

A SEPARATE GOD

The Origins and Teachings
of Gnosticism



*“ The definitive statement that Gnosticism
emerged from within Christianity.”*

— Birger A. Pearson

SIMONE PÉTREMENT

A Separate God

*The Christian Origins
of Gnosticism*

Simone Pétrement

Translated by Carol Harrison



HarperSanFrancisco

A Division of HarperCollinsPublishers

Originally published in French as *le Dieu séparé: les origines du gnosticisme* by Les Editions du Cerf, Paris, 1984.

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FIRST U.S. EDITION

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Pétrément, Simone.

[Dieu séparé. English]

A separate God: the Christian origins of gnosticism / Simone Petrement.—1st U.S. ed.

p. cm.

Translation of: *Le Dieu séparé*.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-06-066501-7:

1. Gnosticism. I. Title.

BT1390.P4513 1990

273'.1—dc20

89-45551
CIP

90 91 92 93 94 HAD 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

This edition is printed on acid-free paper that meets the American National Standards Institute Z39.48 Standard.

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Abbreviations

AEPHE	Annuaire de l'École pratique des hautes études. Paris
BG	Berolinensis gnosticus (papyrus 8502 du Musée de Berlin, publié par W. Till : <i>Die gnostischen Schriften des koptischen Papyrus Berolinensis 8502</i> , Berlin, 1955)
BJRL	Bulletin of The John Rylands Library. Manchester
CA	Cahiers archéologiques. Paris
CBQ	The Catholic Biblical Quarterly. Washington
CG	Cairensis gnosticus (bibliothèque de XIII codices découverte à Nag Hammadi et conservée au Musée copte du Caire; contenant des écrits, gnostiques pour la plupart, traduits en copte)
CH	Corpus Hermeticum
ChH	Church History. Chicago
CSCO	Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium. Paris and Louvain
CSEL	Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum. Vienna
ETH	Evangelische Theologie. Munich
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments. Göttingen
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte. Berlin
HThR	Harvard Theological Review. Cambridge
Irénée	Irénée, <i>Adversus haereses</i>
JA	Journal asiatique. Paris
JAC	Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum. Munster
JAOS	Journal of The American Oriental Society. New Haven
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature. Philadelphia
JQR	The Jewish Quarterly Review. Philadelphia and Leyden
JThS	Journal of Theological Studies. Oxford
Kair.	Kairos. Salzburg
Mus.	La Meséon. Louvain
NHL	The Nag Hammadi Library in English, ed. J. M. Robinson, San Francisco and Leyden, 1977
NHS	Nag Hammadi Studies. Leyden
NovTest	Novum Testamentum. Leyden
NTS	New Testament Studies. Cambridge
Num.	Numen. Leyden
OChr	Oriens christianus. Wiesbaden

- OG Le Origini dello gnosticismo, colloquio di Messina . . . 1966, éd. U. Bianchi, Leyden, 1967
- OLZ Orientalische Literaturzeitung. Berlin
- PW Pauly-Wissowa, Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft. Stuttgart
- RAC Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum. Stuttgart
- RB Revue biblique. Paris
- REA Revue des Etudes augustinienes. Paris
- RecSR Recherches de science religieuse. Paris
- RevSR Revue des sciences religieuses. Strasbourg
- RG The Rediscovery of Gnosticism, Proceedings of The International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale . . . 1978, éd. B. Layton, Leyden, I-II, 1980–1981
- RGG Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Tübingen
- RHP \bar{h} R Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses. Strasbourg
- RHR Revue de l'histoire des religions. Paris
- RMM Revue de métaphysique et de morale. Paris
- RSP \bar{h} Th Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques. Paris
- RSR Religious Studies Review. Macon, GA
- RTh Revue thomiste. Paris
- SR Studies in Religion. Toronto
- ThLZ Theologische Literaturzeitung. Berlin
- ThR Theologische Rundschau. Tübingen
- TU Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur. Berlin
- VChr Vigiliae Christianae. Amsterdam
- ZDMG Zeitschrift der Deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft. Wiesbaden
- ZNTW Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft. Berlin
- ZPE Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik. Bonn
- ZRGG Zeitschrift für Religions – und Geistesgeschichte. Cologne
- ZThK Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche. Tübingen

A Separate God

Introduction

The Problem of Gnosticism*

As is well known, Gnosticism is a religious and philosophical movement that came into being in the Roman Empire, and in the East beyond that empire, during the first centuries of our era. Up until our time, this movement was known almost solely by the battle that the Fathers of the Church, who regarded it as a Christian heresy, waged against it. Numerous refutations of this heresy had survived, while the writings of the Gnostics themselves, hunted down and destroyed during the centuries, had almost all disappeared. This situation has now markedly changed. Previously we were reduced to the information given by heresiologists for the earliest time in which Gnosticism must have appeared. Now, however, we have a number of original Gnostic works, most of which have only been discovered or made accessible within the last hundred years. The main stages of this rediscovery have been: first, beginning in 1904, the publication of Manichean writings found in central Asia (Manicheism is one of the branches issuing from Gnosticism); then the translations of the most important Mandaean writings, which were published by Lidzbarski in 1915, 1920, and 1925 (Mandeism is also a form of Gnosticism); following that, the publication, from 1934, of Manichean manuscripts dug up about 1930 in the Fayum, Egypt; most recently, the discovery in 1945 of fifty or so Gnostic works, again in Egypt, at Nag Hammadi, and the publication of these works, which was completed in 1977.¹

The rediscovered texts are almost all written in Oriental languages, having been either originally written in these languages or translated from Greek texts, the original of which is now lost. The abundance of Coptic texts is partly due to a fluke of climate, which meant that the manuscripts buried in Egypt were preserved without much damage. The preponderance of Asiatic languages is due to the fact that from the fourth century, when the Church had triumphed in the Roman Empire, it was only in countries not controlled by the Church that this sort of doctrine could hold its own and spread.

Gnosticism was not a single doctrine. This name covers a large number of widely differing doctrines. It is modern scholars who speak of Gnosti-

* With a few alterations, this introduction reproduces an article published in *RMM* 85 (1980), 145–77.

cism; the ancients spoke of Simonians, of Menandrians, of Saturnilians, of Basilideans, of Carpocratians, of Valentinians, of Marcionites, Ophites, and Sethians, to name a few.² Nevertheless, there is a justification for this single name because despite great differences, the doctrines of all these sects betray certain common traits. Insofar as they have these features in common, they can be placed in the same genre and under the same name.

The question of the origin and essence of this genre is one of the most obscure, the most complex, and the most difficult to be raised in the history of ideas. Despite intensive and painstaking work, and despite heated discussions among scholars, an overall view that can be considered as definitively established has certainly not been arrived at.

The picture of Gnosticism that the Fathers of the Church have handed down to us, that is, the conception of these doctrines as Christian heresies, has been called into question by modern research, especially since the beginning of this century, or thereabouts. Even before this time, a few scholars, struck by the truly singular, truly strange character of certain Gnostic doctrines, had turned to the East to look for their source. But it was above all Reitzenstein who, in 1904, seemed to have brought decisive proof against the connection of Gnosticism and Christianity when he made the observation that there is at least one pagan work (or one appearing as such) that contains a system of ideas very similar to that which characterizes the Gnostics as described by the heresiologists.³ The work in question is the *Poimandres*, the first treatise of the *Corpus Hermeticum*. The existence of such a work, at once Gnostic and pagan, seemed to imply that Christianity was not an essential factor in Gnosticism. In actual fact, for the evidence to be absolutely certain, it is necessary to be sure that the author of the *Poimandres* did not know of the speculations of Gnostic Christians and was not influenced by them. One cannot be sure of that. Nevertheless, the discovery of an apparently pagan gnosis made a great impression on historians of religion and theologians. Not long after, another scholar, Bousset, published a work in which, deconstructing gnosis, cutting it up, as it were, into a certain number of principal themes, he demonstrated that each of the themes shows a certain analogy with some pre-Christian religious or philosophical theme.⁴ Thus, Gnosticism seemed to be a collection of diverse elements, older than Christianity and independent of it, a syncretism. Reitzenstein conceived it in much the same way and a little while afterwards came to think that in this syncretism the dominant element was a Persian doctrine, an, "Iranian mystery of salvation," which he considered to be very old.⁵ For Bousset also, Iran had played a large role: for him Gnostic dualism was a combination of Persian Zoroastrian dualism and Greek Platonic dualism.⁶

Until about 1950 this orientalizing, Iranianizing theory was accepted by a good number of scholars. But afterward its success declined; it needed to be revised. Some of Reitzenstein's arguments have shown themselves to be ill-founded.⁷ Also, the idea of gnosis as being essentially a syncretism

has been brilliantly refuted by Hans Jonas.⁸ Finally, it has been observed that if Gnostic thought can sometimes be found in writings that show no clear traces of Christianity, it has always, in every case, something to do with Judaism. Not that it agrees with the latter; on the contrary, it fundamentally opposes it, since one of its essential points is that the God of the Old Testament is not the true God. But if it opposes Judaism, it is always aware of it. A new hypothesis has therefore been worked out: Gnosticism could have derived from Judaism, but a dissident Judaism. Its opposition to Judaism would be a direct opposition that did not have anything to do with Christianity.⁹

It is this hypothesis which now dominates almost all research. It is true that certain scholars have again shown, quite recently, that even if there is always a Jewish factor in Gnosticism, the Jewish origin of Gnosticism is not thereby demonstrated.¹⁰ On the other hand, scholars such as Jonas and Schoeps maintain that only with difficulty could Gnosticism draw its inspiration from Judaism, that it differs profoundly from it, and that it is opposed to Jewish Christianity.¹¹ Nevertheless, scholars continue to speak as if the Jewish origin of these doctrines were commonly accepted, or at least as if a Christian origin were from now on excluded. Since the death of two scholars, Nock and Langerbeck,¹² no doubt there are fewer who still hold to the theory of Christian origin, and I do not know whether there are any left among the scholars who are writing at the moment.¹³ Almost all of the specialists regard this viewpoint as *dépassé*. It is quite outmoded to defend it.

This quasi unanimity is indeed impressive, but it does not necessarily convince those who ask for the reasons for such conviction. I do not see that the repeated and often peremptory affirmations of the impossibility of a Christian origin are ever accompanied by clear, solid, and decisive reasons. People are content to say that such and such an idea is not Christian, whereas it is easy to see that the idea in question is clearly present in Christianity, and especially in early Christianity, where it even holds an important place. They are content to say that a certain text is not Christian, whereas the text can be elucidated perfectly well by Christianity and can hardly be understood otherwise. In separating Gnosticism and Christianity our scholars have not allowed us to understand Gnosticism. Their hypothesis is not only unilluminating but renders unintelligible a large number of Gnostic writings. What they offer us as the meaning of these writings is in fact a fanciful doctrine, almost entirely irrational, and one wonders how people could ever be led to imagine it. These same scholars admit, however, that they cannot explain the birth of Gnosticism, even by Judaism, from which it differs even more than from the Church's Christianity. They present it as a religion apart, a religion that somehow fell from the sky, completely formed, about the time Christianity appeared. The latter, at least, has a founder, and however obscure its beginnings, we know something of its early history; but for those who consider Gnosticism

a separate religion, its early history is almost totally unknown. Thus, the mystery is greater than ever; Gnosticism has become one of the most confusing phenomena of history, and above all, fundamental Gnostic ideas appear more than ever as extremely peculiar ideas, not to say devoid of meaning. This does not convince those who think it is possible to find a meaning by relating these ideas to certain Christian ideas. That there is a kinship between Christian and Gnostic ideas is, in any case, absolutely certain. Our scholars explain this fact by saying that Gnostic ideas penetrated Christianity. But they themselves acknowledge that Christian ideas also penetrated Gnosticism. The explanation of the correspondences might then be sought in the opposite direction. It is indeed the case that at the moment we are in the full swing of research, that the texts found at Nag Hammadi are not yet fully studied, and that even the best specialists, drawn by a desire to defend their theory, sometimes advance imprudently. Reading books and articles published on this question over many years, I find that in most of them, learned and replete with references as they are, inexact or unfounded statements are often encountered.

At risk of seeming outmoded, I must admit that, until further notice, the old idea, according to which Gnosticism arose within Christianity, seems to me to be by far the most probable. That does not mean to imply that I think Gnosticism was never anything other than a Christian heresy. Gnosticism evolved. Some Gnostics transformed their religious ideas into doctrines that were almost philosophical and that could be separated from a particular religion. Then it is not astonishing that ideas of a Gnostic type penetrated into non-Christian religions and traditions. Such ideas were present in certain strands of Hellenism (in Hermeticism, for example); they were present in Iranian religion; they were present in Kabbalistic Judaism; and they were present in Islam, among others. Thus, it is obvious that in some way there existed a general Gnosticism. But the question is whether this general Gnosticism *preceded* Christian Gnosticism or whether it is Christian Gnosticism that came first. Given the fact that all the forms of non-Christian Gnosticism seem to be attested later than Christian Gnosticism¹⁴—not counting the fact that properly Gnostic ideas are less pronounced and less distinctive in the former than in the latter—one cannot be sure that Gnosticism was not initially Christian. It seems to me that the theory according to which the Gnostics were originally and essentially Christian heretics, which in no way excludes the possibility that their ideas subsequently penetrated into traditions outside Christianity, is a theory that can still be upheld, and that it can even be upheld by arguments that are better founded than the opposite opinion, and that it is still the best explanation that can be given for this phenomenon and that there really is not another. For if Gnosticism is not explained by Christianity, it is difficult to see it as anything but a collection of bizarre doctrines, seemingly arbitrary and more or less absurd.

What seems to me to be particularly unacceptable in the school of thought according to which Gnosticism was born outside Christianity is the assurance with which it is presented by some as an established fact. Certain scholars, especially in Germany, seem to consider that the problem is now solved. They already classify the writings found at Nag Hammadi into "Christian systems" and "non-Christian systems," and they quite naturally place the non-Christian before the others, thereby indicating that they ought to be regarded if not as the most ancient at least as the most faithful to the earliest form of the doctrine. I am referring here particularly to the way in which Martin Krause classifies the Gnostic texts in the second volume of *Die Gnosis*, the collection of texts published by Foerster, Krause, and Rudolph (Zurich, 1969–71).¹⁵ But the problem is far from being resolved. Even when we are able to say that certain texts, among those which have been discovered, show absolutely no trace of Christianity—and a lot of research is still needed before we can be near to being sure—it would not be proof that Gnosticism was born outside of Christianity. For we do not know the time at which these texts were written; we know only that they are before about the middle of the fourth century.¹⁶ It is already known from the Hermetic writings, for example, that there are some works, which might be said to be Gnostic, in which there is no reference to Christianity or any clear traces of Christian influence. But as these works are generally held to be later than the appearance of Christian Gnosticism, the difficulty lies in proving that they are not influenced by it. This difficulty remains in respect to the supposed non-Christian writings of Nag Hammadi. None of these so-called non-Christian writings, of an uncertain date but which seem generally late, has brought the proof, so eagerly sought since the beginning of the century, that Gnosticism is pre-Christian, or at least, independent of Christianity.

Again, only the New Testament, *interpreted in one way or another*, can provide a control that allows us to date the appearance of Gnosticism in relation to it. If we allow that certain parts of the New Testament clearly imply the existence of a Gnosticism already formed—I mean a doctrine that already betrays the general structure of Gnostic systems—then Gnosticism is at least as old as the earliest Christian texts. If, on the other hand, nothing in the New Testament clearly implies the existence of an already formed Gnosticism, if there is merely the indication of certain tendencies that agree more or less with one or other aspect of what must be second-century Gnosticism, then there is no proof that Gnosticism is either pre-Christian or even quite as old as Christianity, and it can be assumed that it was born of the simple development of these tendencies.

Now there is no *clear* indication in the New Testament of the existence of a Gnosticism already formed. All the texts referred to in this respect can be interpreted differently and are the subject of discussion among exegetes. In all the alleged *traces* of Gnosticism that influenced the authors

of the New Testament, it is possible and much more natural to see the *seeds* of Gnostic ideas, I mean thoughts that could give rise to Gnostic interpretations among other interpretations; and in all that looks like polemics with an organized Gnosticism in view, it is possible and more natural to regard these as polemics against an *incipient* Gnosticism, against the *elements* of Gnosticism that had already taken form by the simple development of these seeds.¹⁷

When Haenchen, in the third edition of *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (vol. 2, 1958, 1652–56), listed the intertestamental ideas or expressions he thought were related to an already extant Gnosticism, there is perhaps not one single passage among those he cites that could not be interpreted more correctly in another sense, and that in fact is or has been interpreted differently. Not that the analogies that he highlights do not actually, in most cases, exist. But what he interprets as signs of organized Gnosticism can be just as easily, and much better, explained as hints of a future Gnosticism, as starting points for a development that could lead to Gnosticism proper. And what he interprets as battles against an existing Gnosticism can be just as easily and much better interpreted as battles against tendencies that, born of the theologies of Paul and John, already betrayed certain aspects, certain elements, of a still incomplete Gnosticism.

The interpretation of the New Testament remains essential for the study of Gnosticism. Now, this interpretation is itself flawed by inexact or at least uncertain ideas as to the origin of this same Gnosticism, so that one turns in a vicious circle. If the Epistle to the Colossians is generally interpreted as directed against a Gnostic doctrine, is this because it derives naturally from the text? Not at all. The oldest and most natural interpretation rests in seeing in this epistle, as in the Epistle to the Galatians and the Epistle to the Romans, an exhortation not to allow oneself to be intimidated by Jewish-Christian propaganda. But since it is believed, trusting in those who study Gnosticism, that Gnosticism could be pre-Christian or at least as old as Christianity, and as there is a tendency to see Gnosticism everywhere, there has been no hesitation in saying that since Paul (or pseudo-Paul, if this epistle is not authentic) criticizes an angel cult, it has to do with a cult that was a form of Gnosticism. But this opinion ignores the truth. Gnosticism is *not* an angel cult. On the contrary, it would be nearer the mark to see Gnostics (or those close to being so) in those Christians the Epistle of Jude accuses of blaspheming “the Glories,” that is, the angels. In fact, it is to devalue the Jewish world and Law that the Gnostics depict them as the work of angels, that is, as not being the work of God himself; and what they wish is that humanity should turn away from these works and their authors in order to turn toward the true God. It is not enough to acknowledge, as is customary, that the so-called gnosis against which Paul warns the Colossians was mixed with Judaism; it is necessary to understand that it is Judaism itself, or rather, Jewish Christianity, its

propaganda for the observance of the Sabbath, the new moons, the food laws, the Law itself, that Paul calls an angel cult. He relates the Law to the angels, as he had done in the Epistle to the Galatians (3:19), as Stephen had done (Acts 7:53), and as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews did (2:2). The people who sought to influence the Colossians had no doubt never thought of making a cult to the angels, but it is thus that Paul interprets their submission to the Law.¹⁸ When the exegetes of our day posit a Gnosticism in order to explain this propaganda, they show that they do not understand the language, used by Paul, by Luke, and by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that could open the way to Gnostics, and they attribute to Gnostics the exact opposite of their doctrines.¹⁹

And what has not been suggested on the basis of the First Epistle to the Corinthians! Interpreting certain passages of this epistle in a sense of which the least that can be said is that it is not the most natural, theories have been built that are manifestly not solid. If Paul had had knowledge of doctrines such as those supposed by Schmithals or L. Schottroff,²⁰ or those assumed by U. Wilckens,²¹ would he not have attacked them more clearly and more directly? Schottroff demonstrates very well how Paul's anthropology differed from that of certain Gnostics. But is that sufficient reason to think that he had Gnostics in mind? If he had had them in mind, would he not have shown it more clearly? He attacks an attitude of pride and a refusal to believe in the resurrection of the dead; but nowhere does he attack any sort of conception of humanity. As for his own anthropology, one can only *deduce* it from what he says of the risen life, but he does not define it explicitly; still less does he set it up against another, and still less against that of the Gnostics, which he does not seem to know. His anthropology differs, for example, from that of Descartes; so why does no one say that he attacks Descartes and that Descartes existed in Paul's time?

Wilckens seems to attribute a theory of divine Wisdom to Paul's opponents that seems very like that of Paul himself. As for Schmithals, his book is very learned, but he takes things backward, explaining Pauline mysticism, the idea that Christ is in the Christian and that the Christian is in Christ, by the fantastical supposition of a "pre-Christian myth of Christ," where the name of Christ had been given to the "primeval man," to the ancestor of humanity who contained within himself the totality of human beings. In reality, the metaphor that Christ in some way contains Christians and is also in each one of them derives from Pauline mysticism, and this is directly comprehensible, so there is no need for a myth of this type to explain it.

It is not that I deny that there are links between what Paul is opposing in the epistles to the Corinthians and Gnosticism. On the contrary, what is opposed in these epistles seems to me to be the first actually attested indication of a tendency to Gnosticism, and one certainly has the right to use these texts to try to rediscover, at least hypothetically, where and how this tendency could have been born. But what Paul is fighting against is an

attitude, a tendency, not, so far as it can be seen, a Gnosticism already formed.²²

In reality, none of the attempts to show that the New Testament contains allusions to a Gnosticism already formed, or thoughts influenced by such a Gnosticism, is convincing. The authors of the New Testament did not know—at least there is no text that allows us to affirm that they knew—a doctrine in which the Creator God (the Demiurge) was distinguished from the true God.²³ And this is without doubt the most characteristic mark of Gnosticism. At the conference at Messina, Jonas said that it was only with difficulty that he could consider a doctrine as Gnostic where this distinction could not be found.²⁴



Fixing the time when Gnosticism appeared, in relation to the New Testament, obviously depends on what is understood by “Gnosticism.” That is why it is necessary at the outset to try to define this idea, at least provisionally and in outline. It is not enough to define it by the meaning of the word *gnosis*; that is to say, Gnosticism cannot be defined simply as a doctrine emphasizing the importance of *knowledge* for salvation. For there have been a number of other doctrines of salvation by knowledge that had nothing to do with Gnosticism. Buddhism, for example, is a doctrine of salvation by knowledge, and it is not Gnosticism. If Gnosticism was nothing other than a doctrine of salvation by knowledge of the “self,” it would be necessary to trace it back at least to the Upanishads. In fact, the knowledge that belongs to *gnosis* originally seems to have been knowledge of God, not of the self. The Gnostics thought that, thanks to the Savior, they had learned to know the true God who was formerly *unknown*. Even later, when the accent was placed on knowledge of the self, what they called self-knowledge was to know “where we have come from and where we are going.” Thus, knowledge of the self implied for them knowledge of Gnostic doctrine, that is, of certain revelations concerning God, the human soul, and the world. The world was included because this self-knowledge implied knowledge that the self was not of the world. (It was necessary to know that the world was less directly related to God than the human soul.) This knowledge, then, included both a theology and cosmogony.

The knowledge the Gnostics speak of is not only not a general knowledge, it is not only a *religious* knowledge, based upon a *revelation* and not expounded by human investigation, but it is knowledge of a specific religious *doctrine*, in fact it is *commitment to a religion*. In the thought of these Gnostic Christians who seem to have been the earliest,²⁵ there is no clear distinction between faith and knowledge, any more than there was in

early Christianity. Even the absolute use of the word "knowledge," *gnosis*, as meaning specifically knowledge of God or the mysteries of the true religion, cannot be used to define Gnosticism, since it is also found in Judaism and in early orthodox Christianity.²⁶ What then is the main feature that distinguishes doctrines described as Gnostic?

Jonas certainly succeeded in elucidating an essential feature of these doctrines when he characterized Gnosticism by "an anticosmic attitude," that is, by a devaluation of the world,²⁷ and to a certain extent this definition is acceptable. But only to a certain extent, for "anticosmic" seems to suggest that for the Gnostics the world was evil; but this is not entirely true. For some of them, at least, the world was simply *foreign* to the good, *foreign* to God, *foreign* to the soul, which was to imply that the world was of a different, though not necessarily opposed, kind. It is the attachment and enslaving of the soul to that which is foreign to it that seems to have been truly evil to them. (It might be said that the world would not be evil if the soul was not subjected to it.) It is obvious that given this, it was easy to slip into saying that the world itself was evil, and some Gnostics did say it. Gnostics also preached the opposition of the soul to the power of the world, at least to the power the world exercises within us. They did not preach a violent revolt against external powers, but they refused to admit that these powers should be adored by the soul. Thus, as long as we are clear about what an anticosmic attitude implied for them, we can say that it is a general characteristic of their doctrines.

But this characteristic is *too general*, for it also applies to doctrines that are not Gnostic. Jewish apocalyptic, for example, is anticosmic but is not Gnostic. Gnosticism retains something of apocalyptic thought, but as a whole it is clearly different and has its own characteristics. While retaining the criterion of an anticosmic attitude, it is obviously also necessary to add something more precise to make the definition narrower. What could this be? I think that Adolf Hilgenfeld saw it when he considered the distinction between God and the Demiurge as the fundamental mark of Gnosticism, that is, the distinction between the God of the Gospel and the God of the Old Testament.²⁸ As we have seen,²⁹ Jonas himself seems to have accepted this criterion, and thereby eventually excluded from Gnosticism the thought-forms that before he had described as being found "radiating from Gnostic ideas,"³⁰ for example, Jewish apocalyptic and the Christianity of Paul and John.

If we accept this criterion, it becomes very difficult to find indications of the existence of Gnosticism in the New Testament. As we have noted, there is no New Testament author for whom the true God is other than the Creator, and there is no New Testament author who attacks the doctrine that distinguishes the true God from the Creator. What is witnessed to in the New Testament are tendencies leading toward certain incomplete and inconclusive aspects of Gnosticism in the strict sense. The latter cannot simply be defined by an anticosmic attitude, still less by the role given to

knowledge, for these features are found in doctrines that are in no way Gnostic. It is characterized by a certain structural system: the distinction between *two levels in the supraterrrestrial world*, two levels, each of which has a representative that can be called God, though *only the representative of the upper level can be the true God*. It is this which makes Gnostic doctrines impossible to confuse with others and this characteristic does not definitely appear until *after* the the time when most of the New Testament was written.



So the problem is far from being resolved. Up to the present no decisive proof of the non-Christian origin of Gnosticism has been found, either in the New Testament or in the Nag Hammadi writings or elsewhere. No Gnostic text has been found that we can date with certainty, or even with a degree of probability, to a pre-Christian time.³¹ On the other hand, the main questions that the appearance of this sort of doctrine poses have not been answered.

