gnosticism’ and ‘asceticism’ have in the cases of certain sources, been taken as indicative of one another. In the case of *GThom*, more recent years have seen scholars gradually abandon the consensus that was held among most early interpreters, that it should be considered gnostic. This agreement had the support of many, most notably Grant and Freedman, Wilson, Turner, Gärtner, and Ménard, who provided the first detailed commentary on *GThom*, advancing the theory that a Gnostic author had injected the esoteric into the synoptic gospel material in order to address a select, intellectually elite
group of Christians. However, as Stephen Davies has argued, these early commentators seemed to apply this designation purely on the assumption that because *GThom* was found among a collection of mostly ‘gnostic’ texts (a premise not yet widely challenged at the time) then *ipso facto* it must itself be gnostic.

Not all joined this consensus; Puech asserted that the text was in all likelihood, not originally gnostic at all. Yet even with acknowledgement of this possibility, Wilson remains committed to the presence of a ‘gnostic element’ suggesting in a similar vein to Ménard, that perhaps a once ‘heterodox’ work may have been adapted by a gnostic author for use by a gnostic group. One of the most significant objectors to the gnostic stance was Quispel, who argued in various essays between 1957 and 1972 that a Jewish-Christian Aramaic gospel tradition such as that evident in the *Gospel According to the Hebrews* is responsible for the creation of the document. The ‘gnostic’ question has now for the most part been laid to rest, with most scholars recognising that this debate survived only during *GThom*’s early years of study due to the uncritical and largely unconscious grouping of it with the other so-called ‘gnostic’ texts it happened to share a jar with.

Several scholars have argued for a Syrian origin of *GThom*, and subsequently, theories about how the text may reflect the Syrian ascetic movement have abounded. Kaestli and Richardson argued that the ascetic outlook of the text was clearly motivated by a

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'gnostic’ or ‘gnosticising’ agenda, aimed at effecting a realisation of the self.\(^{16}\) Puech argued comprehensively for the Edessene origin of \textit{GThom} as we now have it, in a series of early essays on the Coptic text.\(^{17}\) Desjardins argued that the desire for primordial androgyny, celibacy and unity strongly supports a Syrian provenance.\(^{18}\) DeConick sees the text as we now have it as the result of two compositional stages. First, there existed an early ‘Kernel Gospel’ bearing resemblance to Q and consisting of at least five speeches of Jesus that were composed in Jerusalem.\(^{19}\) Every \textit{GThom} saying that is paralleled in Q, she believes, was part of this Kernel Gospel (over 50 per cent fall under this category). The Kernel Gospel was likely pre 50 C.E., and intended to be used orally in the Jerusalem mission. Between 50 and 120 C.E., DeConick argues, the Syrian Christians faced an influx of Gentile converts, crises over leadership, questions regarding how to understand these early Jesus sayings after the early eyewitnesses were deceased, and most significantly, how to interpret this material after their eschatological expectations had gone unfulfilled. The ‘Thomasine Christians’ responded by shifting the hermeneutic to reflect a different understanding of Jesus’ words. The period between 100 and 120 C.E. saw the incorporation of hermetic and encratic material, as these Christians sought to transform the “imminent Kingdom into the immanent Kingdom.”\(^{20}\) Through a physically and mentally demanding


encratic programme, the Syrian Christian communities who used GThom attempted to search for divine truth within themselves, rather than waiting for a cosmic overhauling.

For DeConick, the Coptic GThom as it is to us today provides evidence for a community of ‘Thomasine Christians’ who were required to undergo fierce natural asceticism (to use Ware’s terminology), including celibacy and a severing of biological family ties. This is exemplified, she argues, by encratic attitudes that permeate the entire GThom. In particular, she highlights what she sees as endorsement of celibacy in sayings 16, 22, 23, 27, 29, 49, 69 and 75. The repeated use of the term MONAXOC, which DeConick translates as “celibate,” serves to instruct the community as to the lifestyle they must undertake in order to be ready at all times for a visionary mystical experience of God. Although DeConick’s argument seems plausible on some levels, there are various problems with it. For instance, as we shall discuss below, her desire to understand the entire text in terms of strict renunciatory practices has resulted in datings for certain sayings that have no real evidence. Moreover, her imagined ‘Thomasine Christian community’ is in my view not evidenced in the text, and also seems to somewhat contradict her argument that saying 16 advocates a ‘solitary’ ascetic life.

The Counter Debate

Others have rejected entirely that GThom should be read as ascetic. Buckley points to the absence of any explicit mention of sexual abstinence,\(^{21}\) while Davies highlights GThom’s rejection of fasting and seemingly uninterested stance on marriage.\(^{22}\) More recently, Uro has argued that GThom does not display a radical hatred of the body or an absolute plea for


\(^{22}\)Davies, Gospel of Thomas and Christian Wisdom, 22, also argues that “Thomas, in its aversion to fasting and lack of interest in marriage, contradicts encratism.”
sexual abstinence. Uro does not find anything in *GThom* that betrays a more radical suggestion of abandoning all things fleshly and worldly than in the Synoptic Gospels or Pauline corpus. The notion that the world will be destroyed, with those who are “living from the living” one, i.e. Christ (saying 111) being saved is essentially the same message that the Synoptics give. It is unnecessary, therefore, to view *GThom* as any more ‘ascetic’ than the Synoptics in terms of devaluing the material world and body.\(^{23}\) The dualistic language that *GThom* employs regarding the body and soul, for Uro, need not invoke such a strict interpretation of the relationship between ideological constructions and phenomena and physical practice. As Uro argues, philosophical movements in antiquity, which undoubtedly influenced *GThom*’s Platonistic infusion into Christianity, displayed a variety of practical responses to ideological views about the world and the body. Philo, for example, did not approve of the extreme asceticism that the Cynics practiced, seeing their disdain for and withdrawal from all matters of state as hypocritical and unnecessary (*De Fuga et Inventione* VI.35).

Moreover, when the views of contemporary philosophical thinkers are explored, *GThom*’s description of the hostile relationship between the body and the soul might not be so clear cut either. Sayings 112 and 87 have this to say regarding the body and soul:

Woe to the flesh that depends (ἐπίστρωσις) on the soul; woe to the soul that depends (ἐπίστρωσις) on the flesh. (112)

Wretched is the body that is dependent (ἐπίστρωσις) on a body, and wretched is the soul that is dependent (ἐπίστρωσις) on these two. (87)

Uro compares these sayings with ideas voiced in Plato and Plutarch,\(^{24}\) both of which indicate that although the soul’s reliance on the flesh is detrimental to attaining the truth (Plato


\(^{24}\) Uro, *Seeking the Historical Context*, 58-59.
describes the body as “disturbing us with noise and confusion”), there is a degree to which the two entities are mutually reliant upon each other, and can directly affect the health of the other. Both Plato (Tim. 69 C) and Plutarch (De tuenda sanitate praecepta 4, 10, 11, 13, 22) use the allusion of the body being a ship, which cannot sail if it is unhealthy or neglected. Similarly, a soul concerned with indulgence in passion will have a negative effect upon the body. For Uro, the interpretative key lies in the use of the word "dependence," that links sayings 112 and 87. Those who have taken this to refer to either sexual intercourse or the warning in Lk 9:60 about leaving the dead to bury their own dead (i.e. leaving behind earthly commitments) are missing the significance of this term. Dependence, in this context, implies an imbalance or inappropriate relationship. Therefore, the qualities of both the body and the soul, be they positive or negative, must be considered not simply in isolated terms, but in terms of how they affect the greater picture of harmony that is desirable for the human state.

Accepting that a more complicated position than simply staunch bodily denial and worldly withdrawal is at play in GThom, I will argue in the remainder of this section that GThom’s ‘ascetic’ angle should be understood primarily as forming part of a wider message that is clearly present in CII and the Pach.S alike, that is, individual transformation. While the themes of separation and reunification have been well documented in studies on GThom, their relationship to the ‘ascetic’ outlook of the text has traditionally been explained misleadingly. The suggestion has been that sayings which appear to reject the body and the world, and advocate singleness and separation as the way to achieve eschatological fulfilment suggest GThom advocates a celibate, radical renunciatory lifestyle. Essentially then, reunification

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25Phaedo 66 B, D-E.
26So, Ménard, L’Évangile selon Thomas, 188-189.
27So, Grant and Freedman, Secret Sayings of Jesus, 172.
28Uro, Seeking the Historical Context, 60.
with the living Jesus in the divine realm is accessed through becoming solitary and unattached to the world. However, this interpretation fails to grasp some of the subtleties of the text. If, as Uro suggests, \textit{GThom} (as also did the Pachomians) understands the body and soul to be somewhat reliant on each other’s health, then the view that simply withdrawal from the world and singleness can achieve the true unity cannot tell the full story.

\section*{A More Nuanced Position?}

One of the strongest pieces of evidence for \textit{GThom} affirming a more median position on the issue of bodily asceticism is found in saying 6:

\begin{quote}
His disciples questioned him and said to him, ‘Do you want us to fast? How shall we pray? Shall we give alms? What diet shall we observe?’ Jesus said, ‘Do not tell lies and do not do what you hate, for all things are plain in the sight of heaven (\textit{πάντα ἐν τοῖς ἡλίους ἀποκάλυπτον}).’
\end{quote}

DeConick observes that the Greek reads slightly differently to the Coptic: “How should we fast? How should we pray? How should we give alms? What diet should we observe?”\textsuperscript{29} She suggests that the Coptic was probably revised for later Christians who did not want to observe obligatory fasting. The Coptic saying, then, shows the later ‘Thomasine Community’s’ questions about Jewish practices that their predecessors (who had arrived between 60 and 100 C.E.) had observed. Jesus’ reply to the disciples takes the form of the negative ‘golden rule’ from Mt 7:12.\textsuperscript{30}

For DeConick, this saying presents Jesus’ ethical foundation in the Kernel Gospel. Originally it was intended as instruction for preparing for God’s judgement, but in the

\textsuperscript{29}DeConick. \textit{Thomas in Translation}, 62.

\textsuperscript{30}Deconick, \textit{Thomas in Translation}, 63, notes that this is also found in other Syrian literature such as Ephrem, Aphraates, Philoxenus, the Didascalia, and the Liber Graduum.
complete gospel, these commandments serve to answer the disciples’ questions about correct religious behaviour. Here, the *GThom* seems to argue against unnecessary negative asceticism, to borrow Ware’s terminology, as Jesus removes the focus from fasting and dietary observations. He doesn’t address the disciples’ question directly, but instead, replies that in order to behave properly in the sight of heaven, they “must not lie or do what [they] hate.” Does this show simply ambivalence towards issues that are now seen as non-essential, or could this perhaps be a warning against practicing excessive bodily denial, or doing so without pure motives? I suggest that there is support for this interpretation a few sayings later, in *GThom* 14:

Jesus said to them, ‘If you fast, you will give rise to sin for yourselves (ἠθανάσιον); and if you pray, you will be condemned; and if you give alms, you will do harm to your spirits (ἡμετέρους σπíρτους). When you go into any land and walk about in the districts, if they receive you, eat what they will set before you, and heal the sick among them. For what goes into your mouth will not defile you, but that which issues from your mouth – it is that which will defile you.’

Guillaumont identifies ἡμετέρους σπíρτους as a Semitism, where “your spirits” actually means “yourselves.” This is followed by DeConick in her translation.31 This would fit neatly with Jesus’ initial statement that fasting results in “sin for yourselves” (ἠθανάσιον ὑμῶν).[32] Ultimately, it was more important to understand the ethical code of conduct required for converting Gentiles than to comply with dietary laws.33 This of course recalls Paul’s advice in 1 Cor 10:27 about eating at the table of non-believers.

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33 DeConick, *Thomas in Translation*, 88, suggests that this accretion appeared between 60 and 100 C.E., to offer guidance to a growing number of Gentiles in the community. This doesn’t mean that the Thomasine Christians saw such behaviour as harmful to the spirit, but rather, it acts as rhetoric. What was once central to the community was now not as vital.
However, the notions that giving to the poor will result in spiritual harm, and that praying will lead to condemnation are still a little puzzling. We can make sense of them when we read them in conjunction with saying 6. As we have seen, here Jesus hints that it is not simply specific actions - be they renunciatory or charitable - that produce an ideal lifestyle. It can be inferred from Jesus’ warning that “there is nothing hidden that will not be manifested” that performing such actions just in the interests of displaying to others what is perceived as ‘correct’ behaviour is far more spiritually damaging than not doing them at all. Denying the body certain foods, or giving your worldly possessions to the poor achieves nothing if it is done simply to impress or without full consideration of its benefit. This of course echoes the opinion that Pachomius is recorded as having when dealing with monks who are fasting beyond the necessary degree.

The fact that the disciples are asking Jesus how they should behave in this regard, proves that they are ignorant as to the true value of such practice, and thus, it is useless. It is not as simple, however, as inferring from the sayings that the Jesus of GThom is not an advocate for bodily asceticism. Firstly, these sayings seem primarily to be concerned with the fasting associated with Jewish law, rather than extreme renunciation. Secondly, the implication is that one shouldn’t undertake such actions in the wrong spirit, not that they should not undertake them at all.

Granted, it cannot be easily denied that there are several instances where both the material world and the flesh of the human body are seemingly portrayed as the enemy. Notably GThom 56, in which the world is described as “a corpse” (πτωμα): “Jesus said, ‘Whoever has come to know the world has found a corpse. The world does not deserve the person who has found (that the world is) a corpse.’ ” DeConick thinks that the Coptic form of this saying is corrupt, as “found a corpse” doesn’t make sense. She suggests that the text
reads ΠΤΩΜΑ, when it should read ΣΟΜΑ. Guillaumont argues that the Coptic translation relies on a mistranslation of the Aramaic or Syriac, which would have originally read “whoever has come to know the world has mastered the body.” A bad scribal choice resulted in it making no sense in Coptic. If the saying is read in this way, DeConick argues, encratic ideology is quite apparent.34

*GThom* 80 is almost identical to 56, but with a slight difference. Instead of ΠΤΩΜΑ, the Coptic reads ΠΣΩΜΑ. This lends support to the assertions of Guillaumont and DeConick. However, Davies argues that saying 56 represents an altercation of the words of saying 80, to convey that ‘the world’ is divided into positive and negative aspects, controlled by God and the evil forces respectively. Similarly to the Johannine author, Davies argues that *GThom* uses the term ΚΟΣΜΟΣ to mean both “the goal of the search constantly commended in his logia,” and also the collective group of things that the true believer must resist becoming consumed by (i.e. the pleasure of the material world).35 *GThom* 80 is best explained, Davies suggests, with this dual understanding of the term “world.”

Haenchen’s interpretation of the relationship between the kingdom, the believer, and the world in *GThom* holds them to be greatly at odds with each other. He states that the world is a constant threat to the believer, as it is not enough to surpass it once and advance into the kingdom, one can be dragged back into it.36 Similarly, Lüdemann interprets saying 56 through an insightful comparison with *GPhil* 73:19, where the world is described as a ‘corpse eater.’ *GPhil* goes on to explain that everything eaten in the world eventually dies, whereas

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35Davies, *Gospel of Thomas and Christian Wisdom*, 70.
the truth provides one with nourishment that is eternal. Lüdemann claims, therefore, that for

\( \text{GThom} \), the world is “a sphere opposed to God,” and as such one must abstain from it.\(^{37}\)

The line of interpretation taken by Davies and Haenchen, among others, often finds further support in \( \text{GThom} \) 27:

If you do not fast with respect to/from the world (\( \kappa \omicron \sigma \mu \omicron \omicron \) ), then you will not find the kingdom. If you do not observe the Sabbath day as a Sabbath, you will not see the Father.

Guillamont and Baker have demonstrated that the Syriac preposition “\( \iota \)" may be the reason why the Greek translator chose the accusative (\( \nu \eta \tau \epsilon \zeta \sigma \tau \zeta \tau \iota \nu \kappa \omicron \sigma \mu \omicron \nu \) ) and the Coptic chose \( \tau \rho \iota \mu \iota \mu \iota \tau \gamma \epsilon \varepsilon \pi \kappa \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \) for “to fast from the world”. “\( \iota \)" can signify either a direct or an indirect object. They also argue that this phrase is common for signalling extreme ascetic behaviour.\(^{38}\) As DeConick observes, the saying is drawing focus away from cosmic endings and replacing it with the individual.\(^{39}\) She argues more fully in her book \( \text{Seek to See Him} \)\(^{40}\) that this consists of extreme bodily denial and celibacy in order to prepare oneself for a visionary experience when the believer will enter the Kingdom. The observing of the Sabbath is relevant, she argues, because Jewish tradition associates proper Sabbath observance with celibacy (Jub 50:8-9). Baarda argues that “Sabbath” is parallel to “world” here – the ‘gnostics’ understood the “Sabbath” as the Demiurge, and the world as his created cosmos.

By fasting from his creation they are rejecting him and his creation.\(^{41}\)


\(^{38}\) Antoine Guillaumont, “NESTEUEIN TON KOSMON (P. Oxy. 1, verso 1.5-6),” \textit{BIFAO} 61 (1962), 18-23.


\(^{40}\) DeConick, \textit{Thomas in Translation}, 130.

I am in agreement with DeConick\(^{42}\) that this is a very forced reading that requires *GThom* to be a particular ideal of ‘gnosticism,’ rather than Jewish-Christian, in order to make sense. However, I would still not go so far as to say that we have explicit evidence for extreme renunciation and celibacy here. Fasting on the Sabbath, for example, is a practice that can be fitted into a moderate Jewish lifestyle, and, therefore was likely practiced by the earliest users of *GThom*. The fact that the Sabbath reference is included seems odd to me if strict encratism is being required. Later copyists could simply have edited out the Sabbath reference. After all, this would bring the saying more in line with the sentiment of sayings 6 and 14, which demote the usefulness of Jewish practices such as this. The fact that it is included suggests to me that it is temperate and *appropriate* renunciation that is being promoted. “Fasting from the world” means not allowing oneself to become engrossed in material and physical pleasures. One should keep a healthy distance from these dangers that the world presents. Observing the Sabbath and undergoing occasional fasting would fit with such a moderate viewpoint that wishes to keep one’s search for God’s truth at the forefront of the mind.

However, as Uro\(^{43}\) and others have noted, *GThom* does have some positive things to say about the world as well. Saying 28, for example, emphasises the world as the place in which Jesus “took [his] place.” Jesus mourns for mankind, who enter the world “empty” and risk leaving it in the same way. It is men, however, that are described as lacking in this saying; *the world* is not attacked as such. Indeed, Jesus answers the disciples’ query about the kingdom by affirming that it is “spread out upon the earth.” Once again, it is men that are at fault, as they “do not see it” (saying 113). Marjanen argues that *GThom* 12 offers a positive view of creation vicariously, through the claim that heaven and earth “came into being” for

\(^{42}\) DeConick, *Seek to See Him*, 128.

\(^{43}\) Uro, *Seeking the Historical Context of the Gospel of Thomas*, 56.
the sake of James the righteous. Marjanen notes Jewish-Christian parallels in 4 Ezra 7:11, in which a similar statement is made to honour Israel, and the Shepherd of Hermas 1.1.6, 2.4.1. A similar argument can be made for GThom 89: “Why do you wash outside the cup? Do you not realise that he who made the outside is the same one who made the inside?”

This is almost undoubtedly a reference to the human person. The suggestion is that one cannot purify oneself inside simply by purifying the body externally, or visibly to others. However, as Marjanen points out, if The Father created humankind, and humankind originate in his light, as GThom 50 claims, then both the inside and the outside are a product of this positive act, even if there are some internal deficiencies. GThom 29 strongly emphasises the contrast between “body/flesh” and “spirit:”

If the flesh came into being because of spirit, that is a marvel, but if spirit came into being because of the body, that is a marvel of marvels. What I do marvel is how this great wealth has come to dwell in this poverty.

For Uro, the interpretative key is in the previous saying 28, in which Jesus affirms that he “appeared [to the world] in flesh.” GThom suggests elsewhere (saying 108) that Jesus and his true followers are capable of sharing a corresponding state of being: “He who will drink from my mouth will become like me. I myself shall become he…” It is entirely feasible, therefore, as Uro argues, that the first part of GThom 29 (“If the flesh came into being because of spirit, that is a marvel…”) refers to believers, and the second (“if spirit came into being because of

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45 Marjanen, “Is Thomas a Gnostic Gospel?” 120. M. Fieger, Das Thomasevangelium: Einleitung, Kommentar und Systematik (Münster, Aschendorff, 1991), 234, and Haenchen, Botschaft, 53, disagree with this interpretation on the grounds that the cup cannot represent the human person owing to the fact that the text has an extremely low view of the body in general. The saying can only be referring to the dissolution of division between the inside and the outside, in favour of the GThom’s ultimate desire for reunification (Fieger, Thomasevangelium, 234).
46 Uro Seeking the Historical Context of the Gospel of Thomas, 62, argues that within the text as a whole, “body” can connote not only the human physique, but the entire cosmos as well. However, in this instance he suggests that “body” and “flesh” be read synonymously as referring exclusively to the human body.
the body, that is a marvel of marvels…””) refers to Jesus.\textsuperscript{47} That the flesh houses the saviour, implies, therefore, that it is not entirely without positive function.

The other hot topic relating to \textit{GThom}’s ‘ascetic’ outlook, and particularly relevant for a comparison with the Pach.\textit{S}, is its position on family and society. Those who have argued that \textit{GThom} promotes a lifestyle in which all earthly ties are left behind, draw upon saying 55 in particular:

Jesus said, ‘Whoever does not hate (MUCTE) his father and his mother cannot become a disciple to me. And whoever does not hate his brothers and sisters and take up his cross in my way will not be worthy of me.’

DeConick has observed that this saying suggests that Jesus’ crucifixion was necessary and should be imitated by the believer in some sense; this must be achieved initially by “severing one’s connection with one’s biological family.”\textsuperscript{48} DeConick further argues that saying 56 is the logical progression from this, stating the new meaning of “carrying the cross” – the “mastering” of one’s body. The encratic ‘Thomasine Christians’, she argues, would see the mortification of their own bodies as their dutiful imitation of Christ. Although I do not follow DeConick in the severity of her interpretation, I believe she is correct that sayings 55 and 56 together provide a calling to realise what is truly important – one must “master” themselves, and understand that other concerns must take a back seat in order to be a true disciple. In my analysis of the sayings below, I hope to demonstrate that interpreting from \textit{GThom} such a median position on self-denial and family responsibility is possible, and that any ascetic behaviour should be viewed positively as a transformational aid, not negatively as protest against the body and the material world.

Saying 25 commands, “Love your brother like your soul (NΩΕ ΝΤΕΚΥΧ), guard him like the pupil of your eye.” Guillaumont and Quispel argue that “as your own soul” is a

\textsuperscript{47} Uro, \textit{Seeking the Historical Context of the Gospel of Thomas}, 63.
\textsuperscript{48} DeConick, \textit{Thomas in Translation}, 186.
Hebraism for “as yourself.”\textsuperscript{49} The Greek translator of \textit{GThom} rendered it literally as “your soul,” but the “love your neighbour as yourself” Synoptic parallel in Mk 12:31 uses the idiom \textit{σεαυτόν} (yourself). The Syriac NT versions also maintain the Semitism “your soul.” How can this socially conscious message be reconciled with the seemingly harsh statement in \textit{GThom} 55? Granted, saying 25 likely refers only to spiritual ‘brothers’ not biological siblings, but even so, if as DeConick argues \textit{GThom} calls for strict encratism and total withdrawal from wider society, then this would only make sense in the context of a solely encratic community (which I do not believe \textit{GThom} provides sufficient evidence for). I suggest that in order to grasp the true message of the saying, the emphasis needs to be shifted away from the strong words of Jesus regarding family ties, and onto the command to take up one’s cross, and follow “in my way” (\textit{Ἅ - ΤΑΘΕ}).

Jesus appears to use excessively harsh and brutal language in various places in \textit{GThom}, for example, saying 16, where he claims that he comes to cast “dissension,” “fire, sword and war” upon the earth, turning households against each other (cf. parallels in Lk 12:49-53, Mt 10:34-39 and Mk 13:12):

\begin{quote}
Jesus said, ‘Perhaps people think it is peace that I have come to cast upon the world. And they do not know that it is division that I have come to cast upon the earth – fire, sword, war! For there will be five people in a house. There will be three people against two, and two against three, father against son, and son against father. And they will stand solitary (ΔΥΟ ΣΕΗΑΩΔΕ ΕΡΑΤΟΥΕΥΟ ΜΟΝΑΧΟ).’
\end{quote}

The most interesting phrase for our purposes comes in the final words: ΔΥΟ ΣΕΗΑΩΔΕ ΕΡΑΤΟΥΕΥΟ ΜΟΝΑΧΟ. There has been much debate over this phrase in \textit{GThom}.

Particularly given its apparent relationship to saying 49, which seems to contradict the above ideology, and for some scholars provides evidence for the promoting of a monastic lifestyle away from the world: “Blessed are the solitary (ΜΟΝΑΧΟ) and elect, for you will find the

kingdom. For you are from it, and to it you will return.” Saying also 74 states that: “Many are standing at the door, but it is the solitary (ΜΟΝΑΧΟΣ) who will enter the bridal chamber.”

DeConick, in her most recent translation of the text chooses to render ΜΟΝΑΧΟΣ as “celibate,” on the basis that by the time the Coptic text that we now have was completed, it had come to be used as a designation for those living solitary lives as hermits, or in communities away from larger societies. 50 She argues that ΜΟΝΑΧΟΣ is not found in Greek sources prior to the fourth century.

Guillaumont, Harl, and Quispel51 have noted that its Syriac counterpart was used commonly in the early Syrian Christian Church to refer to ascetics who lived celibately. In GThom, therefore, it is used as it would later develop in fourth and fifth century monastic circles, including of course, the Pachomians. Guillaumont notes that the Syriac equivalent was used to designate a special group of ascetics before it came to mean “monk.” However, the texts in which these usages occur are the writings of Aphrahat and Ephrem, also from the fourth century.52 In addition, the earliest known Christian example of the term being used in the sense of a devotee comes from 365 C.E.53 It is also worth noting the observation of Morard that the Dialogue of the Saviour (120:26, 121:18) also uses ΜΟΝΑΧΟΣ, yet is generally considered by scholars to have a Greek original.54 Quispel once made the claim that the GThom was the first text to ever use ΜΟΝΑΧΟΣ as a noun. 55 However, as Gathercole has recently pointed out, it is not entirely clear that GThom does in fact employ the term as a noun. The phrase “blessed are the ΜΟΝΑΧΟΙ and elect” in saying 49, for instance, indicates

50 DeConick, Thomas in Translation.
possible adjectival usage due to the inclusion of ΔΥΣ “and.” Gathercole suggests that if the phrase instead read “elect monachoi” then it would be more obvious that a noun was intended.\textsuperscript{56} Moreover, Gathercole rightly questions the evidence behind DeConick’s claim that the saying originated between 80 and 120 C.E.\textsuperscript{57} Her claim is based entirely on an interpretation of the saying that sees strict encratism as the central theme.

Although the term is rare prior to the fourth century, there are some examples that might support an alternative reading. For example, its cognates also denoted “uniqueness” and were used to convey individual cases that differed from the majority. Granted, this seems to be quite a rare use, but there are instances in ancient Greek literature. For example, Aristotle (\textit{Metaphysics} 7.1040 A.29) refers to the sun and the moon as “unique” (\textit{μοναχά}). Plotinus (\textit{Enneads} 6.8.7) also employs the term in a discussion of the uniqueness (τό \textit{μοναχόν}) of The Good. Perhaps, then \textit{GThom} 16, 49 and 74 might be interpreted with this in mind. I will further evidence this interpretation below.

I suggest that elsewhere in \textit{GThom} we do in fact find evidence to support the theory that the term is employed in a sense that aims to convey an outstanding individual, who has demoted attachment to earthly ties in order to focus on the pursuit of salvific knowledge. It is not necessary to imagine \textit{GThom} as having anchorites in mind here. In fact, if this were the case then it would be a far less attractive text to Pachomians, who prided themselves on a community ethos! Blatz translates the phrase as “and they shall stand as solitaries.”\textsuperscript{58} Similarly, Valantasis translates “stand alone,” and argues that the “solitary” are those who have “sought their own self-knowledge” by withdrawing from family and society. These


\textsuperscript{57} Gathercole, \textit{Composition of the Gospel of Thomas}, 56-57.

individuals, however, now effectively become part of a new group, unified by their spiritual vigour. When the text asserts that “they will stand alone,” a sense of solidarity against the trappings of the material world is conveyed.\(^{59}\) Valantasis rightly clarifies that this need not imply an organised community, but rather a “loose confederation” of likeminded individuals.\(^{60}\) I suggest that this line of argument fits much better with the broader message of \textit{GThom} that the present work argues for. For our Pachomian readers, the concept of a group invested in leaving behind their former lives in order to ‘stand out’ from society, and ‘stand together’ in devotion to God would have very much appealed.

The translations by Doresse and Layton both support this theory; respectively, “they will be lifted up, being one” and “they will stand at rest being solitaries.”\(^{61}\) The emphasis is changed in both these translations, as the “solitary” state of the individuals is able to be interpreted not exclusively with the splitting apart of the household, but rather with elevation to greater spiritual heights. The insinuation, then, is that in order to become a true disciple, one must understand the priority of this over everything else, and fully commit to the search for truth. Following this path will cause disruptions in all aspects of life, not least the family unit. Each believer is ultimately responsible for his own salvation. This is a ‘solitary’ act. If we also read \textit{GThom} 55 in a similar light, then the demands to “hate” one’s family is also made clearer, and the phrase “in my way” (Ἡ - ΤΑΞΕ) can be better explained. When Jesus speaks here of disciples taking up their crosses and following in his way, it is the difficulty of true discipleship that is being emphasised. The radical anti-familial language in both \textit{GThom} 16 and 55 serves simply as a powerful illustration of this and may also be partly due to dependence on the Matthean and Lukan parallels (Mt 10:37-38, Lk 14:26-27).

\(^{60}\) Valantasis, \textit{Gospel of Thomas}, 84.
Additionally, we can compare saying 101, which adds a further dimension to saying 55 by reference to the “true mother,” which can be contrasted to one’s biological mother. Attaining the highly sought after gnosis involves a complete refashioning and renewed understanding of the self. This is made abundantly clear right at the start of GThom in saying 3:

Rather, the kingdom is inside of you and it is outside of you. When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living father. But if you will not know yourselves, you dwell in poverty and it is you who are that poverty.

Rather than itinerant asceticism, or simple denigration of material wealth and the body, a refashioning of the self is of central concern to GThom. Part of this refashioning involves bringing about unity, replacing the old with the new, and “making the two one.” Reunification is the key to entering into the kingdom. This of course is in line with the message of ApJohn, which as we have seen, views the union between males and females as a reflection of that in the Pleroma. Moreover, in contrast to the spirit overcoming the prison of the body, GThom understands the flesh too as undergoing part of this re-invention, losing its significance as a dividing characteristic between males and females. The ultimate insignificance of the flesh is reinforced by Jesus’ attitude towards circumcision in saying 53. He assures the disciples that if this were necessary, one would emerge from birth already circumcised! Hence, saying 22:

They said to him, ‘Will we enter the Kingdom as little babies?’ Jesus said to them ‘…when you make the male and the female one and the same, so that the male not be male nor the female female…then will you enter the kingdom.’

Many have again seen this saying as a call to celibacy in order to be transformed back into the primal androgynous Adam. According to Meeks, Klijn and Meyer, for example, this primal state is what Jesus means when he compares those who enter the Kingdom to little

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62 See DeConick, Thomas in Translation, 115.
babies. Similarly, Quispel sees the image as a call to prelapsarian innocence and sexual purity. DeConick notes, for example, that *The Liber Graduum* 341:21-24 has the prelapsarian Adam and Eve nursing naked babies, unashamed. I do not think that there is evidence here for celibacy, but certainly, an overhaul of the current self is required. To make the male and female “one and the same,” I would argue, is simply a statement about the unimportance of sexual difference and fleshly identification.

The importance of unity is evident throughout. Saying 72 emphasises this point with the story of a man asking Jesus to command his brothers to divide his father’s possessions with him. Jesus recoils at this request, unhappy that he has a reputation as a “divider” (πέριπατωμένος). This term is employed strategically here. When Jesus specifically picks up on the man’s use of this term and objects to it, the fact that what the man actually requires from Jesus is an authoritative command, is less important than the assertion that division is not part of his remit. Saying 23 follows up on the theme of unity, by referring to the unity of the spiritually enlightened: “I shall choose you (μακάρις ὁ ἤλθεν τῇ ὁμοσπλήρωσι), one out of a thousand, and two out of ten thousand, and they shall stand (καὶ ἐν ᾧ ἦσσαν ἐς πάντας) as a single one (οὐκ οὐκοῦν).”