1. Why did this inversion of values come about in antiquity? Why did so many deny the value of the world and invert the meaning of creation? Why did they attribute creation to an inferior and blind Demiurge and not to the true God? If this reversal was brought about within and by Christianity, the crucifixion of Christ, the Pauline theology of the cross, is an answer. The condemnation of one just man is the condemnation of the world, a judgment upon the world. It henceforth implies (without waiting for the eschatological judgment) the existence of another world which is the place of truth. A "Christian revolution" has quite rightly been spoken of. Christianity has quite rightly been considered a religion that teaches the existence of another world. This other world, in which Christians believe, is not only a world of Ideas, as in the intelligible world of the Platonists, nor a future world, as in the "time to come" that Judaism hoped for; it is a world of souls, where souls appear in their true form. To distinguish thus a superior world where truth appears from this world is without doubt to diminish the value of this world. Even though Christian antic cosmic thought is usually less pronounced than Gnostic antic cosmic thought, it would be untrue to say that there is no antic cosmic attitude in Christianity: one has only to read the New Testament. On the other hand, it must be noted that not only did an antic cosmic attitude become more pronounced between Paul and John, so too did anti-Judaism. This double development, which continued after John, easily explains why at the beginning of the second century certain Christians might wish to criticize belief in a God who was thought to be both the direct cause of the world and

also the giver of the Old Testament Law. The blind Demiurge of the Gnostics is also the God of the Old Testament Law, and it is perhaps primarily because of this that he is depicted as blind. (In the same way the synagogue was depicted as blind in the Middle Ages.) Thus, the inversion is explained. But if the Gnostic revolution came about in some part of Judaism, as is supposed, what could have been the cause? The hypothesis proposed by R. M. Grant,³² interesting as it is, cannot be an adequate answer. At the conference at Messina, he himself expressed some doubts in this respect,³³ and some years later he abandoned it.³⁴ Furthermore, it has, to my knowledge, no textual foundation. There is hardly ever any mention of the taking of Jerusalem in the Gnostic writings. When it is mentioned, for example in Codex VI of the Nag Hammadi texts (43, 34–44, 4), this event is related to the preaching of Christ and is never held to prove that since the God of the Jews was defeated, he is not the true God. Far from the Gnostics reproaching the Demiurge for not protecting his people, they sometimes, on the contrary, reproach him for having wished to submit other nations to the Jewish people.³⁵

An anticosmic attitude can, it is true, be explained by the position of the Jewish people in the Roman world. They were not particularly ill-treated so long as they did not revolt; they even enjoyed certain privileges. But they suffered from the loss of their independence, and pagan cults were an object of scandal to them. They suffered and were humiliated more than other peoples because of a patriotism that was more exclusive, that did not recognize any God either within or outside Israel other than the God of the nation. Anticosmic thought might then be explained by Judaism, but not the particular sort of anticosmic attitude that consisted in making the God of Israel into an inferior, blind power. Whatever the woes of the Jews, it seems that they never drew the conclusion that their God was an inferior power. And if some of them were to revolt against their religion, would it not have been enough to deny God or the account of creation?

Jonas gave a good description of this reversal of values, but he did not explain it. At least he did not adequately explain it when he related it to general conditions in the classical world at that time. He himself acknowledges this. Asking the question, What is it that caused the breakdown of classical devotion toward the cosmos? he answers that the reply to this question is unknown, that it is very complex, and that he simply wishes to point out an aspect of it,³⁶ referring to the collapse of the classical city. I do not doubt that this collapse must have had considerable repercussions and that it would have had a marked effect on the world-picture of people of late antiquity. But its import is too general to explain the very particular structure of the Gnostic myth; moreover, it cannot be directly related to the appearance of Gnosticism. The collapse of the classical city was actually much earlier. On the eastern side of the Mediterranean basin it had already begun in the fourth century before Christ, in the time of Alexander,

and during many centuries it did not produce any breakdown of devotion in respect to the cosmos. This devotion is more manifest than ever in Stoicism, which was born precisely at the end of the fourth century before Christ and which was still very much alive in the second century of the current era. It is still strong in Neoplatonism, and if the Good, for the Neoplatonists, is no longer immanent in the world, but, as in Gnosticism, there is a desire to place the Good high above the totality of beings, this is perhaps not only due to Plato; for the appeal to Plato and the emphasis placed on this aspect of Platonism need to be explained. The influence of Gnosticism might have had something to do with this. This influence could, in fact, have a part to play in the thought of Numenius, and through Numenius on the thought of Plotinus and Porphyry.³⁷

Furthermore, if the collapse of the classical city had been an important factor in the formation of Gnosticism, the latter ought to have appeared just as early and as strongly in the purely pagan world as in the Christian world, or at least in the world where Judaism was known. But this is not the case. Not only do the writings in which a pagan gnosis can be found (which are rare) seem to be later than the appearance of Christian Gnosticism, and not only are Gnostic ideas less marked and less vigorous here, but furthermore Judaism was always well known. There is no purely pagan world. It has been hastily concluded that Gnosticism must have a Jewish origin, despite the difficulty of explaining how a doctrine that was originally Jewish could depict Yahweh as an inferior power. In fact, there is another possible solution. If the Gnostic myth always implies knowledge of Judaism, it is because it is indeed Judaism with which this myth is concerned. But it is Judaism seen from the outside. It is concerned with the place Judaism ought to have in another religion, and this other religion cannot be anything other than Christianity. Gnosticism sprang from Judaism, but not directly; it could only have sprung from a great revolution, and at the time when Gnosticism must have appeared, such a great revolution in Judaism could have been nothing other than the Christian revolution.³⁸

2. Where did the figure of the Savior come from? Many scholars, even among those who are inclined to believe in the non-Christian origin of the Gnostic movement, have acknowledged that it is difficult to explain this figure other than by Christianity.³⁹ It is true that a resolution of the difficulty was believed to be possible by asserting that the figure of the Savior was not an essential element in Gnosticism. But this is very difficult to uphold. For even when Gnostics hold that the persons predestined to salvation have a "spark of life" in their spirits, they think that this needs to be awakened by the Savior's call.⁴⁰ Schenke,⁴¹ following Percy and Rudolph,⁴² clearly saw that there was no Gnosticism without a savior. However, he too thought it was possible to evade the difficulty by stating that

the Gnostic conception of the Savior is not the same as the Christian conception and cannot become so. For him, the Gnostic Savior saves from the beginning of history, whereas the Christian Savior intervenes in the midst of history.⁴³ Nevertheless, he does not, I think, say where this Gnostic conception comes from. Why was it necessary for a savior other than God to call, raise up, and enlighten the first man, and to intervene again in the whole course of history? If human beings do not possess within themselves the means to save themselves, why is it not God who saves them? In the Old Testament, the main savior is God. Even though the Gnostic Savior is a divine emanation, he is always another figure, a person other than God the Father. It is easier to understand how the Christian Savior could have given rise to other types of savior by analogy or even to understand that the Christian Savior himself, who was regarded as having preexisted his own incarnation, could have been conceived as having in some way saved from the beginning of history, than to explain the Gnostic Savior independently of Christianity.⁴⁴

(Moreover, in showing that this idea is already found in the New Testament—that is, in John's Gospel—Schenke thereby demonstrates that it can be *drawn from* the New Testament.⁴⁵ He thinks that it is due to the influence of Gnosticism in the New Testament, but the contrary is also possible and to my mind is nearer the truth.)

The idea of the Savior is linked with anticosmic thought, but it is not directly derived from it. Indeed, the devaluation of the world is not sufficient to produce the idea of a savior who is regarded as *already having come*. It could just as easily produce an eschatology in which the Savior would be God himself or a Messiah *not having yet come*. It could also simply produce the resolution to change the world as much as possible by human action (since by "world" we often understand the human, social world, and even the material world, perhaps changed to a certain extent). Finally it could produce the resolution to flee from the world, at least spiritually, by freeing oneself interiorly. We have examples of these effects entailed by a pessimistic view of the world. One of them is Jewish apocalyptic; another is the modern religion of the revolution; another is the attitude of the philosopher who thinks, "If everything happens by chance, do not be ruled by chance yourself."⁴⁶ These are the words of a Stoic, who certainly did not in fact think that the world could be criticized or that he did things by chance, but who, putting things at their worst, judged that whatever the world is like, one is always free to govern oneself. The idea of the Savior is quite different; to a certain extent it is a negation of human power.

The question posed by the idea of the savior is that of free will. It is a question of knowing whether free will is sufficient or insufficient to save humanity. That it might be judged insufficient cannot be explained by Judaism, which emphasizes the power of free will. Nor is it explained by

Oriental religions, nor by the philosophers who were influential in the pagan world. It can hardly be explained other than by the theologies of Paul and John.

Foerster has shown very well that the Gnostic conception of salvation always implies the necessity of a *call* that comes from outside.⁴⁷ Luise Schottroff saw clearly that for the Gnostic, salvation was always something received.⁴⁸ Whatever forms the Gnostic Savior might take, the idea, so strongly rooted in Gnosticism, that an intervention from a transcendent world is absolutely necessary, and that this intervention is not directly the intervention of God but of a divine envoy—is it not better to explain this idea by the image we have of Christ and his work than to explain the figure of a personal Savior by an idea of call or of a revelation that is primarily impersonal? It is the concrete figure of the personal Savior that makes it possible to abstract from the idea of call the idea of a revelation brought, *given*.⁴⁹

Certainly, the idea of the Savior implies only in a certain sense the negation of free will. For we *cannot* absolutely deny free will. It is never completely denied, either in Paul, or in John, or in the Gnostics. But there is no doubt that there is also an apparent negation of human power in their thought, a negation *in a certain context*, and this negation is implied in the very idea of Savior.⁵⁰

Was the idea of a Savior who has already come found in Judaism prior to Christianity? It does not seem so.⁵¹ In a way, Moses is a savior; but he saved by giving the Law, and when salvation depends on observance of the Law, salvation depends on free will. Even the idea of predestination, which was present at Qumran and which seemingly ought to limit human power, does not hinder the fact that, even at Qumran, persons have the power to obey the Law and that it is this which will save them. The spirit of Qumran is indeed much further from Gnosticism than is that of Paul and John, and if something of it was transmitted to the Gnostics, this could only be through these two founders of Christian theology.

Whatever the strangeness of some of the Gnostic writings, Pauline thought and Johannine thought are always to be found at their roots. Moreover, these are the only doctrines that can make any sense of the Gnostic writings. For finally, the true theory of the origin of Gnosticism will be that which makes best sense of the entire body of Gnostic literature.

3. Why did Gnosticism most probably appear at the same time as Christianity, or rather—what is more probable—a little after the appearance of Christianity? The efforts of our scholars cannot hide the fact that it is very difficult to go back to a pre-Christian era, or even to the time of the first Christian sermons. The only way of giving it a history that goes back almost as far as Christianity is to speculate on the figure of Simon Magus, who is, anyway, a figure acknowledged to be almost completely hidden by legends. The very existence of Simon can be doubted, and more

doubtful still is the notion that if he did exist, he would have been a Gnostic. Among the documents that can be dated approximately, those which might hint at the *beginnings* of Gnosticism—beginning *within Christianity*—do not go back further than the second half of the first century of our era. Indeed, it can even be said that they only become in any way unambiguous and distinctive around the end of the first century. In the end, there are still only tendencies and partial aspects, and a distinctive Gnosticism is not definitely attested until the second century.⁵²

Would it not have been very strange if a little after the birth of Christianity a sort of double of it had appeared? A double said to have been entirely independent of it, but that is only known at first within Christianity and in a Christian guise? A double that, scarcely born, could have penetrated into the domain of its brother, Christianity, and to which this domain would have offered such a favorable climate that it would develop here rather than anywhere else? A double whose actual existence, at the outset, is not established, whose origin remains mysterious, whose beginnings we are ignorant of? Are there not coincidences and obscurities here that make the existence of this double very doubtful? Is it not more likely that this supposed double might, in reality, be one of the developments of Christianity itself?

4. Why was Gnosticism regarded as Christian—a heresy certainly, but a Christian heresy—by the Fathers of the Church who were contemporaries of the Gnostics and who could know them better than we do? Were they all so gravely mistaken? Were they much less intelligent or much less well informed than our scholars? I fear that it can only be the contrary. The picture they give of Gnosticism, even though it is dominated by the desire to refute them, is more intelligent and more judicious than what we find in our works on the history of religions. Clement and Origen understood that it was a matter of human freedom. Irenaeus understood that it was a matter of the relation between the New Testament and the Old Testament. These problems, around which Gnostic speculation turns, *are posed by Christianity and by it alone*. They are not posed either by Hellenism or Persian religion or Judaism or by any other tradition that has been posited as a source of Gnosticism. They are posed by the doctrine of the Savior, the doctrine of redemption, and by the existence of a *double revelation*, the old and the new. They are posed by Pauline and Johannine theology, the two theologies fundamental to Christianity. And these theologies have perhaps never ceased and perhaps will never cease to pose them.

What explains the persistence and resurgence of heresies of a Gnostic type is much more the early Christian texts of the New Testament than texts or traditions deriving from ancient heresies. The Cathars, who have been described as Manichees, did not know of Manicheism; they knew the Gospel of John. It is to this text that they refer incessantly. The debates of

the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries on the subject of free will often reveal in those who denied the power of free will a view of the world and of humanity's natural state that is redolent of Gnostic pessimism. This is not only because they refer to Saint Augustine, who perhaps remained under the influence of his Manichean past; it is still more that, like Saint Augustine himself, they refer to Paul and John. As long as the theologies of Paul and John remain alive, on certain points they can give rise to thoughts more or less akin to those of the Gnostics.⁵³

The Fathers of the Church perhaps did not know some of the texts we know. But they certainly knew many others we do not know. What advantage would it have been to them to present these heretics as Christians if they were not? As much as they can, they portray heresy as the result of exterior influences. They would have been very happy if they had known the theory of our modern scholars, and they would have certainly used it. But it did not occur to them. Certainly, given the fact that they are combatting heresy, one ought in principle to challenge what they say about it. But surely, insofar as what they say accords with the affirmations of the heretics themselves, there is a chance that they speak the truth. It is necessary to distinguish between particular accusations with which they charge the heretics and the overall view in which, without intending to, they support their claims.

5. If we take account of the approximate dates that can be assigned to some of the Gnostic writings and to the appearance of some of the schools of thought, and if we also take account of the information given by heresiologists *and of the dates when this information was given to us*, why does the evolution of Gnosticism appear to be *the contrary* of what it would be if the hypothesis of a non-Christian origin were true? For on the one hand, in the schools and texts that we can date with some probability, Christian Gnosticism appears before pagan, Jewish, or Iranian Gnosticism; on the other hand, Gnostic Christianity itself seems at the beginning to have been far less syncretistic and far less strange than it was afterward. In general, the syncretistic elements became greater and obviously Christian characteristics became fewer. The earliest doctrines described by Irenaeus in about 185 (those of Simon, Menander, Cerinthus, Saturnilus, Basilides, Cerdo, Marcion) are relatively simple and can be understood without any great difficulty on the basis of Christianity. Those which Hippolytus describes for the first time in the *Elenchos*, in the third century, or Epiphanius toward the end of the fourth century, are much more complicated, much more obscure; the meaning is often confused by an accumulation of symbols and myths drawn from all sorts of traditions. They can be understood as Christian (they can be understood only thus, to my mind), but only by taking account of the links that join them to the oldest Gnostic doctrines. It is in these late doctrines that figures borrowed from the Old Testament take on greater and greater importance, and also elements drawn from

Greek philosophy and mythology, Oriental religions, and perhaps even magic. Syncretism is growing, and with it confusion and obscurity.

It can indeed be assumed that the heresiologists did not know very well the earliest doctrines of which they speak; that they only knew the most Christian parts or that they Christianized them in describing them. But apart from this being very unlikely—for, on the contrary, they tend to exaggerate the bizarre parts when they find them—we have some relatively old Gnostic texts, such as the *Odes of Solomon*,⁵⁴ fragments of Basilides and Isidore, fragments of Valentinus and texts and fragments of the first Valentinians. These texts are relatively clear and simple, even when they are mystical, and although more or less heterodox they are manifestly Christian insofar they manifestly depend upon Christianity. We also have original late Gnostic texts. For example, we now have many Manichean texts, and we know that Manicheism was born in the third century. Now we can see from these texts that Manicheism is a strongly syncretistic doctrine that rests upon a very complicated myth. We must also consider the Coptic writings of the Codex Askewianus and the Codex Bruceanus, writings normally dated in the third century. These are incredibly complicated works, obscure and fantastical. They are Christian, but undoubtedly very distant from Christianity as we know it. It might be said that it is precisely because they are so complicated that they are judged to be late. But this is not the only reason.

It is with these late and very strange doctrines that certain writings presumed to be non-Christian, found at Nag Hammadi, have links. Many of these writings are thought of as Sethian. Now the sect that is called Sethian could certainly only have appeared after the time of the first Valentinians, as we shall see.⁵⁵ These Sethian texts from Nag Hammadi also have links with Manicheism and with Bruce's anonymous treatise. As for the letter of *Eugnostos*, like the *Pistis Sophia* and the *Books of Jeu*, it resembles a Valentinianism gone mad.

If the doctrines expounded in these supposedly non-Christian writings existed from the beginnings of gnosis, that is, as is supposed, from the first century of our era or the beginning of the second century, why do we not find any of their characteristic traits in heresiologists like Justin, or in any text that is definitely before the last quarter of the second century, that is to say, in Celsus and in Irenaeus? Why do we not find any characteristic trace of them in the New Testament?

I think that the only ground on which it might be possible to base a belief in the very great antiquity of these complicated and obscure doctrines is a few sentences in Irenaeus that seem to signify that the heresies described in his chapters I, 29–31 are the source of Valentinian ideas.⁵⁶ Now these sentences are less clear than has been thought, and above all, if they really do have the meaning we read here and that Irenaeus probably wished to be understood—perhaps he avoided being absolutely clear, as if he were not very sure of the fact⁵⁷—they are very far from being convincing. For

not only do they disagree with what the general evolution of Gnosticism seems to indicate, but we see that Irenaeus in order to prove his opinion appeals to the *resemblance* of these doctrines with Valentinianism; how if resemblance indicates a relationship, this relationship might be the opposite of the one he supposes. Moreover, it certainly seems that he knew these doctrines directly, from the original documents, in particular that of I, 29, and that he did not find them described in the older heresiological work that is the principal source of his Catalogue. That seems to indicate that they had appeared recently, a little before the time he wrote. We cannot consider this question here with all the care it would need; we hope to do that further on.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, Irenaeus's witness ought not to weigh against what we know with certainty with respect to the succession of heresies. At the Yale Conference, Mme Aland rightly remarked that the only succession we can be sure of is the one made up of these three terms: the Gnostics of Irenaeus, the Gnostics of Hippolytus, Mani.⁵⁹



In 1972, in a footnote to his article "The Man from Heaven in Johannean Sectarianism,"⁶⁰ W. A. Meeks summarized the reasons he considered the Christian origin of Gnosticism could no longer be upheld. These reasons are worthy of examination not only because they are those that seemed right to a very good scholar but because they summarize the arguments that are almost always used in favor of this opinion.

First of all, Meeks attributed "a strong probability" to the conclusions of an article by Haenchen, "Gab es eine vorchristliche Gnosis?" ("Was There a Pre-Christian Gnosis?").⁶¹ In this article Haenchen gave an affirmative answer to this question, basing his argument on an analysis of sources concerning Simon Magus. Meeks himself renounced this first argument a few years later,⁶² and others had already criticized Haenchen's article.⁶³ We can therefore put this argument aside, but as there are some who still adhere to it, we add only that the meaning Haenchen attributed to the title "the Great Power," which according to Acts the Samaritans gave to Simon, is a meaning that can be contested and that differs from the meaning given to same title by other scholars. Even if Haenchen is right in thinking that this title signifies "God"—and I think he is right on this point—this in no way proves that Simon had been a Gnostic before becoming acquainted with Christianity. For he is not the only person in Acts who can be depicted as allowing himself to be deified by his admirers. This is also the case with Herod Agrippa (Acts 12: 20–23). If the Samaritans call Simon "the Great Power" and the followers of Herod Agrippa say that he

is a god, this is because the author of Acts knows that the Samaritans belonged to a type of Judaism and were not pagans. (This is also evident from the position of the account of the Samaritans' conversion in Acts, for it precedes the preaching to the pagans.) The expression "the Power" or "the Great Power" is a name for God in Judaism and Jewish Christianity,⁶⁴ but *it has nothing to do with Gnosticism in the first century*. Even supposing that Simon himself was taken for God—which is not mentioned in Acts—this still would not prove that he had been a Gnostic. A fool, if you like, but not a Gnostic. The accusation of being taken for God or of allowing oneself to be taken for God occurs frequently in Jewish and Christian writers, and it belongs to polemic.⁶⁵

Next Meeks stated that the documents found at Nag Hammadi "prove" that Christian Gnostics borrowed and adapted mythical elements deriving from non-Christian Gnostics. He had in mind, I think, the work the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ*, which could be a Christian adaptation of the *Letter of Eugnostos*, or, as is now thought, of an earlier work that could be the common source of these two texts and that would have more closely resembled the *Letter of Eugnostos*. But first, it is not at all certain that the *Letter* is earlier than the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ*, or that the common source, if there is one, more closely resembled the *Letter*. Even though D. M. Parrott, who translated the two works in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, thinks that the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* is probably derived from a non-Christian work, he nevertheless remains cautious. "Up to now," he writes, "research tends to conclude that *Eugnostos* is closer to the original." This suggests to me that the question is not yet fully resolved. For, before drawing from this one fact conclusions on the way in which the Gnostics "christianized" non-Christian writings, one must be sure of the fact itself. And above all, it has not been proved that the *Letter*, or the unknown work from which the *Letter* might have been drawn, is the work of a "non-Christian Gnostic." The colophon of the *Gospel of the Egyptians* shows that Eugnostos was probably a Christian,⁶⁶ or at least, that he knew Christian gnosis very well. Moreover, it is hard to explain the fact that this letter speaks of the Son of Man, the Savior, the Church, and of faith without knowledge of Christianity.⁶⁷ The obvious contacts with Valentianism⁶⁸ can be explained equally well by the dependence of Eugnostos or his source upon Valentianism as by the dependence of Valentinus upon works such as the *Letter of Eugnostos*.

Meeks added that the Nag Hammadi writings "even though they cannot directly prove anything concerning first-century gnosis, provide, if we examine them with care, a cumulative proof that the myths which involve a Savior who descends from heaven, and who ascends there, flourished without any Christian influence." I think he was alluding to some Gnostic writings from Nag Hammadi, which some consider to be totally independent of Christianity; perhaps also to a number of writings from Nag Hammadi that are Christian, but that the same scholars consider as originally

non-Christian and simply “Christianized.” Insofar as the first group of writings are concerned, it seems to me that they are as Christian as the others, and that the absence of the name of Jesus Christ in these texts might be explained without obliging us to regard them as non-Christian, or, above all, as independent of Christianity.⁶⁹ All that we know as far as the supposedly Christianized writings are concerned is that, in the form that we have them, they are Christian. “Christianization” is only a hypothesis,⁷⁰ and the arguments by which it is proved are far from convincing.

I also recall that, according to Meeks himself, when all this is proved, it will still prove nothing as far as first-century gnosis is concerned (if there was a gnosis in the first century). Meeks understands by this: as far as the beginnings of Gnosticism is concerned.

Finally, Meeks appeals to the hints that some scholars think are present in the New Testament, particularly to the possibility that Paul’s opponents in Galatians(!), in Colossians, and the epistles to the Corinthians were Gnostics. But he acknowledges that the evaluation of these hints depends upon the individual opinion of each interpreter, and that there are many unresolved problems in this area. This is precisely what I stated above. Thus, none of these arguments is solid in itself. A group of bad proofs does not make a good proof, and we can wonder at the number of scholars, who most certainly claim to be strictly scientific, presenting a hypothesis as well-nigh proved that rests on facts so uncertain.



To a large extent the study of Gnosticism has become a matter for philologists. The reason for this is that, the Greek Gnostic writings having almost all disappeared, the texts we encounter are generally found outside of Europe, written in languages only the specialists know. In translating these texts, the specialists render an inestimable service to research. But it must not be concluded that they are more qualified than others to interpret the religious or philosophical meaning of these writings. I sometimes feel that some of them are not quite sufficiently aware of the way ideas work. If Jonas had not been a philosopher and had not introduced some philosophy into the study of Gnosticism, we would perhaps still consider it as simply a syncretism, and fail to understand it.

But philosophy is not enough. The numerous links between Gnostic ideas and texts of the Old and New Testament must also be considered. The Gnostics were exegetes more than philosophers—Marcion is not the only example—and it is on the basis of certain scriptural texts that we can understand most of their myths.

The myth of the seven Archons, creators of the world and humanity who are at the same time the seven planets, is unintelligible if we do not

understand that these Archons without doubt primarily represent the seven days of creation. These seven days were also the days of the week, which were named after the planets. What relation could there otherwise be between creation and the planets? They could be considered as governing human destiny, but did it ever come into anyone's mind to regard them therefore as having created the world? Thus, it is a biblical myth disguised as an astrological myth. The Archons intervene especially in the creation of humanity, for it is thus that the words of the God of the Bible, "Let us make man" (Gen. 1:26), which seem to be addressed to a plurality of creators, are explained. Is it not strange, this depiction of the myth of the creator God who is enthroned in heaven, governs the world, but is nevertheless not the true God—for he is higher and further away still, as in a second heaven? Indeed it is, if we do not understand that the two superimposed-divine thrones signify the coexistence, *within the same religion*, of two revelations of different worth, the second being higher and truer than the first. This means that we cannot reach to the true God without passing beyond the level of the first revelation, that of the God of creation, of might, of judgment, and of the Law, and by discovering that which is still higher in the divine essence: pure goodness, grace, and love. This interpretation of the two Testaments is perhaps brief and exaggerated, but it can be upheld to a certain extent. The myth of the Mother, a divine entity who plays a role in the creation of the world, is barely comprehensible if we do not remember that the word "Spirit" is feminine in Hebrew and that the name of Mother was given to the Holy Spirit by certain Christians in the first few centuries. The Mother plays a role in creation because the Spirit, assimilated Wisdom, which is the instrument of creation in the Old Testament, had been regarded as creator. It still is in the *Veni Creator* which Christians sing. The "myth of Man" is barely comprehensible if it is not related to the expression "Son of Man" by which Christ is designated in the Gospels and *if it does not depend upon it*. For it is not by the "myth of Man" that we can explain the expression "Son of Man," but the reverse, as I hope to show. If everything that makes Gnosticism comprehensible is taken away, obviously nothing remains but a tissue of absurdities.

Schenke tried to reconstruct the original Gnostic system, that which, according to our scholars, would have existed before all Christian influence.⁷¹ What do we find in the system reconstructed by Schenke? We find an "unknown God" enthroned in the Ogdoad (the eighth heaven), with his spouse, Sophia, next to him. Without the cooperation of her husband, she gives birth to an "abortion," the Demiurge. The dwelling of the Demiurge is the Hebdomad (the seventh heaven, or the unity of the seven planetary heavens). The Demiurge begets six other planetary powers, then with these powers he creates the world and humanity. But where did the Gnostics get all this from? If each point of this myth is not referred to a Christian doctrine, nothing will allow us to understand it. And what is the explanation of the rapid expansion throughout the whole of the an-

cient world, the prodigious extension of belief in a myth so arbitrary and ridiculous?

What a picture of Gnosticism can be painted if we read certain books or certain articles! The authors are often very learned, often even very intelligent, but because they are a priori scornful of their subject, they really understand almost nothing. They present it in such a way that one can only make fun of it and ask how such thoughts could occur to so many men. If Jonas, among our contemporaries, is one of the rare men who have understood the *character* of Gnosticism quite deeply (I say character and not origin, because the search for an origin was not his object), it is because he thought he might find resemblances in it to a philosophy he very much admired, that of Heidegger. He did not scorn it a priori.

And what can we say of those who speak of Gnosticism without knowing anything about it, and who sometimes make it the opposite of what it actually is? To start with the *Petit Larousse*⁷² which defines it thus: "Doctrine according to which one can have a perfect knowledge of God." Did whoever wrote this know that perhaps the most extreme examples of negative theology are found in the Gnostic writings, that is, the theology according to which God is *unknowable*?

The "new gnosis" that, according to R. Ruyer, developed among certain Princeton scholars also clearly seems to be the exact opposite of Gnosticism. The religion of these scholars seems to be a cosmic religion, faith in a spirit immanent in the world, almost what Stoicism was in the ancient world. That is why they make no place for Christ in their belief.⁷³ The God whose existence they admit is a God known directly, being manifested directly by the things of the world. Gnosticism, on the other hand, far from not being Christian, can be regarded as a doctrine absolutely centered upon Christ, in the sense that it is a doctrine according to which God cannot be known but by a Savior or a Mediator who has a human form.⁷⁴ The Good is known through a human form, not directly in the things of the world. These are nothing but the interplay of forces. This game has its beauty, but the Good ought to be distinguished from it.

What the Gnostics blamed in the Demiurge, that is, the power that for them dominated and symbolized the world, was that it wished to be God and even to be *the only God*.⁷⁵ Thus, it was not exactly the world that they attacked but *the religion of the world*, the boundless adoration of that which is nothing but might.

The discovery of Nag Hammadi far from having definitively cleared up the problem of the origin of Gnosticism has been much more the occasion for new errors on this point and risks putting research once again upon a false track. In making known these writings, which seem for the most part late and decadent, which seem to have been written at a time when Gnosticism, far removed from its beginnings, had become more and more syncretistic and lost in obscure speculations, this discovery above all highlights the differences between this current, which had developed in one way, and

the principal current of Christianity, which developed in another. In doing so it feeds the hypothesis of the non-Christian origin of Gnosticism and even transforms it into a certitude in the eyes of those who do not look closely. By taking no account of the symbolic language of the Gnostics, nor any account of the evolution by which these complicated doctrines could arise from simple doctrines, which would allow them to be understood, many scholars cannot see at all how these complicated myths can be linked to Christianity. And as the Nag Hammadi writings give scarcely any hints that allow us to date them, many see no difficulty in regarding them as just as old as or even older than Christianity. Or, if they dare not say that these writings go so far back, they say that the doctrines they express do. Thus, an image of a religion apart is formed, a religion already formed in the first century, which nothing explains and which has barely any meaning.

When a question is badly put, no feat can produce a reply. No discovery of texts will suffice, I fear, to resolve the problem of Gnosticism so long as there is no attempt to give meaning to the thought of the Gnostics and so long as one avoids understanding, on certain points, the thought of earliest Christianity.

Perhaps it is because they no longer understand Christianity enough that so many scholars are now inclined to think that Gnosticism does not derive from it. The Gnostics said that humanity must be liberated from the religion of the world and that this was not possible except by a revelation that was not of this world. What did Christianity say but this? What did the Gospel of John say other than this?

There are far more texts in the New Testament that seem to challenge the world than texts that are favorable to it. Certainly, in some texts, "the world" often means "men." But the boundary between the world of men and the world in general, the visible world as a whole, is often obscure. In many texts it is obvious that they cannot simply be referring to the human world. The promised salvation does not consist simply in an evasion of society but in being lifted beyond earthly concerns, particularly *beyond death*. Nietzsche held Christianity to be a factor in nihilism, because Christianity judged things in relation to another world and thereby to some extent destroyed the value of this world. The word "nihilism" is not the right one, but one cannot deny that Christianity does devalue the world in some way, especially if one is referring to early Christianity. Nietzsche was wrong simply to regard the Christian attitude as entirely negative and blameworthy. It is good, as he puts it, to want "to remain faithful to the earth." But looked at from another angle, not to want to judge things from the point of view of a *value*, a *good* that is above all things, that is foreign, like the God of the Gnostics, that is finally *absolute*, apart, is in the end to justify all injustice, all lies, and all evil from the moment they begin to exist. Whoever refuses to confuse what ought to be with what is, right with might, good with evil, might perhaps be accused of nihilism and an anti-

cosmic attitude. In a way, Plato and Kant might be said to be nihilists and to hold an anticosmic attitude, and Nietzsche's ideas, whatever their original intention, can be used by the most brutal might.

I certainly do not defend everything the Gnostics say. Who could do that? They did not agree among themselves. It was not one heresy but a swarming ant-heap of heresies. Not only were these doctrines numerous and diverse, but they were constantly moving and changing. I do not defend the anticosmic attitude of the Gnostics, in the sense that, wishing to overcome the religion of the world, they seemed to overcome the world itself. I defend their docetism even less. Many of the recently discovered texts seem to me to lack wisdom and moderation, and some of them are perhaps even downright stupid. Even the best of the Gnostic texts—at least of those that have been rediscovered and preserved—are certainly far inferior in beauty and rightness of thought to those of the New Testament. But where and when did Christian theology hold itself at the level of Paul and John? The works of the great Gnostic masters (Basilides, Valentinus, Marcion), judging by what little we know of them, seem to have been on at least the same level, if not a higher one, than the works of ecclesiastical writers that have come down to us from the same epoch. One must listen to Origen in the East and Augustine in the West to find great theologians in the Great Church. It is remarkable, too, that both of them were profoundly influenced by Gnosticism and to a large extent incorporated it into their doctrines.

I do not defend the excesses of Gnosticism, but it must have had some meaning. It seems to me that the Gnostics of the first half of the second century wished to be faithful to Paul and John, and that in certain ways they were more faithful to them than their orthodox contemporaries. (In other respects, it is true, they were less faithful.) This desire to be faithful to early Christianity was in their own eyes their justification, it was that which gave meaning to their movement. What they wished and claimed was to be Christian. (The word "Gnostic" meant Christian for them; Origen also used it in this sense.)⁷⁶ Without doubt, this ruleless, one might even say wild, Christianity was likely to lose its way. But if it had a greater degree of liberty to be extravagant, it also possessed a greater degree for creativity and poetry. And it is because of their poetry that the preserved or rediscovered Gnostic works are of value. The hymns of the *Acts of Thomas* (especially the "Song of the Pearl"), the Psalms of the Naassenes, the *Odes of Solomon*, the Manichean Psalms, and certain Mandaean poems are written in beautiful and moving poetry. (The Gnostics developed the theme of exile, which would later be taken up by the Romantics.) Even the Gnostic writings in prose, or at least most of them, probably ought to be regarded as a sort of poetry. They are not writings that strive to argue a case.⁷⁷

Myths and images play a very great part here, and it cannot be thought that all these myths, all these symbols were objects of belief. In actual fact,

Gnostic writings often passed from one sect to another and from one school to another; the same school therefore accepted different works that would be irreconcilable if they were held as dogmas. They were only reconcilable insofar as they were essays of religious literature expressing approximately the same faith and the same feelings.

I have been criticized for not taking account of the whole breadth of the Gnostic movement. R. McL. Wilson comments that on the one hand there are scholars (and he counts me among them) who take the study of Gnostic Christianity as the starting point for their work, and on the other hand there are scholars whose starting point is more general, since they also take account of Manicheism, Mandeism, the *Corpus Hermeticum*, and the Gnostic "motifs" that can be found in Philo and in the New Testament. He suggests that their differences of opinion on the origin of Gnosticism might spring from this.⁷⁸ I do not believe that this explanation is valid so far as I am concerned. For my part, I thoroughly take account of Manicheism, Mandeism, the *Corpus Hermeticum*, and the Gnostic "motifs" that can be found in Philo and in the New Testament. As I said, I entirely agree that from a certain time, there was a general Gnosticism. When I speak of Gnosticism, I refer to every doctrine in which the same fundamental feeling and the same structure as Gnostic Christianity is found. By the same fundamental feeling I understand the anticosmic attitude of which I have spoke above (and which would be better called transcendental dualism, or, better still, *a feeling of transcendence pushed to its limit*); and by the same structure I understand the distinction of two levels in the supraterrrestrial world, each having a representative who can be called God, although only the one who belongs to the superior level can be called the true God. But I stress that this general Gnosticism *may have derived from Gnostic Christianity*. Manicheism has its principal origin in Christian doctrines, as, in particular, the recently discovered Cologne Codex has shown.⁷⁹ As for Mandeism, the position taken up by Quispel⁸⁰ shows that the Mandaean question is far from being resolved. E. Segelberg thinks that the discovery of the Cologne Codex necessitates a new analysis of the oldest Mandaean texts.⁸¹ And as for Gnostic Hermeticism, it does not seem that it could be earlier than the time when Gnostic Christianity was already widespread in Egypt and other parts of the Roman Empire; and its resemblances with Valentinianism suggest a dependence that might go in either direction. The only Gnosticism whose existence before or independently of Christianity can be held for sure is that which is found in Philo—if Gnosticism is found there—or that which the New Testament presupposes—if it is true that the New Testament presupposes a Gnosticism that was already formed outside Christianity. But here R. McL. Wilson has the prudence to speak of "Gnostic motifs" and not of Gnosticism. For he knows very well that Philo was not a Gnostic.⁸² He also knows—he has himself demonstrated it in certain particular cases—that there is no developed Gnosticism whose existence can be proved by the New Testament.

I think I can therefore say that I do not simply take account of Gnostic Christianity. I take account of all that can be called by the name of Gnosticism—or of Gnosis, if Gnosis is defined by the same characteristics as Gnosticism. But I do not see that anything that can be found in general Gnosticism is definitely earlier than Gnostic Christianity or definitely independent of it.



In the first part of this work, I will try to demonstrate that the principal myths and characteristics of Gnosticism can be understood on the basis of Christianity, indeed, that it is difficult to understand them otherwise. In the second part, by studying the succession of Gnostic doctrines, insofar as the documents allow us to reconstruct them, I will try to show how we can portray the beginnings and evolution of Gnosticism.

PART 1
Christianity and
Gnosticism



I
Can the Principal Gnostic “Myths”
Be Understood on the
Basis of Christianity?

Chapter I

The Demiurge

In diverse ways, the Gnostics recount a story that begins at the beginning of time. According to this story, the world was created by powers who did not know God and would not suffer humanity to adore anything but themselves. But God wished to save people from the adoration of the powers. He revealed himself to them by a messenger who broke through the barriers surrounding the world, and, despite the efforts of the powers to destroy his message, this messenger made known the existence of a God located beyond the world, far above the powers, whose kingdom was the realm of truth. This story varied from one account to another, but the principal characters were always much the same. Two of these characters are figures who also belong to Christianity: the one God, called "the Father" and his Son, the Messenger, the Savior, who is usually Christ. But the others seem to be strangers to the Christian tradition. Who is this Demiurge, this Creator, who claims to be God but is not the true God, and in reality is nothing but an angel? Who are these Archons, these "rulers," these "powers," who rule the heavens and collaborated with their Father, the Demiurge, in the work of creation, particularly the creation of humanity? Who is this Mother, or rather who are these Mothers, one of whom is the first of the divine emanations, a very high and pure principle, the other the last and most feeble of the emanations, a "Wisdom" who has gone astray in her search for God and has fallen below the perfect world and has given birth to the Demiurge? Why is the heaven we see made up of spheres or vaults that are really barriers, closing the world and holding back souls who might wish to escape from it? These barriers can only be broken through by souls who know the true God and who have faith in his kingdom, a kingdom of pure spirit and pure goodness, revealed by the Savior who has descended from it. For this world is so apart that we would not have known it if it had not itself been revealed to us. And finally, why is the name of Man, understood as referring to a divine being, sometimes given to God the Father, sometimes to his Son, and sometimes to a sort of great being who brings together all the souls that have been saved?

Strange though these images and figures may seem, I believe that they can be understood as the expression of a theology that though not con-

forming to ordinary Christian theology nevertheless derives from Christianity.

1. *The Demiurge and the Unknown God*

When the Gnostics speak of the figure we call the Demiurge—some Gnostics do in fact call him the Demiurge (*Dēmiourgos*), but others call him “the God of the Jews” or give him yet more names, a few of which we will cite below—they are not actually creating a myth. Insofar as the Demiurge is a character, he existed before them, for he was present (and what an imposing, powerful, and formidable presence!) in the Scriptures known to all Christians and all Gnostics, that is, in the Old Testament. The Demiurge is simply the God of the Old Testament. He is called Demiurge, that is, “Artisan,” because the God of the Old Testament is essentially the Creator of the world.

In the *Timaeus* Plato gave the name of Artisan to the creator of the universe. For Plato this creator was mythical, but he was not so for Jews or for Christians. The Gnostics were not the only ones who gave the name of Demiurge, derived from Plato, to the God of the Bible; the Christians of the Great Church also did this, and before them, the Platonist Jew Philo. It is true that insofar as this name means God it is not found in the Septuagint and only appears once in the New Testament (Heb. 11:10). But it is found in Clement of Rome at the end of the first century, then in the apologists of the second century, and then in the Christian theologians of Alexandria.

What is particular about the Gnostics’ idea, or myth, if you like, is not the character of the Demiurge itself but that this figure was distinguished from the true God. This distinction might be considered as the center, the fundamental decision and characteristic trait of heretical Gnosticism. By it most especially the Gnostics taught the fundamental separation of God and the world, and the fundamental separation of their religion from the Old Testament Law. For Irenaeus the adherents of “so-called Gnosis” are, above all, those who deny that the God of Genesis is the same as the God of the Christians. From the beginning of his great work (*Adv. Haer.* 1, *praefatio*, 1), Irenaeus characterizes them by this denial. Though further on, in his Catalogue of the sects, we also find the Ebionites, that is, Jewish Christians for whom the Creator in no way differs from the true God. But if he refers to the Ebionites it is only briefly and perhaps because the occasion arose (for their Christology, analogous to that of Carpocrates and Cerinthus, led him to speak of them after having referred to these two). Or it might be he is reproducing an earlier catalog, perhaps based upon Justin’s *Syntagma*, but containing additions to Justin (since for Justin Jewish Christians were not heretics). Whoever they were, the Ebionites do not really play a part in the great heresy that Irenaeus opposes in his work.

The Demiurge is thus a figure that the Christians knew and, before them, the Jews. What is distinctive in the Gnostics are the characteristics they give this figure, the very fact that they distinguish him from the true God, and the narratives in which they introduce him. These narratives can be summarized approximately as follows:

The Demiurge, that is to say, the God of the Old Testament, believed and proclaimed himself to be the true God. He wished to be sole ruler of the human soul. But the Savior came, sent by his Father who is high above the Demiurge and whom the Demiurge does not know. Descending into the world, the Savior taught the existence of this God, whose kingdom is the transcendent realm of truth. Those who accepted his message know henceforth that the Demiurge is not God, that he is only one of the "powers" that govern the world; that truth is not what the Demiurge knew and taught; that they are themselves derived from the Father, like the Savior, and are also not of the world. This knowledge allows them to break through the seven spheres surrounding the world and to arrive at another reality, which is both their own origin and their own destination.

What does this narrative mean? It seems to me that it tends to demonstrate above all the *novelty*, as well as the *superiority* and *absolute truth* of the revelation brought by the Savior. He presents this revelation as a reality unknown to the Old Testament Law. The God who speaks and gives the laws in the Old Testament did not make the Father of the Savior known. He was not this Father and did not know him. Does it not seem that what is above all intended—and perhaps simply this—is that the Savior revealed something about God that the Old Testament did not know?

The heavens of the Demiurge must be passed beyond to reach the true God. Could this not simply mean that the Old Testament revelation is imperfect and that it must be passed beyond in order to know the true religion?

It seems that the division of time into two parts—before and after the Savior—explains the apparently spatial division of two superimposed worlds. The world below, which not only contains the earth but also the heaven of the Demiurge, is the sum of what was known before the coming of the Savior. The world above is the one whose existence is known to believers after this coming. The separation of the two worlds is the myth of the separation of the two times. Or, if you prefer, it is the myth of a double revelation: an old revelation that was imperfect (and misleading, since it presented itself as the only true one), and a new revelation that is alone complete and perfectly true.

This myth might, therefore, have been intended above all to bring out the importance of the character of the Savior. Without the Savior there would not have been two times, and there would not therefore have been two levels. It is because the teaching of the Savior is absolutely new that he revealed a world *apart*. The Savior is not simply a man who could disclose something truer than what was hitherto known. He came from another place and made known a reality that could not be conceived if it was not itself revealed. His teaching turned our ideas upside down and

could therefore only be *received* in an unexpected way. It could only be *freely given* by a messenger of the unknown Father.

The name "*unknown Father*," which the Gnostics give to the true God, might be understood as meaning that God is unknowable in his essence. Some Gnostics in fact leaned very heavily on the idea of the impossibility of knowing God. Valentinus, for example, calls God "Abyss" and associates this inseparably with "Silence." Other Gnostics increased the negative predicates in speaking of God, going so far as to say, as in Hippolytus's Basilides, that the true God is "the God who is not" (Hippolytus, *Ref.* VII, 21). But in the beginning, the expression "unknown God" seems to me to have signified rather that the true God *was not yet known* before the coming of the Savior. In Simon, Menander, Saturnilus, and Cerinthus, the Father is called *unknown* (*ignoratus, incognitus*), not *unknowable* (Irenaeus, I, 23–24 and 26). Simon and Cerinthus specify that the Father was not known by the creative powers, or by the creative *power*. The heretics who are opposed in the pastoral epistles, and who were probably Gnostics, or very close to being so, claimed "to know God" (Titus 1:16); they did not therefore think that he was unknowable. They rather wished to say that they were distinguished from the rest of humanity by their knowledge of the true God who was *hitherto unknown*.

In his famous work *Agnostos Theos* (Leipzig, 1913), Norden showed that the expression *Theos agnōstos* was not found in purely Greek literature; it only appears in the Gnostics and (afterward) in the later Platonists. He believed that this expression betrayed the influence of "oriental" thought, of which he thought Gnosticism was the outcome. (He thus adopted the views of Reitzenstein and Bousset.) In the fourth volume of *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste* (Paris, 1954), Father Festugière prefers to see the idea expressed in "unknown God" as going back to Platonism, even though the expression itself is not found in the classical era. He observes that *agnōstos* might mean "unknowable" as well as "unknown," for the idea that the supreme principle is impossible to define in words and that understanding or wisdom can only approach it, not grasp it, is an idea found in Plato.¹ These observations are quite right. The fact remains, however, that the expression "unknown God" is not found in Plato or in the Platonists up to Numenius. The Greeks could dedicate altars "to the unknown god" (Paul saw one as he passed through the streets of Athens); but in this case the expression did not have the same meaning as when it was applied to the one God. (It was rather a matter of protecting oneself against the possibility of forgetting a god.) It is only when it is applied to the one God that it assumes the meaning given to it by the Gnostics and later Platonists. This does not mean that Norden was right in seeing an "oriental" influence here. On the other hand, nor is it certain that Father Festugière was right to equate the "unknown God" and "the unknowable God," especially insofar as the Gnostics are concerned. For them, the *Theos agnōstos* seems initially to have been the God *who was not known*

before a certain time, whom in particular the "Powers" and among them the Demiurge, did not know. The same men Irenaeus depicts as being among the earliest to distinguish the true God from the Creator are those he also depicts as teaching that the true God was unknown to all, and most especially to the creative powers. It therefore seems that the idea of an unknown God might be related to the idea of a Demiurge who is not the true God. And this idea of the unknown God, as being the God who was not known formerly, is one that was preserved throughout Gnosticism, even when the Gnostics also developed the idea that God is unknowable. For the Valentinians, for example, God is only known (insofar as he can be known) through Christ, which implies that before Christ there was no true knowledge of God, even if humanity had some sort of notion of him.

Is it not possible that those who first gave God the name of Unknown has taken up the expression Paul had used in his speech in the Areopagus (Acts 17:23), though implicitly giving the word "unknown" quite another meaning than what Paul had in mind? Paul interpreted "unknown" as meaning "unknown to the pagans." He had used this expression, found upon a pagan altar, as an introduction, a way into the subject, leading up to what he wanted to teach the Athenians. "This God whom you adore without knowing, I am going to reveal to you." But straightaway what he reveals to them is that there is a God who is Creator of the world, a God who is obviously the God of the Old Testament, a God unknown to the pagans but not to the Jews. The first Gnostics could take up the expression used by Paul, but make it mean that the God whom Jesus Christ taught was unknown even to the Jews, unknown to the Old Testament. This expression would have seemed to them fitting to describe the absolute newness of Christ's teaching.

Who, in fact, was this Savior to whom the Gnostics thought they owed their knowledge of the true God? Must he not have been a figure of exceptional importance, that his revelation should be considered so new and decisive? And whatever is said about the minor importance the Gnostics would have attached to the notion of history, must this figure not have been conceived of as historical since he is attributed with having brought something entirely new into history, something that has cut time in two? If the Gnostic Savior is not historical, he must at least have been held to be historical. If he is imaginary, he must have been imagined according to the model of a historical figure.

Now what historical figure do we know of at this time who could have been regarded by those who believed in him as having brought about such a great transformation? As the Gnostics describe him, he cannot have been an emperor, a king or a leader; he can only have been a teacher, prophet, sage, or revealer. But which teacher, which philosopher, which master do we know at about that time who could be held to have brought about such a great revolution in thought? Can it be imagined that men such as Simon or Menander, founders of very small sects, could have taken on such an

aspect, even in the eyes of their disciples? Can it be imagined that the Savior, whose intervention inaugurated a new era, could have been anyone other than the one whose name, ever since the reign of Claudius, gave rise to such tumults among the Jews in Rome that Claudius took the decision to banish Jews from this town?

It might be doubted that Christ himself would have appeared so revolutionary. For his preaching and morality only proceed further along the lines already laid down by certain Jewish masters. But something really was revolutionary: it was the image of the cross, the image of the divine persecuted by the world and punished by it, the image that Paul had made the primary teaching of Christ and foundation of Christianity.

In fact, in most of the Gnostic doctrines known to us, Christ is the Savior. He can bear other names in some works, but we will see that the persons referred to by these names are either probably or definitely figures of Christ. There are also pagan gnoses, but they do not seem to be among the oldest, and specifically Gnostic thought is found here in a weakened form, as if they were imitations. As for Simon and Menander, we will see that the assertions of the heresiologists, according to whom they presented themselves as saviors, ought to be treated with a great deal of caution. In the instances when they might have claimed it, the idea of a savior perhaps came to them from Christianity, as Hilgenfeld thought.

Hilgenfeld, whose *Ketzergeschichte*, published in 1884, is still to my knowledge one of the most useful books for understanding Gnosticism, seems to me to be the one scholar who has had the most accurate opinions on the whole of the Gnostic movement, even though he did not know of the numerous documents that have been discovered since that time, and despite his frequent overestimate of the heresiologists. Before Jonas he saw that syncretism, the intermixture of religions, would not suffice to explain Gnosticism, and that there was a new element in it.² He also saw that the distinction between God and the Demiurge was its characteristic trait. Finally, in contrast to Jonas and many present-day scholars, he saw that Gnosticism could not be explained without Christianity.

Rudolph seems to me not to have understood very well Hilgenfeld's position on this last point. In the preface to his collection *Gnosis und Gnostizismus* (p. XIII), he comments that for Hilgenfeld gnosis is a phenomenon outside of Christianity. He ought to have made it clear that if, according to Hilgenfeld, Gnosticism was born outside of Christianity, he also held that it was not born *independently* of it. Hilgenfeld believed it to be born outside Christianity because he eventually accepted the ecclesiastical tradition that wanted to make Simon Magus the father of this heresy. But according to him, Simon worked out his doctrine after *having encountered Christianity and under the influence of this knowledge*.³ He interpreted Christianity as a new revelation, a revelation of a God hitherto *unknown*. "Hilgenfeld," Lipsius observed, "finds in the fundamental Gnostic doctrine of the distinction of the God of the Old Testament and the

God of Christianity, the metaphysical expression of the new and absolute character of the Christian religion" (article "Gnostizismus," republished by Rudolph in *Gnosis und Gnostizismus*, p36).⁴

2. *The Tension between Judaism and Christianity toward the End of the First Century*

But if it is natural that Christ's teaching appeared fundamentally new, if, in any case, Paul and John's teaching on the cross of Christ could be deemed absolutely new, was this really the case to such an extent that Christians believed they ought to break so completely with the Old Testament? Neither Paul or John went that far. The early Christians, those of the first century, all seem to have regarded the God of the Old Testament as the true God. Why should some Christians do what the early Christians did not do, only a little while after, around the end of the first century or the beginning of the second? What had changed?

What had changed, at least, was this, that the gap between Christianity and Judaism had grown deeper and that, on both sides, some people were conscious of it. The Jewish Christians of Jerusalem, who had thought that they could remain faithful Jews even in becoming Christian, had been the victims of the growth of national sentiment that had preceded the revolt against Rome. Their head, James, had been put to death, and a large number of them, perhaps most of them, had had to flee from Jerusalem. The fall of Jerusalem in 70 had in no way diminished the intensity of the religious and national fervor that inflamed the Jews, or the animosity among many of them toward Christianity. From about 80, Christians were excluded from the synagogues, and curses were pronounced against them there. The author of the Fourth Gospel makes an allusion to this excommunication when he represents Christ as saying to his disciples, "They will exclude you from the synagogues, and the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he renders service to God" (John 16:2).

On the Christian side also, some hardened themselves against Judaism. The author of the Fourth Gospel, indeed, is one of them. For him, Christ's enemies were no longer only the Pharisees, the Scribes, and the Sadducees, but "the Jews," as if the latter simply formed one block. He certainly did not think that the God of the Old Testament was anything other than the true God, and he believes that the Old Testament witnesses to Christ. But he seems to question the Judaism of his time when he makes Christ say, time and again, that the Jews *do not know God* (John 5:37-38; 7:28; 8:19, 54-55; 15:21; 16:3). The Johannine Christ speaks as if the Father had not been known by the world before he had revealed him (John 15:21; 17:25).⁵ In particular, he says that he revealed the *name* of the Father (John 17:6, 26), which would seem to distinguish him from Yahweh whose name was known. From Paul to John, there is without doubt a growth in the

tension between Judaism and Christianity, and this tension would remain strong during the first decades of the second century.