This mimics the eschatological selection of believers (cf. 4 Ezra 7:45-61, 1 Enoch 1:51-93, Lk 17:34-35, Mt 24:40-41). DeConick argues along with Klijn (see discussion above) that οὐκοῦν and μοναξός are equivalent phrases. If this is the case, and the final clause of saying 23 was added specifically to promote celibacy, then why would the editor not use μοναξός at this later stage (when DeConick and others argue that the phrase was commonly used of celibate Syrian Christians)? I believe that this is because celibacy is not

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the issue here at all. Rather, the saying is about solidarity of the chosen, which in fact
overshadows the “singleness” of the individuals who are set apart from the rest of the world.
Unity is superior to, and stronger than disunity, as saying 48 makes clear: “If two make peace
with each other in this one house, they will say to the mountain, ‘Move away,’ and it will
move away.”

*GThom* is, however, littered with allusions to the fact that salvation is not universal. It
is something that requires dedication and work. For example, saying 61: “Two will rest on a
bed: the one will die, and the other will live.” *GThom* 99 provides a summing up of how the
newly transformed individual must understand their place in the world regarding others:

> The disciples said to him, ‘Your brothers and your mother are standing outside.’ He said to them,
> ‘Those who do the will of my father are my brothers and my mother. It is they who will enter the
> kingdom of my father.’

The biological family can no longer be the only concern. Understanding one’s *new* familial
identity is vital for reunification with the kingdom that the “elect” Christians originate from.
The ideal presented in saying 22, to make the “above like the below,” is achieved in the sense
that the family unit is reconceived and perfected. One can choose to become a part of the

So then, it would seem that neither the human body, nor the created world are entirely
devoid of function for the aspiring Christian. They provide welcome challenges to the faithful
disciple and allow him/her to become a master of his/her own passions and desires. The
spiritual and physical suffering and persecution that the world is characterised by, allow the
individual to grow in inner spiritual strength, and to truly come to “know themselves.” By
understanding their place in and power over the material world and the flesh that enrobes
them, they can transcend it. Key to this process is an understanding of the complex
relationship between the body and the spirit, and the world and one’s determination and will.
It is not simply an eternal struggle in which either the flesh or the spirit will triumph, rather, the individual is presented with an opportunity for self-improvement, refashioning, and transformation. As Marjanen claims, the world provides a “stage” for the disciple to act upon.⁶⁷ Positive asceticism plays a significant part in this: one must learn not to over indulge; one must not take pleasure in riches and material wealth, yet should not withdraw completely and ignore one’s responsibilities to others.

Despite the tendency towards individual spirituality that some of the language of GThom suggests, we have seen that in places, it does in fact show some concern for one’s role as an archetype to others. For example, the advice given to the disciples about eating whatever food is offered to them when they are travelling indicates that their conveyance of their message takes priority over regulated food practices. We saw that one of the key aims of the Pachomian Koinonia was to foster an environment of mutual support and edification of others. Not only did one have to ensure that he did not neglect less experienced members, but also that he did not risk creating unrest and unhealthy competition by placing focus solely on ascetic vigour. These same concerns I suggest are prevalent in our next tractate, GPhil. The GPhil has also caused much disagreement over its stance on marriage and sex; I suggest that this is fully coherent with the viewpoints that we have already encountered in CII.

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Metaphorical Marriage? The Bridal Chamber

GPhil does not have anything to say about fasting or relinquishing all of one’s worldly goods, and unlike GThom has never been interpreted as promoting a solitary, monastic lifestyle as such. However, GPhil’s stance on asceticism has always remained unclear due to scholarly disagreement over whether the text promotes marriage, or rejects it in favour of a spiritual union in the “bridal chamber.” Clement of Alexandria does in fact claim that ‘Valentinians’ (from which GPhil is generally considered to stem) were more open to marriage than other gnostic groups, because they saw it as a preview of the greater union that the true Spirituals would enjoy with their angelic counterparts in the Pleroma. Irenaeus (AH I.7.1) and Clement (Stromata III.29) understand the “bride-chamber” in Valentinian thought to be the entire company of aeons in the Pleroma, who when Sophia and the Saviour are united as bride and groom at the end of the age, will also unite with the Spirituals. The aeons are paired into male-female partnerships to provide a prototype for earthly relationships, which, although inferior owing to their fleshly nature, built on desire, are nonetheless valuable as an earthly foretaste of the divine.68 Grant likens this concept to the bridal analogy of God’s relationship with Israel in the OT.69

I will argue in what follows that the author of the text adopts a position on marriage and sexual intercourse that essentially echoes Paul’s teaching in 1 Cor 7, holding a celibate lifestyle in the highest regard, but conceding that marriage is a better option than falling

victim to fleshly desires. Like *GThom*, *GPhil* occupies a median position between staunch “unnatural asceticism” and a lack of concern for the dangers of allowing the flesh to become one’s master. Indeed, the author admonishes his readers not to fear the flesh, but to be well aware of the obstacles it presents along the road to spiritual perfection and transcendence from the earthly realm. Lundhaug has recently argued extremely convincingly that positive transformation of the self is of paramount importance to the author of *GPhil*. Through detailed analysis of the complex metaphorical language in *GPhil*, Lundhaug demonstrates that each individual unit of the text works together to present an overall picture of the transforming process of salvation.\(^70\) Just as I have argued above for *GThom*, I shall demonstrate that *GPhil* is more concerned with promoting ‘appropriate’ behaviour in pursuit of spiritual fulfilment than in a campaign against sexual practice altogether.

In order to understand *GPhil*’s position in relation to sexuality, the historically problematic issue of what the author means when referring to the ‘bridal chamber’ must be tackled. Equally important, is what relationship the bridal chamber has to another ambiguous term, the ‘redemption.’ In a hotly debated passage of the *GPhil*, we read:

\[
\text{\(\alpha\pi\xi\omicron\omicron\epsilon\iota\left[c\,\varphi\right]\,\zeta\omicron\alpha\mu\nu\,\mu\acute{y}\eta\omicron\upsilon\omicron\eta\omicron\omicron\nu\omega\upsilon\alpha\left[\pi\right]\,\tau\iota\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\,\mu\acute{y}\eta\omicron\upsilon\chi\rho\iota\varsigma\mu\alpha\mu\mu\nu\iota
\text{\(\eta\gamma\epsilon\nu\chi\alpha\rho[\iota\varsigma]\,\iota\alpha\mu\mu\nu\nu\varsigma\omega\tau\epsilon\mu\nu\iota\nu\omicron\nu\mu\omicron\phi\omicron\nu\omicron\left(67: 27-30\right)\)}
\]

I translate this passage as follows: “The Lord did everything *symbolically*, baptism, and chrism, and eucharist, and redemption, and bridal chamber.”

Some scholars maintain that five separate rituals can be detected,\(^71\) whilst others subscribe to the suspicions raised by Sevrin that the redemption and the bridal chamber may


\(^71\) Instrumental in purporting this view was Eric Segelberg’s article of 1960, which attempts to exegete from the text a ritualistic setting for each. Eric Segelberg, “The Coptic-Gnostic Gospel According to Philip and Its
not be ritual sacraments in themselves, as the text does not offer us any evidence for specific ritual contexts surrounding either. Recently, Van Os has argued that the failure of scholars to overcome the idea of five separate sacraments is somewhat due to an oversight of what is actually written in 67:27-30 – ΟΥΜΥΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ ought to be taken more literally as “one/a mystery.” When the significance of the indefinite article is recognised, the temptation to construe five separate sacraments is reduced, allowing instead for a more inclusive interpretation of the entire salvatory process. If a translation such as that of Layton, who takes 2ΗΝΟΥΜΥΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ as instrumental (“by means of a mystery”), is accepted, then it is more tempting to view ΜΥΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ as indicating the five nouns that follow as sacramental rituals. However, Gaffron suggested that the phrase is adverbial and represents the Greek adverb μυστηριωδῶς (“mysteriously”). He suggests that Π “did,” refers to a revelation by Christ, the ΣΩΒΗ ΝΙΜ “everything” being the things that were revealed. Sevrin followed suit, suggesting that the phrase is best understood instrumentally. However, for Sevrin, the Π2ΩΘ ΝΙΜ refers to the Saviour’s earthly deeds – the “mysteriousness” being the symbolic significance of these. The list that proceeds simply provide examples of such works that are instilled with hidden meaning, they are not given as focused examples in themselves and thus do not need to be taken together as being of the same nature. Schenke fundamentally disagrees with this hypothesis. Whilst he too takes the

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73 Bas Van Os, “Baptism in the Bridal Chamber: The Gospel of Philip as a Valentinian Baptismal Instruction” (Ph.D diss., The University of Groningen, 2007), 89.
76 Jean-Marie Sevrin, “Pratique et doctrine des sacrements dans l’Évangile selon Philippe” (Ph.D diss. Faculté de Théologie de l’université Catholique de Louvain, 1972), 289.
phrase adverbially, for Schenke, the “mysteriousness” lies not in Christ’s founding of the sacraments, but their ritual performance.\footnote{Hans-Martin Schenke, \textit{Das Philippus-Evangelium (Nag Hammadi CII, 3): neu herausgegeben, übersetzt und erklärt} (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997), 382-383.} The problem with this reading has been highlighted by Thomassen, who points out that without an explanation for the role of Jesus in the ‘mystifying’ of these acts, the whole interpretation is somewhat lacking in completeness.\footnote{Einar Thomassen, “‘Gos. Philip 67:27-30: ‘Not in a Mystery,’” in \textit{Coptica, Gnostica, Manichaeica: Mélanges Wolf-Peter Funk} (Volume 7 of Bibliothèque copте de Nag Hammadi ; Paul-Hubert Poirier and Louis Painchaud, eds.; Quebec: Laval University Press, 2006), 928.} Despite the drawbacks to the arguments of Gaffron and Sevrin, it is still to my mind most logical and in keeping with the larger argumentative context of \textit{GPhil} to read \textit{μηνύωμυστῆριον} in an adverbial sense. My suggestion of “symbolically,” as oppose to “mysteriously” attempts to capture the figurative quality of the sacraments and their role of visibly representing deeper truths that cannot be grasped in any other way. Recently, a more detailed examination of the word \textit{μυστηριωδῶς} by Thomassen, has illustrated its usual description of that which is instilled with \textit{symbolic} meaning.\footnote{Thomassen, “‘Gos. Philip 67:27-30: ‘Not in a Mystery,’” 929-937, esp. 934.} He cites Irenaeus’ description of the Sophia myth (\textit{AH} I.3.1), where it is used of the parables of Jesus, connected with \textit{μηνύειν} (“to disclose something secret”) and opposed to \textit{φανερῶς}, with all its connotations of conspicuousness and visibility.\footnote{Thomassen, “‘Gos. Philip 67:27-30: ‘Not in a Mystery,’” 929.} Whilst the adverb \textit{μυστηριωδῶς} is indeed rare, the various uses of the associated noun \textit{μυστήριον} certainly support the above reading. In addition to definitions such as “mystery,” or “secret rite,” which carry the suggestion of some sort of secretive ritual act, the term can just as easily refer to a divine truth revealed by God.\footnote{The NT certainly employs it in this way. For example, Mt13:11, 1 Cor 14:2, Rev 1:20.}

DeConick attempts to shed light upon the issue by drawing a comparison between the ritual acts in \textit{GPhil} and contemporary Jewish mystical groups.\footnote{April DeConick, “The True Mysteries: Sacramentalism in the ‘Gospel of Philip,’” \textit{VC} 55 (2001), 225-261.} She suggests a broader definition of \textit{μυστηριον}, which allows for more than a ritual activity, and stretches to
include an experience whereby the individual crosses the boundaries between the earthly and the heavenly, the overt and the secretive, receiving inward, divine realities. She correctly cites in support of this GPhil’s assertion in 53:23-35 that worldly representations are merely that; their truth lies in the eternal realm (πανώ).  

That the GPhil’s compiler views such truths and rites to be intrinsically connected with each other is evidenced in the analogy of the sacraments with the temple in Jerusalem (69:14-27):

Baptism is ‘the holy’ building. Redemption is the ‘holy of the holy.’ ‘The holy of the holies’ is the bridal chamber. Baptism includes the resurrection [and the] redemption; the redemption (takes place) in the bridal chamber.

As Segelberg rightly notes, the fact that we are presented with only three ‘holy’ buildings damages the argument for five separate sacraments considerably. Especially given that the statement that the temple in Jerusalem contains only three rooms, in itself is wrong. Why did the compiler not simply create space for all five sacraments if he or she was not strict about giving an accurate representation? The idea of sacramental interconnection is further exemplified in 74:18-24:

He who has been anointed possesses everything. He possesses the resurrection, the light, the cross, the holy spirit. The father gave him this in the bridal chamber; he merely accepted (the gift). The father was in the son and the son in the father. This is [the] kingdom of heaven.

Here, the father’s truths are something that he “gives” (†) within the sacrament of chrism itself – it is the one who has been anointed with the oil of the chrism who gains access to these rewards.

I suggest, then, that the bridal chamber should be understood as a metaphor for the ideal unity of believers with the Saviour. It may be there is some truth in the claims of

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Irenaeus and others, that some groups did indeed practice rituals to physically represent this union, but I do not see any direct evidence for this in GPhil. In any case, it is essentially irrelevant to the current question. What I aim to show here, is that the bridal chamber language forms part of a larger discourse in GPhil about what it considers to be appropriate male-female partnerships in the earthly realm. These relationships are able to co-exist with the spiritual partnerships of the “Images” (the believers) and the angels. By setting out an ideal marital/sexual practice for the physical world, the author/compiler is able to carry this metaphor into the transcendent realms as well, where the ultimate “marriage” between Christ and believer takes place.

GThom asks one to transform oneself through understanding the greater importance of discipleship over earthly pleasures and ties. Similarly, I suggest GPhil is concerned with self-transformation through acquisition of knowledge and subsequent willing participation in baptism, chrism and Eucharist, the rewards of which are vastly superior to any earthly bond. Contrary to the views of many scholars, neither text completely forbids marriage; GPhil in fact sees its value in providing a union that repels malicious spirits wishing to tempt lone individuals into promiscuity. Abstinence from sexuality is likely viewed in both texts as the superior choice for those wishing to attain to the greatest spiritual heights, and in this sense, a link can certainly be made with the Pachomian ideology that we have discussed.

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85 The Spiritual aspect of creation is reflected in “images” (εἰκών) of the Saviour and his angelic consorts. This is how the Pleroma is manifested to Sophia whilst she suffers in repentance. εἰκών is used here to reflect the ideology in Gen 1:26-27, where mankind is created to reflect the image of God and his angelic company: “O you who have joined the perfect light with the holy spirit, unite the angels with us, the images” (58:10-14). The notion of “images” is prominent throughout the GPhil. This mythology is also attested in the Tripartite Tractate 90:31-91:6, 91:32-92:4, 93:25-29, 94:10-95:16, 96:17-97:27. Ultimately, the unity between the Saviour and his angels creates the archetype for mankind.
'Appropriate’ Sexuality

*GPhil* does not anywhere explicitly state that one must remain celibate. Those scholars who have inferred this from the text have done so on the basis of its discussion of sexuality and marriage (and we must remember that for *GPhil* marriage is used to refer to both earthly marriage between a man and woman, and the spiritual union in the bridal chamber with one’s angelic counterpart) more generally. For this reason, we shall examine the instances where *GPhil* appears to be condemning sexual behaviour, which might lead one to the conclusion that celibacy is strongly promoted in the text. What I hope to demonstrate is that like *ApJohn*, focus is on the dangers of *inappropriate* or misplaced sexual behaviour, rather than the disgraceful nature of the act altogether. Before turning to this evidence, it is necessary to labour a related, and hugely relevant point – *GPhil*’s far from straightforward understanding of the role of “the flesh” (ΣΑΡΠΩ). If we are to fully appreciate the author’s view on earthly marital union and the sexual components that are coupled with it, then this cannot be analysed in isolation from the discourse relating to the flesh and the body. If we are to fully understand *GPhil*’s stance on carnality and marriage, therefore, we need to consider how *GPhil* sees “the flesh” as operating more broadly.

Pagels in an article examining “the mystery of marriage” in *GPhil* has argued that the author plays with ambiguities of language in order to make the point that certain issues are not always cut and dried.86 The suggestion in 54:18-25 that the good and evil can be easily confused due to the meddling of the archons suggests that it is possible for that which is considered good to be harmful, and vice versa:

The rulers (archons) wanted to deceive man, since they saw that he had a kinship with those that are truly good. They took the name of those that are good and gave it to those that are not good, so that through the names they might deceive him and bind them to those that are not good.

We are reminded of course, of Ialdabaoth’s despicable spirit in *ApJohn*, which plays a similar role. Koschorke has also questioned the implicit negativity of terms such as “flesh,” and the implicit positivity of terms such as “spirit” or “wisdom.” *GPhil* does not buy into such a simple division between the good and the bad.\(^{87}\) While ἘΓΝΩΣΙΣ makes a ‘free man’ (77:16), it also brought death (74-5-12). As Pagels has identified, the same goes for sacramental practice as well as terminology. Baptism, for example, does not have the desired effect of spiritual renewal on all who undergo it. If the initiate descends into the water and does not ‘receive anything’ then calling him or herself a Christian means nothing 64:22-25.\(^{88}\) Pagels suggests that the author of *GPhil* avoids becoming directly involved in the debate surrounding marriage and celibacy, then, because he views the polarised dichotomies present in the language of such issues as fundamentally flawed.\(^{89}\) I am in agreement with Pagels that *GPhil* sees the issue as more complex than perhaps some of his contemporaries did, however, I do not believe that the author is as ambivalent as she makes out. On the contrary, I suggest that we can identify the author’s position in the debate as a median one – earthly marriage and sexual practice is hardly the ideal, but it does have some benefits.

That *GPhil* strongly upholds the notion of inferior, earthly representations of divine mysteries is particularly evident in the complex argument about resurrection. 56:26-57:19 wrestles with the concept of resurrection, and whether this is something that happens physically to the flesh and blood of the believer post-mortem. *GPhil*’s stance on the resurrection and the role of the flesh in this process is heavily influenced by Paul’s arguments


\(^{88}\) Pagels, “The ‘Mystery of Marriage’ Revisited”, 448.

\(^{89}\) Pagels, “The ‘Mystery of Marriage’ Revisited”, 449.
in 1 Cor. We should not forget, therefore, that Paul’s own use of “σάρξ” and “πνεῦμα” is multifaceted. Gal 4:28 and 5:13-26 see him denounce “the flesh,” contrasting it sharply with “the spirit.” Here, he uses the term “σάρξ” figuratively, to refer to the sinful aspect of human nature. However, elsewhere the term “σάρξ” is employed in a more literal sense to describe the physical bodies of humans and animals (1 Cor 15:39). For the author of GPhil, the flesh (Σῶμα) is a necessary component of the resurrection. When we read later on of the dangers that it presents to those who allow themselves to become consumed by it (66:4-6), therefore, this positive dimension must also be kept in mind. Drawing on Jn 6:53, the author argues that participation in the Eucharist allows the believer to become “clothed” in Christ’s flesh after he/she has consumed his flesh and blood. We read of two types of person, some who live in error because they “wear the flesh” (56:30), and others who have transcended this and “unclothe(d) themselves” (56:31). It seems that the GPhil makes use of the clothing metaphor to mark a clear difference between the “naked” (Κακά), who remain in a state of sin, and the “clothed,” who have managed to transcend this. We later see development of this metaphor when the same adjective, Κακά, is used in the description of Truth’s (Ταλανθοείνυς) entry into the world (67:9-11). Truth did not appear naked, but through a manifestation of ‘symbols and images’ (Τυποποιεῖται Κόμη).

We can see then, that for the author of GPhil, earthly, fleshly experiences are the necessary first stages that man must progress through in order to attain a renewed spiritual identity. I would argue that this logic can be transferred to the way he views sexuality and earthly marriage. It is too simplistic to suggest that GPhil is radically opposed to earthly marriage or equally radically in favour of celibacy. The author of GPhil was too aware that the terminology at the centre of such arguments - common dichotomies between “flesh” and “spirit,” for example – was oversimplified. What is really at issue, is whether something (be it
the flesh, the spirit, knowledge, wisdom etc.) is “in the world” (κόσμος) or “in the aeon.”

Williams has shown that “the aeon” should not be understood spatially, but rather as a ‘quality of existence.’ This state of being is something that one must achieve whilst “in the world” via sacramental participation. If we transfer this concept to the issue of marriage, then the argument can be made that earthly marriage/sexual union has an important function; it acts as the “image” (ἐικών), albeit an inferior one, of the marriage that will occur in the great bridal chamber.

In 61:5-12 comes the first indication that GPhil condemns sexual inappropriateness, rather than sex altogether:

First adultery came into being, afterward murder. And he was begotten in adultery, for he was the child of the serpent. So he became a murderer just like his father, and he killed his brother. Indeed every act of sexual intercourse which has occurred between those unlike one another is adultery.

Wilson and Grant have suggested that this alludes to a “Gnostic-Jewish” myth that sees Ialdabaoth as the father of Cain, having seduced Eve. Schenke relates this passage to 70:17-22, which describes Eve’s separation from Adam:

But the woman is united to her husband in the bridal chamber. But those who have united in the bridal chamber will no longer be separated. Because of this Eve separated from Adam, because it was not in the bridal chamber that she united with him.

Wilson is unsure as to whether the first part of the passage is referring to ordinary, earthly marriage as the “image” of the ultimate union in the eternal bridal chamber. Most importantly, however, is the fact that the “separation” referred to in this passage is not the creation of Eve from Adam’s side, but rather the “adultery” that 61:5-12 is concerned with.

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90 Pagels, “The ‘Mystery of Marriage’ Revisited”, 440.
93 Wilson, The Gospel of Philip, 142.
As Lundhaug argues,\textsuperscript{94} the problem that the author sees is with a created being (ΠΛΑΣΤΟΣ) begetting (ΧΩΝ). The created creature is the serpent, and his adulterous act was his seduction of Eve, which resulted in the begetting of Cain, a murderer.\textsuperscript{95} The real sin is the act of sexual union between a couple that are unlike one another; the serpent and Eve. Because of this unnatural sexual act, the resulting offspring was deficient. Not sex itself then, but sex between the wrong partners is at issue here. The implication is that had the serpent reproduced with one of its own kind, the repercussions would not have been so deadly.

Pagels has noted that the explanation of Adam’s debasement and enslavement by evil powers in 74:1-12 describes how his hylic nature was awakened and instilled with the desire to procreate:

In the place where I will eat all things is the tree of knowledge. That one killed Adam, but here the tree of knowledge made men alive. The law was the tree. It has power to give the knowledge of good and evil. It neither removed him from evil, nor did it set him in the good, but it created death for those who ate of it. For when he said, ‘Eat this, do not eat that,’ it became the beginning of death.

Adam is now bound by the law, and has failed to control his basest urges. In this sense, Pagels argues that \textit{GPhil} promotes an almost Augustinian viewpoint, whereby sexuality was not always inherently bad, but became debased as a result of man’s fall.\textsuperscript{96} The lack of will-power against the desires of the flesh is the real evil, not the act of sex in itself. Another interesting passage describes the danger that the offspring of an adulterous sexual union will reveal the crime, as the child will resemble the lover, not the husband (78:12-24).

Another interesting feature of \textit{GPhil} is its view of the conception and birth of Christ.

Some said, ‘Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit.’ They are in error. They do not know what they are saying. When did a woman ever conceive by a woman? Mary is the virgin whom no power defiled. She

\textsuperscript{94} Lundhaug, \textit{Images}, 198-199.
\textsuperscript{96} Pagels, “Pursuing the Spiritual Eve,” 199-200.
is a great anathema to the Hebrews, who are the apostles and the apostolic men. This virgin whom no power defiled [...] the powers defile themselves. And the Lord would not have said ‘My Father who is in Heaven,’ unless he had had another father, but he would have said simply ‘My father.’ (55:23-36)

The author rejects the Immaculate Conception on the basis that the Holy Spirit is a female, and two females cannot conceive together. The assertion that Mary remains undefiled by the powers seems to appeal to the myth outlined in HypArch 89:17-30, in which the archons become enamoured of Eve.

Doresse argued many years ago that the so-called Western Valentinian school held that the Spirit entered Jesus’ initially psychic body at his baptism. However, Thomassen has recently demonstrated that there was some apparent disagreement within the Western group itself on this issue. As Thomassen argues, Hippolytus seems to have confused a rift within the Western school for the point of departure between the Western and Eastern schools of Valentinianism. What we seem to have in reality is one set of Western Valentinians who see Jesus’ imbued with the Spirit at baptism, and another set who see this as having already occurred in Mary’s womb. GPhil’s denial of the involvement of the Spirit in Christ’s conception would seem to place it more in line with the former group. Wilson suggests that GPhil may be attacking ‘orthodox’ views here. If indeed the author’s primary aim is to refute the views of other Christians in this passage, then it may reveal less about his own stance on Jesus’ conception than we might like. However, the emphasis that GPhil places on Joseph’s fathership in other passages suggests that even if belittling the views of other Christians is part of the intent behind this particular passage, emphasising the ordinary and, therefore, carnal nature of Jesus’ birth is still of some importance.

98 Thomassen, Spiritual Seed, 45.
What is puzzling about the passage is that *GPhil*’s denial of the Immaculate Conception seems to go hand in hand with an assertion that Mary is a virgin. This is attested elsewhere in the text, as we see *GPhil* compare Christ’s birth to that of Adam: “Adam came into being from two virgins, from the spirit and from the virgin earth. Christ, therefore, was born from a virgin to rectify the fall which occurred in the beginning” (71:16-17). However, as Lundhaug states, Mary’s virginity seems to be in relation to the powers, not to Joseph.\(^\text{100}\) Joseph’s paternity is affirmed by the argument that Jesus specifically also identifies his “Father in Heaven.” That Joseph is the intended earthly father is confirmed by the *GPhil*’s assertion elsewhere:

> Philip the apostle said, ‘Joseph the carpenter planted a garden because he needed wood for his trade. It was he who made the cross from the tress which he planted. His own offspring hung on that which he planted. His offspring was Jesus and the planting was the cross.’ (73:8-15)

Rewolinski has argued that *GPhil* views Christ’s conception as occurring by parthenogenesis.\(^\text{101}\) However, this is not supported by the broader arguments that *GPhil* makes. As Pagels argues, *GPhil* suggests that Jesus was born ordinarily from two earthly parents, but with the involvement of the Heavenly Father and the Spirit. This is presented as the paradigm for the individual believer – our birth from human parents is simply the first stage, which is completed by our rebirth through sacramental participation.\(^\text{102}\) Pagels relates the passage to 71:4-15:

> The Father of everything united with the virgin who came down, and a fire shone for him on that very day. He appeared in the great bridal chamber. Therefore, his body came into being on that very day. It left the bridal chamber as one who came into being from the bridegroom and the bride. So Jesus established everything in it through these. It is fitting for each of the disciples to enter into his rest.

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\(^\text{100}\) Lundhaug, *Images*, 180.


Here, we have an allusion to Jesus’ anointing at his baptism in the Jordan, which has preceded this passage. At his baptism, Jesus is “begotten anew,” “anointed anew,” and in turn “redeemed others.” The Father is here seen united with the virgin spirit, which descends upon Jesus and is instilled in him. The disciples are also required to replicate this process. As we discussed earlier, this is achieved through sacramental participation. The individual is “born again through the image” (67: 12-14).

Moreover, and most relevant to the wider argument here, is that the sexual component of Jesus’ origin is something that GPhil is in no way compelled to play down. If anything, the references identifying Joseph as his legitimate father make this aspect more prominent. If GPhil’s attitude towards marriage and celibacy was one of total disdain and prohibition, then to emphasise this aspect of the Saviour’s origins would seem odd. This begs the question, however, of whether or not marriage and sexuality is more widely acceptable to this author, or whether he/she was simply willing to overlook this in the case of the Saviour’s parentage in order to make a more important point; namely, that one’s carnal birth is overridden by spiritual rebirth through participation in the sacraments. In order to answer this question, we need to look at another passage, part of which is unfortunately damaged, meaning that we need to do some reconstruction and careful interpretative work. 64:31-65:1 speaks of the “mystery of marriage.” However, it has not been immediately clear to many scholars whether this refers to earthly marriage, eschatological union in the heavenly bridal chamber, or both:

Great is the mystery of marriage! [For without it, the world would not exist]. Now the existence of the world [is based on men], and the existence of [men on] marriage. Think of the [undefiled] relationship (κοινωνία), for it possesses [a great] power. Its image consists of a defilement.

Wilson reconstructs as follows:
The mystery of marriage is a great one. […] For the existence of [the world is based on men], but the existence of [men on] marriage. Understand the association [undefiled?], for it has [a great] power. Its image is in a [defilement of the body].

What seems apparent is that the unions between the aeons of the Pleroma, and/or the final eschatological unions of the fully enlightened individuals with their heavenly counterparts, are being compared with the unions between ordinary men and women.

It seems that 64:36 logically forms a contrast with 65:1. Wilson has noted that it is possible to restore 64:36 as either “the association of undefilement” or “the association of defilement.” However, the former seems more logical in that it is the image of this association/relationship that is said to be a “defilement” in 65:1. Lundhaug is in agreement here also, viewing earthly marriage as a reflection of something greater. Important for Lundhaug’s interpretation is the notion of marriage as a mystery in Eph 5:31-32, in which the joining of man and woman as “one flesh” in Gen 2:24 is described as a “great mystery.” This is of course picked up on by Paul in 1 Cor 6:15-17, where he describes sexual union with a prostitute as becoming “one body” with her. Translating KOINÒNIÀ as “communion,” rather than “relationship” or “association” as others have done, Lundhaug argues that the interpretation in Eph 5 of the mystery of marriage as Christ’s union with his Church can be applied to GPhil. The “communion” (KOINÒNIÀ), then, has Christ as the bridegroom of his Church. This, he argues can be enriched with Paul’s Eucharistic use of χοινωνία in 1 Cor 10 (we already know the 1 Cor is an important intertext for GPhil). GPhil, then, views the

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103 Wilson, *The Gospel of Philip*, 118
Eucharistic sacrament, in which the individual Christian becomes one with the flesh and blood of Christ, as mirrored in the idea of marriage.\(^{108}\)

That *GPhil* sees the value of marriage as a metaphorical device is further betrayed by 76:6-10, where the author explains that although different in nature, the unions between earthly men and women, and the aeons of the Pleroma are referred to with the same names: “In this world the union is male and female, the place of power and weakness. In the aeon the likeness of the union is another one, but we refer to them with these names.” DeConick has suggested that this passage refers to the ambiguity which language causes, due to “marriage” having dual meaning as a human act and a perfected union in heaven.\(^{109}\) For DeConick, the notion of the bridal chamber as the eschatological joining of the perfected individual with his or her angel is heavily influenced by the concept in some Jewish traditions of the Holy of Holies as God’s bridal chamber.\(^{110}\) When *GPhil* speaks about marriage, therefore, it has both a human institution and an eschatological event in mind. DeConick argues that 64:31-65:1 links human marriage to procreation – this is why the world is said to be dependent on it. However, she argues, *GPhil* does not wish his own followers to participate in sexual activity. This is the “marriage of impurity” (παγαίνω τεφωμ) in 64:36-37 (and later on in 82:5). Their marriages must be ruled over by self-control – this is the “marriage of purity” (παγαίνω τεφωμ) that we read about later on in 82:5.\(^{111}\)

DeConick’s interpretation unnecessarily forces a sexual prohibition onto this passage where there is no strong evidence to support it. Certainly, *GPhil* is setting human marriage alongside greater mysteries of union. However, human marriage is only viewed as defilement insofar as it is inferior to these. The “communion” that individuals enter into with Christ


\(^{110}\) DeConick, “The True Mysteries,” 246.