This is precisely when the doctrines of the Gnostics appear most definitely and clearly.

3. *The Link between this Tension and the Appearance of the Demiurge*

Doubtless one recoils from the idea that opposition to the Old Testament could have formed within Christianity. Nowadays Christian theologians have ceased, or very nearly ceased, to oppose Christianity and Judaism. They think of them as so closely linked that in France, at least, one hardly ever speaks of Christianity without calling it Judeo-Christianity. There are certainly grounds for bringing out everything in the Old Testament that already heralded the New. There are grounds for liking its very beautiful texts, which abound. There are also grounds in that Jesus, Paul, John and the whole of the New Testament lay claim to the Old. Finally, everything that can diminish absurd and cruel religious intolerance is precious. But confused ideas that make history incomprehensible must be avoided. First, the name, Judeo-Christianity might lend itself to confusion. For in the early centuries of our time, there was a Judeo-Christianity that was not Christianity at all but simply a branch of it, which was soon considered heretical. Jewish Christians were those who wished to maintain their Jewish observances (circumcision, food laws, the Sabbath, etc.). Moreover, many of them, even though they venerated Christ, did not consider him absolutely divine or consubstantially united with the one God. To speak of Jewish Christianity in order to designate Christianity in general leads to a situation in which we are no longer able to understand what historians refer to when they speak of Jewish-Christians. Further, it must not be forgotten that there are certain differences between Judaism and Christianity besides that of the divinity of Christ. We cannot consider these differences at length here; it is a subject upon which Christian theologians have hardly stopped holding forth for almost twenty centuries. But it is quite well known that Pauline theology, a theology of the cross, breaks with the Old Testament's vision of the world. Faith in the cross makes the optimism that usually reigns in the Old Testament writings seem naive, where for the most part the good are rewarded and the evil are punished in this life; furthermore, these writings hardly know of another life. The cross is the most striking sign that judgment by what happens in the world is not the true judgment, that glory and power do not justify, that misfortune does not condemn, that it is not history that judges. The theology of the cross implies the "anticosmism" that is found to a certain extent in Paul and that is more profound than that of the apocalyptic writers.

The apocalyptic writers also criticized the world. But the other world they dreamed of was a future world, which ought to succeed the destruc-

tion of this world; a future world, but analogous to this one. For Paul faith in the cross in a sense brought about from now on the collapse of the power of the world, insofar as this power worked upon the soul. Paul preserved the apocalyptic idea of the imminent end of the world; but he thought that, as from the present, the world had lost its sway over the souls of those who had faith in the cross. These people were already as if dead to the world and resurrected to another life. Given the fact that this life coexists with the present life, it is necessarily of another sort; it resembles the present life less than the future life of the apocalyptic writers did. Henceforth there is something truly other and higher than the world for humanity.

In the Old Testament the world was so narrowly and directly dependent upon God that God himself (I understand here the way in which he was represented) was in turn almost tied up with and chained to the world. And he was thereby also tied up with the souls of human beings much more than he would have been naturally. For the temptation natural to human thought was thereby reinforced, to submit wholly to might, to brute fact, not only in judgments of fact but in judgments of value. Since the events of the world were represented as directly dependent upon God, one could scarcely judge the divine will except in relation to events, in relation to success or failure, in a word, in relation to might. To judge the divine will thus was to judge good and evil. It was therefore requisite to submit to the powers of the world, not only by necessity, but even more by religious scruple. It is true that those who believed in the religion of the Old Testament did not always respect might and did not always submit to it. For they also found in their book examples of innocent people—Job among others—stricken, at least temporarily, by misfortune. Moreover, theirs was to a large extent a religion of the nation; now Israel was not always the strongest, and when it was not, Israel energetically challenged might. But there was even a tendency to regard misfortune as a just punishment. The image of the cross is an image that liberates. In showing that the powers did not know the good, it comes between the good and might. It teaches that God is above the powers and is in no way manifested by them. *The cross separates God from the world.* If it does not separate him absolutely, at least it puts him at a very great distance. It puts him much further away than the distinction between Creator and creature could do, or the correction of anthropomorphisms in the Bible, or even the late Jewish theory of intermediaries. It thus delivers human beings from a spiritual servitude in which the spirit of the Old Testament tended to imprison them, just as the spirit of ancient religions in general tended to do. It is indeed, as Paul sees, something that is profoundly new, “a scandal to the Jews and folly to the Greeks.”

Certainly God is also conceived of as powerful in Christianity. He can intervene in the world. But separated from the ordinary course of events, and fundamentally separated from material and social powers, he can be

manifest as the absolute Good. The God of the Old Testament proclaims that he is the cause of evil as well as good, and that the devil is among his servants. At Qumran, the two rival spirits who dominate the world, the Prince of light and the Angel of darkness, are established by God and obey him, even though each detests the other. This idea is still found even in the Jewish Christians of the Pseudo-Clementines, for whom the "True Prophet" and the devil are the right and left hands of God. In the gospel, on the contrary, the devil is the enemy of God who in no sense includes evil. The Gnostics in particular, and especially Marcion and Valentinus, insisted on the absolute goodness of God.

One more idea of God, who might be called "*another God*"; a God hitherto unknown.

4. *Possible Objections to this Explanation*

But did the Gnostics not renounce a theology of the cross? They were docetists, we are told, and indeed we find Gnostic texts that seem to justify this accusation. They often seem to say that the body of Christ and his crucifixion had been nothing but appearances. But is this not because for them what happens in the world is not a revelation of truth, is it not precisely because of this that it was treated as an appearance? At the outset at least, this perhaps meant not that the event had not taken place but that it had a meaning very different from the apparent one. This defeat was a victory. It was the liberation of humanity, the accomplishment of the divine will, the end of the "powers'" uncontested reign. If the cross had no meaning for the Gnostics, the fact that their thought had so many links with that of Paul and John, for whom the cross is the teaching that brings salvation and that contains the essence of Christianity, could not be explained.

Paul was perhaps the first Christian to attach a decisive significance to the cross, and John, a little later, gave it the same significance. Now Paul and John are without doubt the theologians to whom we owe if not the idea of Christ's divinity at least the idea that this divinity was primordial and consubstantial. For the first Christian community, in Jerusalem, it seemed obvious that in origin and nature Christ had been from the outset but a man like others, albeit more just than any other. He was a man who in reward for his merits God had resurrected and then raised up to himself. For this community, still closely linked with Judaism, there had been no *descent* of the divine, but rather *a raising up, an apotheosis*, of a being who was first and foremost human.⁶ For Paul and John, by contrast, Christ is a preexistent divine being, he is the Son of God, *descended from heaven*, which was to say that in a way he was not what he appeared to be. This portrayal could easily lead to docetism; for *the desire to accentuate the divinity of Christ is the root of docetism*. It is remarkable that the portrayal of a Christ who is essentially divine should have appeared precisely in the

two theologians who attached the greatest importance to the cross. It must also be noted that the cross being for Paul and John the event by which Christ overcame the powers, it too was not exactly what it seemed to be.

Implicit in Paul's thought is the idea that Christ (or God by means of Christ) in some way set a trap for the powers. If they had known Christ for what he was, they would not have crucified him;⁷ so the crucifixion was necessary to allow man to escape them. The powers had been deceived by the appearance of a man who was not only a man. This mistake was the beginning of their fall, which would soon be consummated. In this way there were elements in Paulinism that could lead to a docetic interpretation of the cross. In appearance the cross had been nothing but a hideous torture; in reality it was also something else. With the desire to stress the divinity of Christ, the idea that the cross had been the result of some sort of mistake by the powers seems to me to be at the root of Gnostic docetism.

Furthermore, certain ideas peculiar to John's Gospel can also bring us near to Docetism, as we shall see.⁸

Another difficulty remains. We explain the divide between the two worlds by the idea of the absolute newness of the Christian message. But was the revelation of a savior so new for the Gnostics? We know that it was absolutely new to Marcion. But to others? In more than one Gnostic doctrine or work it is said that the revelation of truth had been effected even before the coming of the Savior. For the Valentinians, for example, a divine emanation, Sophia (Wisdom), having become imperfect but nevertheless knowing the true God in some way, had often spoken through the mouth of the Jewish prophets. The Valentinians thought that the unknown God had truly been revealed only by Christ, but they nevertheless attributed a value to certain parts of the Old Testament. Moreover, perhaps for Valentinus, and in any case for other Gnostics, the revelations that came down to the world from the true God had been made ever since the beginning of history, to the first man, Adam, or to his son Seth and had been preserved in the world by men whom certain Gnostics called the descendants of Seth. (At least this is what some scholars think they are able to conclude from the myths called "Sethian.") Finally, for some Gnostics, and in particular for Valentinus, some idea of the truth had been given to the pagans themselves. Thus, the newness of the message does not seem to have had the same fundamental importance for all the Gnostics. How then could this idea of newness have played the fundamental role we attribute to it?

Again, it is a question of being clear about dates. Valentinus seems to have been concerned to rehabilitate certain parts of the Old Testament, and to attenuate the overemphatic division the first Gnostics had made between the old revelation and the new. We will see that such a concern enables us to explain most of the elements of his doctrine. But really, the characteristic traits of the Demiurge are, in Valentinus's thought and that

of his disciples, far less accentuated than in Gnostics such as Saturnilus, Basilides (that of Irenaeus), Carpocrates, and Marcion. He inherited this figure and preserved it, but he related it to the true God. Valentinus's doctrine can be understood as a Gnosticism that to a certain extent reacts against the excessive ideas of the first Gnostics.

It is natural that enthusiasm for the Savior immediately led to an insistence on the newness and absolute singularity of his message. Or if not absolutely immediately, it is natural that it was stressed from the moment the new religion, definitively rejected by the old one, had to realize that it was *another* religion. But it is also natural that afterward someone like Valentinus, who knew Judaism and Hellenism well, would have thought that even before Christ certain Christian ideas or ideas tending toward Christianity could have been conceived. Especially since the texts of the New Testament, which were increasingly better collected during the second century, forced the realization that the founders of Christianity appealed to the Old Testament. To deny the links between the New Testament and the Old many passages would have to be cut out, but Marcion was the only one who dared to do it. Valentinus seems to have had an open and broadly tolerant spirit. He seems to have wished not only to conciliate as far as possible the diverse tendencies that appealed to Christianity but also to give a fair place to Judaism and Hellenism in the knowledge of the truth.

As for those called Ophites or Sethians, whose myths relate that revelations were sent by the true God at the beginning of human history, we will see that their doctrines are better understood in large part as derived from Valentinianism than as the early doctrines that inspired the ideas of Valentinus and his school. The texts we have of Valentinus and his first disciples do not suggest that they knew these doctrines. Rather, they show that Valentinian ideas must have prepared the way for and inspired these doctrines, and are their necessary prerequisite conditions. In particular we will see that the theme of the "four illuminators," which is one of their principal characteristics, cannot be fully explained except by speculations found in the first Valentinians; whereas these Valentinian speculations can only with difficulty be explained by the Sethian and Ophite texts relating to this theme.⁹

5. The Other Explanations that Have Been Proposed

Not only can the Gnostic conception of the Demiurge be explained by Christianity, but it very much seems that it cannot be explained otherwise. It seems to me that nothing in Jewish circles prior to Christianity could lead to the positing of such a distance between God and the Old Testament Creator, to the representing of the latter as ignorant of the true God and as mistakenly considering himself to be the one God. Still less could paganism arrive at the idea that the Creator is an angel who claims to be the

one God; for neither the creation of the world, nor the one God, nor the angels seem to be pagan conceptions.

Cullmann has cited a Talmudic text that states that the doctrines of the *minim* (= the heretics) lead to a debasing of the creator God.¹⁰ But this text is far too vague to allow us to affirm that the *minim* in question were Gnostic Jews and not Christians or Gnostic Christians.¹¹ Moreover, there could have been many ways of debasing the creator God, and that which is found in the Gnostics is not necessarily the only one. At the Messina conference, J. Daniélou stated that there were elements in Judaism that allow Yahweh to be assimilated to an angel.¹² Nevertheless, these elements have never, it seems, sufficed to build up the conception of Yahweh as nothing but an angel, even in more or less heterodox Jewish sects. The latter never make Yahweh into an angel *ignorant of the true God*. On that question one can read Jonas's reply.¹³

The text of the *Tripartite Treatise* (112, 33—113, 1) states that there were heretics among the Jews who said that God had not created alone but with help or by the intermediacy of angels. But this in no way demonstrates that Jewish heretics had worked out the figure of the Demiurge. The idea that God created using his angels as helpers was not even heretical in Judaism; it was upheld by the rabbis.¹⁴ It was based on the Genesis verse (1:26) where God says "Let us make man," as if he spoke to helpers and was not the only one to create. This idea could not be considered heretical unless it was linked with a doctrine contesting the value of the human body, as is the case in Philo. Justin wrote that the Jews considered as heretics those who said that the human body was the work of angels (*Dialogue*, 62). It is in fact probable that Philo was more or less regarded as a heretic (it is Christians who preserved his works).¹⁵ But, heretic or not, Philo is still very far from being a Gnostic. The angels that created the human body were, according to him, obedient servants of God. They were not ignorant of God, and they did not set themselves up as divinities. God used them for part of his work because it was not fitting for him directly to create what might be the cause of sin. But God remained the creator of the universe. There was no other Demiurge for Philo but he who was identical with the true God.

Quispel draws an argument¹⁶ from the doctrine of the Maghâria, a Jewish sect of which Qirqisâni (tenth century A.D) and Shahrastâni (eleventh–twelfth century A.D.) speak, and which was perhaps pre-Christian. But one has only to read what these two writers say about the Maghâria to understand that their distinction between God and the creator angel is in no way that of the Gnostics. As Shahrastâni observes, the creator angel whom they refer to was merely the "lieutenant" of God. God remained the true creator, as one of the texts in which Qirqisâni describes their doctrine shows.¹⁷ The Gnostic Demiurge is characterized by the fact that he does not know God and creates on his own authority. Moreover, this God himself is always the God of the Old Testament, not his lieutenant. For the

Gnostics it is the God of the Old Testament who becomes an angel, and who is thus distinguished from the true God. The Gnostic myth *devalues* Yahweh, and as far as we can know, this is something the Maghârian myth never does. On the contrary, the Maghâria seem to have had no purpose other than to avoid anthropomorphism in the depiction of God.

It is true that H. A. Wolfson¹⁸ and N. Golb,¹⁹ like Quispel, thought there was a strong analogy between the creator angel of the Maghâria and the Gnostics' Demiurge. The second of these writers, however, does not think that the Maghârian sect is pre-Christian. He thinks that it must have arisen in Egypt during the first few centuries of our era. In this case, it could have been influenced by Christian Gnosticism, from which it could have borrowed an image without borrowing the meaning of the image itself. But the most important point is really that the doctrine is not the same. Like Quispel, Wolfson and Golb ignore the profound difference that exists between a creator who obeys God and a creator who does not know God. The second conception devalues creation and the Creator, something the first one does not do. Moreover, the Gnostic Demiurge is not some figure other than the God of the Old Testament, *he is himself this God*. In him the God of the Old Testament is devalued, whereas the Maghâria wished, on the contrary, to exalt him. We must not confuse a purely extrinsic resemblance with an intrinsic one, a relation of ideas.

The creator angel of the Maghâria has more in common with the Logos of Philo and John than with the Gnostics' Demiurge. Shahrastâni compares him with Arius's Christ, and says that, according to some, Arius derived his doctrine from here.²⁰ Whatever it has to do with Arius, and whatever the time in which the Maghâria ought to be placed, the doctrine of this sect is not Gnostic and can neither have produced nor prefigured the Gnostics' representation of the Demiurge.²¹

If we cannot find the origin of this representation in pre-Christian Judaism, might we not find it in paganism? Bousset seems to suggest that we can in the pages where he studies the origin of the mythical figure of Ialdabaoth.²² This name was given to the Demiurge by Gnostics whom we call Ophites or Sethians. Bousset thinks that Ialdabaoth originally had nothing to do with the God of the Old Testament; that his name cannot be related to any of the biblical names for God. Following the Ophites' description of him, according to Origen (*Contra Celsum* VI, 31), Ialdabaoth's appearance ought to be that of a lion, that is, the aspect belonging to the god Saturn, and that the planet Saturn must have been "in sympathy" with him. Bousset concludes that Ialdabaoth is quite simply Saturn, or an Eastern divinity who could have been identified with this god, and that he derives from a purely pagan figure. Only later might this figure have been identified with the God of the Bible. It would also be easy to understand how this could have happened, given the fact that Saturn's day, Saturday, coincided with Yahweh's day, the Sabbath.

I do not know if Bousset thereby meant to explain the figure of the Gnostic Demiurge in a general way or whether he simply wished to explain the particular interpretation of it by the Ophites and Sethians. But given the fact that he puts the sects in which the Demiurge was called Ialdabaoth at the origin of Gnosticism, and also given the fact that in general he regards the Archons as pagan astral divinities, it is quite possible that what he says about Ialdabaoth he means to apply to the Demiurge in general.

Now, the oldest Gnostics described by the heresiologists²³ already devalue the God of the Old Testament and do not seem to know anything of Ialdabaoth. Where Ialdabaoth is described there are always hints allowing us to realize that he is the God of the Old Testament. The words spoken by Yahweh in the Bible are always attributed anew to him. Moreover, he is the same figure who elsewhere bears one of the names given to God in the Bible or in the Jewish tradition: Esaldaioi (= El Shaddai), Elohim, Iao, Sabaoth, and so on, in a way that makes it seem unlikely that his name could ever have had a meaning radically different from these other names. Even among Origen's Ophites, Ialdabaoth is obviously Yahweh, as Bousset realized.²⁴ We know of no other Ialdabaoth than the one who is linked with Yahweh.

Where, however, does the name of Ialdabaoth, which Bousset does not explain, come from? Various etymologies have been suggested. The one most generally accepted a few years ago derived the name from two Semitic words: one coming from the root *ialad*, which could mean "child," and the other, *baoth*, which could have meant "chaos." The whole could therefore suggest "son of chaos." But Scholem has convincingly criticized this etymology,²⁵ which always seemed to me to be hardly likely. He also criticized other hypotheses, in particular those of W. W. Harvey,²⁶ R. M. Grant,²⁷ and S. Giversen.²⁸

Taking up some of the suggestions made by E. Preuschen and A. Adam, Scholem supposes that in Ialdabaoth *iald* could have meant not "child" but on the contrary "father"; and he shows how a name such as Abaoth could be the equivalent of Sabaoth—magical writings proffer examples of this equivalence. Ialdabaoth could therefore mean "father of Sabaoth." In addition, Sabaoth might especially for magicians have preserved something of its original meaning, "armies," or if you like, "powers." Scholem observes that the name Sabaoth, "insofar as it is a magical name, summarizes or concentrates all the powers of Sabaoth."²⁹ It can be concluded from this that for him Ialdabaoth, being "the father of Sabaoth," is thereby the father of all the powers.

And it is as father of the powers that he appears in Gnostic writings. But is this only because he is father of Sabaoth? He is directly this, since in the first place he begets six or seven sons and Sabaoth is but one of them. He engenders them all directly, and Sabaoth is not even the first of

his sons. Moreover, there is a sort of equivalence between Ialdabaoth and his sons. For the most part the latter bear names that are those of the God of the Old Testament; now, Ialdabaoth is also the God of the Old Testament, since he speaks the words of this God. Just as Sabaoth is no more God of the powers than Ialdabaoth is, so the latter is no more the Demiurge than Sabaoth is, who also appears as the Demiurge in some sects. It is hard to see what motivation there could have been to depict a Demiurge defined simply as being the father of another Demiurge who is more or less the same as him.

Scholem has taken account of the fact that Ialdabaoth is called *archigenetōr*, the "first begetter," in the *Origin of the world* (also called *Work without a Title*) and in the *Sophia of Jesus Christ*; that Sabaoth is called "God of the powers" in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and in the *Origin of the World*; finally, that in the last two works, Sabaoth, who is normally only one of Ialdabaoth's six or seven sons, plays a more important role than his brothers. Following the intervention of Pistis Sophia and her daughter Zoe, he takes his father's place as governor of the world. However, these are not the etymological proofs suggested by Scholem. It is natural that Ialdabaoth, as Demiurge, should be called "the first begetter," and that this title has nothing especially to do with this relation to Sabaoth. That the latter should be called "Lord of the powers" is also natural, given his name, but this does not imply a special link with magic, or that Sabaoth is so different from Ialdabaoth that his intervention should be necessary. Epiphanius comments that the "Gnostics" (which for him means Irenaeus's Barbelognostics, that is, the Sethians) sometimes place Ialdabaoth and sometimes Sabaoth in the seventh heaven (*Pan.* 26, 10). He also observes that, for the Severians, Ialdabaoth is the same as Sabaoth (*Pan.* 45, 1). In the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and the *Origin of the World*, Sabaoth is substituted for his father and takes his place, but even this suggests a certain equivalence between them. And why does he take his place? Because he did penance. He submitted himself to "Wisdom," Sophia, a spirit who became imperfect but who retained some memory of the world of the true God and foresees the future salvation of humanity. He found fault with his father's pretension to be the true God, and in so doing in some way accepted in advance the religion of the Savior. This seems to indicate that some Gnostics divided the God of the Bible into two characters, one of whom was judged to be more acceptable than the other. The aspect judged to be the least acceptable could have been Yahweh, the God of the Law. The most acceptable could have been the God of the prophets after Moses, or the Creator, the Demiurge properly so called, a God before Moses.³⁰ Or perhaps Sabaoth could have represented the God of the Jews who accepted Christianity, and Ialdabaoth the God of the Jews who fought against it. Whatever the case, Ialdabaoth and Sabaoth are analogous figures one to the other, both representing the God of the Old Testament. And I

do not see why the name Ialdabaoth should have been derived from Sabaoth, since Sabaoth and other names to designate God already existed.

As for me, it has always seemed impossible that Ialdabaoth, a name so close to Iao Sabaoth and indeed referring to the same figure (the biblical God) was not linked etymologically with Iao Sabaoth from the outset.³¹ Among the etymologies suggested by scholars, the most likely by far seems to me to be that of R. M. Grant, who derives this name from Iao-El-Sabaoth.³² I had formed this hypothesis myself without knowledge of Grant's article—unless a memory of this article, which I perhaps read in 1957 but had forgotten (I rediscovered it thanks to an article by Scholem), suggested it to me. Even though I do not know Semitic languages very well, I had noticed that the *tsadé* in Aramaic could correspond to a *t*. Now the form "Ialdabaoth" existed among the Gnostics. Grant's article confirms for me that the transition from *z* (*tsadé*, the first letter of Sabaoth) to *d* or *t* was possible. He writes that parallels for this transition exist in Aramaic, "where *teth* and *daleth* are sometimes substituted for *tsadé*." As for the letter *l* in Ialdabaoth, Harvey had already observed that it could derive from the divine name El, and Giversen thinks so too. Grant points out that the forms Iaël, Iaôl, Iôël, Iouël, are found as abbreviations of Iao-El.

The transformation of Iao-El-Sabaoth into Ialdabaoth could have happened in magical circles, since Origen writes that the Ophites borrowed this name from magicians (*Contra Celsum* VI, 32). But the magicians themselves had borrowed this name, or rather this collection of names, from Judaism. The magicians believed that the names of the Jewish God held great power.

From a philological point of view, Scholem does not seem to judge Grant's hypothesis impossible. He simply criticizes him for not saying what meaning "Iao-El-Sabaoth" could have in the context of the Ophites' speculations. In other words, for Scholem there would have been no reason to give the Demiurge names that are those of the God of the Old Testament. But this shows that he does not understand what is most fundamental in the Gnostic myth: criticism of the Old Testament. Everything in this myth wants to depict the God of the Old Testament as an inferior power. Was this not reason enough to call him Iao-El-Sabaoth?

To come back to Bousset, he thought that the reason Saturn had been linked with the God of the Old Testament was because "Saturn's day" was the same as the day dedicated to Yahweh. In fact this is quite possible and even probable. But instead of thinking that Saturn, who might have been the Demiurge of the first Gnostics, in some way attracted to himself and absorbed the God of the Old Testament, it is legitimate to think that it was rather the other way around. Saturn had been assimilated to the God of the Old Testament (and therefore to the Gnostic Demiurge) following the adoption of the planetary week in the Graeco-Roman world. In the

next chapter we will consider at more length the role the adoption of the planetary week played in the formation of the Gnostic myth about the creation of the world.

6. "Do Not Curse Ptahil"

Though denying the rank of God to the biblical Creator, the Gnostics preserve this figure, and with it quite a number of elements from the text of Genesis. This shows that for them it was not simply a case of criticizing the world or of criticizing the Bible. For they could criticize the world by, for example, holding that was not a work according to a plan favorable to humanity, but of chance, or of Fate which had no regard for humanity. They could criticize the Bible by saying that it contained only fables. If the Creator was retained, even though devalued, if the text of Genesis was retained, it was because *they wanted to retain the Old Testament while giving it a subordinate place.*

An anticosmic attitude is indeed a necessary condition for the appearance of Gnosticism—in fact, apocalyptic preceded Gnosticism—but is not in itself sufficient. Gnostic systems have a well defined and recognizable structure that a simple negation of the value of the world does not explain. They always imply *two levels*: one level where the Demiurge is God, but which must be passed beyond—this level is clearly identified as being that of the Old Testament—and a superior level from which the Savior came and in which the person who believes in the Savior partakes in that person's deepest essence. This shows that there is a religion here *that defines itself in relation to Judaism but that is different from it*; a religion that, *while preserving Judaism*, affirms that it must be passed beyond.

This corresponds to the structure of Christianity, to the position by which it defines itself. It corresponds particularly to the position of Christianity at the beginning of the second century, that is, to the time when it is no longer doubted that Gnostic doctrines appear. At this time, Christianity, definitively condemned by the synagogue, rose in its turn against the synagogue and asserted its newness, its difference, and its superiority. That might explain why in this battle some Christians believed they ought to go further than the Pauline churches, especially further than the Jewish Christian churches; and why they affirmed that not only was the Christian revelation higher and more perfect than that of the Old Testament, but that the Christian's God was higher and more perfect than that of Judaism. The second affirmation is basically only a bolder form of the first. But these same Christians, even if they wished to present the place of Judaism that Christianity preserved as a stage already passed beyond, did not thereby intend to suppress it completely. It seems to me that the desire to limit the value of the Old Testament within a religion *that nevertheless preserves it* explains, and is the only thing that can explain, the structure of the Gnostic myth.

It must also be noted: the distinction between God and the Demiurge does not signify an absolute pessimism in respect to the world. Rather than speaking of an absolute opposition between God and the world, one must rather speak of a *distance*. After all, the Demiurge is an angel, a creature of the true God, or he is the son of Sophia, Wisdom, who is a divine emanation even though she committed an error in her search for God. The world is not evil, but it is not enough, it is "deficient," as the Valentinians observe. The Demiurge who created it is not the devil, at least in what seem to be the oldest doctrines. For Saturnilus, for example, far from confusing the devil with the Demiurge, he remains his enemy. What is bad in the Demiurge is that he thinks he can judge good and evil and wants to impose his judgments upon human beings. The principle of judgment, the absolute Good, is beyond, above the principle of the world. The Demiurge makes the mistake of believing that he is God and that there is nothing above himself. He is ignorant rather than evil.

For the Gnostic it is not therefore the Demiurge himself that is evil but rather *the religion of the Demiurge taken as an absolute and adequate religion*, the adoration of the source of the world, regarded as God and the only God. What is evil is error. The Demiurge is only evil insofar as he wishes to impose a religion that is not the truth. That there was a Demiurge can be accepted on condition that he is not placed above everything. While preserving his religion it must be passed beyond. The religion brought by the Savior is the only absolute one.

Finally it must be noted that the Gnostics do not give an identical picture of the Demiurge. They do not all regard him as being so alien to the true God as for example Saturnilus and Marcion did. Corbin remarked that in Valentinus the Demiurge "is not at all the wicked and evil God with whom other Gnostic schools, in particular that of Marcion, identified the God of the Bible."³³ Corbin refers here to the *school* of Marcion; I do not think he wishes to refer to Marcion himself. For Marcion, the God of the Bible is not "wicked," he is just. But he is simply just, whereas the Father of Christ is *good* over and above justice. Nevertheless in insisting upon the differences between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the Gospel, in stating that the latter is alien to the former, in recalling that the God of the Bible calls himself the author of good and evil, and by also recalling the Gospel parable of the two trees, Marcion seemed to make two primary and independent principles of these two pictures of God, without any relation to each other.³⁴ And as one was absolute Good, it would be thought that the other was the opposite of Good, the principle of evil and of evil alone, and therefore a wicked God.³⁵ It is perhaps in this way that some Marcionites from the time of Ptolemy, one of Valentinus's first disciples, depicted the Demiurge. For in Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora*,³⁶ though he also thought that the God of the Old Testament was more just than good, he protested against those who spoke of him as they spoke of the devil, and could have had the Marcionites in mind. The Demi-

urge Valentinus speaks of is in any case much more closely linked to the true God than the one Saturnilus, Basilides, Carpocrates, and Marcion (among others) speak of. The Valentinian Demiurge often appears as the unconscious instrument of God. According to the Valentinians, God knew before the fall of Sophia the birth of the Demiurge and what the Demiurge would do. *He therefore knew and desired the creation of the world.* For the world was necessary for the salvation of the spirituals themselves.³⁷ The Logos of God directed the action of the Demiurge without the Demiurge's knowledge; the Savior himself can thus be called Demiurge.³⁸ The divine Spirit spoke through the Old Testament prophets.³⁹ Furthermore, for Valentinus the sensible world is a copy of the eternal world,⁴⁰ which demonstrates an appreciation of the world in his thought that is not entirely negative. We will see that from certain points of view, Valentinus stamped a new direction upon Gnosticism and that we can speak of a *Valentinian turning point*.⁴¹ In reestablishing a greater continuity between the two Testaments, and closer links between God and the world, Valentinus seems to have allowed the bringing together of certain Gnostics either with Jewish Christianity, or the Great Church, or with the Platonists. Certainly he remains a Gnostic; he keeps the Demiurge distinct from God, and for him the true God is only really known to us thanks to Christ. But he seems to open up new paths for Gnosticism, which, among many hazardous speculations, could lead to wiser views on the world and on the Old Testament than those of the first Gnostics.

Other Gnostics also, who are either probably or certainly later than Valentinus and could have been influenced by him, to a certain extent rehabilitated the Demiurge and his work. I will cite, for example, the Basilidean who is the author of the doctrine Hippolytus attributes to Basilides in the *Elenchos* (VII, 13–27). For him there were two Demiurges, one the Great Archon, who is enthroned in the Ogdoad (the heaven of fixed stars) and who is the creator of the stars, the other the Second Archon, who is enthroned in the Hebdomad (the seven planetary heavens) and is the creator of all that is below him. Now, according to this Basilidean, the Great Archon is “of an inexpressible beauty, grandeur and power”; he is “more ineffable than the ineffables, more powerful than the powers, wiser than the wise”; he “surpasses all the beautiful beings which can be named” (VII, 23, 3). An expression of the admiration that the starry sky inspires can be seen here. It is true that not knowing that anything existed beyond the firmament, the Great Archon believed it possible to consider himself the only God; but he confesses his error and is converted “with joy” to the true God from the time he is revealed (VII, 26, 1–4 and 27, 7). It seems that this Archon as well as being the Lord of the Ogdoad is the God who was known before Moses (VII, 25, 3). As for the Second Archon, of the Hebdomad, he is the one who spoke to Moses and who inspired the prophets. He is therefore the God of the Law, the God proper to Judaism, a

God who is here distinguished from the first Creator, from the Demiurge properly so-called. Now although this Archon is said to be "very inferior" to the first (VII, 24, 3), he is not made the object of any criticism, and he also repents and is converted when the Gospel is announced to him (VII, 26, 5).

Apelles, a disciple of Marcion but quite different from him, who seems to have been influenced by Valentinianism, also distinguished two figures in the God of the Old Testament, that of the Creator and that of the God of the Law. The first, the Creator, very much resembles the Valentinians' Demiurge. In his work of creation he is helped it seems by Christ (Tertullian, *De Carne Christi* 8). He creates the visible world by imitating the superior world (Pseudo-Tertullian, *Adv. omn. haer.* VI, 4), and after having created he does penance, apparently because the copy does not equal the model (Tertullian, loc. cit.; Pseudo-Tertullian, loc. cit.). He might even have begged the true God to send his Son into the world in order to correct this (according to a text from Origen which Hilgenfeld cites, *Ketzergeschichte* [1884], 589, n. 895). The God of the Law was less well treated by Apelles; but Tertullian was probably wrong to call him *praeses mali* (loc. cit.), for according to Hippolytus, the author of evil for Apelles was the devil, and he was distinct from the God of the Law. It is always the case that insofar as he is the Creator, the God of the Old Testament is much closer to the true God in Apelles than in Marcion.

The distinction that the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and the *Origin of the World* make between Ialdabaoth and Sabaoth might also be remembered. They are two figures of the God of the Bible, but only the first is rejected. If Sabaoth remains distinct from the true God, at least he is depicted as submitting himself to Wisdom.

I will cite the Manicheans again. If for them matter is the principle of evil (a principle completely alien to God) by contrast the *structure of the world* is the work of the divine Messenger, who organized the world in such a way that there were ways open for the liberation of imprisoned Light.

It remains true that for the Gnostics God is far from the world and is truly known to us only by a human figure, the Savior. The Valentinian writings explain to us that God drew back, hid himself, that he wished to remain inaccessible to all direct approach, to be separated from the Aeons themselves (that is, the eternal beings derived from him), so that the Aeons would have to *return* to him after having sought him.⁴² The true God is even more difficult to find for spirits who are in the world, which is a place of exile for all beings, whose origin and end is the Good. But this exile is not useless and human beings ought to have the wisdom to endure it with patience. In the Mandaean *Ginza*, as Adam complains to the Savior and asks him why the world was created, the Savior advises him to endure his condition and not to curse Ptahil, the Creator.

It is the voice of gentle Mana⁴³
Who calls his savior.
“My Father, if there reigns a just order,
Why has Ptahil gone outside his place? . . .
Why has he sown evil seeds? . . . ”
Then there came the voice of the great savior,
Calling to Mana in the world.
“Be tranquil and keep quiet, Adam,
And the calm of good men will surround you.
Keep watch, when you are ill or fearful,
Beware lest you curse Ptahil.
Do not curse the heavenly being Ptahil,
The heavenly being who is apart from your realm. . . .
He is the son of Abathur,
And his parents have not condemned him to darkness.
When the world perishes
And the angelic firmament is rolled up . . .
And no star shines anymore,
When these works perish,
The garment of Ptahil will be made ready.
For Ptahil his garment will be made ready
And he will be baptized here in the Jordan. . . .
Then Ptahil and you, Mana,
You will shine in the same dwelling place.
Then he will be called,
O Mana, your king.”
Thus spoke the savior
And Mana had faith in him.
When he had to suffer persecution and malice,
He did not, however, curse Ptahil,
But he pardoned him his faults and his failures.⁴⁴

Chapter II

The Seven Creator Angels*

No Gnostic myth has done more to mislead modern research than the myth of the seven creator angels, angels whom the Gnostics also called Archons, and often regarded as corresponding to the seven planets. Here, for modern scholars, was an obvious sign that, in one respect at least, Gnosticism came from something other than Christianity. In fact, this myth seemed to be related to astrology, and by astrology to Chaldean religion. Was ancient Chaldean religion still of sufficient force at the time when Gnosticism must have been born to be able to play a role in its formation? It is not absolutely certain. But it survived in popular superstition, in the vogue for astrology, at the end of antiquity. In any case, the myth of the seven angels, linked with the seven planets, does not in the first instance seem to have anything to do with Christianity. So far as we know it has always been explained by pagan influences.

I think, nevertheless, that it can be shown that this myth has connections with the history of Christianity, connections perhaps closer than those with astrology. Its connection with the history of Christianity might be essential, its connection with astrology accidental and secondary.

The idea that the planets (or the souls of the planets) helped the Demiurge to create the world and humanity, is one that it is difficult to deduce from astrology. To influence the destiny of human beings is not the same thing as to create the world. The Gnostics' seven Archons have a more direct relation with creation and the Creator than with the planets. When the Gnostics gave them names, these names were mostly those of the God of the Old Testament. It is also necessary to remember that the number seven is important not only in ancient astrology and in Chaldean religion but also in Judaism. *It is in Judaism that this number is related to creation*, by the account of the seven days in Genesis. Finally, it is noteworthy that according to Irenaeus's Catalogue, the oldest Gnostic doctrine that mentions *seven* creator angels is that of Saturnilus. Now Irenaeus's summary does not mention the planets. On the other hand, what Irenaeus says shows that Saturnilus was an ardent enemy of the Old Testament.

* With a few alterations this chapter reproduces my paper given at the Messina conferences, 1966, published in OG 460-87.

The first question we ought to ask is this: How did the angels come to be described as blind and on the whole maleficent powers? Are not angels in Christian usage celestial and pure beings? But the Gnostics' Archons are dark and fearful figures. They are opponents of the superior part of the human soul. Not only do they shut up the soul in the body, but when a person dies they can close the gates of the world to stop the soul from getting out. Certainly Christianity is acquainted with evil angels, who are devils. But the creator angels, in Gnosticism, are not exactly devils. In any case, they are not the little demons of the Synoptic Gospels, those evil spirits who could slip into human beings to cause illness or madness but that could be conjured up and put to flight. They are the great cosmic powers. They are the companions of the Creator, and the latter is not the same person as the devil. In order to understand this idea it is necessary to consider the theory of the "powers" in Paul and in the New Testament in general.

1. *The "Powers" in the New Testament*

According to the authors of the New Testament, particularly according to Paul, the world is dominated by "powers," which they normally depict as evil or at least ignorant. Paul often speaks of certain "authorities," to whom he seems to attribute the domination of the world and whom he holds as more or less enemies of Christ and Christians. He speaks, for example, of the "rulers of this age," who have not known the Wisdom of God, and who, because of this ignorance have "crucified the Lord of glory."¹ Elsewhere he speaks of the "rulers of this present darkness."² Clearly he is referring here to the powers that rule over the world. Sometimes he speaks, more vaguely and mysteriously, of "principalities" (*archai*), of "dominions" or "authorities" (*exousiai*), of "powers" (*dynameis*), and of "lordships" (*kyriotētes*).³ In the Epistle to the Ephesians these powers are linked to the "rulers of the world." In other epistles, it can be seen that they have been vanquished by Christ's crucifixion and that they will be destroyed by him even more fully at the end of the world.⁴ Certainly in the Epistle to the Colossians it is said that they have been created by Christ and for him (like all created things) and that he is their "head";⁵ but it is apparent that at a certain moment they went astray, for in this same epistle he has had to overcome them.⁶ Paul also speaks of angels, and these angels sometimes seem to be cosmic powers.⁷ He also speaks of "so-called gods" whose divinity but not, it seems, existence he denies.⁸ Without doubt, it is also necessary to acknowledge cosmic powers of a kind in the "elemental spirits," which Paul seems to assimilate to the gods in the Epistle to the Galatians, and to the angels in the Epistle to the Colossians.⁹ Finally, other Pauline expressions can also be cited that appear to relate to the invisible cosmic powers,¹⁰ and there is hardly one of his epistles in which this type of being does not appear in one form or another.¹¹

Is it legitimate to think that it is always the same type of beings who are being referred to? Could the names we have just cited not sometimes simply refer to social authorities? This could be the case for the “rulers of this age.” But in general the powers whom Paul refers to under the names of principalities, dominions, and so forth cannot simply be social authorities. In the Epistle to the Ephesians it is written that the powers are *in the heavens*.¹² In the Epistle to the Colossians they seem to be assimilated to the angels and the “elements of the world.”¹³ In the Epistle to the Romans they are associated with the angels, as well as the “height” and “depth” (mysterious words that probably refer to supraterrrestrial space and subterranean places).¹⁴ In the First Epistle to the Corinthians the supposed gods are “either in heaven or on the earth.”¹⁵ In the same epistle death is counted among the “powers.”¹⁶ It must also be remembered that in the Greek Septuagint Bible, the names of the powers, authorities, principalities, and rulers are used to refer to angelic beings. What seems most probable, and seems to me to be generally agreed, is that in Paul these names refer both to the social authorities and to the powers of nature, two figures of might, which can work in harmony.¹⁷

Sometimes Paul seems to give the powers a head, or replaces them by a single power. In the Second Epistle to the Corinthians he speaks of the “god of this age,”¹⁸ and in the Epistle to the Ephesians, of the “prince of the power of the air,”¹⁹ an expression that doubtless refers to the head of the powers who reigns above the earth without, however, being in the highest heaven. This figure of the head of the powers foreshadows that of the “prince of the world” (literally “archon of the world”) found in the Fourth Gospel.²⁰

Paul is not the only one in the New Testament to speak of cosmic powers that are kinds of angels. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews leads us to understand that the present world is subjected to angels when he writes: “For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking.”²¹ We have noted that the author of the Fourth Gospel speaks of the “ruler of the world.” Without using this expression Luke obviously considers the devil as being the ruler of the world when he has him say: “To you I will give all this authority and their glory; for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will.”²² Matthew expresses the same idea.²³ In addition, Luke seems to think that up to a certain time in Christ’s preaching and that of his apostles, Satan had his dwelling in the heaven above the earth.²⁴ The same idea is found in the Fourth Gospel²⁵ and again in the Apocalypse, where the devil (the dragon) is driven out of heaven with his angels and thrown upon the earth after the child, that is, Christ, had been brought before God.²⁶ In the First Epistle of Peter it is said of Christ that he has risen into heaven, “the angels, dominions, and powers having being subjected to him.”²⁷

The question that is sometimes raised of knowing whether, in the eyes of the early Christians, the powers were good, evil, or neutral, is quite easy

to resolve. In the vast majority of texts they are obviously evil. The only doubtful texts are those of the Epistle to the Colossians, where they appear as subjected to Christ; but as we have seen, in this same epistle it is written that Christ has overcome them. In the First Epistle to the Corinthians they are called *enemies* of Christ,²⁸ and in the Epistle to the Ephesians, *spirits of evil*.²⁹ The "god of this age," the "prince of the power of the air," the "prince of the world," the dragon of the Apocalypse are obviously evil, and so also, for Matthew and Luke, is the devil, master of the kingdoms of this world.

We can therefore see that for the writers of the New Testament, the world is dominated by visible and invisible forces who are more evil than good. The presence of this conception in their thought is almost beyond doubt and we think that no one would deny it. What is not generally realized, however, is the importance of this conception and its essential link with the theology of Paul and John. It is often regarded as the result of Paul's and John's dependence upon their times, and it is thought that this dependence concerns a subordinate but not essential part of their thought. But as Cullmann has observed, "in considering that all these questions are more or less subordinate and form a context *determined by the conceptions of the time*, the majority of commentators . . . establish an arbitrary distinction between central affirmations and secondary affirmations. We must repeat that there is *only one* objective criterion to determine what is essential: the earliest confessions of faith. Now . . . in these brief summaries of revealed truth, the early Christians almost always mention the invisible powers."³⁰

We might also recall that G. Aulén has shown that in the New Testament and the early Church the theory of redemption and Christology are closely linked to the depiction of the powers. He has shown that the theology of redemption that has become almost classical in the West since Saint Anselm was not the theory of the early Church or of the New Testament. "The early Church," he writes, "has a single great leit-motiv which constantly reappears, that of *Christus victor*, of Christ fighting against and triumphing over the 'tyrants,' the powers hostile to God."³¹ Though admitting that numerous theories of redemption have been held from the beginning, H. E. W. Turner writes of the image of *Christus victor*: "The central importance of this aspect of the doctrine of Redemption can hardly be overestimated."³²

2. *The Origin of this Conception*

Must a pre-Christian Gnosticism now be presupposed in order to explain this conception in Paul, John, and elsewhere in the New Testament? It is not at all necessary. In fact, on the one hand Judaism suffices to explain the idea of the powers or angels governing the things of the world; Chris-

tianity, on the other hand, suffices to explain how these powers or angels could have been considered evil, or at least ignorant.

(a) We know that, according to late Jewish speculation, each category of things or phenomena has its angel which rules over it. The book of *Jubilees* cites "the angels of the spirit of fire, the angels of the spirit of the winds, the angels of the spirit of the clouds, and of darkness, of the snow, of hail, and so forth."³³ The book of *Enoch* names the spirit of thunder and lightning, the spirit of the sea, the spirit of frost, the spirit of snow, and so forth.³⁴ Such mythology is most probably explained as an attempt to adapt pagan religions to Judaism, the gods of the pagans being considered as angels and thus subordinate to the one God.

Philo clearly states that Moses calls angels what the philosophers call "demons," that is, divine beings.³⁵ For him, God "has innumerable powers round about him to help and preserve created things."³⁶ Some of these powers are superior to the sensible world, for it is by them that God created the intelligible realm.³⁷ But others, for whom Philo more properly reserves the name of angel, live in the air and are like intermediaries between the world and God.³⁸ The stars are also for him kinds of angels or powers, and he considers them the "rulers" of the sublunary angels.³⁹ In a general way, for Philo, the angels are related to cosmology.⁴⁰

This mythology takes account of the fact that for Paul and for other early Christians there is a link between the angels and world, and sometimes almost a sort of equivalence between the two expressions. When Paul says, "Do you not know that we are to judge the angels?" it is doubtless simply a repetition of what he says in the preceding verse: "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?"⁴¹ When he reminds the Colossians that they are "dead to the elements of the world," it is because he wishes to warn them against the "cult of angels" (as if being subjected to the angels or to the elements of the world were the same thing).⁴² When the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews writes, "For surely it is not with angels that he is concerned but with the descendants of Abraham,"⁴³ he is perhaps expressing an idea analogous to that expressed by John when he has Christ say, "I do not pray for the world, but for those whom you have given me."⁴⁴ When the author of the *Ascension of Isaiah* speaks of what Isaiah foresaw "about the judgment of the angels and the destruction of the world,"⁴⁵ it seems likely that this could be the same thing repeated twice. *When the early Christians refer to the angels, they sometimes understand the "angels of the world," and for them these angels represent the world itself.* This might well be explained by the Jewish myth we have referred to.

(b) But this explanation still cannot account for the evil character or blindness of the angels. For the angels ruling the things of the world were generally not evil angels in Judaism. Judaism certainly knew of angels who had incurred God's wrath, but it considered them as having been deprived of their power, as long ago chastised and imprisoned.⁴⁶ It also knew of

demons, satans, angels of chastisement, but it did not regard them as reigning over the whole universe; moreover, it thought of them as having received their function from God. Doubtless, a number of different kinds of Judaism must be distinguished in the time when Christianity was born. The conception of the world and the angels of the world is more or less optimistic depending on whether orthodox Judaism or apocalyptic sects within Judaism are being referred to. In the sects that foretold the end of the world, it is obvious that the vision of the world was not optimistic. They prepared the way for Gnosticism but also and perhaps first of all prepared the way for Christianity. Nevertheless, even in Jewish apocalyptic writings we do not generally find evil angels governing the world. In the book of *Jubilees* we read that God has long since destroyed all the demons born of guilty angels; he has allowed only one in ten to live, having saved a tenth on the request of Mastêmâ, or Satan, who made it clear that without their aid he could not fulfill his office, which was to chastise.⁴⁷ In *Enoch* it is written that the descendents of the guilty angels were destroyed in front of them, before their imprisonment.⁴⁸ Also in *Enoch* the laws of the world are spoken of with admiration, and the angels who rule over the stars, over the elements, and over all creatures are not considered evil.⁴⁹ In the apocalypses of Esdras and Baruch, the angels are in general the obedient servants of God, and it is not evident that there are angels of the world who oppress humanity. Only the angel of death appears in the *Apocalypse of Baruch* as an enemy of humanity (which is understandable), and Baruch prays God to reprove him.⁵⁰ But he is also in some way depicted as a servant of God. In the *Psalms of Solomon* the future judgment is a judgment upon the kings and their peoples, not upon the angels. In the *Manual of Discipline*, the Prince of light and the Angel of darkness are described as finding themselves equal ("in equal proportion") in the world until the hour of judgment.⁵¹ In the hymns of Qumran, the angels of the stars (the "Army of the heavens," the "Valiant of the heavens," the "Sons of heaven," the "Army of knowledge," the "Saints") are not regarded with hostility, rather the contrary.⁵² In short, the present age in Jewish apocalyptic is evil in the sense that in it the forces of evil fight against the forces of light, but the world is not completely subjected to them. The demons might trouble the world, but they do not dominate it. There is evil, but it does not cover the whole world as it does in the First Epistle of John.⁵³

Volz has observed that nowhere in Jewish apocalyptic are expressions like "the God of this age" or "the prince of the world" found to refer to the devil. He writes: "A comparison between Jewish literature and that of the New Testament on this point shows that the dualism of the New Testament is on the whole more deeply entrenched than in Judaism of the same time. In the New Testament, Satan is . . . an adversary of God and the master of the world; in Judaism he never so completely loses the character of an instrument of God."⁵⁴

Against this could be placed the Old Testament text where God is seen to deal severely with the stars.⁵⁵ Do the stars not dominate the whole world

in classical astrology? And did this astrology not profoundly penetrate Judaism? When we read in Isaiah that God “will chastise the army of heaven,” we might at first think we are very near to the thought of Paul and John, and also to Gnosticism; for this seems to signify that the powers governing the world are evil. But this text must doubtless be understood in comparison with other passages in Isaiah where it can be seen that on the day of Yahweh there will be trouble and disorder even for the stars, and they will be obscured and fade away.⁵⁶ This does not mean that the stars are evil, it simply means that the whole of nature will participate in the turmoil introduced into the human world by the intervention of God. Often in the prophets the political turmoil that ought to lead to the liberation of Israel is described as a turmoil of the whole of nature; Yahweh, who intervenes in Israel’s favor, is described as striking and destroying the earth.⁵⁷ This does not stop the conception of the world from being in general optimistic, and the liberation of Israel is generally conceived of as taking place in this world.

In a passage in the book of *Enoch*, we see that on the day of judgment there will be disorder in the stars; but this is because there will be disorder throughout the whole of nature.⁵⁸ On the other hand, in the fifth book of the *Sibylline Oracles*, the stars are spoken of as warring powers whose battles God patiently tolerates and who are therefore evil powers.⁵⁹ But in the same book there is a passage that is manifestly Christian,⁶⁰ with the result that it cannot be certain that this book represents Jewish apocalyptic earlier than Christianity.

Did the Jews think of the angels of the world as being *ignorant*? They were certainly regarded as not knowing the essence of God, inasmuch as it is unknowable for all creatures. It was certainly thought that they were not as wise as God.⁶¹ But they were not regarded as being particularly ignorant or blind. In the hymns of Qumran, as we have just seen, the angels of the stars were called the Army of knowledge, the spirits of knowledge.⁶² It is true that in one of the oldest parts of the book of *Enoch* there is a reference to the ignorance of the “shepherds,” and that these shepherds represent the angels, probably the angels of the nations.⁶³ But what the angels do not know is simply the judgment that awaits them, the final judgment, just as all beings do not know of it. Here again we encounter apocalyptic ideas, and we are not far from Christianity or from Gnosticism. But nor are we quite there. For the ignorant angels in Gnosticism are ignorant because they do not know the true God. The Pauline rulers are also ignorant in this way, since without knowing it they crucified the Lord of glory. Now the angels in Judaism know the true God. Even the devils, who on occasion address demands to him. Even the angels of the nations, whom he has charged to chastise Israel (though they sometimes go beyond these orders in chastising too harshly).⁶⁴

It is by the concept of the “angels of the nations” that some scholars have thought it possible to explain the pessimistic judgment brought to bear upon the angels of the world by the greatest writers of the New

Testament.⁶⁵ In Judaism we find the idea that every nation is governed by an angel, all except Israel, whose head is not an angel but God himself.⁶⁶ The Jews evidently regarded the pagan angels of the nations as maleficent angels. They were charged with deceiving the nations by leading them to pay homage to them that was due only to the one God of Israel; they were also charged with chastising and oppressing Israel during a certain time.⁶⁷ If the pagan gods of nature could be transformed in Judaism into beneficent angels, the same could not be said for the angels of the nations, given the inevitable antagonism between Israel's nationalism and that of other peoples. Nevertheless, even the fact that these angels were conceived of as instituted by God to mislead the nations and to chastise Israel shows without doubt that they were not unaware of the God from whom they had received their orders. Moreover, *it is not evident either in Paul or among other first-century Christians that the angels of the nations were a special concern.* The angels or powers they speak of seem to have a relation with the whole of nature. Doubtless, they are also linked to the political authorities, since they are responsible for the death of Christ. But if they were behind Pilate, were they not also behind Caiaphas? Even further, as we will see, *for Paul there was a definite link between veneration of the angels of the world and obedience to the Jewish Law.* Seeking an explanation in the angels of the nations would seem then to be heading in the wrong direction.⁶⁸ In fact, the reason Paul considers the angels of the world, or the rulers of the age, evil or at least blind is quite clear and is adequately explained by Christianity itself.