\(^{111}\) DeConick, “The True Mysteries,” 247.
through the Eucharistic sacrament is a joining of the flesh, and in this sense can be viewed as a marriage. Similarly, the pairing of the aeons, which will eventually include the faithful, perfected believers, is a marriage. The earthly union of man and woman provides a conceptual framework in which these deeper mysteries can be understood.\textsuperscript{112} We need not project anti-sexual polemic onto this passage, especially since, as the following analysis of the rest of the section will show, earthly marriage serves another important function – to protect against evil spirits that plant sexual desire, and so the potential for sexual sin, in humans:

\begin{quote}
The forms of evil spirit include male ones and female ones. The males are they which unite with the souls which inhabit a female form, but the females are they which are mingled with those in a male form, through one who was disobedient. And none shall be able to escape them, since they detain him if he does not receive a male power or a female power, the bridegroom and the bride. One receives them from the mirrored bridal chamber. When the wanton women see a male sitting alone, they leap down on him and play with him and defile him. So also the lecherous men, when they see a beautiful woman sitting alone, they persuade her and compel her, wishing to defile her. But if they see the man and his wife sitting beside one another, the female cannot come into the man, nor can the male come into the woman. So if the image and the angel are united with one another, neither can any venture to go into the man or the woman. (65:1-26)
\end{quote}

It seems that \textit{GPhil} is suggesting that the souls of human men and women can be inhabited by evil spirits that also possess genders. The malicious male spirits want to join with the female souls, and the malicious female spirits the male souls. In order to be protected against these evil spirits, one must receive a bridegroom or a bride from the “mirrored bridal chamber.” Williams suggests that the passage warns of the vulnerability of human beings to unclean spirits that linger in the cosmos. Marriage, he suggests, makes men and women immune to these. However, he claims that ‘gnostic’ couples such as those \textit{GPhil} is addressing were not permitted to practice intercourse within marriage. Their union should only be a

\textsuperscript{112} See Lundhaug, \textit{Images}, 277.
ritual marriage to ‘neutralise their ‘gender charge.’”¹¹³ There is no evidence within GPhil, however, that sexual intercourse was banned for believers. Rather, it must be practiced appropriately.

Some scholars have interpreted the “bride and bridegroom” in this passage as referring to the perfected Christian and his or her angelic counterpart.¹¹⁴ However, the problem with this, as Wilson identifies, is that the notion that the Pleroma, as well as this world, is susceptible to the attacks of evil powers does not seem to be attested in any other sources, and does not make particular sense in GPhil as a whole.¹¹⁵ With reference to the Sahidic version of 1 Cor 10:16-21, where Paul describes the difference between consuming the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, and that of demons through meat that has been sacrificed, Lundhaug suggests that this passage in GPhil is better understood if we understand the “bridal chamber” as the body of Christ in the form of the Eucharist. In the Sahidic translation of 1 Cor. 10:16-21, the same construction is used to describe the unity received from sharing one Eucharistic bread as GPhil uses to describe the protection one receives “from the mirrored bridal chamber”:¹¹⁶

1 Cor. 17 – ἐν μνημοσύνη ἡμῶν: “For we all receive from this one bread.”

GPhil 65:12 - ἐν μνημοσύνῃ ἡμών: “from the mirrored bridal chamber.”

Lundhaug argues, therefore, that just as one risks becoming unified with demons if they eat meat sacrificed to idols, by eating Christ’s body in the Eucharist, one can become unified with Christ. The Eucharistic meal allows the believer to become Christ’s koinōn (“partner”). He suggests that GPhil 65:12 is actually referring to Christ’s body as the

¹¹³ Williams, “Varieties in Gnostic Perspectives on Gender,” 17.
¹¹⁴ So Wilson, The Gospel of Philip, 121.
¹¹⁵ Wilson, The Gospel of Philip, 121.
Eucharist – this is the symbolic representation of his true body, which is the real bridal chamber.\footnote{Lundhaug, Images, 323.} The bride and bridegroom, then, are the Holy Spirit and the Logos, which enter a person when they participate in the Eucharist. These are the male and female powers that one needs to receive for protection. Once they have received the Eucharistic meal, they are “united with Christ in a symbolic marriage,” which wards off evil spirits.\footnote{Lundhaug, Images, 323.} Lundhaug then goes on to claim that the next part of the passage, which describes the dangers of “wanton women” and “lecherous men” preying on those of the opposite sex who “sit alone” – i.e. not united in marriage, should be interpreted purely metaphorically. He suggests that this provides an explanation of how Christian life provides an “antidote” against evil, just as human marriage does the same for sexual immorality.\footnote{Lundhaug, Images, 324.} This is an important point, and reinforces the argument that GPhil does not have a specific grievance against sexual conduct, as long as it is within appropriate boundaries – the suggestion here is that those boundaries are a marriage between a man and a woman.

Given that GPhil draws upon Paul’s teachings in 1 Cor to support his views on the resurrection, it is not impossible that the author’s attitude towards earthly marital union resembles Paul’s in 1 Cor 7: 1-2, 6-7:

> Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: ‘It is well for a man not to touch a woman.’ But because of sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband...
> This I say this by way of concession, not of command. I wish that all were as I myself am...

We have already seen that the two authors share common language and conceptions surrounding the transformation of the earthly into the heavenly and the physical into the spiritual. The above analysis has hopefully shown that whilst GPhil undoubtedly values the heavenly consummation in the bridal chamber above all else, earthly marital union acts as an
“image” of this, with its own additional function to protect against the lusting temptations of evil spirits. From this, we can gather that *GPhil* has the same concern as the apostle Paul—that without a legitimate partner in the form of a wife or husband, individuals will fall victim to the temptations of sexual sin. If an individual has been able to master his or her passions and overcome temptations without the need for this inferior, fleshly union (as Paul himself claims to have done), this is ideal. However, this is an unrealistic aim for many.

The Pachomian monks, having made the decision to enter into a life of celibacy would have identified with *GPhil’s* ideal notion that avoidance of sexual union was the ultimate goal. As believers on the path to a higher spiritual understanding, they could easily identify with an ethos that accepted sexuality as a fact of life, but it was one which should be kept at bay, outside the monastery walls. Contrary to that of the anchorite, however, life within the Pachomian community should not be one of total isolation. Central to the vocation of the Koinonia was a supportive environment, where each brother was mindful of his duty and God-given opportunity to encourage his fellows. Equality was held in the highest regard, with rank and over-ambition (be it clerical, or simply a desire to outdo others with ascetic feats) constantly suppressed. This is something which finds particular support in *GPhil*, and will be the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

**Social Responsibility and Attitudes towards Other Christians**

It is not surprising that the issue of one’s obligation to the spiritual health of others has been overlooked in NH studies given the long held view that ‘gnostic’ texts represent a worldview that sees certain individuals or groups as spiritually privileged or automatically predisposed
to salvation over and above others. The large number of texts that have traditionally become known in scholarship as ‘Sethian,’ such as ApJohn and HypArch from CII, have leant themselves particularly to this view due to an apparent belief in their ancestry and eventual salvation in the figure of Seth. A leading figure in this debate was Schenke, who attempted to isolate the distinguishing doctrinal characteristics and core beliefs of Sethianism with his classification system in 1974.\textsuperscript{119}

A similar notion of the salvation of only the spiritual elite seems to exist in many of the texts that scholars have viewed as stemming from the ‘Valentinian’ school, GPhil being a prime example. Again, this is a complex area, particularly since there appear to have been two branches of Valentinian thought – one Western and one Eastern, whose views on certain issues were not only different, but confused in the heresiological literature from where many of our descriptions come! Thomassen has tackled this problem in his voluminous book from 2007 that seeks to track the history of the “Church of the Valentinians.”\textsuperscript{120} What does seem to be clear is that various ‘Valentinian’ sources view mankind as divided into three categories, the hylic, the psychic and the pneumatic.\textsuperscript{121} Of these three groups, only the pneumatics are guaranteed salvation. GPhil does not use these terms specifically, but does seem to view mankind as spiritually unequal. The author’s use of the terms “Hebrew,” “Gentile,” “Jew,” and “Christian” are significant here. In an article appearing in 1989, Siker argued that the distinction between “Hebrew” and “Jew” is a deliberate device that the author of the text uses to distinguish not between Jews and Christians, but between different classes of Christian.\textsuperscript{122}


\textsuperscript{120} Thomssen, Spiritual Seed.

\textsuperscript{121} See for example, Tripartite Tractate 118:15-122:13.

\textsuperscript{122} Jeffrey S. Siker, “Gnostic Views on Jews and Christians in the Gospel of Philip,” NovT 31 (1989), 275-288. Hugo Lundhaug challenges the view that “Hebrew” and “Jew” represent different groups to the author of the GPhil and sees no reason to distinguish – for him, both terms represents Jews and Judaism. He argues that the imagery surrounding the difference between creating and begetting in the texts opening passage is employed in
Robert Grant sees a progression of faith in the *GPhil* that begins with Judaism and progresses to Christianity before reaching its optimum state in Gnosticism.\(^{123}\) Although I am reluctant to put it in these terms, a salvatory process from to spiritual maturity is certainly alluded to in 79:25-30: “Faith is our earth, that in which we take root. [And] hope is the water through which we are nourished. Love is the wind through which we grow. Knowledge then is the light through which we [ripen].”

Scholars such as Schenke\(^{124}\) and Isenberg\(^{125}\) take all of the passages that speak of Hebrews, Jews and Christians more literally, arguing that the author is simply making the point that once even he and his audience were “Hebrews” or Jews before receiving Christ when they converted. I would argue that the author of *GPhil* plays with the terms “Hebrew,” “Jew,” “Gentile,” “Christian,” and “proselyte” in order to set up a metaphor that betrays his view of the process of Christian development. *GPhil*’s audience would be familiar with the process and associated terminology that comes with this model, and, therefore, the author is able to draw a comparison with their own experience of transforming from unenlightened (or as some would have it, ‘non-Gnostic’) Christians to Christians with all the necessary gnosis and spiritual development. If we accept this theory, then passages such as 55:25-31, which describes Jesus’ mother Mary as “a great anathema to the Hebrews, who are the apostles and [the] apostolic men”, make much more sense. The author is here betraying some ideological conflict with other Christians, whom he views as being less enlightened than himself, in this case on the issue of how Jesus was conceived.

*GPhil*, however, makes explicit the need for the spiritually advanced to be vigilant lest they allow their own pursuit of knowledge to consume them to the detriment of others. In


\(^{124}\) Schenke, *Das Philippus-evangelium*, 159.

the analysis that follows, I will argue that in the eyes of GPhil, responsibility to one’s spiritual brothers must be valued almost as highly as the acquisition of knowledge and self-development. Clearly, GPhil does value knowledge in the highest regard. One passage in particular, which is littered with references to different NT texts, deals with the relationship between knowledge and one’s duty of care to others. It is worth citing in full:

He who has knowledge of the truth is a free man, but the free man does not sin, for ‘He who sins is the slave of sin’ (Jn 8:34). Truth is the mother, knowledge the father. Those who think that sinning does not apply to them are called ‘free’ by the world. Knowledge of the truth merely makes such people arrogant, which is what the words, ‘it makes them free’ mean. It even gives them a sense of superiority over the whole world. But ‘Love builds up’ (1 Cor 8:1). In fact, he who is really free, through knowledge, is a slave, because of love for those who have not yet been able to attain to the freedom of knowledge. Knowledge makes them capable of becoming free. Love never calls something its own, [...] it [...] possess [...]. It never says, ‘This is yours’ or ‘This is mine,’ but ‘All these are yours.’ Spiritual love is wine and fragrance. All those who anoint themselves with it take pleasure in it. While those who are anointed are present, those nearby also profit (from the fragrance). If those anointed with ointment withdraw from them and leave, then those not anointed, who merely stand nearby, still remain in their bad odor. The Samaritan gave nothing but wine and oil to the wounded man. It is nothing other than the ointment. It healed the wounds, for ‘love covers a multitude of sins’ (1 Pt 4:8). (76:15-78:11)

This passage tells us that love is valued above knowledge and freedom, agreeing with Paul that the freedom one believes that they receive as a consequence of knowledge (γνωσις, ἐγνώσσε) carries the danger of inciting a superiority complex over other community members. Like Paul, the compiler advocates love and its ability to ‘build up’ through loving service to Christian brethren (1 Cor 8:1, GPhil 77:25-27). Knowledge, then, must be imparted with care. This echoes Paul’s advice to those who possess knowledge not to flaunt their liberty so that it becomes ‘a stumbling block to the weak’ (1 Cor 8:8). Indeed, GPhil tells us that while ἐγνώσσε makes a “free man” (77:16-17), it also brought death (74-5-12).

“Those who have not yet been able to attain the freedom of knowledge” likely refers to

Christians who have not yet reached the optimum state of ‘gnosis,’ but it is not impossible that non-Christians are also in mind here. Either way, it is clear that the author sees the benefit of interaction between the enlightened and the unenlightened. Identifying knowledge as something that ‘enslaves’ its possessor emphasises the duty that comes attached to coach those still in its pursuit. The spiritually mature Christian, then, must not allow their superior knowledge of the truth to instil them with arrogance and supersede their responsibility to act as a behavioural model to other members of the community. Indeed, just the mere presence of those individuals ‘anointed’ in spiritual love can positively impact those “not anointed.”

The ministerial role of the enlightened disciple is also an issue that *GPhil* advises on:

> Blessed is the one who on no occasion caused a soul [...] That person is Jesus Christ…Therefore, blessed is the one who is like this, because he is a perfect man. For the Word tells us that this kind is difficult to define. How shall we be able to accomplish such a great thing? How will he give everyone comfort? Above all, it is not proper to cause anyone distress - whether the person is great or small, unbeliever or believer - and then give comfort only to those who take satisfaction in good deeds. Some find it advantageous to give comfort to the one who has fared well. He who does good deeds cannot give comfort to such people, for he does not seize whatever he likes. He is unable to cause distress, however, since he does not afflict them. To be sure, the one who fares well sometimes causes people distress - not that he intends to do so; rather, it is their own wickedness which is responsible for their distress. He who possesses the qualities (of the perfect man) bestows joy upon the good. Some, however, are terribly distressed by all this. (79:33-80:22)

Essentially, the passage asks how one can become like Christ, not cause distress to anyone, and offer the appropriate comfort to those in need. This is a difficult task to live up to. Wilson suggests that this passage echoes the sentiment of 1 John, whereby one’s conduct in daily life is what gives the true expression of religious faith. It seems that there are two different types of person referred to here – some that “have fared well” in the world, perhaps through “seizing what [they] like,” and some others who “do good.” The message seems to be that those wishing to “do good” find it difficult to minister to the former group, because unlike

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those who fare well, they are uninterested in “seizing” (likely a reference to the things of the material world). However, the next passage goes some way to offering a solution to this problem:

There was a householder who had every conceivable thing, be it son or slave or cattle or dog or pig or corn or barley or chaff or grass or [...] or meat and acorn. Now he was a sensible fellow, and he knew what the food of each one was. He served the children bread [...]. He served the slaves [...] and meal. And he threw barley and chaff and grass to the cattle. He threw bones to the dogs, and to the pigs he threw acorns and slop. Compare the disciple of God: if he is a sensible fellow, he understands what discipleship is all about. The bodily forms will not deceive him, but he will look at the condition of the soul of each one and speak with him... When he identifies them, to the swine he will throw acorns, to the cattle he will throw barley and chaff and grass, to the dogs he will throw bones. To the slaves he will give only the elementary lessons, to the children he will give the complete instruction. (80:24-81:15)

The comparison is rather crude, but the message is extremely clear – giving someone who is reasonably advanced in knowledge and faith only the basic level of instruction is useless. Equally, giving those who are just beginning advanced tuition is inappropriate.

Relating this passage to *GPhil’s* division of mankind that we briefly discussed earlier, Wilson suggests that the “beasts” or “animals” are representative of materialistic men who have not yet undertaken any spiritual training, the slaves stand for those who are just starting out on the initial stages of the Christian journey, and finally, the children represent the fully initiated Christian whose spiritual knowledge is advanced.\(^\text{128}\) It is this last category that *GPhil* sees himself as fitting into.

Referring back to the previous passage then, ministering simply to those who “do good” is unsatisfactory. Whilst it may be difficult to change the minds of those who are only concerned with the things of this world, the disciple will be significantly advantaged if he learns to recognise the specific needs of all. With each person, the disciple must “look at the

condition of his soul and speak with him” on a level that is appropriate. This message casts any superior view that *GPhil* may have over other Christians or individuals in a slightly different light. Just as Paul advises his Corinthians, all the knowledge in the world is useless if one cannot be a positive influence upon those around him. In fact, this passage seems to say something very similar to Paul in 1 Cor 9:19-23, where Paul explains that in order to make his message accessible to everyone that he encounters, to the Jew he became a Jew, to the weak he became weak, to those under the law he became like one under the law. This may well have been an important message for a monastic community, whose individual spiritual pursuits could lead to a blinkered view of their role as enlightened Christians.

Indeed, of relevance here is a passage in the Pachomian corpus. G1 (49) emphasises that great care must be taken of children, in order to prepare them from an early age to be obedient and receptive to good. Employing an analogy of agriculture, the *Vita* argues that ground that is attentively cultivated from the start is easier to keep clean. It does warn, however, that even ground that is planted with good seed can turn wild if not tended properly. Although this is in principal about children, it does indicate that there was concern within the movement for proper instruction of others. There may also be a metaphorical level intended here, where the children are viewed as the less spiritually enlightened. It could for example, easily have young monks in mind. It is unlikely that the Pachomians would have had a great deal of access to many children outside the monastery walls. Moreover, fragment II of the *Tenth Sahidic Life* contains instructions on how to receive young monks and teach them to keep their bodies pure so that they might become temples of God. The shared sentiment on this issue between *GPhil* and the core ideology of the Pachomian movement is nicely summed up by Horsiesius in the *Test. Hors.* 11:

> After we have rendered an account of our own life, we shall likewise render an account for those who were entrusted to us. And not only is this to be understood of the housemasters but also of the superiors
of the monasteries and of each of the brothers belonging to the rank and file, because all must ‘carry each other’s burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.’ (cf. Gal 6:2)

In the next chapter, I will make the case that the following two tractates, HypArch and OrigWorld validate the ethical and practical advice given in GThom and GPhil by assuring the reader of their eternal reward, in contrast to the miserable fate of the evil world rulers. Moreover, the stance on sexuality betrayed thus far in CII finds further support, as does the notion that the spiritually ‘elect’ is very much an open group.

The Consequences of Earthly Actions

We are now almost half way through CII, and with four tractates remaining it will be helpful to assess where the codex has brought us ideologically. It is probably fair to say that the three tractates we have examined thus far have outlined both through mythology and ethical teachings, a worldview which inspires those aspiring to be among the spiritually elite to overcome the passions that weigh down the soul. As ApJohn explains, these are the malicious attempts of the Demiurge to remove humanity from its true origins with the divine. The implantation of sexual lust is viewed as the Demiurge’s most dangerous attack. GThom and GPhil build on what the ApJohn has outlined by offering some ethical and practical advice for the devoted ascetic. This involves ensuring that bodily denial and the avoidance of wider society are undertaken in an appropriately focused mind-set, so as not to lose sight of their purpose to bring one closer to God. Moreover, the GPhil in particular expresses a concern that those progressing in spiritual pursuits might neglect their duty to share their valuable knowledge with those less advanced.

It might seem at first surprising that CII contains within it two other texts, apart from the ApJohn, that deal with the creation of the world and the malevolent archons responsible for it. However, both HypArch and OrigWorld are included, I suggest, not for the specifics
that they contain about cosmic and earthly origins, but are drawn upon for their broader ideological stances, which placed at their respective junctures in CII help to emphasise some of its vital messages. This will be the focus of the present chapter. CII has outlined its position on some of the most important issues that the fourth-century monastic reader would have had to contend with; sexual desire, bodily denial, removal from wider society, and responsibility towards fellow spiritual brethren. I will argue in this chapter that by making use of the mythology familiar from the ApJohn, its next step is to affirm the importance of the messages given in GThom and GPhil pertaining to one’s conduct, assuring that the eternal reward for the devoted will be greater than the meagre pleasures offered by the world.

HypArch does this largely by making even more emphatic than does the ApJohn the fact that the archons are ultimately doomed, whilst the souls of the spiritual will reign supreme. OrigWorld, through a dramatic and detailed description of the end times, supports this notion with graphic images of the archons’ demise, contrasted with the glory of the redeemed. By the end of OrigWorld, eschatology from a catastrophic global event into an eternal reward for the individual believer. For a fourth century monk, these two texts at this point in CII offered a confirmation that sterling efforts to overcome the temptations of this world will be rewarded in the next. This of course, is a message entirely harmonious with the impetus given in the Pach.S.

Paral. 19 exhorts the brothers to strive towards salvation even though they endure hardship in their current lifestyle. Pachomius is recorded as instructing them that if they could only know the rewards that await the faithful, and the punishment that awaits the negligent, they would strive unrelentingly. He continues by warning them that they only have limited time on earth – one cannot repent after death, and so must not allow the meagre vanities of this “short and contemptible” existence to steal from them the glory of eternity (20). BO and G1 record at length Pachomius’ vision pertaining to the fate of souls after death (BO 82, G1
Each monk’s soul is retrieved by an angel corresponding to his “rank,” in terms of his practice. Those of exemplary conduct are allotted the most-high ranking angels, whilst those who have markedly less virtue are assigned an appropriately inferior heavenly escort. The soul itself is eventually presented to the Lord, but how close it is able to come to Him is entirely dependent on the quality of its good works on earth. Moreover, those who have done the greatest works are greeted by the saints, who embrace them wholeheartedly. Again, those of lesser spiritual merit are kept a proportionate distance from the saints; some warrant an embrace, others not. There is of course, the individual who has lived a wicked life, and his fate is graphically described. At the point of death, two merciless angels thrash him until the soul is ready to leave the body. They then thrust a fish-hook into his mouth and violently pull the soul out before tying it to a “spirit-horse” which drags it to the depths of hell. Still another vision *(BO 88)* records similar torment as Pachomius is carried away to watch the souls of sinners tortured in rivers of fire and enduring whippings by terrifying angels. Punishments are here related to specific sins. For instance Pachomius sees cisterns filled with fire, in which souls stand with feet appearing in a fleshly form. The fire gradually burns each member of the body that the individual tarnished whilst alive. The *Regulations of Horsiesius* 2-3 preface the monastery rules with a fierce reminder of the punishments recorded in Scripture for the negligent wedding guest and the foolish virgins of Mt 22:1-13 and 25:1-13 respectively.

We can see, then, that for those who lead the Pachomian movement, a fervent reminder of what awaited them after death was vital to keep them focused on their daily ascesis and devotional tasks. However, it is important to consider Rousseau’s caution against viewing such statements as overly morbid, constructing an impression of Pachomius whereby his monastic discipline fed primarily off a fear of God’s wrath.¹ Such statements need to be balanced against the view that fear of God was not simply instilled by a vengeful image from

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the OT, but from seeing the good virtue and practice of other monks. “Fear” about one’s fate on the day of judgement might in such instances be better described as a spurring on into action.\(^2\) Chance plays no part here; each monk has the power to determine whether he will eventually taste glory or eternal penance. The eschatological imagery presented in *HypArch* and *OrigWorld* surely enhanced the assurance that adherence to the practical and ethical prescriptions outlined previously in *GThom* and *GPhil* would impact favourably upon one’s chances in the afterlife, complimenting the Pachomian attitude perfectly.

*HypArch* and *OrigWorld* both include their own reinterpretations of the Genesis creation account, and discussion of the cosmic world. In *HypArch* the fate of humanity, beginning with Adam and Eve and continuing through to the spiritual children of their virginal daughter, Norea, is more of a focus than in *OrigWorld*. The latter is more concerned with the order and creation of the primordial beings. The close relationship between the two documents is quite apparent, notably through their common inclusion of the redemption of Sabaoth, the son of Ialdabaoth. *OrigWorld* has been ascribed its title by modern scholars, as unlike the other tractates in the codex, it does not appear as a colophon at the end of the document. Instead, this place is occupied by the title of the following tractate, the *ExSoul*.

### The Hypostasis of the Archons

I suggest *HypArch*’s primary focus in CII is to enforce the message that the malevolent demonic beings responsible for human error and ignorance can be overcome by dedicated human beings, who, consistent with *ApJohn*’s mythology, are naturally superior owing to

their divine heritage. *HypArch* encourages the reader that the archons, despite their malicious meddling in human affairs, are fated to certain demise – no doubt a welcome assertion for ascetics battling daily with a challenging regime aimed at conquering, as they viewed it, demonically inflicted passions and carnal thoughts.

Demons are a common feature in the Pach.S, which isn’t surprising, particularly for fourth century hagiography. One only has to compare the VA in this regard. *G*1 (56) and *Paral.* (2.4) warn against the very real threat posed by such enemies, and claim that the way to beat them is with a combination of humility and active power. Cosmic conflict is as much as part of Pachomius’ early life as it is in the VA. Commonly, this is portrayed as a test of the spirit and will, sanctioned by God, so that the ascetic might learn to know his demonic enemies and their words, never to confuse them with those of God. *Ep. Amm.*, for instance, (24) warns that one’s own impure desires and misguided will are not always attributable to demonic forces. Pachomius teaches that the “appearance” of demons and the inner thoughts (λογισμοί) experienced as a result of their meddling are distinguishable from divinely inspired visions, as the latter involve the total loss of self-consciousness. λογισμοί would no longer occur if a vision was God-given (*BO* 113, *G*1 96, 112, *Ep. Amm.* 16).³

This cautioning against hastily blaming demons may seem at odds with the views put forward in *ApJohn* and *HypArch*, where the archontic beings are the root of desires and passions in humans. However, it is supported by their insistence that despite this, the individual is ultimately responsible for their response to their human situation, and chooses whether to pursue salvation or not. *HypArch* achieves its aim largely through over-emphasis, often in quite comical fashion, on the inadequacy, inability and frequent failings of the

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³ On this, see Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 140-141.
archontic rulers. Initially, the struggle between humanity and these evil forces is understood through a (pseudo) Pauline lens with the citing of Eph 6:12\(^4\) in the opening few lines:

\[
\chi\varepsilon\ [\tau]\ \nu\mu\partial\varepsilon\ \mu\omicron\nu\omicron\ \alpha\omicron\ \gamma\omicron\omicron\varepsilon\ \sigma\alpha\rho\varepsilon\ 21\ [\chi\nu\omicron\omicron] \eta\lambda\lambda\lambda\ \epsilon\rho\omicron\gamma\omicron\varepsilon\ \eta\xi\omicron\omicron\varepsilon\omicron\omicron\varepsilon\iota\omicron\lambda\iota
\]

\[\pi\kappa\omicron\omicron\ [\mu\omicron\nu\omicron\ \mu\omicron] \nu\pi\omicron\nu\omicron\ \gamma\omicron\alpha\omicron\tau\omicron\ \kappa\omicron\omicron\ \eta\pi\omicron\nu\omicron\nu\omicron\eta\omicron\omicron\pi\omicron\omicron\iota\lambda\omicron.] \ (86:22-25)\]

Our wrestling/contest is not against flesh and blood, but it is against the powers of the world and the spirits of evil. (My translation)

This reference has led Williams to suggest that *HypArch* follows the two ‘Gospels’ in the codex precisely because of its reference to the “great apostle”; the allusion to the NT epistles thereby mimicking the ordering of Christian scripture. This, he argues, is why we have a text that deals primarily with a myth of origins half way through CII.\(^5\) The text is offered as an exegesis on the comments made about the cosmic rulers in the Pauline epistles. Pagels has argued similarly that *HypArch* has at its centre a Pauline interpretation of Genesis – this will be discussed below. A superficial look at the ordering of CII might question, however, why *HypArch* is followed by yet another similarly themed text, *OrigWorld*, which offers a more sophisticated version of that contained within *HypArch*. It has been suggested that this decision might be due to a pre-existent pairing of the two texts in the source from which CII’s scribe was working. However, if as I am arguing, the commissioners of the codex were concerned with thematic development, then something more meaningful is required. The answer I suggest lies in the concluding section of the tractate, which deals with eschatology. Williams hints at this, suggesting that the tractate following *OrigWorld*, *ExSoul*, draws this eschatology into a more personal struggle, relating it specifically to the experience of the

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\(^4\) Pagels also suggests an allusion to Col 1:13, “the authority of darkness.” *HypArch*, however, omits the reference to darkness that appears in the Greek and Sahidic versions of Eph 6:12: “Pursuing the Spiritual Eve,” 191.

\(^5\) Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism*, 255.
individual. I think Williams is essentially correct on this matter, but I believe he misses something in his understanding of the placement of HypArch. Williams’ concern is chiefly the scriptural mimicking that he sees in CII, so his focus is solely on the epistolary appeal, and the mention of the ‘great apostle’. However, the placement of the text makes much more sense when we consider how it affects CII *thematically*. After all, there are other texts within the NHL that bear an epistolary character (*The Letter of Peter to Philip*, codex VIII), and others that appeal to Paul (for example *The Prayer of the Apostle Paul*, Codex I, and *The Apocalypse of Paul*, Codex V).

*HypArch* offers a more condensed version of the Sophia myth that we are familiar with from *ApJohn*, along with a similar inversion of the Genesis creation account. *HypArch* has two main parts; a reinterpretation of the first few chapters of Genesis up to the story of the flood, followed by a revelatory discourse to Norea, Seth’s sister, from the angel Eleleth. In much the same way as *ApJohn*, the text mixes elements of Jewish thought and Hellenistic philosophy. However, the appeal to the “great apostle” together with the citation of Ephesians indicates that whatever the document’s compositional history, its final form is a Christian text. Its loyalty to the LXX suggests that it was first written in Greek before appearing in its present Coptic stage. Schenke, Kasser and Bullard argue that the two parts of the tractate are owing to two separate sources, but agreement has not been reached on where exactly the second source begins or exactly what these sources are. Krause favours the use of three sources, one related to Seth and Norea, one to Norea, Noah and the ark, and a final one.

6 Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism*, 255.
7 As Pearson, “The Figure of Seth in Gnostic Literature,” in *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Gnosticism, Stockholm, August 20-25, 1973* (Geo Widengren and David Hellholm, eds.; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1977), 479, notes, the special significance afforded the chosen race in *HypArch* comes through their relationship to Norea, rather than Seth.
documenting Eleleth’s revelation to Norea.\textsuperscript{10} Such source-critical issues are not pertinent to the present study, however, as unlike the differing versions of \textit{ApJohn}, they do not reveal anything about the text’s fourth-century usage, so I mention them only briefly for context.

Pearson and Layton have suggested that \textit{HypArch}’s author bases his exegesis of Genesis on Jewish apocryphal texts and popular Platonic philosophy.\textsuperscript{11} However, Pagels has argued compellingly that his or her interpretation of Genesis is entirely through the lens of Paul’s letters. We do not simply have a Christianisation of various source materials, but a concerted effort to understand the creation narrative through the eyes of the “great apostle.”\textsuperscript{12}

1 Cor 15, for example, is viewed by \textit{HypArch} as Paul’s exposition on Gen 2-3. The archons’ inability to raise their created man (88:5-10), and the subsequent intervention of the Spirit relies on 1 Cor 15:35-36, which Pagels sees as Paul’s exegesis of God’s Spirit breathing life into the man made of dust in Gen 2:7. The initial man of dust in Gen 2 becomes the dead body of 1 Cor 15 – the life which the Spirit breathes into Adam’s body thereby mimicking the resurrection Paul is concerned with. Of course, Paul strongly asserts that the physical body cannot rise again after death – “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom,” but his notion that the body is first “sown perishable” and “in weakness” to be later transformed into one that is “imperishable” and “power[ful]” can be seen in the initial failure of the archons, followed by the Spirit’s rectification. Through the Spirit, Adam is transformed into a “living soul.”\textsuperscript{13} Paul’s assertion in 1 Cor 2:14 that the “psychics cannot grasp the things that are spiritual” explains the archons’ failure to capture the divine image in the water. According to Pagels, then, the author wishes to show that creation has made the spiritual and psychic

\textsuperscript{11} Pearson, “The Figure of Norea in Gnostic Literature,” 241-254. Pearson’s treatment of the text concentrates on the representation of and the influential sources for Norea. Since this initial paper, Pearson has further published on this topic – see the discussion of Norea later on in this chapter. Bentley Layton, “The Hypostasis of the Archons or the Reality of the Rulers,” \textit{HTR} 67 (1974), 364-374.
\textsuperscript{12} See Pagels, “Pursuing the Spiritual Eve”.
\textsuperscript{13} Pagels, “Pursuing the Spiritual Eve,” 194.
forces of the primordial realm incarnate in human beings. It is not “flesh and blood” that are problematic, but the forces which control them. The battle against one’s passions is entirely the doing of the archons – fleshly, worldly affairs are not intrinsically evil, but have been manipulated and used against humanity by the cosmic rulers.\(^\text{14}\) It is easy to imagine that a Pachomian audience, who placed so much value on the teachings of Scripture, would have enjoyed this veneration of the apostle. Positive and dependent usage of Paul in \textit{HypArch} would have undoubtedly made any antagonism such as that displayed towards Genesis much less of a problematic issue.

When the citation from Ephesians is compared to the Greek NT and the Sahidic NT, which itself closely follows the Greek, some relevant differences can be observed. Some are minor and do not seem to make much interpretative difference – for example, \textit{HypArch} renders \(\pi\alpha\lambda\eta\) as \(\omega\delta\chi\varepsilon\) (contest, wrestling) instead of \(\mu\mu\alpha\delta\varepsilon\), which is the choice of the Sahidic NT. \textit{HypArch} also changes the order of \(\alpha\iota\mu\alpha \chi\alpha \varsigma\alpha\varsigma\alpha\varsigma\) (\textit{CNQ} 21 \textit{CAQ} 21) to \(\textit{CAQ} 21 \textit{CNQ}\). However, what is more immediately striking is that \textit{HypArch} omits the terms \(\chi\rho\chi\omega\) and \(\kappa\omicron\omicron\mu\omicron\omicron\kappa\rho\alpha\tau\omega\rho\) completely, as well as the references to “this darkness” and “the heavens.” Given the topic of \textit{HypArch}, the first of these warrants some investigation.

It can be observed that the document’s title, given at the end, uses the term \(\chi\rho\chi\omega\) “archons,” whilst the opening sentence employs \(\nu\epsilon\omega\gamma\varsigma\iota\lambda\) “powers.” Böhlig attempted to address this conundrum by examining the terminology in the related \textit{OrigWorld}, where he argues for synonymous usage of the two.\(^\text{15}\) From \textit{HypArch} 87:23-89:3, along with 92:4-93:23 \(\chi\rho\chi\omega\) is almost exclusively used.\(^\text{16}\) Moreover, he notes a link between passages that use \(\epsilon\omega\gamma\varsigma\iota\lambda\) and the mention of “seed” and the notion of defilement. This is a connection that

\(^{14}\) Pagels, “Pursuing the Spiritual Eve,” 193.


\(^{16}\) See also \textit{HypArch} 96:16, 88:19-31.
he also finds common to *OrigWorld*, and leads him to propose that in *OrigWorld*, two sources are at work, an ἀρχών source and an ἐξουσία source. However, this idea does not easily carry to *HypArch*. As Bullard notes, in the latter text we have the archons (Ἀρχών) creating Adam, and placing him in the garden (87:23), yet it is the powers (Ἑξουσία) that subsequently become jealous of his meeting with Eve (89:19). It seems improbable that different entities are being conveyed here. Moreover, when Böhlig’s thematic link between “power” and defilement is analysed, this is shown to be inconsistent in *HypArch*, also. For instance, 92:19-93:8 has the archons named as harassing Norea and attempting to convince her that her mother, Eve, willingly engaged in sexual union with them. From my reading of both texts, I see no continuous thematic or ideological significance in the particular instances of each word, and, therefore suggest along with Gilhus that ἀρχών and ἐξουσία be understood as synonymous.

The fact that it is not only ἀρχών but also κοσμοκράτωρ that *HypArch* omits suggests that its author/compiler is simply paraphrasing Ephesians, and because he/she does not see any particular distinction in identity between “the powers,” “the rulers,” and the “world powers,” he/she does not see any problem with a shortened citation.

There are slightly differing connotations between the two terms, which if found to be used meaningfully across the two texts, might imply an intentional selective usage. ἐξουσία, when used as a verb rather than a noun connotes power in the sense of permission, or licence to do something, whereas the noun ἀρχών always denotes an individual in some form of rulership or command. Regarding ἐξουσία, it is worth noting that Ialdabaoth and his minions are effectively only able to act as far as the Divine Realm will allow or permit them to, as the Divine Realm have the ability to thwart their plans at any time. However, usage of

17 Bullard, *The Hypostasis of the Archons*, 44.
the two terms does not reflect that the author/s of HypArch had the intention of conveying such meaning.

Making a Mockery of Malice

A distinct mocking of the archons is more noticeable in HypArch than in others that treat the topic of worldly origins. This betrays a particular concern with humanity’s (and in particular the chosen “seed’s”) superiority over the Demiurge and his offspring. For Pachomian readers, I suggest that it would have brought a cosmic justification both for the lifestyle which we have seen supported in both GThom and GPhil. The argument that HypArch asserts is twofold: Firstly, it is the ignorant cosmic rulers who are responsible for humanity’s unawareness of its true origins in the divine realm. The rulers have clouded the minds of human beings with fleshly temptations, and repressed the Spirit’s influence upon their thoughts and actions. Secondly, with the help of the Spirit, and the instruction of the saviour, mankind possesses the ability to overcome the archons’ clutches, and attain to a glorious future residing in the heavenly realm. This of course, is no different to the thesis put forward at length by ApJohn. However, this strategically placed, cogent reminder of the very real, yet essentially beatable opposition that the Christian in pursuit of spiritual perfection faced, focuses attention on the reward for adherence to the issues addressed in the GThom and GPhil.

HypArch’s disdain for and mocking of the archons is prevalent from its opening. In fact, as we shall see – every event that the text narrates is characterised by their inferiority and misplaced arrogance. Various scholars have argued that despite the document’s title, their
“hypostasis” (ὑπόστασις), in terms of physical nature, is hardly discussed. Schenke is an exception, and translates the term as Wesen (character, nature, essence) in his German translation; this choice is followed by Gilhus. Early in the narrative, we simply learn that Pistis Sophia installed [Ialdabaoth’s] children, according to their power, and after the model of the Pleroma (87: 8-10). We also read that the archons possess androgynous bodies in the forms of animals (87:27-30). Later on, the narrating voice (who seems to take the place of Norea in her discourse with the angel Eleleth) asks Eleleth to elaborate upon how the powers came to be, from what material, and who it was that created them and their forces (93:33-94:1). It is probably this short section which gave rise to the titling of the document. The great angel’s answer offers a slightly fuller account of Ialdabaoth’s creation, as well as that of his subordinates. In brief, he is the product of Sophia’s sole creative act without her partner, and consisting of shadowy matter, resembles an abortion. He is androgynous, as are his offspring (94: 5-19).

Bullard, along with others who argue that the document hardly discusses the archons’ nature, fails to appreciate that the treatise as a whole serves to make one overarching point about their existence; that it is one of weakness, inferiority, and ignorance as to their ultimate fate. In effect, their “nature” truly is ignorance and fault. Bullard draws on the fact that the Greek loan word γνώση (γνώσεις), as well as referring to something’s existential ‘property’ or ‘essence,’ can also be used to describe something’s origins, effectively as an equivalent for γένεσις. This is how Bullard understands it in HypArch. However, this seems insufficient, as the text does not pay much attention to the origins of the archons either. The two short passages referred to above contain the most detail that we

21 See LSJ for the full range of meanings.
22 Bullard, The Hypostasis of the Archons, 42.
receive. The ignorance which defines their being, on the other hand, is prevalent throughout. Indeed, many features or characteristics of the archons are simply implied in the course of the narrative. For instance, their inability both to raise their created man and to catch Eve in order to rape her, imply weakness and inefficiency. That they will eventually be trampled under the feet of the spiritual humans implies that they are finite, and doomed. That they fall victim to base passions such as envy and desire implies that they are just as captive as the human beings whom they attempt to enslave with such vices – worse off still, because they are void of the spiritual aspect that humankind possesses.

Norea’s confrontation with the archons uncovers their true character as misguided dominators. This seems to be what Luttikhuizen interprets from the text in his choice to translate the title as “The True Nature of the Archons.”\(^{23}\) The threat of the archons is real, but against the power of God they cannot compete. Layton claims that they are no match for the “spiritually endowed gnostics.”\(^{24}\) However, McGuire points out that this seems to downplay the very real struggle that the text’s readers were enduring. Granted, our extremely limited knowledge of the text’s compositional origins means that we have no strong evidence for reconstructing any sort of social context at this time. However, we have demonstrated that certainly in the eyes of our fourth century monastic audience, their daily battle with demons was a constant threat. As we have seen, this struggle is elaborated upon throughout CII, with many of the consequences and strategies for overcoming the archons’ inflictions already discussed in the first three tractates. HypArch, despite going to pains to emphasise the archons as the source behind earthly struggles, is actually the most encouraging text in that it portrays them as defeatable. For the fourth-century readers of the codex, the rulers can be seen as a metaphor for all that distracts the mind from the pursuit of the spiritual, be it the

\(^{23}\) See Luttikhuizen, “Eve’s Children,” 206.

\(^{24}\) Bentley Layton, “The Hypostasis of the Archons (Conclusion),” *HTR* 69 (1976), 44.
mundane concerns of daily life, or all-consuming sexual desire. The assertion that one’s true battle is not with flesh, but with malevolent forces seeking to lead humanity astray brings the mythology of *HypArch* directly in line with the ethical issues elaborated upon in the previous two tractates of CII. 25

Immediately after the opening homage to Ephesians, the author’s first comment relates to the rulers, specifically that they are presided over by a blind, ignorant chief – Samael (Ialdabaoth). The claim of the Jewish God from Is. 45:5 that he alone is God is here placed onto Ialdabaoth’s lips as a misguided statement of his significance, which is swiftly corrected by the Divine Realm:

> Their chief is blind (בلاء); because of his power and his ignorance and his arrogance he said, with his power (כסום), ‘It is I who am God; there is none apart from me.’ When he said this, he sinned against the entirety. And this speech got up to incorruptibility; then there was a voice that came forth from incorruptibility, saying, ‘You are mistaken, Samael’ - which is, ‘god of the blind.’ (86:27-87:4)

*OrigWorld* claims similar ignorance on the part of the Demiurge regarding his identity; while he calls himself Ialdabaoth, the “perfect” call him Ariael, on account of his leonine appearance (100:25-26). Samael’s mistaken claim in *HypArch*, followed by its immediate rebuttal, is repeated a further two times in the latter half of the document, in Eleleth’s retelling of the Ialdabaoth story to the narrator – firstly at Ialdabaoth’s birth, and again when he repeats the claim to his offspring (94:21-26, 95:5-7). Here begins a rulership characterised by ignorant hubris, as Samael’s offspring are described as a product of their father’s blasphemy, which is his “power/might” (כסום) (86:4-9).

Samael’s blindness is identified here with his thoughts and his power, and is essentially, therefore, his existential characteristic. This, of course, supports an interpretation of

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25 That the antagonism is truly between the Divine Realm and the archons of the lower world is exemplified by the fact that Norea destroys Noah’s ark because, as Pearson states, it is built upon the command of the archons. Norea acts here as a representative of the world above (*HypArch* 92:15-18). See Birger Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 93.
such as that of Gilhus, who understands it as a technical term for the archons’ “fundamental characteristics,” somewhat synonymous with “ΤΥΠΟΣ.”\(^{26}\) That Samael’s power is identified with his blasphemy is a hugely damning statement; if we recall the wholly good creative power that arises from the spoken words of the Father in *ApJohn*, an implied contrast is hinted at. Another intriguing comparison can also here be made with *OrigWorld*. In a slightly confusing episode, Sophia’s production of Ialdabaoth is said to bring about “verbal expression” (100:15-16). From this point on, verbal expression is established as a creative force, and is used by Ialdabaoth to bring about both his offspring and the heavens in which they reside (101:11). The connection between Sophia’s crying out to her son and the instigation of verbal expression is not made clear, but it is apparent that there is a difference between this, and creation which arises from sexual intercourse. This is clarified later on in the text when the archons defile the earthly Eve. They are described as defiling not only her body, but also her voice, in an attempt to sully any human being who later on tries to claim that they were born of “verbal expression” from the “true man” (117:5-12). The implication here, of course, is that their raping of the earthly Eve brings about sexual intercourse, which will become the mode of reproduction for human beings, in contrast to the pure method of creative speech used by the Divine Realm, and indeed manipulated by Ialdabaoth to his wicked ends. All three of our texts which relate the Demiurgical myth, then, place significant value on the act of speech – its creative power is exemplified with the begetting of beings in the Pleroma, but it also plays a central role in both *HypArch* and *OrigWorld* in their condemning of Ialdabaoth, both texts narrating that his vocal assertions regarding his identity highlight his sheer obliviousness.\(^{27}\)


\(^{27}\) *OrigWorld* of course, draws upon Is 45:5-6 in its relaying of Ialdabaoth’s blasphemy, with Pistis’ rebuke that he will be trampled like potter’s clay recalling Is 41:25. This rebuke takes the words of YHWH in Isaiah and uses them to speak against Ialdabaoth’s vain claim. However, Painchaud, “The Use of Scripture in Gnostic Texts,” 141-142, suggests that *OrigWorld* has in mind the LXX text of 41:28, which includes a pronouncement
Some comparisons of HypArch alongside OrigWorld and ApJohn will help to further illustrate its heightened denigration of the archons. The first noteworthy incident is that which leads to the archons’ creation of Adam. HypArch claims that when the image of Imperishability above is reflected in the waters of the regions below, the powers fall in love with it (usahaan), but cannot reach this spiritual being on account of their own deficient psychic make-up (87:13-20). When compared to other accounts, HypArch’s relaying of this incident is distinctively more focused on the archons’ weakness and helplessness than malice and desire. ApJohn omits any reference to their desire for the image, but like HypArch lists it as the inspiration for their creation of Adam, in order to replicate the divine image that they have seen (87:12-15). The account of Pistis Sophia appearing in the waters in OrigWorld is lengthy, but again does not seem to directly result in desire on the part of Ialdabaoth or the archons to replicate the image. Here, Pistis shows her image, which is directly connected to that of the first spiritual human, in response to Ialdabaoth’s vain claim that he alone is God. When the archons see the Adam of Light, they scoff at Ialdabaoth for having claimed that there was no one in existence before him. In his embarrassment, Ialdabaoth coerces them to create an earthly model so that they might enslave him (112:26-113-5).

In OrigWorld, this part of the story relays Ialdabaoth’s impulsiveness and misunderstanding, with man’s creation being the result of a jealous attempt to save his own pride. Neither OrigWorld nor ApJohn, however, seem to portray quite the level of utter hopelessness that HypArch does. Even the use ofusahaan implies a feeling of helpless longing, rather than sheer jealousy or malice. It is owing to the archons’ psychic nature, their weakness (מַעַן תֶּכְוָה), that they are simply unable to touch the divine image. Their subsequent creative act follows suit, not quite matching up to their grand plans. They model Adam on their own

against false gods – specifically condemning their failure because they cannot “declare anything,” unlike Pisits who declares against Ialdabaoth. The editor has transformed the conflict between the true God of Israel and the false gods in Isaiah into that between Ialdabaoth and the Divine Realm (represented by Pisits).
appearance, as well as the divine image that appeared to them in the waters (87:30-32).

Lacunae in the following lines make it uncertain as to exactly what their greater purpose is, but if we compare the passage to similar equivalents in *OrigWorld* and *ApJohn*, an attempt at reconstruction can be made: “They said, [‘Come, let us] lay hold of it by means of the form that we have modelled, [so that] it may see its male counterpart […] and we may seize it with the form that we have modelled.’ ” (*HypArch* 87:33-136:1)

The account in *ApJohn* has the archons make Adam in an attempt to bring them closer to the divine light which they have caught a glimpse of (II 15:2-4). By fashioning him partly according to their own form, and partly in the divine image, they hope to make the divine light tangible for themselves, and a similar implication is found in *HypArch*. However, *OrigWorld* seems to add the suggestion that the archons wish to trick Adam into becoming enamoured with his own likeness:

‘…let us create a man out of earth, according to the image of our body and according to the likeness of this being, to serve us; so that when he sees his likeness, he might become enamoured of it.’ (112:34-113:4)

The reference to a “co-image” in *Hyp. Arch.*, especially given the close relationship between the two texts, suggests that a similar statement was probably present. It makes most sense to interpret this as the archons’ plan to trick mankind into a pre-occupation with the body, and all that is associated with it. This seems especially likely given *HypArch* 91:7-11, where the result of Ialdabaoth’s cursing of mankind is that they become “preoccupied with worldly affairs”, having no time for the Holy Spirit. No explicit references to sexual desire, wealth, or greed are made; rather, all that distracts from the spiritual seems to be implied. Their attempted entrapment of Adam, however, backfires upon them. In a somewhat comical episode, the archons persistently blow into their psychic man, who is lying motionless upon the ground. Like “whirlwinds” they blow and blow, with no effect (88:7-9). Moreover, in
their weakness (.mid.), they fail to realise (h0e1n) that the Father of the All is in constant control of their actions, in order to bring about his will. We might be reminded here of the notion in the Pach.S that demons can only act if God allows them to. The power (ΔΥΗΔΜΠΣ) and will (ογωμω) of the Divine stand in stark contrast to the weakness and ignorance of the archons. Eventually, after the archons’ spectacular failure, the Spirit descends into the man and transforms him into a living, moving soul (γυχ) (88: 10-15). ApJohn similarly has Adam lying motionless for a long time. Ialdabaoth blows his Spirit into Adam’s body, but does not realise that it is really his Mother’s power. Once Adam becomes endowed with the Spirit, the archons realise that he has become greater in intelligence than them, so they cast him into the “shadow of death” (II 20:32-21:5). The depictions of the archons and their actions in ApJohn are almost always of malicious, jealous, deceptive beings. The Paradise account, for instance, describes their tree as one of death and poison (21:22-24). The picture ApJohn paints of them is considerably more threatening than that in HypArch., where they appear feeble and the emphasis is upon their certain demise.

That the archons effectively have no free will is a notion which HypArch shares with both OrigWorld and ApJohn. All three texts make clear that the will of the Father is always being played out, with all of the archons’ actions either being manipulated or eventually thwarted. The creation of man in OrigWorld is said to be “against [the archons] own interests,” as Sophia Zoe knows of their plans to create man before even they have formulated the plan, and amused at the ignorance of their decision, she creates the Adam of Light in anticipation of their modelled form, so that the she might instruct the created man to despise them (113:18-21). Similarly, when HypArch’s archons command Adam not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, unbeknown to them, the Father manipulates their words in such a way that Adam is compelled to eat, thereby seeing the archons in their true hylic nature (88:24-89:3).
We learn that when the archons see woman talking with Adam, they once again “fall in love” (ΜΕΡΙΤΕΣ). They pursue her with the intention of having intercourse with her, but she eludes them, mocking their attempts. She becomes a tree, and leaves only a shadowy image of herself to fool them, which they defile unknowingly. Bullard’s translation, along with those of Krause and Schenke, do not have Eve “become a tree,” but rather claim that she “spent a night” with the archons. As Pearson has argued, followed by Pagels and McGuire, this mistranslates the Coptic. The clause reads ΑΥΟ ΑΤΡ ΟΥΗΝ ΤΟΤΟΥ (89:25-26), but Bullard take the supralinear stroke, which indicates a final η, not as the final letter of the word ΟΥΗΝ (tree), but as the first letter of the word beginning the next line. This has led to the incorrect assumption that the text reads ΟΥΗ (night).

Gilhus argues that the story of the rape of Eve uses the motif of laughter and mocking to significant effect, following a set pattern:

1. A spiritual being descends
2. The powers want to conquer it
3. The spiritual being mocks them
4. The spiritual being escapes
5. The powers conquer only a shadow of the spiritual being
6. The powers believe that they have conquered the spiritual being.

According to Gilhus, laughter for these authors represents receptivity and openness – the body physically has to open up in order to laugh. ‘gnostic’ writers, she claims, believed that

30 Ingvild Gilhus, Lauging Gods, Weeping Virgins: Laughter in the History of Religion (London: Routledge, 1997), 73-74. See also the Second Treatise on the Great Seth 55:10-56:20, where Jesus is described laughing at those who have crucified his earthly body, falsely believing that they have conquered him.
in order to open oneself up to the spiritual, one had to close one’s body to the material world. In contrast to the monastic ideal, which sought to close the body off from the world in order to come closer to God, ‘gnostics’ aimed to free the soul from the prison of the physical body. Eve’s opponents resort to using force to access the spiritual world – they have already forced open Adam’s side to get to the spiritual Eve, and now try to rape her. The text asserts that this cannot be done – the spiritual world can only be accessed through proper spiritual awakening. Eve’s mocking of them functions on two levels; firstly, it indicates (through her laughter) that she is ‘open’ and, therefore, able to receive salvific knowledge, and secondly, it highlights the ignorance of the archons because they have resorted to violence. The author of HypArch understood the importance of knowing one’s true identity, and the mocking of the archons serves to illustrate their ridiculousness because they are ignorant of it. For Gilhus, ‘blindness’ acts as a metaphor for “closure against knowledge”. We see this in particular with the identification of Ialdabaoth as “blind” because he does not understand his true identity.

OrigWorld also has Eve become a tree, which given the relationship between the two texts, offers further support for this translation. The mistake has interpretative consequences, however, as the mistranslation suggests that Eve does in fact submit to the archons in her carnal form, rather than completely fooling them. As we saw in chapter one, ApJohn has the Deity pre-empt Ialdabaoth’s raping of Eve, and removes Zoe (life) from her before the act is committed. However, Ialdabaoth is successful in fathering two sons as a result, Cain and Abel. HypArch on the other hand, attributes Cain and Abel to Adam (91:12-14). They are born after Adam and Eve are cast out of Paradise and have become “preoccupied by worldly

31 Gilhus, Laughing Gods, 73.
32 Gilhus, Laughing Gods, 74-75.
33 Gilhus, Laughing Gods, 74.
affairs” (91:7-11), which implies a sexual component to this phrase. *OrigWorld* adds a further element of malice to this episode – the archons intend to defile Eve in order that she will then be unable to ascend into her light, and that all her children will be under the rule of the archons. As in *HypArch*, she laughs at them, this time causing a mist to obscure their eyes. She then becomes a tree in order to hide, and leaves her likeness with Adam in order to fool them. Her plan works, and the archons defile the likeness unawares (116:11-117:14). Eve does become pregnant with Abel and “the other offspring” (Cain) as a result, but it is made clear that this is a prearranged plan by the Father of the All, to trap the authorities in modelled forms. When the three are compared, *HypArch* again gives the most pathetic display by the archons. Not only are they mocked by Eve, but they unknowingly defile themselves, and are not even afforded offspring as a result. *ApJohn*’s portrayal of this episode is interpretatively controversial, as we saw in chapter one. Woman is created when Ialdabaoth wishes to draw Epinoia out of Adam, but fails to do so – he creates woman in Epinoia’s likeness as an attempt at capturing something of her. Ialdabaoth later finds woman “preparing herself” and failing to comprehend the true union between male and female, he defiles her (23:37-24:1).
Sexuality: The Roles of Eve and Norea

Scholars continue to disagree over the extent to which HypArch is specifically concerned with sexual and gender politics. Williams argues that although HypArch uses a substantial amount of gender imagery, it is not primarily interested in gender as a topic. The author’s concern is the conflict between the spiritual and the physical, and any language pertaining to femininity is simply inherited from Jewish traditions that influenced the text. For instance, Jewish traditions portray Eve as leading Adam astray by first eating from the tree of knowledge, but ‘gnostic’ texts using these textual traditions are more concerned with the story’s relevance to the acquisition of knowledge than the womanly guiles. In line with my own argument, for Williams, the key message of HypArch is that those who put on the armour of truth will fend off the psychic, physical forces, i.e. the archons, and the earthly temptations they have installed to lead man astray. Pagels similarly focuses on the antithesis between the physical and the spiritual, arguing that HypArch advocates a radical sexual asceticism, whereby celibacy is a prerequisite for spiritual recognition between man and woman, as well as the required condition for spiritual awareness. She refers to the omission of any allusion to Gen 2:24-25, where Adam addresses Eve as “bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh.” The potential connotations of intercourse and marriage, she suggests, are contrary to the author’s position, so instead he/she places the words of Gen 3:20 on Adam’s lips, “you

34 Williams, “Variety in Gnostic Perspectives on Gender,” 9.
35 That the author is uninterested in gender politics is supported by the shifting in gender of the Instructor: 89:31 f. has the Spiritual Principle, the Instructor, in the feminine ἀρχή, 90:6 has the Instructor in the masculine ἀρχή, and 90:11 has the Instructor in the feminine ἀρχή. Furthermore, the guidance provided by the females Wisdom and Life, as well as the obvious superiority of both Eve and Norea over the archons speaks against an anti-feminine polemic. Williams, “Varieties in Gnostic Perspectives on Gender,” 9-10.
36 Pagels, “Pursuing the Spiritual Eve,” 206.
have given me life, you shall be called ‘Mother of the Living.’” It is unnecessary, however, to read this episode as a pronouncement of celibacy; this skews the position that we have not only in HypArch, but also in other texts in CII. When Eve is taken from Adam, he becomes “wholly psychic” (89:11), but recognises the “spiritual woman,” who is associated with the Instructor, the “spiritual one,” given in the feminine, just a few lines later (89:14), as the one who has given him life. The spiritual Instructor in the form of the serpent advises them that eating from the tree of knowledge will make them like gods, and it is then the fleshly, psychic woman who instigates this and gives the fruit to her husband (90:2-15). They are immediately aware of their nakedness, and following Genesis, bind their loins with leaves. However, it is the spiritual component that they realise they are lacking (90:17-19). Their nakedness in relation to sexual organs does not appear to be the focus here. The entire episode of woman’s creation and her leading Adam to eat focuses rather on the contrast between the physical and the spiritual.

As Pagels identifies, the separation of Eve’s spiritual and bodily identity when the archons try to rape her is significant in that it highlights the archons’ distortion of the antithesis between the two, and that they as wholly psychic beings cannot unite with the spiritual. However, Pagels’ connection of these incidents to sexuality seems unwarranted. Granted, the author of HypArch seems to view sexual intercourse as among the “distractions” that plague in humanity as a result of Ialdabaoth’s cursing of them; the subsequent births of Cain, Abel and Norea indicate this. McGuire has illustrated that Norea’s virginity is her most powerful tool against the dominating archons. At her birth, she is named as “the virgin (ΠΑΡΘΕΝΟΣ) whom no power defiled,” and the “assistance” (ΒΟΗΘΕΙΑ) to the generations of man. This connects her to the voice of Incorruptibility, who earlier gets described as Adam’s

38 Pagels, “Pursuing the Spiritual Eve,” 196-197.
“assistance” (88:18). Her divine origins are further implied by the paralleling of her rebuke of the archons with their failure to grasp the divine image in the water. Norea tells them that they only knew their own female counterpart, the carnal woman, not the spiritual Eve, Norea’s true mother. They are forced to defile a carnal imitation, just as they are forced to create Adam as a modelled form to mimic the divine image.39

The description of Norea as the undefiled virgin uses the same phrasing that we find of Mary, mother of Jesus in an apparent reference to this incident in the GPhil. We saw earlier that GPhil asserts that Mary did not conceive simply of the Holy Spirit. This is followed by the following claim:

Mary is the virgin whom no power defiled. She is a great anathema to the Hebrews, who are the apostles and the apostolic men. This virgin whom no power defiled [...] the powers defile themselves. (55:27-33)

It is likely that the author has encountered these phrases in a source such as that evident in HypArch, and is incorporating them to identify the mother of Christ with Norea, whose direct claim to divine origins qualifies her as the spiritual guide to the generations. Like Norea, Mary, as the mother of Christ (whom we can identity as the True Man (ΠΡΩΜΕ ΠΑΝΟΡΜΟΣ) of HypArch 98:33) helps fulfil a vital stage in the enlightenment of mankind. Gilhus identifies a vital qualification, however, to the way in which “virginity” is understood in HypArch; we have seen that while the earthly Eve is defiled (χείρὶ) by the archons (89:27-31), Norea is “the virgin whom no power defiled” (92:2-3). Norea and her offspring are thereby separated from earthly defilement.40 However, Norea’s virginity does not seem to be understood by HypArch in a physical sense; the offspring which Norea bears are given no clearly identified father, but are simply understood as lying in contrast to those born of the

archons’ defilement. This is similar to the way in which GPhil presents Mary’s virginity; again, she is not a virgin in relation to Joseph – Christ’s descent from Joseph is made explicitly clear – but rather in relation to the archons. For both texts, then, virginity appears to be understood in the cases of Norea and Mary, as spiritual, not sexual.41

Contrary to this, McGuire believes that the author is directly concerned with sexuality, and proffers the suggestion that HypArch’s readers are invited as Norea’s spiritual children, and the rightful heirs of Eleleth’s promise to partake in her virginity, which “preserves the purity and power of divine androgyny.”42 Norea’s feminine virginity subverts the violent oppression of the archons, who although androgynous in form, represent male dominance – the Chief Ruler is portrayed distinctively as male, and their desire to “sow their seed” in Eve suggests male sexual desire. Norea represents the struggle between dominant sexuality, and subversive virginity.43

We saw in chapter one that ApJohn is not opposed to sexuality directly, but rather to its manifestation in violent lust. We have also seen that GPhil is similarly concerned with inappropriate sexual behaviour. I suggest that HypArch takes a comparable position. The text makes reference to reproduction, claiming that “mankind began to multiply, and improve” (Ῥ–ΣΑΗΕ ΑΫΩ Î€ΕΜΑΙΕ) (92:4-5). Layton views Cain as the son of the archons, interpreting “ΠΟΥΨΗΡΕ” as referring to the archons, not Adam and Eve.44 However, the text is ambiguous here. In both ApJohn and OrigWorld, both Cain and Abel are the offspring of the archons, but HypArch clearly represents Abel as Adam’s son (91:13-14). If Adam is not also the father of Cain, it seems incongruous for the text to then read “he knew his wife; again [ΠΑΛ]IH] becoming pregnant, she bore Abel.”

41 Gilhus, The Nature of the Archons, 91-93.
In the latter section of *HypArch*, we read of one last pathetic attempt of the archons to gain mastery over humanity. Ialdabaoth attempts to compel Norea to submit to him in the same way that he claims her mother (Eve) did. Norea is not fooled, and refuses him outright. Her knowledge proves greater than that of the archons, as she breaks the news that they are cursed, and have defiled only themselves:

‘It is you who are the rulers of darkness; you are accursed. And you did not know my mother; instead it was your female counterpart that you knew. For I am not your descendant; rather it is from the world above that I am come.’ The arrogant ruler turned, with all his might, [and] his countenance came to be like (a) black [. . .]; he said to her presumptuously, ‘You must render service to us, [as did] also your mother Eve...’ (92:22-31)

A humourous mockery is again present here as well, as the powerlessness of the archons manifests itself in rage, so much so that Ialdabaoth’s face turns black. Norea cries out to the heavens for help, which is granted in the form of the angel Eleleth. The archons swiftly depart from her and Eleleth turns to reassuring Norea that the archons pose no threat to her. Indeed, he seems to find it unbelievable that she thinks they hold any power over her at all:

‘Do you think these rulers have any power over you? None of them can prevail against the root of truth; for on its account he appeared in the final ages; and these authorities will be restrained. And these authorities cannot defile you and that generation; for your abode is in incorruptibility, where the virgin spirit dwells, who is superior to the authorities of chaos and to their universe.’ (93: 22-32)

Reference is made here to the chosen “generation,” who originate in the Divine Realm. Unlike *ApJohn* and *OrigWorld*, *HypArch* does not elaborate on the origins of this special generation other than that they are the spiritual children of Norea (96:19). We saw in chapter one that for *ApJohn*, salvation is not something closed off to a select few, but is a potential in every human being due to their inheritance of the “divine nature” through Seth. This potential must, however, be awakened in order for salvation to be realised. Individuals must react to

45 Bullard, *The Hypostasis of the Archons*, 99, notes that her statement of knowledge as to the archons’ true identity is reminiscent of certain Egyptian incantations whereby the soul must name hostile powers in order gain passage beyond them.
the the call of the Spirit. *HypArch* can be seen to hold a comparable position, as is argued by Gilhus. A surface reading of the text seems to suggest that there are two groups of people. The first are the descendents of Norea, and are automatically saved because they possess the “true light.” The second are the offspring of the earthly Eve, and only have the “mixed light” as a result of the archons’ defilement of Eve. This latter group possess the potential for salvation, but it is not predetermined. I would agree with Gilhus, however, that Norea’s seed are not identified by *birth*, but by *choice*. One can become part of Norea’s seed by choosing to abandon the defiled way of life instigated by the archons, and seek the spiritual instead. Norea herself, after all, is only saved from the clutches of the archons after she realises her origins. She must realise her predestination in order to activate it.⁴⁶

Reinterpreting the ‘Chosen Generation’

The tractate culminates with a vivid assurance from Eleleth that the spiritual seed are untouchable by the spiritually lacking archons. This same lack of spirit that meant they could not reach the divine image in the water separates them from the chosen generation; the opposing natures of the two are here vitally important. The eschatological element of the tractate is relatively short, serving simply to assure that the archons will fall, and the spiritual will return to their rightful place with the Father:

‘Until the moment when the true man, within a modelled form, reveals the existence of [the spirit of] truth, which the father has sent. Then he will teach them about every thing: And he will anoint them with the unction of life eternal, given him from the undominated generation. Then they 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!’ (96:33-97:21)

Eleleth informs that when the True Man (best understood as Christ) appears in a creaturely form he will teach the seed and wash away their blindness. The reference to the abolition of blindness is particularly striking here, as it is juxtaposed with first characterisation of the chief archon as blind at the document’s opening (86:27). In contrast to the archons, the chosen generation will gain realisation of their origins, their “root” in truth. This recalls 93:24-25, where Eleleth affirms that none of the archons will be able to “prevail against the root of truth.” Eleleth makes it clear that because the archons have only had the privilege of a finite period of time (καιρός), they will never be party to the permanence of the Infinite Light (97:8).