For Paul, as for the Gnostics, the rulers are ignorant rather than evil. And why ignorant? Because they have not known the wisdom of God, which was hidden and was reserved for Christians, "for if they had known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." In other words, it is the crucifixion that demonstrates the blindness of the rulers. And how could it not demonstrate it?

What does the ignorance of the creator-rulers signify in Gnosticism but the world's ignorance of the true good, the true God, whom it did not recognize in the Just One? Now John affirms, directly and without metaphor, that the world *has not known God*, just as it has not known Christ and it does not know the Spirit of truth.⁶⁹ Paul also affirms " . . . in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom."⁷⁰

These are Paul's and John's statements on the subject of the world, which explain their judgment of the cosmic powers. What do they say about the world when they speak clearly and without metaphor? Paul says: "So that we may not be condemned along with the world . . ." ⁷¹ "But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."⁷² "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God."⁷³ "According to the elemental spirits of the universe and not according to Christ . . ." ⁷⁴ "So that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole

world may be held accountable to God . . . ”⁷⁵ Those texts where he speaks of the “present time,” that is, of the “age,” must doubtless be added to these; for some passages show that he hardly makes any distinction between the age and the world.⁷⁶ He says of this age: “Our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age . . . ”⁷⁷ “Do not be conformed to this age.”⁷⁸

John writes: “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.”⁷⁹ “The world hates me because I attest that its works are evil.”⁸⁰ “I have overcome the world.”⁸¹ “Whatever is born of God overcomes the world.”⁸² “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world.”⁸³ “They are of the world . . . we, we are of God.”⁸⁴ “The whole world is in the power of the evil one.”⁸⁵

We do not want to say that there is nothing else in Paul and even in John. There are also words that are more favorable toward the world in their work, even though they are less numerous, especially in John. We simply want to show that a whole part of their thought implies a passionate desire to detach themselves from the world, and that this adequately explains their judgment on the angels of the world. This feeling against the world is adequately explained by the idea of the cross.

And it is not only Paul and John who write thus on the subject of the world. What does the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews say, for example? “By faith he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness which comes by faith.”⁸⁶ What does the Epistle of James say? “To keep oneself unstained from the world . . . ”⁸⁷ “Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”⁸⁸ The notion of a *stranger*, that is, a stranger to the world, which is so characteristic of Gnosticism, is also found, strongly accentuated, in the New Testament.⁸⁹

We therefore think that the ignorant angels of the New Testament, analogous to those of Gnosticism, are nothing other than the ignorant world, the world that condemned Christ. This conception comes from no other source than Christianity.

3. *Transition to the Myth of the Creator Angels*

What we never find in Paul or John, what we never find even in nonheretical Christianity, is the idea that the angels *created* the world. The angels rule the world, they might even have ruled it from the beginning, but they did not create it; which is to say that the essence of things is not evil. Things are only submitted to an evil or blind Law, but this Law can be lifted.

From the moment that gnosis taught that the angels created the world it unquestionably became unfaithful to Paul and John, or, if you like, he-

retical. How did the Gnostics take this step? It might be thought that they took it directly from the idea that the angels ruled the world, by simply reinforcing this idea. We think nevertheless that they only came to it by a detour and because another factor was added to their contempt of might and of the world. This other factor is the battle against Judaism at the beginning of the second century.

There is in fact at least a hint in the Gnostic myths that another motive was allied to the desire to devalue the world. The hint lies in the fact that the head of the creator angels is identified with the God of the Old Testament. If they had simply wished to devalue the world, and not also to criticize Judaism, would they not have said that the God of the Old Testament did not create the world directly but that he had it made by the angels? It is thus, according to Philo, that God did not directly create the body of Adam (or the irrational part of his soul), but had it created by the angels, because it was not fitting for him to create directly what might be the cause of sin.⁹⁰ Similarly, when some of the early Christians wished to criticize the administration of the world, they took care to say that this administration was not directly exercised by God but by the angels to whom God confided it.⁹¹ But when the God of the Old Testament himself is said to be only an angel, this means that it is a matter of combatting Judaism at least as much as opposing the world. They wanted to devalue the Creator not so much because of the creation of the world but because the Creator was the God of the Law, the God of Judaism.

We know that Christianity freed itself from Judaism and therefore had to defend itself against it before having to withstand the pagans. Whatever Christ's attitude to the Law might have been,⁹² the criticism of certain fundamental Jewish ideas appeared very soon after his death among a group of his followers, the "Hellenists," whose principal representative, Stephen, was stoned for this reason. And the form this criticism took is not without similarity to certain Gnostic myths and might in part explain their origin.

In the account of the Acts the men who accuse Stephen of preaching against the Temple and the Law are called false witnesses.⁹³ But the speech that is then put into Stephen's mouth shows that he actually did preach against the Temple.⁹⁴ This shows that he opposed traditional Judaism on a major issue. For the obligation to sacrifice to God only in the Temple at Jerusalem was the foundation of Jewish unity, of the Jewish nation. As for the Law, does Stephen say nothing against it? He does perhaps attack it also, in a way that is not clear for people of our time, but those who know Gnosticism can guess the meaning: repeatedly, and with obvious insistence, Stephen says that on Sinai Moses spoke with *an angel*.⁹⁵ Doubtless, this might be based on certain biblical expressions: the Bible sometimes says "angel of Yahweh" for Yahweh, indeed this expression is found in Exodus in relation to the Yahweh's first appearance on Sinai (what follows shows that Yahweh himself is intended).⁹⁶ It might also be based on certain Jewish

traditions according to which Yahweh, on Sinai, was accompanied by angels.⁹⁷ But above all, in the Bible and Judaism, it is with God that Moses spoke on Sinai and it is from him that he received the Law.⁹⁸ Why does Stephen always speak of an angel in relation to Sinai rather than of God? And why does he finally say to his hearers, "You who received the Law as delivered by angels and did not keep it . . ."?⁹⁹

It must be noted that the anger of the Jews who are listening to him breaks at this moment. Is it because he tells them that they have not observed the Law? They ought to have been accustomed to this reproach, which is constantly directed against them in the Old Testament; moreover, the misdeeds Stephen mentions were old and recognized facts. Is it not rather that he tells them that the Law had been given "according to the angel's commandments"? In Paul's Epistle to the Galatians we find the same affirmation, that the Law had been given by angels, in other words not given by God, and here it is definitely a case of devaluing the Law.¹⁰⁰ The means that Stephen seems to use, and that Paul certainly uses, to depreciate the Law is exactly the means the Gnostics will use to depreciate the world. Is this a case of two parallel movements with no link between them? In any case, note that it is the Law and not the world that Christians first depicted as the work of angels.

Note also that it is possible to pass from this idea to the other. If it is an angel who speaks in the Law, it can be concluded that the Creator of the world is only an angel. For it is Yahweh, the Creator, who speaks in the Law.

It is true that it is not certain that the words attributed to Stephen in Acts correspond to what he really thought. Perhaps Luke, the author of Acts, reconstructed Stephen's thought on the basis of his own doctrine, which was much later and founded on that of Paul. It might even be the case that the character of Stephen is entirely legendary, as has sometimes been suggested. But at least Paul certainly says that the Law has been "ordained by angels through an intermediary."¹⁰¹ Paul adds that despite this it must not be thought that the Law is opposed to God's promises. But the Law is inferior, he says, to the promise made to Abraham, because it was given by intermediaries, whereas the promise derived from God alone. Moreover, this is not the only text in which Paul establishes a link between the Law and the angels. I mentioned above that in the Epistle to the Colossians when Paul (or pseudo-Paul) opposes an angel cult, he cannot be referring to a form of Gnosticism; he is much rather referring to the practice of the Law.

In the epistle Paul writes, "Let no one disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement and worship of angels."¹⁰² Almost immediately before he has written, "Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a sabbath."¹⁰³ And almost immediately after he writes, "If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the universe, why do you live as if you still belonged

to the world? Why do you submit to regulations, 'Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch' [referring to things that all perish as they are used], according to human precepts and doctrines?"¹⁰⁴ What can these words refer to but to Judaism? What is there of Gnosticism in the doctrines these words oppose?

The reasons why W. Michaelis,¹⁰⁵ for example, thinks he sees something of Gnosticism in this doctrine are the following: first it lacks references to the circumcision and the Law, to be able to conform to the standard picture of Judaism (but he acknowledges himself that "indirect" allusions to circumcision and the Law are found in Col. 2:11 and 14); next this doctrine teaches asceticism (but the passages he quotes, 2:16 and 2:20, only mention food laws or refraining from certain forms of contact and can therefore be understood as concerning Judaism); finally, it teaches a cult of angels and the elements of the world (but besides this being in no way Gnostic, the comparison he himself makes with Gal. 4:3 and 9 shows that the practice of the Law could be understood by Paul as a cult of the elements of the world, and therefore of the angels). It must also be noted that 2:14 clearly and not "indirectly" makes a link between the "powers" and the Law. It might also be said that the word "slavery" does not obviously apply to a Gnostic doctrine, whereas it might apply to the observance of the Law, which Paul regards as servitude. E. Percy has clearly seen that in Colossians Paul's enemies do not consciously venerate the angels, but that it is Paul who interprets their practices thus and that the latter were nothing but legal observances.¹⁰⁶ This is also Origen's¹⁰⁷ and Saint Jerome's¹⁰⁸ interpretation.

The only thing that might suggest that it has to do with a Gnostic doctrine is that Paul calls this doctrine "philosophy."¹⁰⁹ But it is a misunderstanding of the meaning of the word "gnosis" that would lead to this interpretation. In fact, from the outset, gnosis was no more of a philosophy than Judaism or Christianity. If it could later be considered a philosophy, Judaism could also be.¹¹⁰ And what shows that it is a question of Judaism here is not only the mention of Sabbaths, the new moons, the food laws, the forbidding of certain forms of contact, but also the expression linked to the word "philosophy" here: "according to the elements of the world."

According to Paul, the Jewish Law is linked to the "elements of the world." In the Epistle to the Galatians, which is wholly directed against the full observance of the Law, he writes, "So with us, when we were children, we were slaves to the elemental spirits of the universe. But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."¹¹¹ And further on: "But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits, whose slaves you want to be once more? You observe days, and months, and seasons, and years! I am afraid I have labored over you in vain."¹¹²

It is true that in the last text the words "how can you turn back again" could indicate that for Paul the elements of the world are the pagan gods, or that they reign in some way over the pagans, for the Galatians came from paganism. (That Paul did think in this way would not be at all surprising, for as we have seen, in Judaism the angels of the world play much the same role as the gods of nature in paganism.) This does not hinder the fact that, according to him, they might return to the elements of the world by observing the Jewish Law, so that he makes a link between the elements of the world and the Law.¹¹³

In the Epistle to the Colossians it is clear that he makes a link between the Law on the one hand and the principalities and powers on the other: ". . . having canceled the bond which stood against us with its *legal demands*; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the *principalities and powers* and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him."¹¹⁴

It might also be noted that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who is Pauline in thought and who might be Luke, probably also makes a link between Judaism and the angel cult, for his epistle aims to demonstrate the superiority of Christianity over ancient Jewish worship. At the beginning of the epistle he argues for the superiority of the Son over the angels. Why does he do this if he does not think that Judaism is in some way an angel cult?¹¹⁵

Finally, one might note that the early Christians sometimes accused the Jews of worshipping angels.¹¹⁶ Talmudic literature does not explain this accusation, for Jews are never seen as worshipping the angels in it. Where did this reproach come from then except the Christian tradition, and in particular the fact that certain passages of the New Testament were interpreted in this way in the early centuries? The most important of these passages is without doubt that of the Epistle to the Colossians on the angel cult; it was referred to Judaism, which was to understand the author's intention very well.

We certainly do not think that Paul ever considered the God of Genesis an angel. But the criticism of the Law by regarding it as given by the angels, as subjecting humanity to the rule of the angels, prepared the ground for the placing of the God of the Law and consequently the God of Genesis on the same level as the angels.

Without any doubt, devaluation of the Creator could not follow from rejection of the Law if there had not been a prior disposition to turn away from the world. But criticism of the Law and criticism of the world worked along the same lines and reinforced each other.¹¹⁷

Finally, if we ask when the idea that the Creator or the creators as some principle other than the true God was formed, we find that it was probably at the time when the rupture between Christianity and Judaism was accomplished, and when hostility to Judaism had become very strong among certain Christians.

It is not really sure that the first Gnostics spoken of by the heresiologists, Simon and Menander, taught the distinction between the creator God and the true God. It is true that Irenaeus attributes to them the idea that the world had been created by angels (which perhaps implies that Yahweh is merely an angel). But it is possible that on this point he confuses their doctrine with that of their disciples, or with other later doctrines. Justin, who is earlier than him, and like Simon and Menander was a Samaritan, does not know that they distinguished between the creator God and the supreme God. Immediately after having attacked them he attacks Marcion, and it is Marcion whom he reproaches for having blasphemed the Creator by opposing him to another more exalted God.¹¹⁸ He would have reproached Simon and Menander for the same reason, if he had known that such was their doctrine. In the system attributed to Simon by Hippolytus, it seems that there is no distinction between God and the Demiurge,¹¹⁹ and Hippolytus only speaks of the creator-angels in the part of his account drawn from Irenaeus.¹²⁰ Moreover, L. Cerfaux has shown that in the pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* a passage in which Simon is depicted as saying that he is above the creator God has been altered by the compiler, and that mention of the creator God is probably not found in the earliest source.¹²¹ Further still, a comparison of the *Homilies* with the *Recognitions* seems to indicate that there was no question of a creator God in the source.¹²² Finally, the texts of the New Testament contemporary with Simon and Menander seem to ignore the distinction between God and Creator. Quispel is doubtless right to think that the distinction between creator God and supreme God is not earlier than the end of the first century.¹²³ It is very likely that Simon and Menander had simply taught that the world is *governed* by angels¹²⁴ and that these angels oppress and persecute the Holy Spirit in this world, of which the Mother might be a symbol. (If this was their teaching, they would not be very far from Paul.)¹²⁵

Cerinthus and Saturnilus are therefore perhaps the first, or among the first, to have taught the distinction between the creator God and the true God. Now they taught at a time when Christianity, in the communities formed principally of former pagans, was becoming more and more critical of Judaism and the Law.

4. *Transition to the Myth of the Seven*

It is also by opposition to Judaism that we can explain, at least to a considerable extent, the Gnostic myth of the *seven* creator angels.

The idea that there are seven principal angels was not foreign to Judaism, or to the earliest form of Christianity. The passage in the book of Tobit where the angel Raphael says: "I am one of the seven holy angels who present the prayers of the saints and enter into the presence of the glory of the Holy One"¹²⁶ has often been quoted. These seven archangels appear again in the literature concerning Enoch.¹²⁷ A fragment of a litur-

gical work discovered near the Dead Sea mentions the seven "supreme Princes" (in Greek, the seven Archons) who are the highest dignitaries of the angelic hierarchy.¹²⁸ Similarly, the Apocalypse speaks of "the seven Spirits who are before his throne," of "seven Spirits sent throughout all the earth."¹²⁹ In the *Testament of Levi* (in Greek), which is probably a Jewish-Christian work, seven angels appear to Levi in the form of seven men dressed in white.¹³⁰ Hermas speaks of six angels, "the first created": "It is to them that the Lord entrusted all his creatures, to make them prosper, to organize and govern them as masters."¹³¹ In some passages he depicts them as surrounding the "Son of God," who seems to be regarded as a seventh angel, though far superior to the six others.¹³² In Clement of Alexandria angels called *prototistoi* or *protogonoi*, who are seven in number, are found again, on more than one occasion. Clement attributes them with "the greatest power" and calls them "archons of the angels."¹³³

This idea is normally thought to derive from astrology. However, since the Gnostics relate the Archons to creation, it might also be supposed that they have something to do with the seven days of Genesis. In the *Treatise of the Triple Recompense of the Christian Life*, it is written that in the beginning God created seven princes of the angels, and these princes are identified with the seven days of Creation.¹³⁴ Saint Augustine will later say that God first created an intelligible light, and that this intelligible light, or created Wisdom, is the angels: *that it is them whom Genesis refers to as days*.¹³⁵ In certain Jewish writings we see that the seven days of creation can be personified.¹³⁶ We might therefore question whether the seven arch-angels in Judaism were not initially related to the seven days of Genesis rather than to the planets.¹³⁷

It might be thought that it is much the same thing, since the days of Creation are also those of the week (and are depicted as their prototype), and the days of the week carry the names of the planets. But it is not really the same thing. For the planetary week does not seem to have been known by Jews in the pre-Christian era, and does not even appear in the Babylonians. The seven-day week and the planetary week must, as is well known, be distinguished. The seven-day week seems to have been known of at a very early date among certain peoples; in any case it was in use among the Jews. But whatever its origin (whether based upon the revolutions of the moon or not), the days were not named after the planets, nor were they dedicated to them. The planetary week is probably an invention of astrologists using Greek science,¹³⁸ and it does not seem to have been used either earlier than the second half of the first century before Jesus Christ (if Tibullus's description of the Sabbath as the "day of Saturn" is thought to already imply the existence of a planetary week) or than the second half of the first century after Jesus Christ (if we agree with Rordorf that the Sabbath could have been called the "day of Saturn" well before the use of the planetary week was widely diffused).¹³⁹ Its use first seems to have arisen in Italy, where the earliest witnesses to it are found. In the part of the

world where Greek was spoken, Plutarch is the earliest example known to Boll.¹⁴⁰ Rordorf thinks that the existence of the planetary week is not in general attested before around the end of the first century after Jesus Christ.¹⁴¹ In any case, the planetary week does not seem to have been known in the East before the end of the first century after Jesus Christ, or thereabouts. It can be seen that from this time the seven principal angels could have been assimilated to the planets, whose names the seven days henceforth bore. But before this, did the seven angels *originally* represent the planets or *originally* represent the days of creation?

Perhaps, in fact, they originally represented neither one nor the other, at least in pre-Christian Judaism and in Jewish Christianity. Perhaps there were seven principal angels here because seven was a sacred number, and in the Bible and Jewish literature many things go in sevens, as also in the Apocalypse and Jewish Christian writings. But whatever the case with Jewish and Jewish Christian archangels, the Gnostic Archons definitely seem to be linked with the text of Genesis. They are regarded as creators. Now the idea that the planets created the world and humanity does not seem to be deduced from astrology. Rather it might be said that, according to astrology, the planets govern the future and generation; but creating the world is quite another thing. Alternatively, it might be said that the seven days of creation are creators, in the sense that they have made the world and humanity manifest. The Archons are always related to the creation of human beings, and one understands why when one sees that their presence is always used to justify God's words in Genesis, "Let us make man." The plural could suggest that there were a number of creators, and if it was thought there were seven, it is perhaps because the God of Genesis is the God of the seven days, since he created by means of seven days, as by means of seven powers, which he would have called to collaborate with him.

According to Hippolytus, Monoimos spoke of the first six days of creation as six "powers."¹⁴² It might either be thought that there were seven powers at creation or that there were only six. For the first six days could in some way be depicted as being the angels, and the seventh, more sacred, day, as being in some way God himself. It must be noted that the Jewish and Jewish Christian archangels are sometimes six and sometimes seven. In a passage of *Enoch* one of the manuscripts speaks of seven angels, the others, of six.¹⁴³ We have seen that in Hermas there is in one sense seven angels, but in another there are only six, Christ both being and not being an angel. In the *Treatise of the Triple Recompense*, God first creates seven princes of the angels, then he chooses one of them as a son, so that there remain no more than six archon-angels. Among the Ophites, Ialdabaoth is sometimes outside the number of the seven, sometimes he is considered as one of them.

It is true that the Archons were thought of as corresponding to the planets. But this correspondence does not seem to appear very early in

gnosis. Irenaeus does not speak of the planets when he refers to Simon, Menander, and Cerinthus. He does not even directly refer to them in relation to Saturnilus, who is the first person to whom he attributes the idea of the *seven* creator angels. Nor does he directly refer to them in relation to the great Gnostics of the second century (though the idea of the seven planetary heavens is implicit in Valentinus and in all those who speak of the Ogdoad and Hebdomad).¹⁴⁴ He only refers to it clearly in the thirtieth chapter of his book, in relation to Gnostics normally identified with the Ophites and Sethians. And there, even if he clearly states that they assimilate the “sacred Hebdomad” to the “seven stars,” that is, to the planets, he also states that according to them there are seven “days” which are called “the sacred Hebdomad,” and that among the Jews each person has chosen his “herald” from the seven days to be honored as a god.¹⁴⁵ Thus, for the Ophites, the Hebdomad are the stars, but *they are also the days*, and it can be clearly seen here that the days could be personified. It can also be seen that the Hebdomad is closely linked with Judaism, since it is related to texts praising Yahweh in the Old Testament. For the “heralds” are the Jewish prophets, and if they praised the Archons it is because five of the seven Archons have names that are among those given to Yahweh in the Bible.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, since no prophet praised any God but Yahweh, it must be concluded that the seven powers all represent Yahweh, even the last two, Horeus and Astaphaeus, whose names are drawn from magic, according to Origen.¹⁴⁷ Yahweh therefore seems to be a God of seven figures, a God to whom the number seven would be essentially linked.

In Codex II of Nag Hammadi, in the *Origin of the World*, Ialdabaoth, the God of the Old Testament, is represented as having besides his masculine form a feminine form, called *Pronoia Sambathas*, which is to say, Hebdomad.¹⁴⁸ Thus the God of the Old Testament is identified with the Hebdomad, since it is his feminine form. The Hebdomad itself is identified with the “Providence of the Sabbath.”

Like Yahweh, the seven Archons are the originators of the Law. The Mandaeans also knew that the Seven participated in the redaction of the Torah.¹⁴⁹ It is clear that for the Mandaeans, “the Seven” meant Judaism. When, at the beginning of the *Diwan Haran Gauaita*, we read that sixty thousand Nazoreans (or Nazarenes) “separated themselves from the signs of the Seven” to emigrate into Media, this means that they left Jerusalem and Palestine.¹⁵⁰

It is possible that Saturnilus had already linked his seven creators to the planets. But if he had, there is an easy explanation. As we have seen, the planetary week was known in the East from about the end of the first century. The powers that represented the seven days of Creation, and later, of the week, could easily have been assimilated to the planets, whose names the seven days bore from that time. Some of the Fathers of the Church (Saint Basil, Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Saint John Chrysostom) will later certainly say that the Hebdomad represented time (rather than the world),

and that it represented time because it represented the week.¹⁵¹ Other Fathers (Saint Hilary, Saint Jerome) will later know that the opposition of the Hebdomad and the Ogdoad signifies the opposition of Judaism and Christianity.¹⁵²

We do not know whether Saturnilus was particularly hostile to the planets. (Such hostility would be a little strange, and the idea that the planets created the world and man would be stranger still.) But we know that he was profoundly hostile to Judaism. If we believe Irenaeus's Latin translation, Saturnilus taught that the Archons has wished to destroy the Father of Christ, and that because of this, Christ came into the world to destroy the God of the Jews.¹⁵³ It is true that this translation doubtless needs to be corrected. For in the parallel texts of Hippolytus and Theodoret, one of which perhaps exactly reproduces Irenaeus's Greek, we read not that the Archons wished to destroy the Father but, according to Theodoret's version, that the Father wished to destroy the God of the Jews at the same time as the other angels, and to this end sent Christ for the salvation of those who believe in him; and according to Hippolytus's version, the Father having wished to destroy the Archons, Christ came for the destruction of the God of the Jews and the salvation of those who believe in him.¹⁵⁴ Whatever the case and whatever texts one chooses, if it was not Christ, it was God himself, the true God, who, according to Saturnilus, resolved to destroy the God of the Jews. Saturnilus therefore regarded the battle against Judaism as essential to Christianity. Now the number seven was the sacred number in Judaism, quite independently of the number of the planets.

The number seven was the sacred number in Judaism because it was the number of the days of Creation, according to Genesis, and also—which probably explains the account in Genesis—because Judaism was the religion of the Sabbath, of the seventh day. We know with what enthusiasm Philo speaks of the number seven and with what extraordinary praises he extols it.¹⁵⁵ Judaism could be regarded as the religion of the Hebdomad.

It is also possible that the name Yahweh Sabaoth had been understood by some as meaning God of the Seven or God of the Sabbaths.¹⁵⁶ In any case, the word "Sabbath" is interpreted by Theophilus of Antioch in the second century as meaning the seventh day.¹⁵⁷

Now Saturnilus is not just extremely hostile to Judaism. There is a fact that must be taken account of: around the beginning of the second century, and therefore about the time of Saturnilus, the observance of the Sabbath in Christian communities generally disappeared. In truth, Christians who had come from paganism had doubtless never observed the Sabbath; Paul had vigorously reprimanded those who were tempted to do so. But Christians who had come from Judaism continued to observe it in the first century, and Paul himself did not oppose this practice.¹⁵⁸ Perhaps there was even some sort of meeting for prayer on the Sabbath among those Christians who did not come from Judaism.¹⁵⁹ However, after the begin-

ning of the second century, Ignatius of Antioch bears witness that even Christians derived from Judaism renounced the observance of the Sabbath.¹⁶⁰ Rordorf affirms that during the whole of the second century there was no longer any question of celebrating the Sabbath among Christians of the Great Church.¹⁶¹ (In the third century and particularly in the fourth, the custom of celebrating the Sabbath to some extent resurfaced.) There had therefore been a sort of break, around the beginning of the second century. It must also be noted that Ignatius of Antioch, who opposed the temptation to observe the Sabbath among former pagan Christians and gave them the example of Christians derived from Judaism who themselves renounced its observance,¹⁶² lived in the same town and at about the same time as Saturnilus. It is possible that at this specific time and place a polemic appeared necessary to combat what remained or could reappear of the tendency to celebrate the Sabbath.

In fact, the renunciation of the Sabbath, which characterizes second-century Christianity, did not happen without polemics or theories that attempted to demonstrate the superiority of the "eighth day," or Sunday, over the seventh. Such theories are found in pseudo-Barnabas, in Justin and in Clement of Alexandria.¹⁶³ Indeed, one of these theories is that which concerns the seven heavens (the Hebdomad) and the eighth heaven (the Ogdoad). Carl Schmidt has shown that it is linked to reference to Sunday as the eighth day.¹⁶⁴

This theory admittedly presupposes a knowledge of Greek astronomy. But the basic idea is not a scientific one. Rather, as Cardinal Daniélou has seen,¹⁶⁵ it begins with a theory that simply knows of seven heavens (without there being any question of an eighth). Such a theory could hardly be drawn from astronomy. If astrology has knowledge of seven planetary spheres it also knows of an eighth, above these spheres, that of the fixed stars, and it would have been natural to place God in the eighth sphere, the highest, the best regulated, the closest to eternity; or to place him further above it. Nevertheless, according to the works that have knowledge of only seven heavens—these are either very old works, like the *Ascension of Isaiah*, which is probably from the end of the first century, or works of a Jewish-Christian character—*God is enthroned in the seventh heaven*.¹⁶⁶ This demonstrates that the number of the heavens was not thought of in an astrologically precise way but rather according to the number of days in Genesis, or because seven was a sacred number. God is enthroned in the seventh heaven because in these works he is still God of the seventh day, Yahweh, and because seven is still a venerated number.¹⁶⁷

It was in opposing this early Jewish-Christian speculation that Christians in the second century adopted the Ogdoad of the astronomers and drew their arguments from it. For the majority of these Christians, whether they were Gnostic or not, God was the God of the eighth day, of Sunday, of the Resurrection. Hence a debasing of the Hebdomad, a debasing of the seventh heaven, and the other planetary heavens. It can be seen

from this that Saturnilus's theory might be linked to the evolution of the Christianity of his time.