As Bullard observes, this final section of Eleleth’s revelation employs language reminiscent of that in John’s Gospel. The Spirit of Truth as a revealer evokes John 14:17, 26, and the description of the Man of Truth who will come in a created form seems to recall the Johannine notion of the Word becoming flesh (1:14). The reference to anointing in connection with teaching also seems to draw upon 1 Jn 2:20, 27. The fourth-century readers of CII could identify themselves as the offspring of Norea precisely because they had chosen a life that sought to quash the earthly trappings that the demonic forces advocate. The sectarian ‘Sethian’ mythology which appears to underpin HypArch (and of course OrigWorld and ApJohn) could be thereby accessible to a fourth century Christian monk. The ethical message that underpins HypArch would have rang clear, that through a choice to abandon the

47 Bullard, The Hypostasis of the Archons, 114, understands this expression to be adverbial, so describing their “rooting” in the truth of the Father.
48 Bullard, The Hypostasis of the Archons, 113-114.
fleshly ways of the archons one could attain salvation. A monastic community of fourth century Egypt could align themselves with the “sons of Light” in HypArch and find encouragement in its assurance that they will triumph.

Relevant in this regard is another intriguing feature appearing in both HypArch and OrigWorld. Both texts share the inclusion of the ‘repentance’ of the archon Sabaoth, one of Ialdabaoth’s offspring. Williams has pointed out that this concept is something that both NH texts seem to have in common with that lying behind the conversion of Elohim in Justin’s Baruch.49 Upon hearing the blasphemous outbursts of his father, Sabaoth repents his wickedness and is taken up into the heavens where he builds a chariot (as well as a throne and dwelling place in OrigWorld) for himself and creates angels to serve him. The portrayal of Ialdabaoth as the Jewish creator God is well attested in ‘gnostic’ Genesis reinterpretations such as we have in the NHL. However, here it is Sabaoth who can claim an association with the God of Israel. As Rasimus has identified, it seems as though the God of Jewish scriptures is divided in OrigWorld, his characteristics shared between Ialdabaoth and Sabaoth. Those attributed to Sabaoth, however, are distinctively more positive – he is portrayed as a powerful ruler, whilst Ialdabaoth is demonic and jealous.50 The two accounts of Sabaoth’s repentance are examined in detail by Fallon, who concludes that the more developed account in OrigWorld is redacted specifically to represent Sabaoth as the ruler of the psychic class of men, who form the Christian church. The redactor sees him or herself, and presumably his/her addressees as superior to the church at large.51 Fallon’s argument finds support in the fact that as we will discuss below, the eschatological discourse in the text is very clear about the separation of humanity, and the ultimate fate of each class. Perhaps for our Pachomian

49 Williams, Rethinking ‘Gnosticism,’ 94.
readers, the assertion that even within the Christian church as a whole, those such as
themselves who have relentlessly pursued God’s truths will reap the greatest rewards, would
have been attractive.

On the Origin of the World

Eschatology Cosmic and Individual

The futility of the archons that HypArch makes explicit is confirmed by OrigWorld in its
detailed accounts of their doom in the end times. However, by contrasting the eschatological
fate of the archons with that of the spiritually perfected humans, the text draws the experience
of the cosmic into the realm of the individual. The soul of the individual believer now
becomes a focus, and as I shall argue in the next and final chapter, it is the journey and
ultimate destiny of the soul that CII develops and concludes with in its last two tractates,
ExSoul and ThomCont.

By way of a brief introduction, OrigWorld comprises a more detailed and
sophisticated version of the Sophia myth than is found in the preceding tractate, HypArch. As
commentators have frequently noticed, however, its focus is steered towards protology and
eschatology, with little mention of earthly activity. It appears to draw upon various
traditions, including elements of Jewish apocalyptic, but sole adherence to this particular
genre has been discounted due to the lack of common features such as visionary narrative, the

Or.4926(1), and P. Oxy. 1, 634, 655 (Bentley Layton, ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1989), 12.
periodization of history and a view of God as creator. The presence of Christian thought, Greek philosophy, astrology and Egyptian lore all point to an Alexandrian prominence for the Greek original. Various texts, which are unfortunately lost to us, are cited in the author’s account, and as I have mentioned, there is an evident relationship to HypArch with several parallels that OrigWorld explicates in more detail. Rather than a direct relationship, it seems more likely that both texts may have drawn upon common sources, due to their differing representations of certain details. For example, the creation narrative largely follows Genesis, as does the description of Paradise, but unlike the account in HypArch and also that in ApJohn, Paradise is not created by the archons. Painchaud sees OrigWorld as we now have it as having undergone two stages of redaction. The “primitive text,” which he argues contains most of the parallels with HypArch was a rhetorical tractate concerning the presence of those belonging to the “Immortal Man” in this world. This material was later supplemented with a reinterpretation of 1 Cor 15:45-47 (First Redaction), and later still an attack on those Christians who view themselves as “the spirit-endowed of the world” (Second Redaction). This will be discussed below.

As I have stated, I do not believe that either HypArch or OrigWorld are included in CII to supplement the mythology outlined in ApJohn. Indeed, many of the differences between the three which we have discussed so far support my argument that it is their broader ideologies which grant them their places in CII. For instance, in chapter one we saw that ApJohn introduced the major themes and ideas that we have seen continuing throughout CII,

53 See, for example, Alexander Böhlig, “Die griechische Schulr und die Bibliothek von Nag Hammadi,” in Les Textes de Nag Hammadi, 42.
54 Bethge, “Introduction,” 13. For an argument emphasising OrigWorld’s syncretistic nature, see Tardieu, Trois mythes gnostique, 297-335. Painchaud, “Redactions,” 217-218, criticises overemphasis on this characteristic, as he claims that it undermines the argumental coherence evident in the text as we have it now.
55 See Böhlig and Labib, Die koptische-gnostische Schrift, 27-29.
57 Louis Painchaud, “The Redactions of the Writing without Title (CG II, 5),” Sec Cent 8 (1991), 223-229. His approach speaks against the interpretation of Layton, “Gnosticisme,” Revue Biblique 83 (1976), 465, which identifies apparent contradictions within the text, suggesting that it represents an unfinished stage of translation from Greek into Coptic.
such as ideal avoidance of sexual temptation and the necessity of promulgating knowledge - particularly among one’s spiritual peers. Thus far in the current chapter it has been argued that *HypArch* affirms the archons as the source of human struggles, and assures of its overcoming. *OrigWorld*, I suggest, despite its lengthy and detailed description of cosmic goings-on is essentially significant for its eschatological conclusion, which develops that only hinted at in *HypArch*. Moreover, it effects a transition into the concluding theme of the codex – the condition and struggle of the individual soul (see chapter 4). The reader can understand him or herself as one of the spiritual children of *HypArch*, and knowing that their cosmic enemy will suffer defeat, can concentrate on understanding and purifying their own soul. We shall see in the following chapter that *ExSoul* and *ThomCont* address this issue. This individualised eschatology would likely be of particular appeal to a monastic readership, whose spiritual life was to some degree characterised as a personal struggle against adverse forces. For the reasons laid out above, it is unnecessary here to analyse in detail every section of *OrigWorld*. Where its narrative holds comparative significance for wider themes of CII, it has been examined at relevant points throughout this work as a whole. My treatment of it in the remainder of this chapter, therefore, will be largely confined to its concluding sections, where I believe its significance for inclusion in CII lies.

Unlike *HypArch*, *OrigWorld* is not overly concerned with the present condition and plight of mankind and therefore, its view on the salvation of humanity is rather more cryptic. The text refers to four races of men in total. Initially, however, the author speaks of a tripartite separation of natures. This is expressed through three “stages” or incarnations of Adam; it seems that mankind reflects the three Adams:

Now the first Adam, (Adam) of Light, is spirit-endowed and appeared on the first day. The second Adam is soul-endowed and appeared on the sixth day, which is called Aphrodite. The third Adam is a
creature of the earth, that is, the man of the law, and he appeared on the eighth day [...] the tranquillity of poverty, which is called ‘The Day of the Sun’ (Sunday). (117:29-118:2)

Rasimus argues that this understanding of Adam’s creation, along with that in HypArch, is dependent upon 1 Cor 15, as well as Philo’s interpretation of Genesis.\(^{58}\) We saw earlier that Pagels takes a similar position with regard to Pauline interpretation in HypArch more broadly. 1 Cor 15:45-47 makes reference to two Adams, citing Gen 2:7. Paul argues that a spiritual, life giving Adam came from heaven only after a psychic Adam had been born of the earth. The suggestions in the 1960s and 1970s of scholars such as Jervell and Schmithals,\(^{59}\) that Paul was responding to the mythology of ‘gnostic’ opponents is not widely held anymore. Rather, it seems more likely that both Paul and the authors of texts such as OrigWorld draw upon similar traditions of Hellenistic Judaism.\(^{60}\) OrigWorld shares with ApJohn and HypArch (as well as Irenaeus’ account of the Ophites in AH I.30) some common exegetical material relating to the creation of Adam. The order in which OrigWorld and HypArch present Adam’s creation is slightly different to that in ApJohn. The latter sees the created Adam as a model of the divine image – when Ialdabaoth (unknowingly) blows the spirit of his Mother, Sophia into him, he arises and is luminous. HypArch has the archons use a combination of the words of Gen 1:26 and 2:7\(^{61}\) in their plan to create a man. As we saw earlier, this is done in response to the appearance of Incorruptibility’s image in the water.\(^{62}\) The archons’ creation, however, remains earthly until Ialdabaoth blows into Adam’s face and he becomes psychic. The Spirit now descends and allows him to move, making him a “living soul” (Gen 2:7).

When Eve is created, she takes Adam’s spiritual element, leaving him entirely psychic.

\(^{58}\) Rasimus, Paradise Reconsidered, 163, suggests that Adam’s creation in OrigWorld allegorises Christ’s passion.


\(^{61}\) The plural “let us” is taken from 1:26, while the reference to soil (χετος) is from 2:7.

\(^{62}\) Rasimus, Paradise Reconsidered, 166, notes that the term “incorruptibility” is also found in 1 Cor 15:42.
Unlike ApJohn, which has Adam immediately reflective of the heavenly prototype, HypArch is more in keeping with Paul’s teaching, and emphasises that the earthly man came before the heavenly. 63 OrigWorld, on the other hand, seems to be at odds with Paul’s representation, and brings a third Adam into the equation.

Rasimus suggests that this might be owing to a slight ambiguity in Paul’s language—he speaks of a first, second and last Adam in 1 Cor 15: 45, 47. 64 OrigWorld’s three Adams are as follows: The first, the Adam of Light, is endowed with spirit (πνευματικός). Created on the first day, this is the spiritual prototype, an emissary of the immortal Father, which first descends to counteract Ialdabaoth’s claim that no one has existed before him. The second, created on the sixth day, is composed entirely of soul (γυμνός), and is the prototype of the earthly Adam. This second Adam is identified with the female Instructor, Eve of Life. Finally, the third, created on the eighth day, is entirely of the earth, and is under the law (χωικός). 65 He is created after the likeness of the rulers, but also after that of the Adam of Light. The reference to the law suggests that the author perhaps has in mind the Jewish people here. After Adam’s creation, he becomes psychic, but is left soulless for forty days. Painchaud believes this to be the addition of a redactor responsible for the text’s anthropogenic material. This editor wishes to identify the created man as the third Adam of the earth, who is lacking in both spirit and soul. 66 Earlier in the text we read of Sophia Zoe creating an androgynous human. This event takes place after the descent of the first Adam of Light, but before the creation of the third Adam. Logic would suggest, then, that this human

63 Rasimus, Paradise Reconsidered, 166.
64 P tries to make the second and last Adam one and the same by adding πνευματικός in between δεύτερος and ἄνθρωπος. See Rasimus, Paradise Reconsidered, 167.
65 The use of this term supports a dependence on 1 Cor, as it is not found in Hellenistic literature prior to this. HypArch translates it as ΡΜΙΚΑ. See Rasimus, Paradise Reconsidered, 167, who also notes a similarity with Philo (Questions on Genesis 2.56), where the “ideal man” of Gen 1:26f. is created on the sixth day and the earthly man of Gen 2:7 afterwards on the seventh.
is identified with the second, psychic Adam.® OrigWorld appears to be unique in its complication of 1 Cor, and Painchaud’s theory that this is the work of a redactor with a specific agenda seems plausible. However, what is of chief concern here is how this concept of Adam’s creation relates to the classification of mankind in the text, and the subsequent consequences for salvation.

An examination of the immediately preceding co-text can shed some light on this, where reference is made to the carnal Eve as the first mother. Her rape by the archons has resulted in her containing their “mixed seed,” which begins the various races and generations that will come to inhabit the earth:

…all this came to pass according to the forethought of the prime parent (Ialdabaoth), so that the first mother might bear within her every seed, being mixed and being fitted to the fate of the universe and its configurations, and to Justice. A prearranged plan came into effect regarding Eve, so that the modelled forms of the authorities might become enclosures of the light, whereupon it would condemn them through their modelled forms. (117:18-28)

It is plausible that the reference to Eve as the matriarch of mankind, along with the assertion that the various seed she will promulgate is in line with the eschatological organisation of the universe, indicates that in the author’s mind, the categories associated with the three Adams transfer to human beings, and specifically to Christians. This finds further support in the use of “mixed seed” terminology to refer to the inhabitants of the Christian church subsequently in the document (see below). We later read of these Adamic divisions as the three “γενεά” (races) – the pneumatics being the only group who are eternal (122:8). However, I mentioned earlier that OrigWorld speaks not only of three races, but of four.

® Rasimus, Paradise Reconsidered, 168. A connection might also be made between the androgynous human and the divine breath of Sophia Zoe which makes the earthly Adam psychic. He is now able to move, but cannot arise. Prior to receiving this breath he is soulless, and remains so afterwards. Sophia Zoe’s breath, therefore, appears to instil Adam with a psychic nature, perhaps betraying something of its own nature (114:36-115:1). HypArch speaks of an “animating spirit” that makes Adam spiritual whilst it possesses him.
The text describes how mankind multiplies from the earthly Adam and Eve, yet is kept in ignorance by the rulers (123:34-124:4). The “immortal father,” however, seeks to remedy the “deficiency of truth” that the archons have brought to eternal realms by using their creations, human beings, to bring them to justice. In a statement that appears to address the audience of the text, we read that he sent “your likenesses (plural ἰδιώτες) down into the world of perdition, namely, the blessed little innocent spirits.” These beings are characterised by their familiarity with gnosis (124:9-12). The task of these blessed spirits is to bring condemnation upon the archons by exposing their perishability (124:18-21). The spirits are, however, in modelled form upon the earth, and so the archons, as we might expect, attempt to lead them astray by “mixing their seed with them,” in much the same way as they did with Eve (124:23-24). They are unsuccessful, and cannot prevent the spirits from revealing (ἀνακαθίστησιν) their knowledge to the “visible church” (124:29). The blessed spirits are described as appearing luminous and in a variety of ways. That they are in fact specially chosen human beings, however, is evidenced not only by the fact that the author describes them as the “likenesses” of his readership (see second person plural above in 124:9), but also that 134 speaks of their mission enlightening his own land followed by the wider “visible church,” which is made up of “modelled forms.” This πλασμα language, in keeping with that of the earlier creations by the archons designates specifically the church in its physical form, hence it is visible (ὁ νόον). Moreover, the church, we are told, contains many different “seeds” because the authorities have bred within it. The next few lines seem to identify these blessed little spirits as our mystery fourth race. Unfortunately, there is a gap in the text which makes it difficult to interpret:

Then the saviour created […] of them all – and the spirits of these [are manifestly] superior, being blessed and varying in election – and also (he created) many other beings, which have no king and are superior to everyone that was before them. Consequently, four races exist. There are three that belong
to the kings of the eighth heaven. But the fourth race is kingless and perfect, being the highest of all. (124:32-125:7)

That the elect race spoken of here are the revealers of gnosis discussed above is hinted at in that their “spirits” are “blessed.” Like the blessed little spirits, these individuals will “condemn the gods of chaos” (125:13-14) and were sent to uncover that which is hidden, including the illegitimacy of the authorities (125:19-23). They are likened in this sense to the Word, with a citation from Mk 4:22, who although referred to as a superior being, does not appear to fulfil a role much different from theirs:

Now the Word who 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 recognised will be recognised.’ (125:14-19).

The proceeding section renames them as the “perfect” (ΤΕΛΕΙΟΙ), who have appeared in “modelled forms” (125:23-25). They bring the power of the archons into dissolution, whilst they themselves enter into eternal rest with the Father (125:7-11). It is not immediately apparent why these individuals are set apart from the “pneumatics” that earlier have been described as eternal. However, a clue may lie in another term that is used to describe them - “kingless.” This seems to contradict the tripartite system which we have seen elsewhere in the text.68 It could be that an allusion to the weakness of Israel is intended here – Israel’s wish to be ruled by a king reflected a lack of trust in God, and lead to its further estrangement (1 Sam 8, 13, 14). A reference to the Jewish people might be especially true given the identification of the third, earthly Adam as “under the law.” As Painchaud and Janz have noted,69 there seems to be no obvious explanation in either the document’s immediate or wider context as to why the tractate would hold these blessed (ΜΑΚΑΡΙΟΙ), elect (ΚΩΤΙΟΙ) spirits above the Pneumatics. The Pneumatics themselves do in fact get described in these

terms in certain ‘Valentinian’ texts.\(^{70}\) An examination of the occurrences of the “kingless race,” or ‘kinglessness’ more generally in five NH tractates led Painchaud and Janz to conclude that the expression was the hallmark of a specific Christian group which saw themselves as superior even to the Pneumatics which various “gnosticising” texts held as the highest rank of humanity.\(^{71}\) The Greek adjective ἀβασιλεύτος does not have a precise Coptic equivalent, but\(^{71}\) OrigWorld, along with the Tripartite Tractate uses άταρρό. OrigWorld first speaks of those without a king in 125:2, as well as the reference to the “kingless race” we have noted above in 125:6 (ἂνειος οὐ άταρρό). 127:14 also contains a reference to what can be translated as a place of “kinglessness” (ΤΜΗΝΑΤΑΡΡΟ) that the unperfected will never enter. Each of these occurrences specifically link the blessed, elect beings to the notion of kinglessness, holding them as “kings” in the mortal world (125:11-12). Painchaud and Janz view these references as an interpolation which seeks to correct the text as it previously was. Such rewriting of texts became a means by which different Christian groups could place their own polemical stamp on the material they circulated.\(^{72}\) Painchaud and Janz even view the unperfected of 127:10 (see above), who will only receive glory in “their realms and in the kingdoms of the immortals” as Pneumatics that later redactors hold as inferior to themselves.\(^{73}\) OrigWorld in the form that we now have it, then, reflects its possession by a circle which saw itself as the “kingless race,” superior to the Pneumatics of other Christian groups such as the Valentinians.\(^{74}\) Rasimus is unconvinced that Valentinians were the target of OrigWorld’s polemic. Instead, he wonders whether Paul’s identification of the Corinthian

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\(^{70}\) See Excerpts of Theodotus. 58:1, Tripartite Tractate 122:13-136:24

\(^{71}\) In addition to OrigWorld, the term appears in Tripartite Tractate., Eugnostos, Sophia of Jesus Christ, Apocalypse of Adam and HypArch.

\(^{72}\) Painchaud and Janz, “Kingless Generation,”439-440, 452.

\(^{73}\) The self-understanding of these Pneumatics is likely within the context of Valentinian soteriological terminology that was circulating at the time. Painchaud and Janz, “Kingless Generation,” 453.

\(^{74}\) Painchaud and Janz, “Kingless Generation,” 460, note a potential connection with a complaint of Shenoute, at the beginning of the fifth century, of a group that were apparently claiming to be “kingless.”
opponents as “kings” might be the inspiration. This is certainly plausible, especially given that these individuals equated possession of the spirit with socio-religious status. \textit{OrigWorld}, of course corrects Paul’s teachings in 1 Cor, but this term is not exclusive to this text, as Painchaud and Janz demonstrate, so its redactors could have adopted it.

As I have stated many times in the course of this work, our fourth-century audience, including their use of and interpretation of the NHL must be distinguished from the groups who were responsible for their prior composition and earlier stages of redaction. They did not need to belong to a ‘Valentinian’ or ‘Sethian’ Christian circle, however, in order to view themselves as spiritually different from other humans, and indeed other Christians; their choice to enter into the monastic lifestyle immediately set them apart. They surely felt an affinity with such a position as that displayed in \textit{OrigWorld}, which not only separates the earthly and the spiritual, but also divides the latter into superior and inferior sections. For the redactor of \textit{OrigWorld}, the Pneumatics were above other Christians, but it seems that he/she believed in a ‘super-spiritual’ race too. In chapter one, we discussed the desert father Antony’s three part categorising of Christian souls, and suggested that monastic readers would have been aiming for the highest of these. Perhaps for this audience, the “kingless generation” of \textit{OrigWorld} represented the highest form of spirituality which they hoped to achieve.

Universal eschatology is a major theme in the text – the end times are repeatedly referred to, and eschatological events are described in fervid detail. The focus of eschatology, both universal and individual, is something that we find elaborated upon much more than in \textit{HypArch}. As we have seen, \textit{HypArch} gives a relatively short account of eschatological events, describing in just a few lines how the archons will be trampled under the feet of the

\footnote{Rasimus, \textit{Paradise Reconsidered}, 142.}
spiritual children and forced to renounce their reign of terror. The document’s culmination is on a joyful note, with a Christian worship formula placed upon the lips of the “sons of Light”:

They will all say with a single voice, ‘Righteous is the truth of the Father, and the Son is over the All, and through everyone, forever and ever. Holy, Holy, Holy. Amen.’ (97:16-21)

*OrigWorld*, on the other hand, gives a much lengthier and grittier description of the end times. The eschatological account (125:32-127:17) details the chaotic destruction of the heavens and earth, with the dramatic deaths of the rulers, bloody wars and darkness. However, of particular interest for our purposes are the concluding lines of *OrigWorld*, which introduce the ultimate concern of CII – the fate of the soul. The closing sentences of the tractate transfer the grand eschatology of the preceding sections more specifically and intimately, to the individual:

For everyone must go to the place from which he has come. Indeed (γινώσκει), by his acts and his knowledge each person will make his nature (φύσις) known. (127:14-17)

The use of the term φύσις at the end of this sentence is significant. The term, of course, recalls the theme of our previous tractate, *HypArch*. It might be tempting, therefore, to interpret this statement as a reference to the physical differences between soul-imbued human beings and the soulless archons. The first clause implies that fate is predetermined to a certain degree – one “returns” to where he/she has come from; human beings, created in the image of the perfect Divine Realm have their origins therein, and so will return. However, the mention of acts and knowledge complicates the picture somewhat. Does the author of the text see one’s character and capacity for knowledge as already decided based upon one’s origins? Or,

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is one able to determine one’s own fate by living virtuously and actively seeking the truth? The latter seems more likely in light of what we have already observed in CII.  

If through “nature” a person’s eternal resting place has already been decided, then why the need to endure ascetic renunciation? Moreover, why the emphasis on the spiritual edification of others? Surely their fate is already decided too, rendering the input of others useless. Still, the direct connection made in this passage between where a person has “come from” and their “nature” is evidenced by the use of τῆς in the opening of the second clause. The answer, I suggest, lies in OrigWorld’s explanation of the four “races,” which we have discussed above. Immediately prior in 127:7-14, the author has confirmed that it is only the kingless and perfect (τελειος) who will enter the “kingless realm” of the Father. Others who have not quite managed to attain the greatest spiritual heights will only be rewarded in the lower – yet still immortal (νεκτομοι) - realms. As we have seen, the situation is more complex, therefore, than simply a division in nature between humanity and the archons; humanity itself is also varied in its spiritual capacity. Rudolph argued that these closing words betray a notion that ‘right behaviour’ is somewhat predetermined, yet must be made manifest during earthly life in order for salvation to be assured. That some individuals are born with a ‘pneumatic’ capacity is not enough to guarantee redemption – one cannot simply live however one wishes. The actions of each individual while on the mortal coil are taken into consideration. In other words, the Pneumatics are given a head start, but the onus is on them to ensure that they fulfil their spiritual potential. We also find the notion of spiritual elevation in the account of Sabaoth’s repentance. Sabaoth through his repentance is transformed from a wicked minion of Ialdaboth into a just ruler. Despite his ‘origins,’ he has

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77 This sort of Deterministic concept as a traditional characteristic of so-called ‘Gnosticism’ is one of the paradigms that Williams shows to be inconsistent across the sources. See Rethinking ‘Gnosticism,’ 189-212.
78 Granted, he views it as a characteristic trait of ‘Gnosticism,’ which at the time of his writing had not undergone the scrutiny that it now has.
79 Kurt Rudolph, Gnosis, 117-118.
managed to alter his fate. It might be a fair assumption, then, that the redactor also sees this as a possibility for human beings.

Rudolph’s observation here, then, is pertinent. Luttikhuizen agrees, arguing that an “ethical exhortation” best describes the final words of *OrigWorld*. Based on what we have seen throughout CII so far – for example, the practical advice given in *G Thom* and *GPhil* – it is fair to say that CII understands one’s actions and choices to be of central soteriological importance. Concluding with this emphasis not on cosmic fate, but on that of the individual, *OrigWorld* sets the scene for our final two tractates, both of which provide the reader with the opportunity to contemplate the condition of the soul, and evaluate their journey towards spiritual perfection.

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The final two tractates in CII are the shortest that it contains, yet both texts offer a significant reflection on the issues which have defined its ideological outlook. The concluding lines of *OrigWorld* brought the focus away from the eschatological fate of the entire cosmos to that of the individual believer, emphasising that all humanity will ultimately be made accountable for his/her conduct on earth. Our final tractates, *ExSoul* and *ThomCont*, bring the soul into central focus. Drawing heavily on Hellenistic literature as well as both the OT and NT, the former provides an elaborate narrative of the soul’s plight in the material realm and her restoration to glory, while the latter asserts the importance of the soul’s transcendence from the physical world in the form of a dialogue between the risen Jesus and Thomas, his disciple. Both fit in with CII’s general condemnation of sexual immorality, although *ThomCont* is certainly more explicit on this issue; we shall see that while *ExSoul* employs the metaphor of the soul as a prostitute, sexual fornication is not the author’s only concern – this metaphor must be understood more broadly as inclusive of transgressions in general. The compiler of CII, I argue, inserted these documents to add an individualised context in which to understand the eschatological musings of *HypArch* and *OrigWorld*, in which the demise of the archons has been assured. The monastic reader, seeking to be counted among the “perfect,” or “spirituals,” that all of our texts have referred to in some way, is encouraged now to contemplate his or her own fate.
This chapter will seek to ask questions that the limited existing scholarship on both texts has failed to address thus far, particularly in relation to how they fit with the rest of CII. Can the apparently radical denouncing of sexuality that has been identified in *ThomCont* be understood to have any coherence with the more nuanced attitudes towards sexuality elsewhere in CII, which view misplaced lust, rather than male-female union altogether as the problem? Might the extensive use of scriptural quotation in *ExSoul* be significant for our consideration of a monastic audience? Might monks well versed in biblical texts have been in a good position to appreciate not only the direct quotations, but also the subtle intertextual allusions that Hugo Lundhaug has recently analysed?\(^1\) Perhaps the compiler of CII saw some benefit in adding unmistakable biblical backing to the points raised throughout CII, which *ExSoul* now hammers home. How do these texts, which scholars argue to be less “gnostic” and much more Christianised than their other CII companions, understand the role of the individual in their salvation? Are the divisional notions of mankind that we have seen in varying formats in other tractates present to any degree in these texts? Moreover, given the discussion in the introduction to this thesis relating to the helpfulness of labels such as “gnostic,” “heretical” and “orthodox,” is it constructive to label these texts as more “Christian” than any others in CII?

*The Exegesis on the Soul*

*ExSoul* has thus far received relatively little scholarly attention. Much of the work that has been undertaken has been focused on the way in which the author employs biblical quotations, in addition to three citations of Homer’s *Odyssey*. In one such article, Wilson was

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\(^1\) Hugo Lundhaug, *Images.*
rather scathing of the author’s use of scripture, claiming that passages were simply lifted out of context without consideration of their initial settings. This view has been challenged recently in Hugo Lundhaug’s detailed study, which argues that to interpret simply ExSoul’s explicitly quoted passages of scripture merely scratches its surface; some of its most complex and important concepts are in fact developed through implicit allusions not only to scripture, but also to ritual practices. I shall return to Lundhaug’s work in the discussion that follows.

In brief, ExSoul relates the trials of the soul, personified as female in nature, who falls from heaven to earth and becomes trapped in a material body. From this point onwards, when referring to Soul as the central protagonist of the tractate, I shall capitalise her name. References to ‘the soul’ more generally, i.e. those of other human beings, will remain in lower case to avoid confusion. After her descent to earth, Soul engages in fornication (πορνεία) and prostitutes herself to a series of adulterous men. It should be emphasised from the start, however, that the Greek loan word πορνεία does of course cover a range of sexually inappropriate behaviour, and ExSoul’s use of it is greatly influenced by that in the NT and LXX. I shall discuss this point in more detail below, but for now, it is sufficient to simply state that I do not interpret every use of this term as referring to prostitution. When Soul realises her transgression, she repents and appeals to her heavenly Father, whose presence she longs to be in once again. The Father sends her salvation in the form of a bridegroom and saviour, who through marital union with Soul, enables her to be reborn, and return to her original state of purity. Initially, we learn, Soul was androgynous, only taking on

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3 Lundhaug, Images, 67.

a wholly feminine nature upon her fall from heaven. Her marital union restores this male-
female unity and allows her to ascend back to her rightful place in heaven.⁵

Kasser has suggested that because the text is primarily a narrative of Soul’s journey, 
€ΣΗΓΗΣΙϹ should be translated as “story,”⁶ which of course is a perfectly good option for the 
Greek loan word. Indeed, Scopello has argued that the tractate is best described as a “gnostic 
novel” heavily influenced by those in Greek Hellenism; Greek novels too frequently 
employed love and adventure as the central themes, more often than not involving some sort 
of tragic separation and reunion, as we find in ExSoul.⁷ However, the sheer volume of 
scriptural interpretation offered by the text justifies the tractate’s exegetical tendency being 
recognised in the translation of its title. According to Scopello, the story differs from Greek 
novels in that the female is centre stage, with the male only playing a small role.⁸ Indeed, 
Johnes has comprehensively demonstrated that heroines in ancient Greek novels appeared as 
“equal being[s] and fully recognised partner[s]” of male protagonists. In fact, Johnes has 
highlighted that the heroes of ancient novels often paled in comparison to their female 
counterparts, appearing as weak, unimaginative “shadows” alongside the complexities of the 
females.⁹ Behind this often superior female intelligence, however, Johnes shows that the 
themes of chastity, constancy and virginity as well as passionate love were the staples of the 
novel, affirming values that were still seen to be admirable and appropriate in the Hellenised 
world, especially of females.¹⁰ In the case of ExSoul, our female protagonist is nothing if not 
complex, and certainly takes the centre stage in the narrative. Virginity, faithfulness and

⁵ Robinson, “The Exegesis on the Soul,” 111, notes a parallel in the exile, shaming, and redemption of Soul with Plotinus’ Εἲνν VI 9.9
⁷ Madeleine Scopello, “Jewish and Greek Heroines in the Nag Hammadi Library,” in Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism, 72, 78.
¹⁰ Johnes, “Women in the Ancient Novel,” 158
passions are of course all vital ingredients to the narrative, which in the manner of many Greek novels, begins with uncontrollable passion, continuing with various trials, before culminating in a marriage.\textsuperscript{11} However, I would caution against the downplaying of the male role in \textit{ExSoul}. Although Soul steals the focus, she is ultimately less a heroine and more of a silly, foolish and lost child, who requires saving by the two significant males, her heavenly Father and her saviour husband.

\textit{ExSoul’s} extensive use of biblical scripture does not mark it out as especially unique among the NH texts. I have demonstrated in the preceding chapters that tractates such as \textit{ApJohn}, \textit{HypArch} and \textit{OrigWorld} incorporate the OT and/or NT so as to refute or reinterpret biblical literature in line with their own worldview, mythology, or ethical agenda. More than simply quoting randomly and out of context, the authors and editors of these texts frequently display a desire to recast some of the key ideas of their chosen texts, particularly Genesis and Paul.\textsuperscript{12} It is fair to say that \textit{ExSoul} follows in this tradition, drawing heavily on scriptural quotations as well as inexplicit, yet certainly identifiable allusions in order to introduce or support its contentions. \textit{ExSoul} does not challenge biblical tradition as does, say, \textit{ApJohn}, and it is partly owing to this fact that many scholars view it as markedly Christian, with few modern commentators finding anything much to align it with traditional definitions of ‘Gnosticism.’

An early suggestion by Doresse held the quotations to be a later insertion by the compiler of CII.\textsuperscript{13} However, his suggestion did not receive much subsequent support. Robinson argued that they were the addition of the redactor of the original Greek text, who used them to legitimate the mythical narrative. If one were to remove the quotations, he

\textsuperscript{12} We have seen 1 Cor heavily drawn on - \textit{GPhil}, \textit{HypArch} and \textit{ExSoul} all interact with this important Pauline epistle. For a study devoted to the relationship between 1 Cor and \textit{GPhil} see Klutz, “Rereading 1 Corinthians.”
\textsuperscript{13} Doresse, \textit{Secret Books}, 190-191.
maintains, the essential narrative of the text would be unaffected.\textsuperscript{14} On the contrary, Wisse, Layton, Wilson, Krause, and more recently Lundhaug, all view the citations as a vital part of the text’s integrity, seeing it as crucial to the mythical narrative.\textsuperscript{15} Scopello and Sevrin have suggested that the tractate was compiled using various sources, one being responsible for the mythical narrative, and the OT quotations coming from an anthology, rather than directly from scripture itself.\textsuperscript{16} Again, it is the tractate in its present form that is of concern to my argument. The biblical and non-biblical citations that appear, therefore, will be considered in light of their relevance for the text’s argument as a whole, rather than the moment when they might have been introduced. Incidentally, I am inclined to agree with those scholars who do not separate the mythical narrative from its quoted biblical support. Indeed, Soul’s experience often seems dependant on biblical concepts – the notion of her saviour as a bridegroom being one example. \textit{ExSoul} directly quotes from Jeremiah, Hosea, Ezekial, Psalms and 1 Corinthians, which is prefaced with an introductory phrase: “Paul, writing to the Corinthians, said...” (131: 2-3). Ephesians, Genesis, Isaiah and John are all quoted without specific reference. Moreover, there are also various passages which appear to paraphrase biblical texts\textsuperscript{17} and present them as quotations, introduced with phrases such as “as it is written.” Notably 133: 4, “For the master of the woman is her husband,” which draws upon Gen 3:16, 1 Cor 11:3 and Eph 5:23, all of which refer to the authority of man over woman.

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\textsuperscript{17} “Quotations” of this sort have been taken from Genesis, Matthew, Luke, Acts, 1 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians and Ephesians. See Lundhuag, \textit{Images}, 70.
\end{flushright}
Roukema has identified that the representation of Soul in *ExSoul* is very similar to that of Helen in the myth of Simon Magus and Helen, known to us only through the heresiographers. First mentioned by Justin Martyr (*First Apology* I.26) and Irenaeus (*AH* I.23.4), the myth claims that Ennoia, God’s First Thought was held captive in the material world by envious angels, who trapped her in a female body. She took on many forms, including that of Helen – a slave and prostitute in the city of Tyre. God subsequently descends to liberate her in the form of Simon Magus. As Roukema observes, Soul shares with Helen a similar role to Helen/Ennoia in that both figures originate in the heavenly realm and are expelled to an earthly body. While in this physical form, both submit to prostitution and await redemption by salvific males. Redemption is described in both myths in sexualised terms, yet attributed primarily to the Father’s grace. Roukema also notes that the experience Soul has with her earthly father is reminiscent of the story of Abraham, who also leaves his father’s house. It could be that the text understands the earthly father to be the creator God, as he is distinguished from the heavenly father. Roukema suggests that this is one of the only indications that the text has any affiliation with the demiurgical “gnostic” myth. Plotinus (*Enn.* VI, 9.9) writes of the soul as a virgin who is similarly deceived and taken from her father. Like Soul, she later purifies herself. The clear similarities with myths such as that of Simon and Helen, the writings of Plotinus and the quoting of Homer make it clear that the author originates from a rich intellectual culture. The favourite suggestion among scholars has been Alexandria, where philosophical and intellectual culture met the Christian.

This apparent influence from Platonic and Hellenistic literature, significantly Homer’s *Odyssey* is presented somewhat differently in *ExSoul* from other NH texts displaying

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ideological and mythological affinities with Greco-Roman philosophy, in that it quotes Homer explicitly. Some scholars have taken this to mean that it affords it equal authority to biblical scripture. I am not sure that this is a logical conclusion – in the entire document, ExSoul includes only three such quotations, following directly after one another, and all at the end of the tractate. For its final quotation ExSoul reverts back to the OT (Ps 6:7). It could be seen as strange that these non-biblical references come in the homiletic section of the text (beginning at the end of 134), in which the Christian overtones of salvation as God’s gift through Christ are particularly prominent. I think it is more likely that in ExSoul’s author, we have an educated Christian, well versed in Greek literature, who simply saw these verses as particularly fitting. They are far outnumbered by biblical references, and as we shall see, the author’s attempts to explain the fall and redemption of Soul with the words of the prophets and the NT writers make it fairly obvious where the majority of his or her loyalties lie.

The use of scripture supposes that the text’s original audience at least would have been able to recognise (perhaps through having heard scripture read out) its presence as a stamp of authority on the text’s message. Lundhaug’s analysis further emphasises the likelihood that whatever audience the original author had in mind, would have also had a good enough grasp of biblical texts to make these subtly hinted at connections as well. Regardless of the identity of the original addressees, as a potential fourth-century audience, Pachomian monks would certainly fit into this category. As we have already discussed, scripture was an extremely important factor in Pachomian piety, and is quoted and alluded to in abundance in the Pach.S. In this respect, ExSoul is not dissimilar in format to say the Vitae.

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23 See below for a discussion of this section. For a summary of the various sections of ExSoul, see Kasser, “L’Ekségèsis etbe tpsukhê.”
Graham has also argued this very point, claiming that the very spirit of Pachomian monasticism saw scripture as “the ultimate basis for every facet of the monastic life.” More recently, Rousseau has demonstrated that Theodore and Horsiesius both have scriptural allusion in common with the NHC. For example, Horsiesius combines OT and NT quotations and allusions in his presentation of the monastic life, on one occasion stringing together Hosea, Psalms, Malachi, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Matthew, Romans and Deuteronomy to emphasise the heart’s return to God. Theodore instructs the monks to always keep the Gospels to hand and to keep the rest of the scriptures in their thoughts at all times (BO 189).

This connection is entertained by Lundhaug, who additionally raises the possibility of a readership among Shenoute’s monks. Equally, drawing on the assertions by Rubenson that Origenism became widely disseminated across the Egyptian desert communities during the fourth and fifth centuries, Lundhaug argues that Origenist monks could also provide a possible audience for the NHC. We have seen that Pachomius’ biographers were condemning of Origen. However, I have maintained throughout that there are a number of concepts, mythologies etc. that the NHC and the Pachomians would not have seen eye to eye on – the demiurgical myth likely being one of these. If, as I am arguing, the monks did make use of the NHL, they would have done so with the understanding that these tractates contained some material that differed from their own viewpoints. One aspect of ExSoul warranting further consideration, not only for its similarity to Pachomian ideology, but to that of CII as a whole, is the topic of sexuality, which will be the subject of the following discussion.

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26 For some thoughts on this issue, see my conclusion.

Soul’s Transgression

The fact that Soul is portrayed as a female who falls into promiscuity has given rise to the opinion among some scholars that *ExSoul* views sexuality as the most serious of transgressions, and, therefore, advocates celibacy. It might be tempting to see this interpretation as fitting with the blaming of sexual sin on woman that we have observed in *ApJohn*. However, I have demonstrated that CII’s attitude towards sexuality is far more complex than this; *ExSoul* is no different. We will look now at the way in which Soul’s femininity works within the argument of the tractate, before offering an interpretation of the text that presents its views on sexuality in line with CII, and therefore, the Pach.S.

Soul’s femaleness is introduced in explicitly anatomical terms – she has a womb.\(^{28}\) As Lundhaug argues, various metaphors of womanhood allow the author to convey complex ideas about the struggle of the soul through the identifiable model of a woman. Soul takes on various aspects and roles of femininity and womanhood as the narrative develops; throughout the course of the tractate she is a daughter, a virgin, a prostitute, a wife, and a mother. Soul is obedient to her heavenly father – this introduces the proper hierarchy of power.\(^{29}\) One of the major points of *ExSoul* is that while Soul is obedient to her father she remains a pure virgin. When she becomes a disobedient daughter, she falls from grace and loses her virginity to prostitution.\(^{30}\) The androgynous nature of Soul before she is expelled from heaven of course fits into the tradition of interpretation of Gen 2:21-27, whereby man, created in the image of God is understood to be an androgynous being. We have already discussed in relation to *ApJohn* and *HypArch* the idea that to these authors, Eve’s creation out of Adam’s body

\(^{28}\) Lundhaug, *Images*, 75.
\(^{29}\) Lundhaug, *Images*, 76-77.
\(^{30}\) Lundhaug, *Images* 77.
marked not only the origin of gender difference in humanity, but also gave rise to sexual intercourse and the dissolution of sacred spiritual union between males and females modelled in the heavenly realm.

The male counterpart of Soul is identified explicitly later on in the narrative, when he appears as both her brother and bridegroom (133:3-6). Lundhaug argues that just as Adam and Eve can be understood to be brother and sister as well as husband and wife in Genesis, so too can Soul and her male aspect. The original unity of Adam and Eve is described in 133:4 through a quotation of Gen 2:24 (LXX). This is offered as the biblical sanction for Soul’s marriage to her bridegroom, which results in them becoming “a single life” (132:35). Pagels argues that the author of *ExSoul* views Adam, the male, as the “higher, spiritual self” and Eve as the lower part, the soul. This is in fact different to *ApJohn* and *HypArch*, which both view Adam as the representation of the lower aspect of human nature. Pagels’ interpretation supports Lundhaug’s notion of male hierarchy, but it is difficult to corroborate for certain, as *ExSoul*’s exegesis does not offer commentary upon its biblical proof texts in the same way that *ApJohn* does, for instance. The author clearly understands the Genesis story to be the paradigm for original unity between males and females, however, and Soul’s apparent inferior status to both her father and her male bridegroom saviour gives decent weight to Pagels’ theory.

*ExSoul*’s interpretation of the Genesis myth contains further ambiguity, however:

For they were originally joined to one another when they were with the father before the woman (led astray/lost) the man, who is her brother. This marriage has brought them back together again and the soul has been joined to her true love... (133:4-8)

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It is uncertain due to the Coptic word swrm whether ExSoul understands the first woman to have “lost” or “led astray” her husband. Lundhaug argues that the latter doesn’t really fit with the wider narrative, as it is Soul’s falling from heaven and leaving of her husband that instigate her troubles. Her husband later comes to rescue her from the material world. “Lost,” therefore, seems a much more appropriate rendering.34 Indeed, there is no evidence that Soul’s husband does anything wrong to suggest he has been led astray, and Soul, despite all her flaws when she falls into a body on earth, is not really represented as a malicious temptress that would specifically try to lead her saviour astray. Robinson chooses “led astray,” possible because of the comparison with Eve tempting Adam with the fruit from the tree of knowledge.35 Lundhaug points out that the tractate’s quotations of the Odyssey near the end seem to favour “lost,” as this would put Soul on a par with Penelope, who having lost Odysseus, awaits his return to save her from the numerous male suitors that try to tempt her away from him.36 Even so, I am inclined to favour the reading of Robinson, given that the author is using the Genesis story as support here. However, I suggest that Eve’s leading Adam astray is invoked by the author here simply in order to explain the origins of human disobedience and temptation, and not in direct relation to Soul.

Williams asserts that despite Soul’s representation as a woman, virgin, wife and mother, the tractate is uninterested in gender roles.37 Before her redemption, Soul’s womb is turned inside out and resembles male genitalia, only turning back inwards when she has repented, thereby restoring natural order.38 The “natural” social order is restored by Soul depending on the appropriate males. It seems, then, that the text suggests dependence on the correct male equates to divinity. However, Williams claims that this is incongruous to the

34 Lundhaug, Images 80.
36 Lundhaug, Images, 80.
37 Williams, “Variety in Gnostic Perspectives on Gender,” 15.
38 For Scopello, “Introduction,” in The Nag Hammadi in English, 191, this is effectively a “spiritual circumcision.”
tractate’s ‘theological’ standpoint that sees encratism rather than marriage as the ideal. He draws upon 132:28-33, which speaks of “the carnal marriage” as unlike that between Soul and her bridegroom saviour, and 137:5-11, which contrasts Soul’s perfect husband with the temptations of Aphrodite, for support here. The male-female gender role imagery, therefore, is purely a metaphor, and does not mean that the author endorses this as a social reality. I do not believe Williams is correct to understand encratism as the main point of the tractate. The examples that Williams gives are not indicative of a general condemnation of marriage or sexual intercourse. The claim that Soul and her saviour do not share a carnal marriage need not be taken as a proclamation against marriage altogether – indeed, the reference to Ps 44:11-12 (LXX) depicts a young girl leaving her father for the king, who desires her.

It is a gross misreading of ExSoul to understand Soul’s transgressions as exclusively sexual. This is the position taken by Wisse, who argues that the promotion of celibacy is the only viable way to interpret the tractate. As more recent commentators do indeed recognise, a celibate reading certainly wouldn’t entirely contradict the representation of Soul, but is far from the only interpretation. Robinson argues that in her original state, Soul is “asexual,” only becoming characterised by sexual identity when she falls. However, as Lundhaug states, this misses the important point that it was her loneliness as a female that caused her trouble, in contrast to her male-female union in heaven. Her vulnerability to the robbers and wanton men highlights her defencelessness without her rightful protective males. The descriptions of the robbers and wanton men as false “husbands” is significant, because Soul is obedient to them as she would be her rightful father and husband. “Husband” (ὡς ἄρσει) and “master” (ὑπατιά) are linked here, emphasising the relationship of submission and hierarchy.

40 It must be remembered that Soul’s redeemed state is not one without sexual union, but with her true saviour husband, rather than the adulterers. See discussion below.
41 For example, Lundhaug, Images, 85.
43 Lundhaug, Images, 81.
This is reinforced with an allusion to Gen 3:16/1 Cor 7:4; 11:4/Eph 5:2, stating that the husband is master over his wife (133:9-10). When “master” is used to describe the adulterous males, Soul is appropriately labelled a “slave” (MΩXΣ). Sexual promiscuity is simply one manifestation of the soul’s degraded existence in the material world (130:28-131:2).

Soul’s faithfulness is what is at issue – she needs to turn her back on worldly things. Her “prostitution” should be viewed as her attachment to material, external things, rather than the spiritual. She should reserve sexuality only for her true husband. I will return to this important point later on. Contra Wisse and Robinson, who both view Soul’s degradation as tied up with her engagement in sexual activity, I suggest that what we have in ExSoul is a position consistent with that which we have found thus far in CII, whereby sex is problematic primarily insofar as it is somehow ‘inappropriate.’ We have seen in ApJohn, HypArch and GPhil that such misconduct is defined generally as sexual union driven exclusively by violent lust, and/or that which occurs between ill matched partners. The spiritual paradigm of male-female unity exemplified by the divine realm represents true and legitimate sexuality, and is mirrored on earth through marriage. ExSoul is no different.

ExSoul distinguishes between the πορνία of the body and the soul (130-131), once again drawing support from various passages of the NT that warn against πορνεία:

But as to this prostitution (πορνία) the apostles of the Saviour commanded: ‘Guard yourselves against it, purify yourselves from it’ speaking not just of the prostitution (πορνία) of the body but especially that of the soul...the great [struggle] has to do with the prostitution (πορνία) of the soul. From it arises the prostitution (πορνία) of the body as well. (130:28-131:2)

Although the two remain distinguished from one another, it remains the case that if the soul is prostituted then the body inevitably follows. That ExSoul asserts the πορνία of the soul

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44 Lundhaug, Images, 83.
45 Lundhaug, Images, 85.
46 Lundhaug, Images, 131-132.
47 Acts 15:20, 29, 21:25; 1 Thess 4:3; 1 Cor 6:18; 2 Cor 7:1.
militates against a reading that understands the author to be solely concerned with sexual transgression. 48 1 Cor 5:9-10 and Eph 6:12 are subsequently invoked to further emphasise this point:

Therefore Paul, writing to the Corinthians, said: ‘I wrote to you in the letter: ‘Do not associate with prostitutes,’ not at all meaning the prostitutes of this world or the greedy or the thieves or the idolators, since then you would have to go out from the world.’ Here he is speaking spiritually, ‘for our struggle is for us not against flesh and blood,’ as he said, ‘but against the world rulers of this darkness and the spirits of wickedness.’ (131:2-13)

The author suggests that Paul here is not referring specifically to bodily “prostitution,” but that of the soul. “Prostitution” becomes the umbrella under which all worldly distractions are grouped. As Lundhaug states, illicit sexual relationships are used as a metaphor for all worldly things. 49 This may help to solve another matter of uncertainty, that of the identity of Soul’s “earthly father.” As well as the heavenly Father, 133:25 also speaks of “the house of the earthly father.” It is here, we are told, that things begin to go wrong for Soul (133:26-27). Using the imagery of Psalms 44:11-12 (LXX), of a young bride leaving her father’s house for that of her new husband, the king, the passage sets up a series of contrasts between the realms of Soul’s earthly father and that of her father in heaven (133:16-29).

It seems most logical to understand the earthly father as a representation of all earthly ties; the realm of the earthly father contains the entire spectrum of the ποιημα that Soul has engaged in. Roukema suggests alternatively that this could be a piece of supporting evidence for the influence of the demiurgical myth upon ExSoul. Does the author view the earthly father as a creator God, completely distinguished from her true father above? 50 We have seen that ExSoul contains elements from a variety of traditions, and certainly the similarity between Soul and the disobedient Sophia, who also falls from the heavenly realm to repent

48 See Lundhaug, Images, 85-86.
49 Lundhaug, Images, 86.
50 Roukema, Gnosis and Faith, 30.
and await the Father’s mercy, cannot be ignored. It might also be significant that *ExSoul* draws upon Eph 6:12 in partial explanation of the reason for Soul’s folly. This same text of course acts as the starting point for *HypArch*’s polemic against Ialdabaoth and his minions. Perhaps, then, this myth is in the author’s mind, Ialdabaoth acting as the instigator and embodiment of distracting passions and worldly temptations. Roukema objects to a reading of the earthly father as all that is worldly on the grounds that if this were the case, the “robbers” who reduce Soul to prostitution in the first place would then not make much sense – the negative imagery associated with robbery does not seem to fit with idea that Soul was indulging in earthly pleasures. However, this ignores the complexity of Soul’s situation. She is not simply robbed and deceived, but is also tempted with gifts and eventually engages willingly in adulterous acts (127:30-32). Indeed, scholars have frequently spoken of Soul being expelled, or thrown down from heaven, seeming to assume a punishment for something or other. However, while her transgressions in her earthly body are explicitly detailed, the initial reason for her fall is unclear.

From 128-129, the suggestion seems to be that it was Soul who “fled” (πωτ) from and “abandoned” (κω) her father’s home. This section represents her as a foolish young girl who gives in to the overwhelming desire to experience the pleasures of the world below; she is tempted by the “things she thinks she needs” (130:27-28). The author here interprets the “great of flesh” of Ezek 16:26 (LXX) as the “domain of the flesh and the perceptible realm and the affairs of the earth,” all of which have defiled Soul. Soul’s infidelity is inspired by

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Israel’s infidelity to God. However, Smith argues that when *ExSoul* quotes Isa 30:19-20 (136:8-16), the author is not using this as a metaphor for Soul, but actually referring to Jerusalem. I see no reason to restrict it to one or the other, the formation of such a metaphor relies upon a certain degree of acceptance of both – Smith is wrong, however, to take Soul out of the equation, this would be very odd given that the entire tractate is formed around her escapades.

The “adulterers” (ὢὔμπροος) lull Soul into a false sense of security, making her comfortable with worldly possessions and affection, before eventually abandoning her. These adulterers must also be taken to mean all worldly trappings. A comparison might be made with Ialdabaoth’s “despicable spirit” in *ApJohn*, which as we saw in chapter one, clouds the minds of men and women, presenting wicked things in a positive light, so that they lose the ability to distinguish between the good and the bad. Similarly, the adulterers are contrasted to Soul’s “true husband” – they fool her, “deceive” her and pretend to be faithful, before eventually abandoning her and leaving her “without help; not even a measure of food.” She is effectively a widow, without a legitimate husband, and left with the feeble, blind and sickly offspring of her dalliances with the adulterers (128:12-26). Again, that they are “blind” recalls one of the key descriptors of Ialdabaoth from *ApJohn* and *HypArch*. These comparisons suggest an area of overlap in terms of ideology, if not mythological dependence.

The reader is warned that while earthly, fleshly temptations provide temporary pleasure and comfort, they will eventually cease; the individual solely concerned with these carnal and material luxuries, therefore, is condemned to be left with nothing. Of course, this is a fitting message for a monastic readership, who have renounced the comforts of their

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55 This same term is used of the suitors who seek to tempt Penelope away from her true and rightful husband in the *Odyssey* (6.120, 9.125, 13. 201).
former lives in order to train the soul. Paral. (20) contains a section whose sentiment is entirely in keeping with that in ExSoul, where the soul pleads with the body to endure, in the hope of the two enjoying a “blessed eternity” together:

Let the soul then, brothers … say … ‘Oh feet, while you have power to stand … stand eagerly for your Lord’. To the hands let it say, ‘The hour comes when you will be loosened and motionless, bound to each other and having no motion whatever; then, before you fall into that hour, do not cease stretching yourselves out to the Lord’. And to the whole body let the soul say, ‘Oh body, before we are separated and removed far away from each other…stand boldly, worship the Lord. Bear me as I eagerly confess God … do not condemn me to eternal punishment in your desire to sleep and to take your rest…If you listen to me, we shall together enjoy the blessed inheritance. If you do not listen to me, then woe to me that you have been bound to me; because of you I also, wretched as I am, am condemned.

The soul’s lament makes quite explicit that it is inseparable from the body – the one directly affects the other; this of course recalls ExSoul’s assertion of the same (130:36-131:1).

The overall message of ExSoul is that marriage with Christ is the true Christian life, and an association with him is a “legitimate sexual relationship.”56 The term ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΑ and its cognates are used to denote the relationship between the Christian and Christ. Obviously the sexual connotations of the term are present with the imagery of marriage that the text employs, but similarly to ΠΟΡΝΙΑ, its use is far from restricted to these. ExSoul does not mention explicitly, but almost certainly alludes to 1 Cor 10:16, 20: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion in the body of Christ?” and “I do not want you to be partners with demons.” Lundhaug observes that ExSoul draws upon Paul’s juxtaposing of the communion in Christ with that in demons, to emphasise Soul’s communion with the saviour in contrast to that with the adulterers.57

56 Lundhaug, Images, 87.
57 Lundhau, Images, 89.
Scopello has also highlighted that Soul’s uniting with her bridegroom is described in carnal, passionate terms, yet it is spiritual and eternal in nature. The offspring that they produce are good and beautiful. A further comparison might be made here with ApJohn, where Adam and Eve’s carnal union results nonetheless in the begetting of Seth and Norea. In contrast, Soul’s weak and sickly children that she bears with her adulterers are reminiscent of Sophia’s Ialdabaoth. Scopello is one scholar who does in fact support the notion that ExSoul takes some inspiration from the demiurgical myth. Both Sophia and Soul undergo repentance marked by fear, anguish and loneliness, and both pray to the father and await his mercy. Salvation is afforded both of them through nuptial union, allowing them to regain androgyny and virginity. Moreover, she argues that the biblical stories, picked up on by the Apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, of Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba were also of likely influence. All are prostitutes at some point in their lives for a variety of reasons, and are eventually saved by confidence in God. However, Parrot questions the relevance of these parallels, as “prostitution,” he claims, does not accurately depict the experience of all these women. Bathsheba, for example, was forcibly taken by King David (2 Sam 11: 2-5). It is not certain that Rahab was indeed a prostitute (Joshua 2), and Ruth’s dealings with Boaz where she indicates an interest in him are not explicitly sexual in nature (Ruth 3:6-13).

Granted, this may be true, but we should not forget that soul is forced by some of her male suitors, so her experience is not altogether different from, say, Bathsheba’s. Equally, she also willingly engages in promiscuity with others, which supports the parallel with Tamar (Gen 38: 13-19) at least, if not Ruth and Rahab. Wilson observes that ExSoul uses a large part of Hosea 2 in order to describe Soul’s harlotry, effectively substituting Soul for Israel. Hosea is

58 Madeleine Scopello, “Jewish and Greek Heroines in the Nag Hammadi Library,” in Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism, 74.
59 Scopello, “Jewish and Greek Heroines,” 76-77.
60 Scopello, “Jewish and Greek Heroines,” 82-86.
led by his unhappy marriage to a deeper knowledge of God’s relationship with Israel. Israel has treated God in the disrespectful manner that Hosea felt Gomer had treated him. After Soul’s repentance, a string of OT quotations are given with the prophet identified in each case. Soul’s harlotry is understood to be prophesied by the Holy Spirit in the scriptures. Wilson argues against Robinson’s division of the text into sections. For Wilson, there is apparent unity across the entire text – indeed, 133:20-23 seems to echo the prophetic condemnation of Israel.

**Soul’s Reunion and Rebirth**

*ExSoul*’s view of sexuality, then, is consistent with that which we have seen thus far in CII, and also with the Pach.S. The tractate’s metaphor of Soul as a prostitute both ravaged by adulterers and willingly accepting of their charms stands for all worldly, material trappings. However, the tractate is not simply concerned with graphically depicting Soul’s transgressions; it also prescribes a remedy for them. This is what I shall now turn to examine.

One of the most obscure assertions of *ExSoul* is that relating to Soul’s womb. Her fall and redemption is described with specific reference to this explicit and physical aspect of femininity. Soul’s iniquity has the effect of externalising the womb and making it in this sense like male genitalia (131:23-27). Lundhaug points out that this is highly significant in that it suggests a connection between maleness and Soul’s fallen state. This of course

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64 Martin Krause, “Die Sakramente in der ’Exegese über die Seele’,” in *Les Textes de Nag Hammadi*, 49, n.23, and Lundhaug, *Images*, 90, note that Philo of Alexandria also speaks of the soul having a womb that acts as a vessel in which God places virtues (*Leg. 3:180*).
speaks against the argument that her femininity is partly responsible for her despicable actions, and so contra Horman Arthur, who has argued that the text treats most of soul’s feminine elements pejoratively. Horman Arthur argues that a male redactor uncomfortable with the female imagery at this point has altered it by insisting that Soul’s genitalia is in fact male in some way. This is an unnecessary assumption, however. Scopello and Wisse, to varying degrees, view this image as an indication of Soul’s exhibitionist tendencies. For Wisse, she is indecently exposing herself, and this is the reason for her violation by the adulterers. Smith has offered a convincing explanation given the wider assertions of the tractate, noting parallels with ancient medical theories which viewed male and female genitalia as essentially the same, but with one turned inwards and the other outwards. This image of Soul’s womb, therefore, may well represent her original androgynous state before she fell into a specifically female body. I suggest that the emphasis of Soul’s marriage with her male counterpart betrays that the author is greatly concerned with “proper” male-female union, and as such, the notion of confused genitalia expresses powerfully the current dissolution of this ideal state. Lundhaug and Scopello’s argument that this external representation of her womb portrays her male characteristics of promiscuity and predatory sexual behaviour is too simplistic, and fails to appreciate that while male adulterers do tempt Soul and lead her astray, she is also described as willingly offering herself to them. The notion of a female victim preyed upon by dominant males seems to me to be unsupported by the tractate.

Male authority, on the other hand, is something that we see advocated in the tractate—we have already seen this to be true of Soul’s relationship with her heavenly father, and shall re-visit this theme once again in our analysis below of Soul’s marriage to her saviour. Soul’s restoration begins at the point of her repentance, which begins at 131:13-22. Here, we learn that her salvation will involve the reversal of her external womb back to its natural inward state, once the father has mercy on her and sees her remorseful pleas as genuine. This repentance is directly connected with baptism. The text cites Acts 13:24, John the Baptist’s “baptism of repentance,” as necessary to Christ’s salvation, thereby supporting its necessity for Soul’s salvation also.\textsuperscript{72} What is baptism to the author of \textit{ExSoul}, however? Does the author refer to the Christian initiation ritual, or is the sacrament here understood metaphorically? I follow Lundhaug in suggesting the latter.\textsuperscript{73} The womb is once again brought into focus, with its inversion as the trigger for her cleansing (131:27-132:2). Soul is washed like a garment in the baptismal waters, just as clothing is turned inside out to be scrubbed clean.\textsuperscript{74} The fact that Soul’s womb must return to its natural, feminine state inside her body in order for her baptismal cleansing to commence supports Wisse and Scopello’s suggestion that this “exposure” is the reason for her vulnerability to fornication. However, this need not be read as a comment on the fact that she has specific ‘male’ characteristics or that her ‘femaleness’ is responsible for her desire. Rather, it is simply the fact that gender neutrality has been decimated by her fall.

Lundhaug raises an important point in that Soul’s womb inversion marks another key theme in \textit{ExSoul}, the dichotomy between inside and outside.\textsuperscript{75} That which is inside is conveyed as good, in sharp contradiction to that which is outside. While Soul’s womb is on

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{72} Lundhaug, \textit{Images}, 93.
\item \textsuperscript{73} Lundhaug, \textit{Images}, 94-99.
\item \textsuperscript{74} Wisse, “On Exegeting,” 73.
\item \textsuperscript{75} Lundhaug, \textit{Images}, 98.
\end{itemize}
the external of her body, she is defiled; it is only when it returns inside her that she is redeemed. What Lundhaug doesn’t connect with this, however, is its significance for the role of the individual in their own redemption. The Father is named as the instigator, who must decide to grant his mercy. However, this is done upon his judgement of whether Soul is truly, deeply repentant or not (129:1-5). Repentance is more than skin deep – it requires genuine inward remorse and pleading to the Father. Indeed, *ExSoul* 134:30 points out that simply memorising scripture (which Lundhaug suggests might be what the text means by ἀσκήσις, “ascetic words”) is not enough – one must repent and pray also, as it is ultimately God’s gift. This is obviously a central theme, and is also prominent in the Pach.S. Rousseau has also observed the common themes of rebirth, revelation, redemption, rest, prophecy and fulfilment in the Pach.S, which Lundhaug suggests form a link with *ExSoul*. BO 142, for instance, describes repentance as a rebirth, and Theodore’s *Instructions* 3:28 describe the monastic life as a “rebirth.”

One’s plea to the father must be done inwardly, not with the lips. Again, the implication is that empty actions serve no purpose. This recalls *GThom* and Jesus’ attitude to fasting and prayer etc.; one needs to understand inwardly. This is supported by an allusion to Mt 5:4,6 and Lk 6:21: “Blessed are those who mourn, for it is they who will be pitied; blessed, those who are hungry, for it is they who will be filled” (135:16-20).

*ExSoul* also quotes Lk 14:26 (135:19-22), “If one does not hate his soul he cannot follow me,” which is again familiar from *GThom* where I have argued that the synoptic command to “hate one’s mother and father” is used to support the notion that the believer must ensure his or her priorities are in order. Here in *ExSoul* this seems a very odd statement to enforce, given that Soul is the central protagonist of the tractate! I suggest that “life,”

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76 Lundhaug, *Images*, 143.
rather than “soul” might be a better translation of יוחם here. What the text is attempting to convey is that the soul suffers if one is too preoccupied with the material temptations of life. In fact, this echoes a similar statement that we saw in HypArch 91:7-11, where Adam and Eve are said to become “preoccupied with worldly affairs.” In this case, I argued that this referred to all the trappings of the material world.

God examines “the inward parts and searches the bottom of the heart,” there is no use in praying “hypocritically” as the individual deceives only him or herself (136:22-23, 25-27). Homer’s Odyssey (1.48-59; 4.558) is now quoted as the tractate draws to a close, with Odysseus weeping upon Calypso’s isle because he no longer wants to indulge in her temptations, just wanting to go home. He effectively represents Soul, who has similarly become tired of the meagre pleasures that earth has to offer – she wants to return to her rightful home above, and her true partner, as Odysseus wishes to return to Penelope. It is interesting that the comparisons with the Odyssey have Soul aligned with both Odysseus and Penelope at different points in the narrative, especially given Scopello’s observation that the female role is not usually centre stage. This supports Williams’ assertion\(^78\) that the text is not concerned with downplaying the female gender so much as conveying that the ideal state is one where males and females are with their rightful partners.

The final quotation depicts Israel’s delivery from Egypt, claiming that it would not have been saved had its plea not been truly desirous. The message seems to be that empty gestures of repentance cannot fool God. He knows when a soul is really crying out to him. This lament of the soul encourages the reader to contemplate his or her desire for salvation. It forces the individual to consider whether their attempts to attain salvation are given weight with all their heart and focus. As Ménard argues, repentence is portrayed not simply as a

\(^{78}\) Williams, “Variety in Gnostic Perspectives on Gender,” 15.
change in actions, but relies on penitence as well.  