Even Irenaeus, who thinks that there are seven heavens, no longer thinks that God is enthroned in the seventh; for him the seven heavens are only inhabited by angels. In this way the whole of Christianity arrived at a certain devaluation of the planetary heavens and therefore of the planets. The difference is that in the Christianity of the Great Church, the God of the Old Testament, who remains the true God, is transported above the seventh heaven, whereas for the Gnostics, the God of the Old Testament, who is not the true God, is left in the seventh heaven. But for both types of Christianity, the true God is no longer in the Hebdomad, he is in the Ogdoad, or beyond.

Not only the Gnostic Theodotus but Clement of Alexandria also assimilated the Ogdoad to the "Day of the Lord," that is, the Christian Sunday.¹⁶⁸ The same incorporation is found in the *Epistle of the Apostles*, which is not Gnostic.¹⁶⁹ J. Daniélou was no doubt right when he observed that the doctrine of the Ogdoad could only have arisen within Christianity and that the Gnostics took it over.¹⁷⁰ He has shown that the reasons Reitzenstein believed it to be earlier than Christianity can hardly be retained.¹⁷¹ As for Scholem, who states that the origin of the concept is Greek (which is true insofar as there is a link with astronomy) but that it penetrated into Judaism before the separation of Judaism and Christianity, his reasoning does not seem to me to be right. He finds the Ogdoad mentioned by a Babylonian rabbi of the end of the third century and says that it is not unlikely that a Greek influence had first been at work in Babylonia; that the Ogdoad must therefore have entered Judaism before this; and that, since it is also found in Christianity, though lacking Christian characteristics, it must have entered into Judaism before its break with Christianity.¹⁷² But this is to presuppose first that speculation about the Ogdoad includes no Christian element, which remains to be proved; then that Christians could not have borrowed the Ogdoad from Hellenism without passing through Judaism; and finally that the Babylonian rabbi could not have been influenced by his surroundings. For in Babylonia in the third century there were Gnostic Christians, of whom Mani is an example. It is more natural to think that the Ogdoad came to this rabbi through Gnostic Christianity, and similarly in some other relatively late Jewish texts.

If the Gnostic Ogdoad is essentially Christian, their conception of the Hebdomad as an inferior power to be passed beyond is Christian too, for the two conceptions are relative to each other.

The Hebdomad is a power to be passed beyond because it is linked with the Sabbath and with Judaism in general. We have seen that in the *Origin of the World* it is called *Pronoia Sambathas*. Similarly, the *Apocryphon of John* mentions a "hebdomad of the Sabbath."¹⁷³ Certainly theories on the Hebdomad are linked to astrology, a powerful force during the

centuries when Gnosticism developed. Astrological beliefs were also a religion to be passed beyond for the Gnostics. In the *Extracts from Theodotus* (74, 2), we read that Christ came into the world to free all people who believe in him from fate (understood as astral fate). Also there would be nothing very astonishing if Saturnilus had brought his seven angels into relationship with the planets. For Theodotus, astrology is not a wholly fictional science or an error. It can tell the truth concerning the destiny of those who do not believe in Christ; but once one is baptized, the astrologists “no longer tell the truth” concerning the person’s destiny (78, 1). Similarly, for Tatian, Christians are free from Destiny, which reigns over others by the power of the stars.¹⁷⁴ This idea seems to be already implied in what Ignatius of Antioch says when he compares Christ to a new star that has troubled the other stars and made magic impossible (Eph. 19:2–3). Ignatius is very close to Saturnilus in time and place. Also there would be nothing very astonishing if Saturnilus had brought his seven angels into relationship with the planets. He was able to bring together as powers representing the world those which produced the world and those which govern it. To bring together these two symbols was so much the easier since each of the seven days of the week, which are also those of Creation, already had a name that associated it with a planet. One could say “the planets” in order to say “the week,” in particular the first week of the world. But it is no less true that Saturnilus’s myth is principally related to the Genesis account. What especially interested Saturnilus was to deny the divine character of the creator powers, among whom he placed the God of the Old Testament. It will be the same with the other Gnostics. If they often posit links between the astral powers and the Archons, they never forget that the number seven is above all linked with Judaism and the Creation.

Anz¹⁷⁵ thought he could explain Gnosticism by saying that those who felt oppressed by Destiny represented the planets as tyrants and presupposed a God superior to them, capable of delivering humanity from them. But that was to forget that the Gnostic account of the world’s creation, and particularly that of man, refers to the Genesis account and challenges the Old Testament Creator even more than the planets; that the idea of tyrants reigning in the heavens, an idea so contrary to Stoic optimism as well as Old Testament optimism, contrary perhaps even to Chaldean religion, would necessarily have to have been prepared by the Pauline and Johannine vision of the world as dominated by the forces of error; finally, that the figure of the Savior is essential to all this speculation. For the Gnostics do not say that they need to be delivered from Destiny; for them Destiny is already overcome. They do not seek deliverance, they are already acquainted with it. For them, it has already been brought by the Savior. Destiny was only regarded as an inferior power that could be overcome when it had in fact already manifestly been overcome by another power.

The Archons were not primarily the planets, but they *corresponded* to the planets because they represented the seven days of Creation, which were also those of the week. Symbolizing Creation, they symbolized the world that Christ overcame, as well as all the laws of the world, including planetary Destiny.

Appendix

I think that difficulties may be found in this hypothesis that I have not noticed. I would like at least to try to anticipate some of the possible objections.

1. Do the planets not already appear as guilty powers in the earliest part of the book of *Enoch*? Yes, in *1 Enoch* 18:13–16 and 21:3–5. But Enoch's planets are not the Archons. They do not rule over the whole world. They are not linked with the account of Creation. They have been chastised and imprisoned by God, and the text says that this is because they “have not come in their times.” Consequently, it seems that the only reason for the condemnation of the planets in this work is their name of wandering stars, and the fact that their progress around the sky is slower than that of the fixed stars, so that in a way they delay and do not come in their times. This has nothing to do with Gnosticism.

2. Is the planetary week not mentioned in the *Oracle of Hystaspe*, a work perhaps earlier than Christianity? This is what is sometimes said, appealing to the witness of John Lydus (*De mensibus* II, 4). However, not only is this witness late (sixth century), but John Lydus does not exactly say that. He writes: “The Chaldeans, disciples of Zoroaster and Hystaspe, grouped the days into hebdomads according to the number of the planets.” It is therefore a question of the Chaldeans, that is, the astrologers, not perhaps Hystaspe himself, nor Zoroaster himself. If John Lydus did find this correspondence between the days and the planets in a work attributed to Hystaspe, it must be remembered that a number of works seem to have circulated in Hystaspe's name (cf. Bidez and Cumont, *Les Mages hellénisés*, vol. 1, 361–77). So far as the *Oracle of Hystaspe*, which *might* be earlier than Christianity, is concerned (Bidez and Cumont, vol. 1, 217–18, place it in the first century before, or in the first century after Jesus Christ), it seems that there were Christianized versions, as the fragment quoted by Clement of Alexandria shows (frag. 8 in Bidez-Cumont). We cannot know if the text John Lydus perhaps alludes to (and it is not certain that he makes allusion to a text attributed to Hystaspe) is the Christianized version of the oracle or the oracle itself or some other work. In the midst of such uncertainty, we cannot affirm that the *Oracle of Hystaspe* attests to the use of the planetary week before Christianity.

3. Why are the Twelve (that is, the twelve constellations of the Zodiac) sometimes also considered evil, or at least ignorant, in certain Gnostic works? The astrological interpretation of the myth of the Seven developed among the Gnostics themselves. And in virtue of this perpetual advance by which they placed the true God farther and farther away from the world, they got to the stage when they were able to place God no longer in the Ogdoad but further above it. Thus the Twelve could be reduced to the level of inferior powers. In the *Pistis Sophia*, a work placed in the third century, the Twelve seem to play the role ordinarily played by the Seven. But in this work it is still discernible that this version of the myth has

replaced an earlier version that referred to the Seven (cf. Bousset, *Hauptprobleme*, 346–50). The same evolution from the Seven to the Twelve appears in the Gnostic *Hermetica* (compare CH I and CH XIII). In Mandeian thought, the Twelve are sometimes joined to the Seven, but the role of the Seven remains predominant.

The relative newness of the doctrine of the Twelve Archons in comparison to that of the Seven is indicated in the *First Apocalypse of James* (26:2–8). Here James says to Christ: “Rabbi, are they twelve who belong to the Hebdomad, and not seven as it is written in the Scriptures?” Christ replies: “He who spoke in Scripture only knew to a certain extent.”

(Where is the Hebdomad and the Seven spoken of in Scripture? Is it in the account of Genesis? It certainly has to do with the seven days of Creation and not the planets, at least at first. He who spoke in Scripture is without doubt Moses.)

4. Is Saturnilus’s theory on the creation of the body of man inspired by that of Philo, according to whom Adam’s body (or the unreasonable part of this nature) was created by angels? It does resemble it, and it might be the case that Saturnilus knew this theory. But the great difference is that Philo’s angels obey God and are not ignorant or rebel powers. They are certainly less perfect than God and he can entrust them with tasks not fitting for him to accomplish himself: but they act according to his order, and the number seven (which moreover is not mentioned on this occasion) is a sacred number for Philo. The Gnostic myth cannot be understood without this *upturning of values brought about by Christianity, which the Gnostics wished to push to the limit.*

Chapter III

The Mother

1. “The Mother” as a Name of the Holy Spirit

According to Irenaeus, Simon and Menander, the earliest heretics he mentions attribute a major role in the creation of the world to a certain spiritual, eternal entity, proceeding from God, whom they call “Thought” (*Ennoia*). This Thought was for them the Mother of all beings. This universal, eternal Mother is found in a number of later Gnostic doctrines. Following the hints of the heresiologists, scholars have suspected for a long time that she represents the Holy Spirit.¹ This was found to be confirmed by the works discovered at Nag Hammadi.² So, when the Gnostics speak of the Father, of the Mother, and of the Son, this is not a reference to some sort of pagan mythology, it simply refers to what we call the Trinity.

To think of the Holy Spirit as a feminine being might seem to be a fantasy alien to Christianity. Nevertheless, no more than the allegory of the angels symbolizing the world, or the Hebdomad symbolizing Judaism, the depiction of the Holy Spirit as a feminine character was not unknown in early Christianity. It is found in the very old Jewish-Christian gospel, the *Gospel of the Hebrews*. In this work, of which only fragments remain, Christ says: “My Mother the Holy Spirit.”³ In Theophilus of Antioch and in Irenaeus’s *Apostolic Demonstration*, the third person of the Trinity is not called Spirit but Wisdom, a name that suggests a feminine entity.⁴ Again, Aphraates, in the fourth century, says that man has God for Father and the Holy Spirit for Mother.⁵ (I add that to my mind it is possible that the mysterious woman of chapter 12 of the Apocalypse represents the Holy Spirit.)⁶ These depictions of the Spirit as feminine are explained by the fact the word *rûah*, spirit, is feminine in Hebrew.

The name *Ennoia* was perhaps preferred to *Pneuma* in certain early Christian groups, because it is feminine like the Hebrew it translates. This mark left by Hebrew on a thought that expresses itself in Greek ought not to lead us to believe that Gnosticism was closer to Judaism than ordinary Christianity, for on the contrary, so far as these ideas are concerned, it is further removed. This simply shows that certain Gnostic sects used traditions going back to a time when Christianity was still very close to its Aramaic origins, and that these sects had preserved the forms of language and representation of these early times.

Instead of translating *rûah* by *Ennoia*, one can also, in order to preserve the feminine character that the Spirit has in Hebrew, assimilate it to Wisdom. As we have just seen, this is what Theophilus of Antioch and Irenaeus did. The two devices can also be used at the same time: to translate *rûah* by *Ennoia* and to assimilate *Ennoia* to Wisdom. If we believe the *Clementine Homilies* (II, 25), for Simon, *Ennoia* was also Wisdom, *Sophia*. Even before Christianity, Wisdom was likened to the Spirit in certain Old Testament texts,⁷ and Wilckens has shown that in Philo the ideas of Spirit and Wisdom are very close to each other.⁸

Wisdom without doubt passed on some of its characteristics to the Spirit as much in Gnosticism as in the Christianity of the Church. We know that in late Jewish speculation it became a sort of hypostasis, an entity proceeding from God, closely united to him, but sometimes spoken of as if she were a separate person. This personification of Wisdom no doubt contributed to the conception of the Spirit as a personal being. Moreover, Wisdom was regarded as having a special link with Creation. She was the partner to whom God gave himself when he created the universe (Prov. 8:22–30). Even though the Spirit is also related to Creation in Scripture—he is named at the beginning of Genesis (1:2), and in Psalm 33:6 he is mentioned with the Word as the instruments by which God created the heavens—the assimilation of the Spirit to Wisdom is without doubt one of the main reasons why the Spirit was considered as creator in the Church as well as in Gnosticism.

However, the Holy Spirit could only be identified with *creative* Wisdom in a doctrine or concept of creation that was not yet devalued. This is the reason why this identification can hardly be found except in orthodox Christianity, or Jewish-Christianity, or among the earliest Simonians. The latter were probably a sect apart, aloof from the community at Jerusalem but perhaps not yet Gnostics properly speaking.⁹ We have seen that for Simon the Creator God was perhaps not yet distinct from the true God.¹⁰ Even in the system attributed to Simon by Irenaeus, it seems that the *Ennoia*, in creating or emitting the angels (which is in some way to create the world), does nothing else but accomplish the will of God. For it creates or emits the angels “because it knows what its Father wills” (Irenaeus, I, 23, 2). This recalls what is said to God in the Book of Wisdom: “With you is Wisdom, who . . . was present when you created the world *and who knows what is pleasing in your eyes.*” It is therefore the Father who is the true Creator. It is true that according to Tertullian (*De Anima*, 34) the Simonian *Ennoia* could have “foreseen” its Father’s design, which doubtless means that it could have acted with more haste, or that it might have wished to carry out itself what ought to have been carried out by God. But Tertullian perhaps only bases what he says on Irenaeus’s account, to which he may have added here, as he sometimes seems to do,¹¹ an embellishment that he has imagined himself.

Simon’s *Ennoia*, like Wisdom in the Old Testament, was probably the worker through whom God created the world. For, even supposing that

the Simonian angels had truly been creators, nothing in Simon's thought proves that they disobeyed God or the *Ennoia* in creating. Nothing proves that they became tyrants who held back and persecuted the Spirit *before creating the world*. Rather, it is *in the world* that they hold it back. Their fault would not therefore be to have created the world but to have enslaved the Spirit. Creation would remain conformed to God's design.

But in Gnosticism properly speaking, where the act of Creation is devalued, this act could no longer be attributed to the Holy Spirit. This is why when the figure of the Mother appears it is henceforth found doubled into two figures, one of which is still the equivalent of the Holy Spirit but is no longer creative Wisdom, while the other is usually creative Wisdom, but no longer equivalent to the Holy Spirit—even though the name of Holy Spirit can still be given to it.¹² The first is the supreme Mother, the first emanation of God, associated with the Father and the Son, the pure and immaculate mother of the aeons. The second is also, most often, a divine emanation; she is still a form of the Spirit; she is still called Mother; but she is depicted as far inferior to the first. In Valentinus she is the last of the aeons, and it is by committing a fault or error that she puts in motion the process leading to the Creation of the world. She gives birth to the Demiurge and is thereby the origin of the seven Archons, the tyrants of the souls. In Mandaean thought this degradation will be pushed to its limit. *Rūhā*, that is, the Spirit, who is still called Holy Spirit (*Rūhā Qūdshā*), no longer has anything holy in the portrait they paint of her. She is nothing but the mother of the Seven and the enemy of the human soul.

In the myth of the Mother, therefore, at least two stages must be distinguished. In the first, where the Mother is simply the Holy Spirit assimilated to Wisdom, the myth is explained by the feminine character of the spirit. This comes from Judaism, but, as with many other concepts that came from it in early Christianity, it is not properly Gnostic. But in the second, where the Mother is doubled up into the supreme Mother and the inferior Mother, the latter being creative Wisdom, the myth is explained by the devaluation of the act of Creation, a devaluation of which we have already spoken in reference to the Demiurge and the Seven. We have seen that this devaluation is probably explained by the tension that existed between Christianity and Judaism at the beginning of the second century, which added to the depreciation of the world in the doctrines of Paul and John.

It is therefore not impossible to understand the myth of the Mother, at least in its main strands, on the basis of Christianity. As for the particular forms it took, we shall now try to understand some of them.

2. *The "Mother," Captive of the Angels*

As we have seen, it is not difficult to understand why Simon could have considered the *Ennoia* creative. For him, the *Ennoia* was simultaneously

Wisdom, and in the Old Testament the latter is the worker through whom God created everything. This idea is definitely a Jewish, pre-Christian idea, but that does not mean that there was a *Gnostic* myth of Wisdom in Judaism, before Christianity. To be Gnostic this myth would have to mean that Wisdom was made into an intermediary between God and the world to relieve God of the responsibility of having created the world. But this is not what it means. The origin of the Jewish doctrine of Wisdom is probably found in chapter 8 of Proverbs, where Wisdom is presented as the first work of God and the one by which he made all the others. First of all, this simply means that God created everything wisely, and that his creation is good.¹³ In no way does it devalue creation. Quite the contrary. In Philo it is sometimes Wisdom and sometimes the Word who is depicted as intermediary between God and the world. Thus, one can say both that God created wisely and that he created by his word. These myths, if one wishes to label them thus, are adequately explained by the meaning of the words. I admit that I cannot understand why some scholars think it necessary to look for an explanation in pre-Christian Gnostic thought, which is in no way attested and to which Jewish Wisdom speculation would have been directly opposed. I understand still less why it is judged necessary to invoke the influence of pagan religions by recalling the fact that these religions included feminine deities. That an abstract concept should be personified and give way to a sort of myth is a phenomenon not at all unknown in the history of religions.

Simon therefore seems to have adopted, like early Christianity and with it Jewish speculation on creative Wisdom, speculation that by itself was not at all Gnostic, quite the contrary, and which was barely mythological.

But what does the myth that Irenaeus (I, 23, 2) attributed to Simon mean, the myth according to which the *Ennoia*, having given birth to the angels "by whom the world was made," was then held by them, reduced to captivity, and underwent many outrages at their hands, until the time God descended into the world to save her? Why did Simon or the Simonians think that the angels wished to hinder the Spirit from returning to her Father? Why did they depict her as oppressed by her own creation?

It seems to me that it might be understood on the basis of some of Saint Paul's thoughts.

In the Epistle to the Romans (8:19–24) Paul writes: "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we are saved." In this wonderful text, Paul, more moderate than normal in respect to the world, speaks of it with a tender pity. According

to him, creation itself aspires to be delivered and to share in the glorious liberty of the children of God. However, creation is at present subjected to "futility" (*mataiotēs*), which doubtless means to corruption and disorder. Moreover, it is not only creation: "We ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly." These "first fruits" (*aparchē*), are they anything other than the Spirit itself? Are they only a presentiment of it? No, they are something of the Spirit itself, since Paul said in two instances before this, "The Spirit of God dwells in you" (8:9 and 11). Christians therefore have something of the Spirit of God in them, but nevertheless they groan, they need to be delivered. The Spirit itself groans: "The Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words" (8:26). Is the Spirit who groans and intercedes the one who is close to God or the one who has descended into man? It is doubtless the one who has descended into man, else why would Paul add, "And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit" (8:27)? Thus the Spirit of God, who dwells in man, participates in his sufferings and aspirations. Can it not therefore be concluded that the divine Spirit suffers in the world he himself has created?

For Simon, the Spirit is captive, the Spirit is constrained by the world. For the angels mean the world. There is perhaps nothing here that goes beyond the thought of Paul.

One might also note this: Paul entertains the hypothesis that Christians can be separated from the love of God by the powers, among whom he mentions the angels. All the same, in chapter 8 of the Epistle to the Romans, he says: "For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (38–39). Paul does not entertain the hypothesis of separation except to refute it; nothing will separate Christians from the love of God, no power, no angel. But at the same time he thinks that in a way Christians are separated from God, since they groan and the Spirit himself groans in them. In a way they are not separated, but in a way they are, as if something held them captive. This is not far from the thought that the Spirit is in a way the captive of the angels.

A link can also be found between the myth attributed to Simon and the thought of Saint John the Evangelist. The latter depicts the Word if not subjected at least persecuted by the world he has created. "The world was made through him, yet the world knew him not" (John 1:10). Now the Spirit, the Word, and Wisdom are more or less interchangeable ideas.¹⁴ In Philo the Word and Wisdom fulfill almost the same role. The Wisdom of the Old Testament is sometimes interpreted by Christians as being the Spirit, sometimes as being the Word.

Finally it must be recalled that for the Gnostics, as often for ordinary Christianity, the Spirit is at the same time the Church. The Mother, as the Church, can be persecuted by the world she created as the Spirit. Thus, in the Apocalypse (chapter 12) one sees a woman who at first appears to be

the sovereign of the world, and who later, persecuted by the dragon, flees into the desert. Not only could the Mother be persecuted, however great and powerful she was in essence, but she also needed to be saved, because insofar as she is the Church she can be identified with the people who comprise her. Such people were initially either idolaters and pagans, or subject to the Law, which is also subjected to the angels. The Mother therefore needed to be saved, she was “the lost sheep” (Irenaeus, I, 23, 2).

It is true that there is a sort of transition here from the idea of the divine Spirit to the idea of the human spirit. From the depiction of the Church as an entity with a divine character one moves to the depiction of those who compose it and applies to the former what is only true of the latter. But this transition is very easy. Not only is it easy to identify the Church with the individuals which make it up, but when one speaks of *pneuma*, one can easily pass from the divine spirit to the human spirit. It is sometimes difficult to judge whether when Paul speaks of *pneuma* he is referring to the Spirit of God or to the human spirit.¹⁵ And Paul is not the only one; it is the same in Luke, for example.¹⁶ H. E. W. Turner notes that there are a number of passages in the apologists in which it is almost impossible to decide whether *pneuma* means the human spirit or the divine Spirit.¹⁷ What is true of *pneuma* can also be true of its feminine equivalent *Ennoia*.

This myth can therefore be explained by ideas analogous to certain Pauline ideas. Let me add that they are less likely to have been invented by Simon himself. It is certainly not impossible that Simon and Paul formed the same ideas at the same time. But I think, rather, that the myth was formed under the influence of Paul’s ideas and by the Simonian school rather than by Simon. The expression *the lost sheep* or *the wandering sheep* seems to have come from the Synoptic Gospels (Matt. 10:6; 15:24; 18:12–14; Luke 15:4–6). It therefore seems that this myth can scarcely be earlier than the end of the first century. Nor can it be much later, since creation is not yet devalued. Perhaps Menander invented it. According to Irenaeus (I, 23, 5), Menander also said that the angels were derived from *Ennoia*. In relation to Menander, Irenaeus does not make it clear whether the angels had held back *Ennoia*; but since he says that to be saved, according to Menander, was a matter of “overcoming the angels,” this seems to imply that the angels in some way oppressed *Ennoia*.

3. “Helen”

According to Justin (*Apol.* I 26), Simon Magus was accompanied by a woman called Helen, who had formerly been a prostitute. This woman was said to be “the first *Ennoia* (Thought) begotten by Simon.” Since, according to Justin, Simon was “the first God” in the eyes of the Simonians, Simon’s *Ennoia* ought to be the *Ennoia* of God for them, that is, in some way the Holy Spirit. This is also what can be deduced from what one finds in the later heresiologists. Inspired probably by Justin, and more or less

copying one another, they in their turn recounted that a former prostitute, who accompanied Simon, shared with him the highest rank in Simonian theology. Epiphanius distinctly states that for Simon she was “the Holy Spirit” (*Pan.* 21, 2). If this depiction of the Holy Spirit as incarnate in a particular human being was really taught by Simon, or by the Simonians, it would be a strange and perhaps unique depiction. The Holy Spirit can descend into humans, but it does not constantly and exclusively identify itself with one of them. It would be a depiction almost as strange and almost as unique as that of God the Father incarnate in the person of Simon. Foerster thinks that it is precisely because such depictions were attributed only to Simon and the Simonians that they ought to be held as authentically Simonian. For they could not have been invented on the basis of later doctrines.¹⁸ Nevertheless, this reasoning does not seem to me to be absolutely compelling. There might have been reasons for attributing these ideas to this school, and to this school alone, without it actually having taught them. We will see further on that it is possible to explain why Justin believed Simon presented himself as God.¹⁹

Justin is far from being a trustworthy witness when he speaks of the Simonians, whom he detests.²⁰ Nevertheless he does not seem to have completely invented the character of Helen. The name Helen, in any case, or some name of this type, certainly seems to have been linked with the Simonian sect. For the pseudo-Clementine writings also mention a Helen in relation to the story of Simon. Here Helen is not described as a former prostitute. She could initially have been a follower of John the Baptist. Then, when Dositheus succeeded the Baptist as head of the sect which the latter founded, she might have followed Dositheus. Finally, when Simon took Dositheus’s place, he might have inherited Helen at the same time.²¹ Given this version of the facts, one might ask whether the name Helen might not have been derived from a name given to the Simonian sect. For it seems that on becoming head of the sect one also inherits Helen. Celsus (in Origen’s *Contra Celsum* v, 62) says that the Simonians were also called Helenians; but he does not seem to know that Simon had had a companion with him called Helen. He says that they are called Helenians “because they venerate Helen or a master called Helenos.” The Helen he speaks of is probably Helen of Troy. In fact, heresiologists after Justin who repeat his affirmations sometimes embroider them with new embellishments, placing Simon’s Helen in relation to Helen of Troy, of which she would be a reincarnation. (This is why Helen of Troy appears in Goethe’s *Faust*, the legend of Faust being in large part inspired by the legend of Simon Magus.) But Celsus does not speak of a Helen of Troy *reincarnate*; he does not seem to know of Simon’s companion. It might therefore be questioned whether the name Helenians really derived from the name of a woman who might have accompanied Simon; if, on the contrary, Helen was not a name coined after the name of the sect, just as the heresiarch Ebion was invented from the name Ebionites.