For the Pachomians, who we have already discussed in relation to the proper way to approach asceticism etc., this would be a valuable message. Their labours are not enough – they must continue to ask God to have mercy on them, and must keep the health of the soul always at the forefront of their minds.

The narrative in fact concludes several pages before the conclusion of the tractate (134:35), giving way to a more homiletic concluding section. Soul’s re-ascending is detailed, emphasised as owing purely to the Father’s grace:

Thus it is by being born again that the soul will be saved. And this is due not to ascetic words 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from heaven by the Father, and is her husband as well as her brother (132:7-9). Lundhaug understands the brother figure to refer to her original brother and husband, as well as Adam and Christ. Wilson renders the plural “her brothers” (Ἰησοῦν) in 134:27, and thinks that it refers to the myth of Sophia’s fall. The intertextual connections in ExSoul to Gen and 1 Cor make it more likely that Lundhaug is correct to view Soul and Christ as identified with Adam and Eve. The fall of Soul, then, represents Eve’s separation from Adam, her marriage symbolising a return to their original unity. The parallel is furthered by the description of Soul’s painful writhing like a woman in labour (132:2-5), which seems to echo Eve’s punishment for leading Adam astray in Gen 3:16. Wisse has suggested that this passage could also refer back to 134:6ff, the theme of rebirth – Soul must “give birth” to a renewed version of herself to recover from her former state. This seems to stretch the meaning of the passage, however; the fact that Eve is additionally burdened by both desire for and submission to her male counterpart, both of which we have seen in ExSoul supports the former suggestion. The submission of Soul to Christ is presented as the rightful correction of the dominion that the adulterous males held over her.

Soul awaits her bridegroom in anticipation, cleansing the bridal chamber and filling it with perfume; her desire to “run around the marketplace having communion with whomever she wants” rescinds as she anxiously frets over the arrival of her beloved (132:10-17). As well as the potential parallels with the ten virgins of Mt 25:1-13, who watch for their bridegroom knowing “not the day or the hour,” this invokes the image of Penelope waiting

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83 Song of Songs also has the bridegroom as the bride’s brother, and Ephesians 5 also uses the motif of the bridegroom as saviour. Ephesians has already been “primed,” as Lundhaug puts it, in 131:9-13 for instance, for the reference will be readily available and brought to mind, 102.
84 Lundhaug, Images, 102.
87 See Lundhaug, Images, 103.
tirelessly for Odysseus while attempting to avoid the many suitors trying to tempt her away from her true husband. When the saviour finally arrives, his behaviour raises some questions:

the bridegroom came down to her into the place of marriage (\(\text{f}\text{ē}{\text{λ}}\text{ε}\text{ε}\text{τ}\)) which was prepared, and
he adorned the bridal chamber (\(\nu\text{μ}\text{φ}\text{ω}\text{ν}\)). (132:24-27)

Firstly, we have the use of two different terms, both which can be translated as “bridal chamber.” The Coptic \(\text{f}\text{ē}{\text{λ}}\text{ε}\text{ε}\text{τ}\) and the Greek \(\nu\text{μ}\text{φ}\text{ω}\text{ν}\). Robinson, Scopello, Sevrin and Krause, among others, all assume the two terms to be entirely synonymous, but Lundhaug entertains the possibility that a difference in meaning may be intended for each. He argues that the latter Greek loan word should be translated as “bridal chamber,” but the Coptic term something like “place of marriage.” Lundhaug’s argument suggests that the marriage imagery in ExSoul draws upon intertexts from the NT that may shed some light on its choice of terminology; namely, Mt 22:14 and 25:1-13 – the parables of the wedding feast and the ten virgins, and 1 Tim 2:15, which narrates woman’s submission to man and the potential of salvation through childbirth. In the Sahidic NT, he observes, \(\text{φ}\text{ε}\text{λ}\text{ε}\text{ε}\text{τ}\), which can mean either “bride” or “marriage” is used to render the Greek \(\gamma\text{ά}\text{μ}\text{ο}\text{ς}\) (wedding), \(\nu\text{ψ}\text{φ}\text{η}\) (bride), and \(\gamma\nu\nu\text{η}\) (wife, woman). \(\text{f}\text{ē}{\text{λ}}\text{ε}\text{ε}\text{τ}\), which translates literally as “place of marriage” in turn is used to render \(\nu\text{μ}\text{φ}\text{ω}\text{ν}\) (bridal chamber), \(\pi\text{α}\text{s}\text{τ}\text{ό}\text{s}\) (another term usually rendered as “bridal chamber”) and \(\gamma\text{ά}\text{μ}\text{ο}\text{s}\). The Sahidic NT translates \(\gamma\text{ά}\text{μ}\text{ο}\text{s}\) in Mt 22: 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 with \(\text{f}\text{ē}{\text{λ}}\text{ε}\text{ε}\text{τ}\). Lundhaug notes that \(\nu\text{μ}\text{φ}\text{ω}\text{ν}\) only appears in one textual variant of Mt 22:10, and once in ExSoul (132:26-27). However, that \(\text{f}\text{ē}{\text{λ}}\text{ε}\text{ε}\text{τ}\) is used for both of these terms indicates a possible link with the parable of the wedding feast in the author of ExSoul’s mind. Moreover, both ExSoul and the Matthean parable make reference to wedding garments.

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89 Lundhaug, Images, 105-109.
Soul 132:22-26 has the saviour descend to the “prepared bridal chamber/place of marriage” (ΜΑΝΕΛΕΥΕΤ ΕΤΣΩΤ) (c.f. Mt 22:8), which he proceeds to “adorn/dress” (ΚΟΣΜΕΙ). The notion of dressing may be intended to bring to mind the man who does not have appropriate wedding clothes in Mt 22:11-14. Unlike the inappropriately dressed man, ExSoul has the saviour correct this problem by properly dressing the chamber.91 The fact that the saviour dresses the chamber, however, and not the bride herself, is something which scholars have not found an entirely satisfactory solution to.92 There is of course the possibility that it is simply a translation error by the Coptic translator of the original Greek text, which I would argue makes the most sense. That this is the case is supported by the fact that the bridal chamber is already described in 132:26 as “prepared” (ΣΩΤ). What does this preparation refer to if the groom then is required to decorate it himself? There is the possibility that this preparation refers to Soul herself, but her readiness to receive him has also previously been narrated – she has cleansed herself, filled the chamber with perfume and anxiously waited for her husband, dreaming like a “woman in love” of his arrival (132:14-24). Lundhaug suggests that perhaps the wedding chamber itself stands for the body that the soul is encased in, which requires proper “dressing” and preparation in order for its uniting with the saviour. Perhaps, he suggests, the text refers to a post-baptismal dressing in white garments that is evidence in other early Christian texts.93

However, the problem with this is that the text places such great emphasis on the role of the individual in ensuring their repentance is heartfelt and their attachment to earthly desires and passions are overcome; this is their preparation for full union with Christ. Granted, the Father’s grace and mercy are the catalyst that eventually brings about redemption, but the individual must do the initial preparation. Having the saviour take on this

role after the salvatory marital union has come seems odd. Moreover, I am not sure that there is enough evidence in *ExSoul* to suggest it is concerned with the ritual act of baptism; rather, the term is employed metaphorically to denote the cleansing of the mind and body. Certainly, for Pachomian readers the text would not have been used as a baptismal text, as it is doubtful that it would be seen to have enough authority. For these readers the text’s emphasis on the need to overcome fleshly desires and seek after fuller union with Christ would have been the key message.

Krause claims that the ‘sacrament’ of the bridal chamber plays an important role in Soul’s deliverance.\(^{94}\) However, there is not sufficient evidence to interpret a ritual sacrament – the bridegroom imagery is no different to that of Christ and the believer in the NT, where no sacramental context is interpreted by scholars. Granted, I have also argued that there is insufficient evidence within *GPhil* for a ritual context, which forms the basis of comparison for Krause’s assertion. The meeting of the saviour and Soul in the bridal chamber is followed by a description of their marriage in contrast to “the fleshly marriage.” Unfortunately, lacunae have made this passage rather difficult to interpret. The quotation below is my own adaption of Lundahug’s translation, which I believe to convey the most sensible reconstruction of the passage given both the immediate and wider context.\(^{95}\)

For that marriage is not like the carnal marriage, those who are to have intercourse with one another will be satisfied with that intercourse. And as if it were a burden they leave behind them the annoyance of physical desire and they [turn their faces from] each other. But this marriage [. . .]. But [once] they unite [with one another], they become a single life. Wherefore the prophet said concerning the first man and the first woman: ‘They will become a single flesh.’ (132:27-133:3)

Wisse reconstructs 132:32 as ἄφιξαν ἐβολας “they do not [separate from]” (the equivalent translation is in bold type above) and is followed by Sevrin.\(^{96}\) As Lundhaug

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\(^{94}\) In Foerster, *Gnosis*, vol. 2, 102.


recognises, this fits with the subsequent quotation of Gen 2:24 that asserts they will become a “single flesh.” However, a just visible superlinear stroke in the middle of the lacunae militates against this reconstruction. Robinson translates “turn (ΚΤΟ) their faces (ΝΟΥ 2Ο) from (ΕΒΟΛ),” making allowance for this by reconstructing as follows: ΝΕΣΤΚ ΤΟ Ρ[ΝΟΥ 2Ο ΕΒ]ΟΛ. 97 Unlike those who indulge their desires in the fleshly marriage (ΠΑΜΟC ΝΙ CΆΡΚΙΚΟC), the marriage between Soul and the saviour will not be defined by sexual intercourse alone, which eventually becomes tedious, causing the participants to “turn away” from each other. On the contrary, Soul must “turn her face” from her adulterers (133:21-22). The true marriage allows Soul and saviour to become a “single life” in opposition to the separation the fleshly marriage ultimately leads to. 98 This union brings about Soul’s necessary “rebirth” (ΠΕ ΧΠΟ ΦΚΕΟΠ), introduced with a quotation from Ps 103:1-5 (LXX), where the soul’s renewal and ascent is described with the image of a youthful eagle, able to fly up 99 to her rightful place in heaven. 100

ExSoul, then, has reinforced the plight of the soul in its human ‘prison’ and made explicit that the only way for it to transcend the body is through genuine repentance and union with Christ. Its message that actions and words alone are not viewed in the eyes of God as sufficient for salvation would back up the position advocated in the Pach.S examined at the beginning of this thesis. The Pachomian writers controlled the ascetic vigour of monks by maintaining that such actions undertaken out of vainglory are useless, and in fact damning of the individual. Moreover, the close relationship that ExSoul has with biblical scripture would

97 Lundhaug. Images, 110.
98 Lundhaug. Images, 111.
99 We will see in the next part of this chapter that the image of the soul as having wings to fly away from iniquity is one that ThomCont draws upon also.
100 Lundhaug points out that this term for “rebirth,” ΠΕ ΧΠΟ ΦΚΕΟΠ, only appears twice in the Sahidic NT, both times rendering the Greek παλιγγενεσία. Once in Mt 19:28, where Jesus tells the disciples that those who follow him “in the rebirth” will receive eternal life, and once in Titus 3:1, which asserts that salvation cannot be bought through works, but only through the grace and mercy of God. This of course fits with the message of ExSoul. See Lundhaug. Images, 114-116.
have resonated with the commands in the Pach.S for monks to always keep scripture as their driving force. The community orientated message that I argued for in GPhil has given way at the closing of CII to an exhortation for each individual reader to examine the health of their own soul. It would be perfectly reasonable for CII to conclude here, the method of redemption having been explicated. However, the compiler chooses instead to make one last dramatic demonstration of the danger that the soul is in while in the body’s constraints, and urges the reader to actively pursue its liberation; I turn finally, then, to ThomCont.

The Book of Thomas the Contender

An Ascetic Epilogue for Monks?

ThomCont, like ExSoul, is significantly underrepresented in scholarship. Turner’s critical edition and commentary published in 1975 still remains the only comprehensive study dedicated to the text. In ThomCont we have a revelation dialogue between the resurrected Jesus, prior to his ascension, and Judas Thomas, his “twin”. The text is ascribed to a certain Mathaias, who claims to have heard the conversation between Jesus and Thomas. The general consensus among scholars is that it stems from the tradition of texts associated with the apostle Thomas, popular in Edessa, Syria during the third century, which placed central value on ascetic piety. I have briefly discussed this theory in relation to GThom in chapter two,

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101 Similar in this respect to ApJohn, Sophia of Jesus Christ, Dialogue of the Saviour and the Letter of Peter to Philip.
102 The uniting feature is a particular name formula that seems to have its earliest attestation in John’s Gospel, Θωμᾶς ὁ λέγόμενος Δίδυμος (11:16, 20:24 and 21: 2). The apostle in John 14:22 known as Ἰούδας, σύχ ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης is referred to uniquely in Syriac recension as ‘Judas Thomas’ (syr) or even simply ‘Thomas.’
so will not repeat it here. However, it should be noted that this is not the only suggestion; for Klauk, the author’s use of Platonising Hellenistic Jewish sapiential material suggests an origin in Alexandria. This is supported by Schenke, who identifies a series of parallels with the works of Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexandria. 103

It is possible that the text used as one of its sources a collection of sayings attributed to Mathaias attested by Papias in the first half of the second century, Clement of Alexandria in the late second century and Hippolytus in the early third century. 104 The tractate offers two titles; the first is the subscript which concludes the text: “The book (χωρεῖ) of Thomas the contender/athlete (ΔΗΛΗΘΗΣ) writing to the perfect (ΠΕΛΕΥ)busy),” and the second appears as an incipit (138:1-4) at the start of the tractate: “The secret words (ΠΑΤΕΡ ΕΘΝΙ) that the saviour spoke to Judas Thomas which I, even I Mathaias wrote down, while I was walking, listening to them speak with one another.” Unlike GThom, however, the genre of the text is not particularly well described as a “sayings” collection; it is predominantly a dialogue, whereby Thomas asks the Saviour questions and is offered responses. The implication is that as Jesus’ “twin” Thomas has special insight into not only Jesus’ identity as the saviour, but also his teachings. Because of his closeness to Jesus, if Thomas comes to truly “know himself” as the saviour advises him, he will gain knowledge about the saviour’s origins in “the all” and become fully equipped to impart that which is “hidden” and “invisible” to other likeminded Christians. Turner argues that this designation simply betrays the text’s

which suggests that at some point, a disciple of Jesus whose name was Judas, was given the nickname Δίδυμος ‘the Twin’ (in Aramaic t’ōm(ā)) to distinguish him from Judas Iscariot. The Johannine author has then seemingly transliterated the Aramaic into Greek, resulting in Θωμᾶς. In both the Coptic GThom and the Greek Acts of Thomas, it appears that a combination of the Greek and Syriac formulas have been used. The Greek prologue to the GThom (P.Oxy. 654: 2-3) claims Ἰουδᾶς ὁ καθὼς Ἰσκαριώτης as its author, whilst its later Coptic counterpart ascribes the text to ΔΙΔΥΜΟΣ ΙΟΥΔΑΣ ΦΟΡΜΑΣ. ThomCont ascribes the text ΙΟΥΔΑΣ ΦΟΡΜΑΣ, omitting the ΔΙΔΥΜΟΣ included in GThom.


composition from a sayings source, a descriptor of this source having found its way into 
*ThomCont*. There is also a colophon appearing after the subscript, which reads “Remember 
me also, my brethren, [in] your prayers: Peace to the saints and those who are spiritual.” As 
Turner points out, this likely was an addition of the scribe of the MS rather than to *ThomCont* 
itself. This of course offers some additional support for a monastic setting for CII, as it 
appears that the commissioner of this codex at least, was addressing a group of fellow 
“spiritual” Christians that he envisaged reading the tractates.

Turner argued for a division of the text into two sections, “A” and “B.” Originally, 
these units were independent, stemming from different source material, and were later 
combined by the redactor of the text as we now have it. The “A” section (138:4-142:21) 
started out as a revelation dialogue between Thomas and Jesus, which Turner argues aimed to 
incorporate Hellenistic ascetic teachings into those of Jesus. This source probably ended, 
Turner claims, with Thomas’ affirmation to Jesus that “your word is abundant,” which is 
where Thomas departs from the text. Subsequently, the tractate comprises of a homily given 
by Jesus (142:21 – end); this is Turner’s section “B.” The dialogue structure gives way to 
what can be identified as an original collection of sayings, added to “A” as Jesus’ departing 
sermon. This latter part of the text consists of a series of “blessings,” not dissimilar to the 
beatitudes of Mt 5:1-12, and “woes” that Turner observes are similar to those given by Moses 
in Deut 27-28. Schenke argues contrary to Turner that an older work bearing the second 
title, “The Contender Writing to the Perfect” was not a dialogue, but rather a letter, as this 
title, he suggests, is typical of an epistolary praescriptio. This letter was later refashioned into 

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107 Turner, “Introduction,” 174-175 for a brief summary of the source argument and for more deatail, John D. 
Turner, *The Book of Thomas the Contender from Codex II of the Cairo Gnostic Library from Nag Hammadi* 
107-113 in particular.
a dialogue between Thomas and Jesus. Schenke’s argument would be more convincing if the colophon had in fact been written by the author of ThomCont, as it resembles the farewell greeting formulas that we see, for instance, in the Pauline literature and of course in Greek epistles more generally. Nothing else in the latter half of the tractate, however, is particularly epistolary in character. It is merely Turner’s section, “A” that Schenke views as belonging to the Thomas tradition, however. He posits a dating for the text in its present form of around 200-235 A.D., allowing it to lie chronologically between the GThom and ActsThom. For Turner, this indicates a gradual development from an early sayings tradition (GThom) into an apostolic narrative (ActsThom - termed later by Poirier as a “missionary romance”), during which the emphasis on worldly, particularly sexual, renunciation becomes increasingly prominent. It is of course the text in its present form that is relevant to the present analysis, but it is interesting to note that even within CII itself, there might be support for such a development present in the sequencing of the ‘Thomasine’ tractates; GThom, which I have argued acts in CII as Jesus’ sanctioning of some of the key ethical standpoints of the codex, paves the way for the more rigid focus on individualised pursuits that ThomCont promotes.

Sexual asceticism is consistently viewed as the overarching theme of ThomCont, with fire used not only as a recurring descriptor of the fleshly passions that burn in the bodies of men and women, but also in relation to the eternal punishment for the individual who fails to overcome the trappings of the flesh and liberate the soul. Klauk argues that the term ἄγοντης, “contender” or “athlete” can be made sense of in light of Jewish wisdom traditions, which also have a strong tendency towards sexual asceticism. The athlete, then, is the ascetic. Lundhaug, of course does not treat ThomCont in his monograph dedicated to the

110 Paul-Hubert Poirier, “The Writings Ascribed to Thomas and the Thomas Tradition,” in The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years, 298.
ways in which metaphor is employed in *GPhil* and *ExSoul*. However, just as he describes, for example, the various aspects of prostitution, daughterhood, motherhood and wifehood that *ExSoul* draws upon to describe Soul’s relationships to the various males in her story, the same can be said of how the concept of the athlete illuminates that of the ascetic. The reader can transfer to one’s own ascetic pursuit the arduous physical and mental vigour and discipline, unwavering dedication, and, of course, the highly esteemed end prize.

Renunciation, however, does not fully account for the meaning of ἀθανασία – it denotes a continuous struggle towards perfection. In Jewish tradition, the model was Jacob, based upon his physical struggle with God recounted in Gen 32:23-32, where God tests him by wrestling Jacob through the night, eventually dislocating his hip. This is an important clarification, and indeed fitting with what we saw in *GThom*, the other CII tractate which appears to stem from the same Thomas venerating Christian tradition as *ThomCont*. In *GThom* we saw that on the topic of renunciation, expressed through the disciples’ question to Jesus regarding fasting, the author has Jesus respond in such a way that the act of renunciation itself is clearly made secondary to the intent behind it.

As Turner recognises, the first part of the tractate identifies a series of opposing forces: the divine light of Christ vs. the earthly fire of the passions (139:32-34), the hidden vs. the invisible (138:17-139:31), and the wise man who comprehends the truth vs. the fool whose mind is shrouded in the deception of the passions (140:6-31; 140:41-141:2). I have argued thus far that CII does not seem to condemn sexuality outright, but rather its abuse through the violent, lustful degradation of primal male-female unity. *ThomCont*, however,

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111 Lundhaug, *Images*. See 77-99 on the various feminine identities that Soul takes on. Lundhaug’s methodological approach is influenced by conceptual metaphor and blending theories developed by the likes of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. See for example, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), and the comprehensive theoretical discussion offered by Lundhuag in his second chapter, 21-64.


seems to deviate from this perspective, ferociously condemning the bestial nature of mankind and emphasising the temporary nature of everything created through sexual intercourse. Indeed, intercourse between men and women is explicitly referred to as “polluted” (144:10). The attitude of “appropriate” union does not seem to hold any sway in ThomCont and unlike ExSoul it is difficult to argue that sexual passion is not at the forefront of the author’s mind. Indeed, it is probably significantly owing to the ascetic message of ThomCont that scholars initially suggested an ideological affinity between the NHC and the Pachomians.

If as Turner argues, ThomCont represents a developing tradition of Thomas-venerating ascetic literature then this is hardly surprising. Similarly to ExSoul, there are few traces of the demiurgical myth; the author’s greatest influences appear to be largely from Plato and other Greek philosophical literature, as well as the NT. Turner notes numerous parallels with Plato’s writings, and demonstrated that ThomCont drew heavily, but possibly indirectly, upon Platonic literature. The only hints that demiurgical mythology played any part in the author’s thinking are the references to Jesus originating in “the all,” and the Pleroma (138:18, 33), and the association of lust with the demonic powers (144:13-14). This latter feature of course recalls ApJohn, OrigWorld, HypArch, and also GPhil from CII alone. However, it should be remembered that HypArch and ExSoul both draw upon Eph 6:12 as NT support for this very notion, so it is by no means necessary to connect this idea solely with the Ialdabaoth myth.

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114 It is perhaps worth noting that both these references appear in the first section of the text, which Turner, Introduction, 176, identifies as more “gnostic” in character than the latter. I of course do not suggest this problematic label in any case, but if one compares ThomCont with the other texts not only in CII but also the NHL in general, these references are two which suggest a Christian tradition of describing the heavens in language alternative to that used in the NT. Turner also notes on this subject the reference to “seeking truth from true wisdom” (140:2), questioning whether the Sophia myth might be in mind here. I think that this is unlikely – the heavy emphasis in the text upon gaining knowledge of oneself and the salvific “light,” i.e. Jesus, suggests that “wisdom” is intended by the author simply as a descriptor of that which one must come to understand in order to liberate the soul. This reference is followed by Thomas affirming that Jesus is “the one who is beneficial to us” (140:9), to which the saviour confirms that his words are indeed “the doctrine for the perfect” (140:11). We might reasonably equate the “true wisdom” with Jesus’ teachings, therefore.
*ThomCont* is essentially a Christian document, with enough emphasis on the importance of hidden knowledge to have been considered on a par with much of the other literature from NH. Like *ExSoul* (and of course, *GPhil*) it emphasises the role of the saviour in the redemption of the individual. For instance, the saviour’s light shines “on the behalf” of men, in order that they might “come forth” from the material world (139:25-28) – it is their guide. *ThomCont*’s once likely prominence among east Syrian encratic Christians probably explains its explicit attack on the dangers of fleshly desires, which we have seen to be more nuanced thus far in CII. This need not weaken the argument for consistency within CII, however, or its connection with the Pachomian monks. As I outlined in the introduction to this thesis, the Pachomians were committed to mastering their passions through regimented asceticism. This must be undertaken at a level appropriate to the skill of each monk, however, and not abused to excess with the aim of outdoing others. I suggest that *ThomCont* differs from the preceding tractates in CII in terms of its unmistakable contempt for the flesh due to its role as the final plea to the reader to maintain their efforts to liberate the soul. The preceding tractates have given a basis for understanding the origins of inhibiting physical desires, but the individual must now take it upon him or herself to confront them. *ExSoul* has made explicit the plight of the soul as it is trapped in the fleshly prison of the body, and emphasised the necessity for repentance through union with Christ. As its final exhortation, CII asks the reader in *ThomCont* to ensure that their efforts towards transcending the grip of worldly passions are maximised, warning of the dreadful punishment awaiting should they fail.

Precisely *because* it is the final tractate, the final exhortation to the reader needs to be made emphatic. *ThomCont* needs to impact upon the reader in a significant way, with a powerful message; the all-out attack on the flesh and accompanying encouragement to overcome it do just this. *ExSoul* and *ThomCont* together reaffirm what one must do to assure
salvation: repent, and ensure that the pleasures of the flesh do not rule one’s mind. 

*ThomCont*’s poignancy hammers home the necessity of continuing to battle the desires which characterise the human condition. If CII was indeed commissioned by monks, which the colophon at the end of *ThomCont* may suggest, then this ascetically driven conclusion is not out of place at all. The Pachomians’ moderate attitude towards asceticism that I have discussed, however, is not undermined by the message of the tractate, as the pronouncement against sex does not equate to a command for excessive ascetic feats. Rather, it simply supports more explicitly the celibate vow that they would have taken upon becoming initiated into the Koinonia.

The remainder of this chapter, then, will explore how *ThomCont* develops the assertion in *ExSoul* that only through a combination of eliminating the hold of the passions and understanding the role of the saviour is salvation attainable. Moreover, we shall see that the language of the “elect” and their journey to “perfection” offers a more Christ-centred understanding of the categorisation of mankind and the spiritual journey of the individual than we have seen thus far in CII. *ThomCont* offers an apt conclusion for a monastic audience by not only developing and continuing the key themes of CII, but also presenting them in explicitly Christocentric, ascetic language that would speak to them.

The polemic against fleshly desire is expressed predominantly through the metaphor of fire, which was well established in antiquity, partly because fire was seen as the primal element required for reproduction. Cicero comments of necessity of heat for the germination of seeds, and the role of the “fiery element” in the generation of all organisms (*De Natura Deorum* II.10). Similarly, Pseudo-Clementine describes the power of fire as twofold: there is terrestrial fire that is responsible for destruction, and there is the fire that

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115 See my introduction for the arguments for and against this.
stirs the urge for reproduction in living beings (Excerpts of Theodotus 26). Fire is responsible for the “first birth” (Recognitions IX.10). Within the NHL the Teachings of Silvanus (108:4-6) speak of the “fire of lust.” Perhaps most similar to ThomCont’s usage is that in the Sophia of Jesus Christ, where the “unclean rubbing” (i.e. intercourse) is understood as originating in “the fearful fire that is from their fleshly part.” ThomCont states:

O bitterness of the fire that blazes in the bodies of men and in their marrow, kindling in them night and day, and burning the limbs of men and [making] their minds become drunk and their souls become deranged [ . . . ] them within males and females . . . [ . . . ] night and moving them, [ . . . ] . . . secretly and visibly. For the males [move . . . upon the females] and the females upon [the males. Therefore it is] said, ‘Everyone who seeks the truth from true wisdom will make himself wings so as to fly, fleeing the lust that scorches the spirits of men.’ And he will make himself wings to flee every visible spirit.

(139:32-140:5)\textsuperscript{117}

The fire of passion burns the souls of men, and becomes “like a stake stuck in their heart which they can never dislodge.”\textsuperscript{118} Moreover, it “leads them according to its own desire” like a bit in the mouth. For Kuntzmann, this “Feu du désir” is effectively the anti-saviour!\textsuperscript{119} Klauk suggests that the “stake” which lust drives through the heart reminds of Eros’ arrows, and the metaphorical bit of the charioteer in Plato’s model of the soul.\textsuperscript{120} Material, fleshly pleasures masquerade as beauty and truth, but eventually leave the soul defiled. When the body becomes subject to its eventual decay and death, the soul that has failed to transcend its fleshly prison will be condemned to dwell as a “shapeless shade” among the tombs and corpses (141:16-19). Klauk recalls Plato’s image of the soul wandering as a shadowy image amongst graves, having become separated from matter (Phaedo 81 D).\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{117} The association of fleshly desire with alcohol recalls OrigWorld.
\textsuperscript{118} Turner, Book of Thomas, 150, compares Plato’s Phadeo 82 E - 83 E, which depicts the soul welded and nailed to the body.
\textsuperscript{120} Klauk, Apocryphal Gospels, 181.
\textsuperscript{121} Klauk, Apocryphal Gospels, 181.
We recall of course Soul’s experience with her adulterers, who shower her with gifts and affection at first, before leaving her a desolate widow. Desire has “fettered them with its chains” and bound their limbs with “the bitterness of the bondage of lust for those visible things that will decay and change” (140:21-34). Similarly to ExSoul, sexual lust is seen in ThomCont as part of a greater collection of material distractions. Indeed, Jesus’ monologue in the latter part of the tractate, effuses a series of twelve “woes” that identify the ignorant as those whose “god is this life” (143:9-144:20). That “this life” is identified as their master indicates that like ExSoul, it is not only sexual lust that the author views as a problem.

These “visible” (ἐβόλα), material things of the world that condemn men to death are in opposition to the invisible (ἀφύ) truths of the saviour. The visible things of the world are described as beasts, trapped in bodies that require nourishment from other worldly organisms (139:2). Subject to unavoidable change, decay and death, these things are contrasted to the eternal, self-nourishing truths of the saviour:122

But these visible bodies survive by devouring creatures similar to them with the result that the bodies change. Now that which changes will decay and perish, and has no hope of life from then on, since that body is bestial. So just as the body of the beasts perishes, so also will these formations perish. Do they not derive from intercourse like that of the beasts? (139:2-9)

The saviour makes clear that sexual intercourse is as Klauk puts it, “a prominent symptom of the imperfection, fragility and mortality of existence.”123

140:19-20 is reminiscent of Plotinus’ division of mankind that alluded to in chapter one. Plotinus argues that the lowest category of mankind is merely concerned with fleshly pleasures, making no attempt to flee from them. These individuals, he likens to birds that have wings but cannot fly. This, I suggested was similar to the division of monks made by

122 Turner, Book of Thomas, 133-34, notes a parallel with Ecc 3:18-21 and the conception of men as beasts in Neoplatonism (e.g. Plato, Phaedo 80 B,C, who posits the souls of wanton, lustful men will pass into asses or other similar animals when they die).
123 Klauk, Apocryphal Gospels, 179.
Anthony. *ThomCont* also uses the analogy of wings to describe those who refuse to abandon the flesh: “there are some who, although having wings, rush upon the visible things, things that are far from the truth.” Again, there are parallels with Plato here, who uses the image of the winged soul escaping the dungeon of the body (*De som.* I. 139).\(^{124}\)

The ignorant are falsely guided by the fire, which “gives them an illusion of truth” (ΦΑΘΣΩΝ ΜΗΝ). The theme of bad masquerading as good is a common one in CII – we have seen it in *ApJohn* through Ialdabaoth’s despicable spirit, and through the false naming of things by the powers in *GPhil*. Thomas expresses a concern about how to teach those individuals who blame their iniquity entirely upon their fleshly state (141:20-25):

> What shall we say to blind men? What doctrine should we express to these miserable mortals who say, ‘We came to [do] good and not to curse,’ and yet [claim], ‘Had we not been begotten in the flesh, we would not have known [iniquity]?’

These complaining individuals may be referring to non-ascetic Christians who have not taken the initiative to abandon the world and the flesh as our monastic readers had done. Either way, Jesus has no sympathy. The human state cannot be used as a justification for allowing the flesh to become one’s master – it must be overcome. Jesus claims that such individuals should not even be regarded as men, but beasts, as they have allowed their base instincts to rob them of the chance at redemption, which distinguishes human beings from animals (141:26-29).

Turner has suggested in light of the above passage, where the characteristic of bestial creatures is their need to consume one another, that this reference to “devouring one another” indicates that the tractate advocates abstinence from meat, as well as sex.\(^{125}\) This is possible, but I think it more fitting with the context of the statement as a response to Thomas’ query

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\(^{124}\) The *Phaedrus* 249 C also relays the story of the mind of a wise philosopher, which grows wings to escape the cycle of reincarnation. See Turner, *Book of Thomas*, 145.

\(^{125}\) Turner, *Book of Thomas*, 158.
regarding their salvation, to simply understand it as the detrimental effect that such individuals have upon one another. Those who do not heed the teachings of the saviour and strive to overcome the passions can have no positive effect upon those around them. Their passions “devour” them, and these men and women in turn only encourage each other into further iniquity. Perhaps it is for this reason that Jesus emphasises the positive effect of the “elect” resting “among [their] own” (141:3-4).

The images of “burning” passions that preoccupy the minds of men eventually give way to vivid descriptions of their eternal punishment in the torturous fires of hell. Men love “the sweetness of the fire” yet do not realise that eventually it will be this very fire that burns them! (141:31, 142:2) The following passage is damaged in places, but its can still be understood, the motif of fire being prominent in the punishments of the underworld:

Moreover, he (i.e. the condemned man) can neither turn nor move on account of the great depth of Tartaros and the [heavy bitterness] of Hades that is steadfast [. . . ] [. . . ] them to it . . . [. . . ] they will not forgive . . . [. . . ] pursue you. They will hand [. . . ] over [. . . ] angel Tartarouchos [. . . ] fire pursuing them [. . . ] fiery scourges that cast a shower of sparks into the face of the one who is pursues. If he flees westward he finds the fire. If he turns southward, he finds it there as well. If he turns northward, the threat of seething fire meets him again... (142:35-143:5)

In HypArch and OrigWorld, where we find comparable descriptions of the fate of the world rulers, the argument is that these malevolent beings cannot redeem themselves.\textsuperscript{126} This is not the case here, the men and women who have allowed the flesh to rule over them and inhibit the soul’s liberation have done so out of choice. Unlike the archons, mankind, despite its pitiful state as carnal and perishable, has the option to transcend this if they will heed the teachings of the saviour and vow to actively renounce their passions.

The fires of passion that hold the soul captive are contrasted to the pure and illuminating light of the saviour, Jesus, which Thomas identifies, thereby revealing the close

\textsuperscript{126} The exception of course, is Sabaoth.
knowledge of the saviour that is implied by their “twinship”: “And you, our light, enlighten, o lord.” Thomas compares those who speak ignorantly of the “things that are invisible” with an archer blindly shooting arrows in the dark. Without guiding light, it is impossible to reach the desired target (139:15-20). In the context of the spiritual struggle towards perfection, this light is Jesus. One cannot help but think of the “light of the world” discourse from Jn 1:4-5, especially given the connection between the Johannine literature and that bearing Thomas’ name that scholars such as DeConick, Riley and Skinner have debated. 127

The identification of Jesus as “the light” is also illustrated in ThomCont through a comparison with the sun:

Who is it that will cause the sun to shine upon you to disperse the darkness in you and hide the darkness and polluted water? The sun and the moon will give a fragrance to you, together with the air and the spirit and the earth and the water. For if the sun does not shine upon these bodies, they will wither and perish just like weeds or grass. (144:17-23)

Turner posits that the reference at the beginning of the tractate (138:21-27) to Jesus’ ascension (Ἀνάλημμα) may in fact link to 139:28, which depicts the ascension of the light to its source once the elect have turned away from bestiality. 128 The sun extends its rays when it rises, and withdraws them again when it sets. See also the Treatise on the Resurrection 45:31-39, which describes the saviour as the sun and the faithful as its beams, which will be drawn into heaven at their setting (i.e. their death on earth). 129 Turner also draws a comparison with the Manichaean Kephalaia (67:165.27-166.9), 130 but unlike the Manichaean system (and the implication of the above statement in the Treatise on the Resurrection)

128 Turner, Book of Thomas, 126, 129.
129 Turner, Book of Thomas, 139.
whereby the faithful souls are understood to be particles of light that must eventually return
to their origin in the sun, the elect in ThomCont do not appear to viewed as a part of the sun
as such.\textsuperscript{131} Rather, they are like seeds that require the sun’s nourishment to flourish and rise
above their physical and material desires that would choke them like weeds. The metaphor of
the body as a seed that requires the saviour’s “light” to grow recalls not only 1 Cor 15, but
also Phaedo 83 D, E, 84 B.

ThomCont is not at all concerned with human origins or the origins of sin and desire.
Rather, it focuses on humanity’s present state and their “future destiny.”\textsuperscript{132} Unlike ApJohn,
the Jesus of this tractate has no need to explain in detail where fleshly passions have come
from. Nor is he concerned with shifting the blame for their hold over humanity, as we saw in
HypArch. CII has already dealt with this issue in these two texts, and indeed, we saw that
HypArch provided assurance that humanity could indeed triumph over the prison of the flesh
and its consuming desires. What ThomCont now seeks to do, is make clear that this is a
problem that must simply be dealt with, and this can only be done by the concerted efforts of
the individual. It is not helpful to blame malevolent forces or to wallow in the unfortunate
state of one’s existence. Turner claims that “the reader cannot save himself; all he can do is to
deny the body and hope that he is included among the elect who abandon bestiality.”\textsuperscript{133} This,
however, does not accurately represent the viewpoint of the tractate. Surely the purpose of its
tirade against the flesh is to encourage the reader to attempt to overcome it? It does not seem
consistent with the overall messages of CII to conclude with a simple condemnation of its
readers to hell! Granted, the text’s language of the “elect” does suggest that salvation is not
open to all, but I believe that a more careful reading, which I shall offer below, might show
this to be incorrect.

\textsuperscript{131} Turner, Book of Thomas, 140.
\textsuperscript{132} Turner, Book of Thomas, 119.
\textsuperscript{133} Turner, Book of Thomas, 135.
Throughout *ThomCont* there are two terms used which suggest some sort of select ‘in-group,’ and regardless of the originally intended audience, this would undoubtedly have appealed to a monastic audience such as the Pachomians who had specifically chosen a life as part of a spiritually focused community. We read of the “elect” (ἵερον) (139:29) and the “perfect” (τέλειον) (140:11 and also the subscript title), which we can assume to refer to the same group of people. There are numerous occasions where Jesus’ responses and teachings are in the second person plural, indicating that Thomas is part of a wider group of specially chosen individuals. This should not be interpreted as a literal group of hearers that are present at the time of Thomas’ dialogue with Jesus, but rather as a reference to all those who like him have taken notice of the saviour’s teachings and attempted to conquer the flesh. Is this group one that can be entered into through free choice, however, or is it somewhat predetermined? The implication of Jesus’ teachings at 139:29-32 is that “the light” is only concerned with this elect group, and will cease when they have all come to perfection:

> And whenever all the elect abandon bestiality, then this light will withdraw up to its essence, and its essence will welcome it, since it is a good servant.

It seems that Jesus is tasked – hence the identification of the light as a “good servant” – with guiding the elect, and once they have overcome the flesh his work will be complete. When Jesus speaks of his teachings as “the doctrine for the perfect,” then, does he reinforce that this is a limited group? Indeed, there is no obvious indication of universal access to salvation here. Of all the texts that we have examined in CII, *ThomCont* would appear the most exclusive at this point. However, this would not explain one of the tractate’s other key concerns; namely the missionary duty of the enlightened. Thomas’ first question to the saviour concerns the imparting of knowledge to others:
Therefore I beg you to tell me what I ask you before your ascension, and when I hear from you about the hidden things, then I can speak about them. And it is obvious to me that the truth is difficult to perform before men. (138:22-27)

Jesus’ replies as follows:

If the things that are visible to you are obscure to you, how can you hear about the things that are not visible? If the works of the truth that are visible in the world are difficult for you to perform, how indeed, then, shall you perform those that pertain to the exalted height and to the pleroma, which is not visible? And how shall you be called ‘labourers’? In this respect you are apprentices, and have not yet received the height of perfection. (138:28-36)

The sentiment of Jesus’ response of course echoes Jn 3:12. Turner notes that “difficult to perform (ΔΑ) before men” (ἐργαται. ...) is an odd choice of phrase given that Thomas appears to be referring to speaking. He suggests that this probably reveals that this term has been inserted in order to fit with Jesus’ response, which uses “perform” to refer to the visible works of truth. If it were original, Turner claims, one would expect Jesus to say simply “if the truth is difficult...” rather than “if the works of truth are difficult...” which would more directly mimic Thomas’ own phrase. It is notable here that the plural form of address (ἁμαρτητοι) also begins here, when the focus is taken away from Thomas’ own self-knowledge, which is the concern of the opening of the tractate, and placed instead upon his duty to preach to others. This continues throughout 138:27-139:12.

The statement that Thomas and those like him are compared to “apprentices” not yet worthy of the designation “labourer” is significant, as it marks them out as disciples on a learning curve, and makes explicit that even though Jesus recognises in Thomas a superior understanding, even so he cannot be called “perfect” yet. Thomas aspires to become a “labourer” (ΕΡΓΑΤΗΣ) for the saviour, spreading the words of truth. Indeed, the notion of

134 Turner, Book of Thomas, 129-130.
135 Turner, Book of Thomas, 131.
136 Turner, Book of Thomas, 132, notes that Paul uses this same term of his opponents in 2 Cor 11:13 and Phil 3:2.
the ignorant disciple is also found in GThom (51, 52, 91, 92, 22, 37, 21) and, of course, Mark’s gospel.\textsuperscript{137} This passage is significant in two ways, then. Firstly, it demonstrates that ThomCont, consistent with what we have seen elsewhere in CII, does show concern for the teaching and encouragement of others. Moreover, it indicates that the “perfect” is not a predetermined, closed group, as Thomas, Jesus’ twin and most enlightened disciple is here chastised for his amateur state. The theme of progression is emphasised throughout the text with the contrast between the visible and the invisible, the former representing that which is tangible, and worldly, and the latter referring to hidden, divine truths. One cannot help but bring to mind once again Paul’s discourse in 1 Cor 15 about the perishable becoming imperishable. This is especially true given that Jesus describes men while they are in their physical, bestial bodies as “babes” who are yet to become perfect; this of course probably draws on Heb 5:13, 1 Cor 3:1-3, 1 Pt 2:2 and Eph 4:14.\textsuperscript{138} One must first be capable of expressing more basic knowledge to others before moving on to that which is more complex. This of course fits with the assertions of GPhil that one cannot give novices the deepest teachings.

One must become perfect through one’s own efforts. There is an element of choice involved, which again supports the notion found elsewhere in CII and in the Pach.S. The perfect, or elect, come to gain this designation depending on whether or not they choose to indulge in or abandon their passions and worldly trappings. The tractate makes very clear that one chooses to either heed or ignore the saviour’s teachings, and to either make excuses for or try to overcome their bestial nature. The “perfect” are likely intended to be read as the implied addressees of Jesus’ beatitudes (145:1-16), while the curses, on the other hand, are

\textsuperscript{137} Turner, \textit{Book of Thomas}, 132-133.  
\textsuperscript{138} Turner, \textit{Book of Thomas}, 136
intended for the ignorant fools who have chosen to ignore his teachings and wallow in their fleshly state instead (143:10-145:1).

Turner has stated that Thomas’ essential mission is to “exhort mankind to abandon sexual passion.” However, as I have suggested above, while sexual lust is clearly the central focus of the tractate, the material trappings of the world in general are included within the author’s remit. We have also seen that ThomCont advocates discipleship in the form of preaching about the redeeming “light” of the saviour to all those who will listen. Those who ignore this message are shown no mercy by the Jesus of this tractate. For ThomCont’s author, then, spreading Jesus’ message that the flesh must be abandoned in favour of seeking after eternal truths is important. The somewhat closed-group characteristic of the tractate’s language pertaining to the elect must, therefore, be understood in light of this. Here we find a theme that we have already found to be present in the GPhil, which advocates the necessity of sharing salvific knowledge with others. Perhaps, however, ThomCont is more akin to ApJohn in this respect, which also promotes the sharing of truth, yet John is given this command specifically in relation to his fellow “spirituals,” giving it a seemingly more localised edge. I argued in chapter one, however, that ApJohn, along with HypArch does not see the ‘spiritual seed of Seth’ as a predetermined group, but rather one than the individual can choose to become a part of. I suggest that the same is true of ThomCont. If it were not possible for individuals to be somewhat in control of their own place among the “elect” then the emphasis placed in ThomCont upon the punishments for those who actively ignore the truth would be unwarranted.

In any case, the focus placed on discipleship and evangelism, to whatever degree, indicates that ThomCont and CII in general supports a group scenario whereby spiritually

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focused Christians seek to mutually encourage the abandoning of the desires of the flesh and yearn after redemptive union with Christ. Such an ethos is precisely what we have seen the Pach. S to promote – discipleship for these monks would, of course, have been primarily restricted to that which they performed inside the monastery walls. Granted, they did socialise with the outside world, and would undoubtedly have been expected to maintain the same conduct in wider society that was acceptable in the monastery. The monastic reader, viewing himself as a member of the Christian spiritual elect is effectively invited to identify with Thomas, as a fellow “athlete” striving for spiritual knowledge.  

140 Jesus’ command to Thomas that he “examine [himself]” in order to understand his own existence and what he will “come to be” (138:9-10) acts as a command to the reader too.

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140 Raymond Kuntzmann, “L’identification ,” 284-285, identifies that as the “twin” of the saviour Thomas is “the prototype of the perfect.” The perfect, in turn, are also the twins of the saviour.
CONCLUSION

When Williams and King challenged scholars to re-evaluate the way that they thought about and studied texts such as those from NH, many documents that had previously been viewed primarily in terms of their distance from the NT and ‘orthodox’ Christianity as it eventually developed, came to be studied increasingly for what they also had in common with the latter two. With such texts for the most part no longer widely suppressed in the scholarly mind by the canonicity of biblical scripture, it has become more commonplace to abandon the notion of ‘Gnosticism’ and ‘Christianity’ as distinct sections of the ancient Mediterranean religious landscape in favour of an appreciation for the presence of a richer variety of Christianities. Much scholarly effort has been spent in exploring the relationships between the NHC and the OT, NT, Jewish literary traditions, and Hellenistic philosophical traditions. This is valuable of course, but what has received surprisingly less attention is the relationship between the NHC and the fourth-century Egyptian Christian context from which they sprang. This is largely because so much interest has been, and continues to be in the ‘original’ settings and compositional origins of the NH tractates.

For this reason, the essential principle that I have worked by in this thesis has been an appreciation of the fact that in the form we have them today, the NHC are fourth-century Coptic documents from the Egyptian desert. This has not meant that issues related to the compositional and redactional footprint of the texts in question has been irrelevant. Indeed, as we saw with APJohn, GThom and OrigWorld in particular, the scholarship devoted to source critical and redaction history analysis helped to illuminate the ideological and/or rhetorical
intents of those involved in producing the final documents as they are today, and in turn, the thought processes of those collating these texts into thematically meaningful codices. The linking of femininity to sexuality by the redactor/s of the longer version of *ApJohn*, for instance, would explain part of its appeal to a male monastic audience. I have attempted to demonstrate that the ‘Gnosticism’ debate can not only enrich the study of texts such as those from NH, but also offer a much needed dimension to the question of their potential monastic ownership. I have suggested that the connection between the Pachomians and the NHC need not be restricted to comparisons borne out of outdated and generalising conceptions of so-called ‘Gnosticism,’ such as Pachomian interest in visionary experiences, or the cryptic mystical alphabet in Pachomius’ letters.

The codicological evidence, while in one sense the most “scientific” that we have available, cannot offer a great amount of support for the Pachomian connection – the references to monks in the cartonnage do not tie the codices specifically to the monasteries, and could simply be the result of monastery waste being sold into the paper trade. On the other hand, the references to economic transactions that Wipsycka and others have taken to be strong evidence against their owning of the NHC is equally flawed. The cartonnage only tells us that monastic material was used by the binders of the library; it cannot tell us who these binders were, and more importantly whether these individuals made use of the codices for spiritual nourishment. This thesis has sought to develop a much richer basis for comparison between the NHC and the Pachomian movement, based not upon codicology, but upon shared ideology. The bid to discover whether Pachomius had gnostic inclinations or gnostic followers is just as unhelpful as the bid to confine Gnosticism into the narrow definitions critiqued by Williams and King.
Claiming that the Pachomians were sympathetic to Gnosticism is no longer an illuminating insight. What can be said is that there is much more within CII than has previously been understood that would have appealed very much to Pachomian worldview and spiritual practice. I do not claim that the Pachomians did not eventually become more aware of and concerned with dogmatics as their relationship with Alexandria developed. However, this does not mean that they could never have had a use for the NHC. Moreover, it would be narrow-minded to claim that the possibility of monastic usage of the NHC is restricted only to the Pachomian movement. The preference for the Pachomians has always been based upon their closer proximity to the burial site of the NHL than monasteries affiliated with other movements, but this is hardly tying, and is something which other scholars have raised before of course. This study has been limited to following the Pachomian line of enquiry, for as I hope to have demonstrated, this is one that required further investigation focused on closer engagement with both the NHC themselves and the Pach.S. Indeed, Lundhaug hints at the possible study that could be undertaken into connections with the White Monastery of Shenoute, which also lay near to the site of the NHC burial. This could be a promising line of enquiry that far from weakening the argument about the Pachomian connection might offer a stronger and more substantiated argument for the use of the NHC within Egyptian monasticism more broadly. Indeed, some of the characteristics of Pachomian lifestyle that we have examined and compared to those displayed in CII were not exclusive to that one movement.

It is entirely possible that the increasing pressures put upon the desert monks by Alexandria, which may even have been the reason for the burial of the NHC, caused any other monasteries which held such texts to go one step further and destroy them completely. This is nothing more than speculation, but the point is valid that we cannot discount the possibility of more than one movement having read these texts at some point before the mid-
fourth century. My thesis continued an existing line of enquiry, which I believe is a necessary step towards better understanding ideological coherence, rather than simply relying on the often speculative evidence of the cartonnage from the covers of the NHC. Moreover, I have dispelled the notions that we need to view the Pachomians as ‘heterodox’ or ‘Gnosticising’ in order to approach the question of a relationship with the NHC. Rather, the liberation of the NHC from being viewed under these same labels encourages us to simply compare the two bodies of sources as two examples of Christianity.

What I have attempted to do, is show not only how the individual tractates of CII might have been interpreted individually by a Pachomian audience, but also how they unite to give certain overarching messages. I have suggested that by beginning with ApJohn, which offers a lengthy account of creation, CII sets up the central themes of overcoming carnal passions, seeking knowledge of the truth, and promoting knowledge among others. These themes are developed and reinforced throughout the tractate, and are made more emphatic by the way in which the compiler of CII has chosen to order the tractates. What I have argued for, is a progression whereby mythology, ethics and soteriological teachings work together to take the reader on a journey of spiritual understanding which I have suggested runs essentially as follows. Our examination of CII began with ApJohn, which asserts that the earthly human condition is the fault of the archons. Their influence must be overcome by acquiring the knowledge that this is achieved by renunciation of carnal passions. The enlightened have a duty to share this knowledge with others – all those who actively seek to conquer the passions and realise their origin from the divine realm can be counted among the ‘chosen generation.’

Next, we saw the Gospels of Thomas and Philip elaborate on the manner in which ascetic behaviour should be approached, and also emphasise the importance of promulgating
knowledge among others. This advice was supplemented by emphatic assurance that the archons, and therefore, the passions which make such efforts necessary, are ultimately inferior to humanity, who have the Divine Realm on their side. HypArch and OrigWorld subsequently condemned the archons in graphic and comical fashion, before concluding that each individual must be responsible for his or her own salvific fate. Finally, CII drew to a close, beginning with ExSoul, which offered a contemplative lament on the health of one’s soul, before ThomCont concluded the tractate with a dramatic description of the miserable fate of those who fail to heed the plea to master their body. Moreover, the central role of Jesus in this final tractate, which aside from an increased marked influence from philosophical literature, we saw to be little at odds with the Jesus of the NT, would have resonated especially clearly with a Pachomian audience. Williams’ suggestion of CII mimicking scriptural ordering does not adequately account for the thematic coherence present across the tractates. Rather, what I have hopefully demonstrated is that the codex develops themes introduced from the outset in ApJohn throughout the course of its accompanying six tractates. I would argue that these central subjects prevail more clearly than does an attempt to recreate the Christian canon.

In the introduction to this thesis, I outlined some significant aspects of Pachomian practice and ideology that I have subsequently demonstrated to be paralleled in CII. Scholars who have previously considered the possibility of a monastic audience for the NHC have identified the promotion of asceticism as an important similarity, but this thesis has demonstrated that it is not the only one. Moreover, on this issue of asceticism I have highlighted an illuminating feature that previous scholarship has missed; that ascetic opinion within CII is nuanced in a way that is fully in line with the impression that we are given from the Pach.S. We saw in the introduction to this work that while the Pach.S do advocate asceticism as an important part of a monk’s daily spiritual journey, this is qualified by strict
warnings that renunciatory practices should be appropriate to one’s individual ability, and not undertaken to excess in order to impress others. One’s motives for undertaking ascetic feats must always be God-centred, and this of course is precisely the message of Jesus in GThom.

It might have been tempting to go along with scholars such as DeConick, who view the usage of monaxos as evidence for the GThom’s later usage among anchorites and monastic communities. However, I have demonstrated that this is not accurate or indeed necessary. The analysis that I have given has hopefully illustrated that the GThom as we now have it is more concerned with the spiritual end results of renunciatory behaviour than the practice itself. This is exemplified in Jesus’ refusal to indulge in the disciples’ questions regarding fasting and alms giving. No doubt, monastic readers of the fourth and fifth centuries would identify with the use of the term monaxos, but I have argued that this need not be simply on semantic grounds.

The GThom’s references to the “solitary and elect” can be understood as referring to those spiritually focused individuals who stand out above the trappings of the material world, and seek to recognise their true identity as a member of the Divine Realm – this reunification with God was the ultimate aim of the Pachomian monk. The significance of this ideological similarity should not be downplayed on account of common use of the term monaxos. GPhil discusses sexual ethics more directly than GThom, and complements the opinion of ApJohn, viewing violent lust as the worst affliction upon the human spirit, yet all the while upholding that appropriate spiritual union between males and females is entirely legitimate, and part of the fabric of the Divine Realm. GPhil’s attitude towards marriage we have seen to mirror that expressed by Paul in 1 Corinthians, whereby it is prescribed as the lifestyle choice for those who cannot contain their base urges. Indeed, both GPhil and ExSoul in their lavish employment of marital language to describe the ideal union with Christ reinforce and
commend the alternative choice made by the Pachomian monks to go against the grain of an accepted societal convention.

One of the potentially most problematic obstacles to Pachomians (or indeed other monks) finding edification in the NHC is how they would understand themselves as fitting into some of the apparently ‘sectarian’ language in tractates such as *ApJohn* and *OrigWorld*. It could simply be argued on the one hand, that they could ignore this aspect and concentrate on the general message being conveyed. However, analysis of such tractates in CII has revealed that it is not in fact difficult to interpret the ‘seed of Seth’ or the ‘kingless race’ as open, accessible groups. Rather than advocating a deterministic mode of salvation, which of course is one shown by Williams to be inconsistently true of so-called ‘gnostic’ texts, choice becomes an essential part of CII’s message regarding salvation. *ApJohn* insists that the chosen “seed” of Seth is not a predetermined group, but rather one which can be entered through willing commitment to conquering base urges and leaving aside earthly trappings. *ExSoul* supplements this notion by framing Soul’s redemptive process as something which she achieves only after heartfelt penitence and unquenchable desire to be received back into her Father’s presence. *ThomCont* makes quite explicit that those who wallow in self-pity at their human state and refuse to seek after the truth are not party to any sympathy from the Saviour. As *HypArch* narrates, men’s carnal distractions are the doing of the archons, however, human beings have the capacity to fight their influence, and should not be complacent about doing so. As we saw in the final words of *OrigWorld*, one’s behaviour will determine their soteriological outcome. Relevant in this regard of course is another characteristic of Pachomian ideology that I have identified as being not only shared with CII, but also contradicting some of the assumptions once made about ‘Gnosticism’; namely, the promotion and sharing of knowledge.
The Pach.S display strongly a desire for equality among monks, and the discouragement of the holding of ranks of office. The Pachomians sought to achieve a fine balance between encouraging individual pursuits and development, and fostering a community orientated spirituality. *ApJohn*, *ThomCont*, and *GPhil* even more so, all point to some sort of evangelism as a vital part of discipleship. We are forced, nonetheless to understand this on a much more localised level than wide-spread missionary activity. Firstly, the Pachomian Koinonia, while not entirely cut off from society, as Goehring in particular has argued, was by nature an enclosed environment for its inhabitants to practise their spiritual endeavours. Moreover, it is evident from the rhetorical stance of *GPhil* (for instance in the denouncement of the Immaculate Conception) and *OrigWorld* (expressed through its criticism of the Pneumatics) that the authors or editors of these texts viewed themselves as superior to other Christian groups. Might *GPhil*’s author or editor have intended its discourse on the sharing of knowledge to be applied only among likeminded Christians, or does he/she seek to bring those of other persuasions into the ‘correct’ line of thought? This remains uncertain, but it seems a feasible suggestion that a position where one’s primary duty of spiritual care is to those belonging to the same ideological “community,” would have appealed to monks who had chosen to cut themselves off from wider society, and draw upon the collective nourishment of those with the same spiritual thirst as themselves.

The terminology of *ThomCont*, and *GThom*, which speak simply of “the perfect” and “elect,” would of course have been more immediately accessible to Christian monks such as the Pachomians than the language of our so-called Sethian and Valentinian texts. However, the latter need not have alienated them when we consider that throughout CII, the penetrability of the elite, chosen race is advocated. Membership is based on one’s willingness

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1 I use this term cautiously, and do not intend to imply a structured group with geographical boundaries, but rather a collective, however widespread, of common thought.
to engage in relinquishing the passions, and seeking knowledge of the Divine truth. The
mythologies of ApJohn, HypArch, OrigWorld, and GPhil (to a lesser degree) provide a way
in which to express complex soteriological ideas and a system of ethics. Just as some
Christians in the modern period view the Genesis myth as simply that, offering an
explanation of the human condition and the implementation of social structures such as
marriage, it is easy to imagine the Pachomians gleaning from the NH texts support for their
lifestyle and assurance that their concentrated efforts would be rewarded.

It remains simply to consider some potential areas of further study raised through the
discussion thus far. Perhaps the most obvious of these is an expansion of the analysis carried
out here to other codices from NH. The fact that ApJohn appears at the beginning of three NH
codices, as well as BG, suggests that it had gained some popularity as an opening text. It is
also noteworthy that the repetition of this text, along with OrigWorld and the Gospel of the
Egyptians in more than one NH codex suggests that they were not commissioned by the same
person or persons, but rather came to be gathered at a later date. This could have easily been
in one of the Pachomian monasteries (perhaps that at Phbow, closest to the site of their
discovery), either when monks entered with their own collections of texts, or as the monks
specifically sought enrichment from texts other than the OT and NT. Williams hypothesises
that Codices III, IV, VII, VIII and IX might be considered to display a “history of revelation”
through their ordering of tractates, while Codex I, he suggests, mimics the order of the NT.3
Codex XI might be organised with liturgical practice in mind,4 while Codices V and VI seem

2 These range from ApJohn, II, III, IV, which as we have seen is a revelation dialogue combined with a myth of
origins, to other revelations of Christ (e.g. Sophia of Jesus Christ, III, and the Epistle of Peter to Philip, VIII),
and revelations from other figures (e.g. Zostrianos, VIII, Paraphrase of Shem, VII, Melchizedek, IX). Williams,
Rethinking Gnosticism, 250.

3 Here, the ‘gospel text’ for Williams is the Apocalypse of James, a dialogue between Jesus and his disciples,
while the eschatology slot is filled by the Treatise on the Resurrection. Williams, Rethinking Gnosticism, 254.

4 Williams argues for a catechistic order intended for initiates: On the Anointing, On Baptism A and B, and On
the Eucharist A and B. Williams, Rethinking Gnosticism, 256.
to be focused upon ascent and eschatology. As I have already stated, I think that thematic links are much more easily identifiable in CII than a mirror image of scripture. Perhaps closer engagement with other NH texts alongside monastic sources would reveal equally significant areas of overlap. The present analysis has shown, for example, that to simply identify a promotion of asceticism as present in both the NHC and Pachomian monasticism is insufficient. Closer exegesis of both sets of sources has revealed that they share very specific notions about precisely what value should be placed upon asceticism, and how it should be controlled and used effectively. Perhaps examination of other NH texts could reveal further shared particulars, which might in turn increase the interest that scholars have in investigating the social milieu of the NHL.

The central focus of this study has been the male inhabitants of the Pachomian Koinonia. However, it has long been recognised that the NHC afford a central and complex stage for female characters and feminine motifs. In CII alone, texts such as HypArch and OrigWorld have portrayed Norea not only as a powerful female opposed to the inferior, violent male archons, but also as the direct ancestor of the chosen, spiritual race. In this case, she bears much more significance than her brother Seth, after whom the “Sethian” gnostic sub-group to which both these texts have been ascribed, was created. In ApJohn, as well as the two aforementioned texts, we also read of the spiritual Eve (who contains within her the Divine entities Zoe and Epinoia) as the helper and instructor of Adam. Conversely, chapter one indicated that ApJohn connects sexuality more directly with the female species, chapter four showing that for ExSoul, the femininity of Soul is used as a significant descriptor in her folly. Sophia’s defiant creation of Ialdabaoth can also be read as an attack on female sexual

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5 Paul’s ascent to the divine realms is described in the Apocalypse of Paul, V, while Asclepius, VI deals with individual eschatology. Williams, Rethinking Gnosticism, 257. The placing of Asclepius at the end of Codex VI might have similar intent behind it to the placing of ThomCont, which also deals with eschatology on an arguably more individual level, at the end of CII.
deviance.\textsuperscript{6} Williams, of course, has argued that several of the texts in CII are not overly concerned with gender at all, but rather with the conflict between the spiritual and the physical, which often simply comes to be expressed in sexual terms, thereby naturally evoking male and female gender roles. This said, I have suggested that the associations of females with sexual temptation made in \textit{ApJohn}, and \textit{ThomCont} would have undoubtedly appealed to the Pachomians, who were actively attempting to suppress sexual desire without female distraction.

All this begs the question, of course, as to how female ascetics might have interpreted the NHC. I have already suggested that the Pachomians are not the only possible readers of these texts, and we know from the Pach.S that there were women’s houses affiliated with the Koinonia. There is no reason to suppose that these female institutions could not have gleaned many of the same spiritual messages from the NHC that their male counterparts did. I have argued that there was likely certain material, such as the correcting of Genesis, that Scripture venerating Pachomians might have found somewhat uncomfortable. However, this need not have detracted from the broader messages of such texts. Similarly, the rhetoric which appears to condemn sexual promiscuity as a female trait may well have been tolerated by female ascetics given the inspiration offered by strong female figures such as Norea and Pronoia. These characters provided a direct link between the feminine and the spiritual, often prevailing over and above their earthly-minded male counterparts such as Ialdabaoth, and Noah, who builds the ark at the request of the archons.

I mentioned in my discussions of \textit{GThom}, \textit{ExSoul} and \textit{ThomCont}, that these texts have to some scholars seemed to have much less in common with traditional constructions of

\begin{footnote}{6} Although, King, \textit{Secret Revelation}, 125-126, argues that her actions may be better interpreted as an attempt to overthrow the patriarchal suppression she is subject to in the Divine Realm. This may be the case, but since we have seen that \textit{ApJohn} in particular emphasises the perfect order of the Divine Realm, and the need for this to be mirrored in human relationships on earth, it seems unlikely that an attack would be made upon this cosmological system.\end{footnote}
‘Gnosticism’ than others in the NHL, and it has been suggested, therefore, that they are perhaps best simply described as ‘Christian.’ Such debates over labels, however, carry the danger of being circular and unproductive. Indeed, one of the criticisms of Williams’ decimation of ‘Gnosticism’ is that even if we revert simply to viewing all the NH and related texts as ‘Christian’ or ‘Jewish-Christian,’ how long will it be before the term ‘Christian’ comes under fire? Moreover, when attempting to distinguish the social context of the NHL in the fourth century the documents are much better considered purely in terms of their specific levels of appeal to the individual or group in question. Christ is portrayed as a salvatory figure in all of the texts within CII, so to label certain texts as ‘more Christian’ seems to rely simply on their absence of certain other material (significantly the Demiurgical myth) rather than detailed consideration of that which they do contain. Perhaps a balance was in fact sought by the compiler/s of CII between texts betraying clearer influence from Jewish mythological traditions, such as ApJohn, HypArch and OrigWorld, and those stemming from a more purely Christ-centred tradition, in order to maximise the appeal to Christian monks. If Christian monks such as the Pachomians were using the NHC for their own spiritual enrichment, then is this not enough to say that at least at this point in the fourth century, they had become accepted as ‘Christian’ texts? After all, most Christians in the modern period would view the OT as being part of their Christian library, despite its origins.

Ultimately, the present study is intended to do more than simply re-affirm the Pachomian ownership theory. The similarities examined herein between the Pachomian movement and the tractates within CII illustrate that there are clear and significant points of accord between these two bodies of Egyptian Christian literature. At the very least, this demonstrates the degree to which religious and intellectual culture in this period influenced and filtered into one another. Moreover, this work re-emphasises the value in understanding the Nag Hammadi Codices not as ‘heretical’ infiltrators into the emerging ‘orthodoxy’ of
fourth-century Christian Egypt, but simply as one part of the spiritual library of ascetic devotees in this period.
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### Additional Documents

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### Further Reading

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