But why were the Simonians called Helenians if Helen was not the companion of Simon? Who is this Helen whom they may have worshiped, or this Helenos? Did they give the name Helen to the divine Mother, to *Ennoia*, who figures in the doctrines attributed to Simon and Menander? It is possible, rather it would be certain, if one admitted that for them Helen was the Holy Spirit. But they are not the only Gnostics who invoke *Ennoia* in this way, and this calls for an explanation.

The explanations proposed by modern scholars are numerous and varied. Many scholars have taken what Justin recounts at face value: Helen might have been a real woman, the companion of Simon, and the latter, being deified, might also have deified his companion. It is indeed rather difficult to explain the fact that a man should claim to be God and that he should present his companion as the Holy Spirit. But Quispel does not see too much difficulty in this: he observes that there are paranoiacs who think thus.²²

If one has to admit this sort of explanation, it would also be necessary to think not only was Simon mad but also all those who followed him. Doubtless, if it were established that Simon's sect was made up only of pure pagans, the possibility might be entertained that this sect had divinized its master and also its master's companion. Among the pagans, deification of a man or a woman was possible. But were they pagans? The only document concerning Simon that is relatively close to the time when he lived, the Acts of the Apostles, shows him converted to Christianity. Modern scholars, and before them the heresiologists, suggest that this conversion was merely apparent or only very ephemeral; but there is nothing to suggest this in Acts, even though this account is hostile to Simon. Beyschlag seems to be right when he observes that from the beginning the Simonian school claimed or was considered to be Christian.²³ Hilgenfeld also says this.²⁴ Justin states that all those who come from Simon, Menander, or Marcion are called Christians (*Apol.* 1, 26). Moreover, as I will demonstrate below,²⁵ there are reasons for believing that before his conversion Simon did not belong to the pagan part of the Samaritan population but to that which was of the Samaritan religion, that is to say, to a religion that was a form of Judaism. In such a religion, it is very difficult for a man to set himself up as God and to deify his companion. If he did do it, it would be very difficult for him to find followers among his fellow believers.

The influence of oriental religions, where the supreme God is normally accompanied by a goddess, his paramour, is alleged. But these religions do not have very much to do with what we are told of Simon's doctrine. As this doctrine is presented to us, it is above all inspired by Judaism and Christianity, even if it deviates from both of them. Doubtless Irenaeus describes the Simonian priests as syncretists, who could represent Simon and Helen in the guise of Zeus and Athena. But if the Simonians were syncretists in the time of Irenaeus, it is much less likely in the first century,

when Christianity and also Simonianism were still very close to their Jewish origin.²⁶

Helen of Troy is also appealed to, since some say that she might have been venerated as a goddess in Samaria and that her statue may have been discovered. A bas-relief depicting the helmets of the Dioscuri has in fact been found in Sebaste, in the ruins of a temple apparently dedicated to Koré-Persephone, and not far from there, outside the town, a statue of Koré holding a torch in her right hand and a pomegranate and ears of corn in her left has been found.²⁷ According to legend, Castor and Pollux were Helen's brothers; some conclude from this that Koré of Sebaste ought to be assimilated to Helen, since the cult of the sister might have been associated with that of the brothers. This conclusion seems very weak to me. The cult of Koré and the cult of the Dioscuri were in any case related cults that could be associated. This is not because Koré was likened to Helen, but because the same idea inspired both cults, the idea that life and death reciprocally beget one another. A temple to Koré could at the same time be a temple where the Dioscuri were worshiped, without Koré being in any way assimilated to Helen. The Koré holding a pomegranate, ears of corn, and a torch, as a goddess of the moon, is simply the Koré of the Eleusinian Mysteries. She does not brandish the torch as Helen does in the legend recounted by Virgil (*Aeneid* VI, 518–19), but simply holds it in front of her. At the end of his article "La Légende pythagoricienne d'Hélène," Marcel Detienne writes: "According to Vincent, there might have been a cult of Helen associated with the Dioscuri, in Samaria. But the reconstitution of this triad seems quite hypothetical; only the cult of the Dioscuri is well attested."²⁸

It is true that Simon's Helen is sometimes called *Séléné* (the Moon). In the Clementine *Recognitions*, of which we have a Latin translation, she is called *Luna*. But it is the resemblance of the names *Héléné* and *Séléné* that produced this confusion, as had already happened in relation to Helen of Troy.²⁹

It is quite likely that there were Simonian syncretists, and that in a work written by one of them Helen of Troy was presented as a symbol of the soul or of the divine spark that is in the soul. (This is the case in the *Exegesis of the Soul*, found at Nag Hammadi, where the repentant Helen of the *Odyssey* symbolizes the soul regretting its faults.) The abducted Helen could have symbolized the robbery of the powers seizing hold of the divine element. A work of this type is conceivable from the middle of the second century. But why did the Simonians attach so much importance to this myth that they took the name Helenians?

Cardinal Daniélou has propounded an explanation of the name Helenians by paralleling it to Hellenians, a Jewish sect mentioned by Justin and which, according to J. Daniélou, might have been identical with the Essenes. The Hellenists in Acts, Christians who formed a group distinct

from the apostles in Jerusalem, who were obliged to flee from Jerusalem when their principal representative Stephen was stoned, thus becoming the first missionaries in Samaria, may have belonged to this group.³⁰ The hypothesis is interesting, and, insofar as it links Helenians and Hellenists, does not lack probability. But it is in fact useless—useless and very problematic—to bring in Justin’s Hellenians and the Essenes. For the name Helenian, mentioned by Celsus, is almost identical to Hellenian, and Hellenian by itself is the equivalent of Hellenist.³¹ It would be natural that Christians in Samaria, who had been converted by the Hellenists or Helenians, should call themselves Hellenians, or that they should be called this by their enemies.

Helen could therefore have been conceived of as a collective figure, according to the name Hellenians. It would be natural to associate her with Simon, who was doubtless the head of the first Christians in Samaria, or at least of a group among them. It would also be natural for Jewish Christians to depict her as a former prostitute, for the Simonian sect must soon have included a large number of former pagans. The fact that Simon often represents Paul in the pseudo-Clementine writings, and the links between the doctrine attributed to Simon and Paulinism, indicate that this community must have adopted Paul’s ideas very early on and have been of the same type as the Pauline communities. The sect was therefore probably largely made up of former idolaters, which is to say, former “prostitutes,” in the language of the Old Testament. Finally, the veneration these Christians manifested in relation to *Ennoia* might have been interpreted as veneration of the Helen who was thought to be implied in the name Helenians.

J. Daniélou’s hypothesis makes reasonable sense of the legend of Helen and Simon, and it seems to me very likely that it is right.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that another, perhaps simpler, explanation can be defended. The key to this explanation is provided by Irenaeus when he says that Simon found Helen at Tyre (1, 23, 2). Bousset uses this to suggest that the goddess Isis, who in a legend reported by Epiphanius is said to have been a prostitute in Tyre for ten years, is one of the models for Helen and for the Mother in general.³² But besides this having nothing to do with the Mother in general, but rather with an idea particular to the Simonians, this legend concerning Isis is reported only by Epiphanius (*Ancoratus* 104), that is, in the fourth century, and seems a very weak argument for relating Helen with Isis.³³ There is a text closer to Simon that might have exercised an influence on his school. It is the Gospel account in which Christ works a miracle in favor of a woman from Tyre, whom Mark says was *Hellēnis*, that is, a pagan (Mark 7:26). Is it not possible that in the Simonian sect this woman was taken as a symbol of pagan humanity, at first subject to the powers of the world and then enlightened and redeemed by the Savior?

Even if the Savior for this sect was Simon and not Christ—which I can hardly believe, for was this sect not considered Christian—is it not possible

that the role played by Christ in this account was transferred to Simon? It would be so much easier since, according to Irenaeus, Simon considered Christ one of his own manifestations.

In Matthew's account, parallel to Mark's (Matt. 15:22–28), Christ first refuses what the woman of Tyre asks him. "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But finally, touched by the woman's faith and humility, he grants her the miracle. Was this not to accept her among the "lost sheep" to whom he was sent? This account could therefore have given rise to the suggestion of calling Helen "the lost sheep," which the Simonians did, according to Irenaeus (I, 23, 2).

As I have said, the Simonian community probably very quickly became a community in large part made up of pagan-Christians. Not that it was necessarily like this from the outset; but it must have been from the time when Paul's ideas were widely spread. It would be natural for it to accord the utmost attention to an account concerning the *Hellēnis*. This woman who was at first an idolatress (and therefore a prostitute in accordance with the expression used in the Old Testament to refer to idolaters), but who in virtue of her faith found favor in the eyes of the Lord, could have become a symbol of the pagan saved by faith. She could have provided a model and ideal image for the community. Identified with the community, she could also have been the Holy Spirit.

That *Hellēnis* should become Helen can hardly be judged impossible by anyone who is acquainted with the transformations and corruptions of names that come about in the heresiological tradition. Certainly one must presuppose that the Simonian theories based on Mark's account were not formed at the time of Simon himself. They must have appeared at the earliest around the end of the first century, when the Synoptic Gospels were known, unless the Simonians knew the tradition used by Mark from another source, which is after all not impossible.

Such is the explanation that seems to me to be the most likely, together with that of Cardinal Daniélou. These two explanations are not mutually exclusive. The people who called themselves or who were called Hellenists—a name that suggests a pagan origin—could well have taken the *Hellēnis* as a model and symbol, the pagan who found favor in the eyes of Christ. It must simply be noted that J. Daniélou's hypothesis does not in itself explain why Helen was encountered by the Savior in Tyre.

4. *Sophia*

We have observed that from the second century the figure of the Mother is in some way found to be doubled among those Christians who assigned an inferior rank to the Creator.³⁴ Henceforth, on the one hand there is the supreme Mother, who is the Holy Spirit, and on the other the Mother responsible for the creation of the world and who, as a feminine entity associated with Creation in the Bible, is called Sophia (Wisdom).

The myth of Sophia is primarily known to us through the heresiologists, who present it as being an esoteric doctrine of Valentinus or of the Valentinians. It is told in diverse forms. The one most often encountered might be summarized thus:

Sophia is one of aeons, that is, one of the eternal beings that emanated from God. In his deepest essence God is the "Abyss," inseparable from "Silence," which means that he is profoundly mysterious and cannot be revealed by words. But there are eternal essences, which, being derived from God, give us some idea of him. The highest of these essences are Intellect (*Nous*) and Truth. A little further from the divine center there are aeons such as the Word (*Logos*) and Life; Man and the Church (Man on high, and the Church on high); then Faith, Hope, Love, Unity, and so on. These are either names given to God or Christ (explicitly or implicitly) in the New Testament or virtues or perfections analogous to the Platonic Ideas. Now although these beings are in God (for Valentinus they were simply moods, thoughts, or actions of God³⁵), they do not know him, or at least not entirely. That is to say, they do not wholly know their own essence. Only the first among them, *Nous*, whom the Valentinians also call *Monogenes* (the only Son), perfectly understands God's essence. (This idea seems to be based on the Gospel passage, "No one knows the Son but the Father, nor the Father but the Son and he to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.") The other aeons desire to know God as perfectly as *Nous*, and as directly as him, but they are hindered by "Silence," companion of "Abyss" (Silence is a feminine word in Greek), and by *Horos*, a being whose name means Limit or Separation, and who might also be called *Stauros* (the cross). (This might mean that the aeons are limited concepts, that they ought to remain limited in the use made of them,³⁶ and that they do not allow one truly to know God, unless it is through the Son and the cross).

Now the last of these aeons, Sophia, drawn by the force of a love without measure, wished to understand God directly and rushed toward him. She proceeded in this action without the agreement of her companion *Thélētos*, whose name means "Desired," obviously signifying "Desired by God." She thereby became guilty. In her attempt she could have been annihilated and completely absorbed by the divine light. But she was stopped by Limit, who prevented her from being dissolved in God. In some versions of the myth she then fell, or was separated from the divine Pleroma because she had become imperfect, so to speak. (*Pleroma* is a word drawn from Pauline and Johannine language, signifying plenitude, or perfection.) According to other versions, she never left the Pleroma, since she was forgiven; only her guilty "intention" was separated from her and thrown out of the Pleroma, thereby becoming a second Sophia, an inferior Sophia. Whatever the case, whether it was directly or by her "intention," in wishing to directly understand God's greatness, Sophia gave birth to a being who was

like an imperfect image of God. This being is the Demiurge, the craftsman of the sensible world.

Thus, as in Jewish wisdom literature, Sophia is linked with the creation of the world. But here it is by a fault that she set in motion the process that led to creation. In the Old Testament and Philo, Sophia's activity is absolutely conformed to God's designs, and she is a figure who essentially serves to highlight the excellence of the created world. Moreover, in the Old Testament, Sophia was a work of Yahweh, the first of his creations. Here she is an emanation of the true God, but so far as Yahweh is concerned, she is depicted as being his mother, not his creature. Her relation to the God of the Old Testament is reversed.

It is obvious that we cannot move directly from the Old Testament Sophia to the Valentinian Sophia. The latter can only be explained by Gnosticism prior to Valentinus, and above all by the distinction of God and the Demiurge.

The links that G. C. Stead³⁷ makes between this myth and different classical traditions though interesting are very far from explaining its beginning. Stead links it principally to Philo, or to Platonic Judaism analogous to Philo's. He attempts to show that there were already signs of a devaluation of the world and of Sophia in Philo. Nevertheless, he acknowledges that Philo's Sophia does not fall, and that for him creation is good. To fill the gap between Philo and Valentinus on this point, Stead appeals to Platonic ideas such as the dyad or the "evil soul" of the *Laws*. But Sophia is not an "evil soul" and the dyad is not a divine spiritual being: the dyad is a sort of matter. Doubtless, there is a certain devaluation of the visible in Plato, and in this his doctrine perhaps derives from an inspiration that might be linked to that of Valentinianism: but the Platonic *myths* are very different from the Valentinian myths, and even the inspiration is not absolutely the same. Valentinus's Sophia is obviously linked with that of the Old Testament and Philo, even though she greatly differs from it in the adventure that is attributed to her. And this difference does not simply come from Plato, whose doctrine could lead to a devaluation of matter but not of the world or the Creator. It can be explained only by the Gnostics' reversal of ideas on the subject of the value of the world and the Old Testament Creator. Valentinus found this reversal in Gnostic Christians like Saturnilus and Basilides. Stead introduces Christian elements only into the last phase of the evolution of this myth; it seems to me that they must be introduced at the beginning, or at the very least given an essential role.

G. M. MacRae has shown³⁸ that there are numerous parallels between the Gnostic myth of Sophia and Jewish ideas on the subject of Wisdom. But he has also clearly seen that the Jewish contribution to this myth is far from able to explain it completely; that it does not explain the basic spirit of the myth and that a "spirit of revolt" against Judaism, or a loss of

confidence with respect to the created world, an anticosmic attitude, must also be added. Nevertheless he thinks that the revolt against Judaism could only have arisen within Judaism itself. Certainly one only revolts against something in which one feels trapped. But once separated, one still seeks to justify and explain the separation, in criticizing that from which one is separated. This is what most Christian theologians have done in past centuries, but in less extreme forms than the Gnostics. Why could Christianity, which defined itself both as Jewish and as non-Jewish, not have given rise, in one of its branches that was more radical than the others, to a myth that was both inspired by Judaism and also by a spirit of revolt or opposition against it? Why should this not be the place, as it is said "on the edge of Judaism," where one seeks so desperately to find a place for the appearance of Gnosticism? Christianity was definitely on the border, on the margin of Judaism, a Jewish *heresy*, according to traditional Judaism.³⁹

What did this Sophia who falls, this Sophia whose name signifies Wisdom but who nevertheless commits an error and gives birth to the ambiguous person of the Demiurge, mean for Valentinus? One might think she was necessary in order to explain how the "deficient" world here below could have been born of the divine world. To explain the origin of evil it was enough to attribute it to some sort of transformation or corruption of the created world, a corruption due to the fault of the first man (which is what Paul seems to have thought⁴⁰), or to a revolt by the governing angels or creators of the world, or to their inferior and limited nature (which seems to be implied in the doctrine Irenaeus attributed to Simon, as well as in the doctrines of Saturnilus and Basilides). Nor was Sophia necessary to illustrate the inferior level on which it was thought the Old Testament revelation ought to be placed. It was enough to distinguish the God of the Old Testament from the true God by placing him on the level of the angels, as Saturnilus and Basilides had done. Was this not sufficient to devalue God, was it necessary to add a Sophia, imperfect like him? One gets the impression that Sophia represents something that is linked to the Old Testament but is not exactly what the Demiurge represents; something someone wished to debase, but not as much as the Demiurge was debased. Could she be Jewish wisdom? I do not mean the hypostatized Wisdom of the Book of Proverbs, the Wisdom created by Yahweh and who is his servant; but a wisdom that represents the whole of Jewish thought, the philosophy of the Old Testament, Judaism. It would be natural that for a Gnostic Jewish wisdom would have been something insufficient and that it had committed a fundamental error. It would be natural to regard her as the Mother of the Demiurge, since it was in Judaism that the name and conception of Yahweh had appeared. It would also be natural to consider her as an essence higher than him. For Yahweh was perhaps thought of as being, above all, the God of the Law, of the Pentateuch; but in Judaism there is not only the Law, there are also the prophets, indeed the Valentinians said that Sophia had spoken much through the mouth of the prophets.

In the prophets, more than in the Pentateuch, the Gnostics could find foreshadowings of the true religion. This myth might therefore express the desire to distinguish the parts of the Old Testament that were more or less admissible. It could be the measure of a certain *reconciliation* with Judaism. The Valentinians may have thought that Sophia, that is, Judaism, committed an enormous error in wishing to lay hold of God directly, when he can only be apprehended through the mediation of the Son; but they may also have thought that she committed this error because of an excess of misguided love, and that at the beginning she derived from the true God.

As I have suggested,⁴¹ there may have been a turning point in Gnosticism around the middle of the second century. In any case it is certain that Valentinus is far less anti-Jewish than Saturnilus or even Basilides and Carpocrates were. He does not take Saturnilus's extreme position in relation to the Old Testament, for whom the prophets themselves were strangers to the revelation of the true God (Irenaeus, I, 24, 2). It is probable that, like his disciple Ptolemy in his *Epistle to Flora*, he wished to distinguish between the different parts of this book, which in truth is not a book but a whole body of literature.

It would be the same for the author of the *Apocryphon of John*, who definitely has some sort of link with Valentinianism. In this work one sees (BG 46, 4-6; CG II, 13, 29-30; IV, 21, 18-20) that if the Demiurge does not know God, he at least knows his own Mother, Sophia. That might mean that the Old Testament knew a certain wisdom, which was not the complete truth about God, but which was not entirely alien to the realm of this truth.

If it can be thought that for Valentinus the Demiurge was merely an imaginary figure, a symbol, the interpretation of Sophia as being Jewish wisdom would explain this myth quite well. This would simply mean that Jewish wisdom, being imperfect, gave birth to the figure of the biblical Creator, who is only an imperfect image of God. This wisdom would have been one of the forms of the eternal Spirit, but it would have been the form farthest away from the center, the weakest. Because of this relative weakness, she thought she could lay hold of God. Thus, instead of understanding God, she gave birth to a false image of God, a God conceived of as being the origin of the sensible world and therefore knowable through the sensible world. This image could have held prisoner the thought of those who believed in it. However, despite her error, Jewish wisdom retained some memory of the true God and could have transmitted some rays of truth through an imperfect religion.

But where did the visible world come from? It could not have been created by an imaginary figure, and the Demiurge could only be an imaginary figure if it was only an invention of Jewish wisdom. It is true that one can ask to what extent Valentinus in his Platonic idealism believed in the actual existence of the sensible world. The author of the *Treatise on the Resurrection* (who might be Valentinus and who is in any case Valen-

tinian), after having said that the resurrection is not an illusion, says: "Much more is it fitting to say that the world is an illusion" (48, 13–15; cf. 27–28). In the *Gospel of Truth* (28, 24–30, 10), the man who is given a revelation of the Savior awakes as from a dream, and he sees that what he previously believed, what he previously feared, was *nothing*. In the *Tripartite Treatise*, the author speaks more than once of the material elements or forces of the world as things born of the imagination (*phantasia*), of Sophia (78, 7; 82, 19; 103, 16; 109, 27 and 34). In fragment 5 of Valentinus, it seems that the visible world is perhaps merely a painted picture imitating eternal reality, and that only the name of God (the idea of God?) allows humanity to have faith in the world.

Let us admit for a moment that for Valentinus the world is only an illusion. Even in this case, the illusion would be real insofar as it is an illusion, and it could hardly be the work of a Demiurge who in reality did not exist. Could it be the depiction (= illusion) of the existence of the Demiurge who produces an illusion of the world's existence in us? No, for this illusion of the world's existence is also found in peoples who do not know the God of the Old Testament. Could it be Sophia who produces this illusion? But if Sophia is Jewish wisdom, she could not be the source of an illusion that does not exist only among the Jews.

To be frank, it seems to me that it would be an exaggeration to think that the sensible world was wholly an illusion for Valentinus. Doubtless, it is a world *in the process of becoming* and the things found here do not exactly belong to *being*, as do the essences that make up the eternal world. But being an imitation of the eternal world, the sensible world participates in it and is not simply a painted picture. The end of fragment 5 shows that knowledge of God allows one to have faith in the world. Moreover, in the *Tripartite Treatise* we see that God not only allowed but desired the appearance of the world, because it was necessary for a plan (an "economy") which had to be realized. From Irenaeus's work (I, 5, 1) we also see that not only Sophia but rather (*mallon de*) the Savior himself has made images of the aeons in the sensible world. The images made by the Savior cannot simply be imaginations, *phantasiai*, even if they are not eternal like their archetypes. They are *real* imitations, existing, not dreams.

But if the world is in some respects real, the Demiurge, on the contrary, seems to be a figure very close to dream and unreality for Valentinus and the Valentinians, a figure who lacks substance and is perhaps only a product of Sophia's imagination. He is among those beings whom Sophia wished to grasp in reality, but whom she could only grasp in "shadows, images and similitudes" (*Tripartite Treatise* 77, 15–17). It is perhaps not only because he is not the true God that he is merely a shadow but also because he is not the true Creator. It is Sophia who wished to make him into the Creator (Irenaeus, I, 5, 3), but this perhaps simply means that she wished to *depict* him in this way, since he is not actually the only Creator.

A number of times the Demiurge is said to imagine himself creating and thinking that he is the only creator whereas in reality he was inspired and directed either by Sophia or, indeed, by the Savior (Irenaeus, I, 5, 1; 5, 3). Moreover, we will see (in Part 2 of this work, Chapter 11) that in the *Gospel of Truth* the aeons (who are already in some sense Sophia) are not simply purely spiritual beings, existing in another world; they are also the *ages of the world*, that is, men from the times before the coming of Christ. Thus the world already existed. It existed when the aeons began their wandering in their search for God, before their imaginations could have fashioned illusory creations, which is to say before Sophia's error and before the Demiurge. The aeons who sought God in going astray were already beings of the world, and the existence of the world was already a fact.

Did Valentinus accept the existence of the world as a fact, without seeking to explain it? Did he retain the account of Creation, but as a myth, as Plato did? This does not seem to be impossible. But if Creation was something other than a simple myth for him, it is also not impossible that by the mediation of the Logos the true God was for him the true Creator of what is real in the world. At the same time, God could have left the field open for the contrivances of error and to Sophia's imagination, since, in the *Tripartite Treatise* (76, 24—77, 5) he had foreseen and desired Sophia's fall and what resulted from it. What there is of imagination, not in the world but rather in our depiction of it, might be due to Sophia; but what is real in the world, God could have created by the Logos, as the Gospel of John states. In any case it is certain that for the Valentinians the Logos had some part in the formation of the sensible world.

Nevertheless, if Sophia is the cause of whatever is illusory in our depiction of the world, it must be that she is something greater and wider than Jewish wisdom. Is she the human soul, the natural wisdom of man, the *anthrōpinē sophia* Paul speaks of in 1 Cor. 2:13 (cf. 2:5)? The human soul, or natural human wisdom, would therefore be an eternal essence, one of the forms of the divine, but it would be the form farthest from the center and the source. (As in Neoplatonism, in Valentinus increasing distance is the cause of increasing imperfection and in the end the cause of evil.) Because of its distance it must have committed a transgression and fallen from perfection. It would only have retained a memory of what it had seen in the eternal world. The story of Sophia's fall would be a new, more metaphysical, more Platonic account of the fall recounted in Genesis.⁴² As with Adam and Eve, Sophia fell from the Pleroma by disobedience. As Adam and Eve wished to know good and evil, Sophia fell for having wished to know God, the Good. Human beings cannot know God directly; they are separated from him by Horos, Limit, the cross. One must pass by the mediation of the cross, that is, by a mediation that is at the same time a separation, a rending, or at least a distance, in order to know the truth

about God. It would therefore be a myth of Platonic inspiration, but at the same time modeled on the account of Genesis, and in which Christianity, the cross, was an essential element.

By Sophia is meant the human soul, who, before even existing in the world, committed a transgression, an original transgression that caused its exile. It is she who rushed forward toward God and attempted to understand him, but by a way that did not allow her to reach him. The true God is inaccessible to any search that does not take account of the limit and the cross.

But in this case, why did Sophia give birth to the Demiurge? Did the human soul universally produce an image of the Creator? Is the latter not proper to Judaism? It is proper to Judaism, it is true, to relate all Creation to a single creator. But one might say that everyone thinks up divine creators of some kind, in the sense that they think of the events of the world as being caused by the wills of certain beings whom they believe ought to be worshiped and whom they call gods. This goes back to the idea that they consider all events as effects and signs of the Good. Thus the universal human soul naturally produces a false religion, because the Good, for Valentinus, is far above events and is not revealed by them.

This is perhaps the meaning of the Valentinian myth. But this does not exclude the first meaning we thought of. For what we have just written shows that Jewish wisdom to a certain extent corresponds to the natural religion of the human soul.⁴³ As the soul is naturally pagan, so it is naturally Jewish, in the sense that it thinks it can grasp the divine through the events of the world. Basilides wrote: "We are no longer Jews, but we are not yet Christians" (Irenaeus, I, 24, 6). Some scholars conclude from this that the Basilideans must have been Jews before becoming Christian, and that they were probably Jewish converts. For my part I do not think that this naive deduction is correct. It rather means that, for Basilides, Christianity was an ideal. He wished to say that all people begin with Judaism and only afterward arrive at Christianity, if they get there at all.⁴⁴

It would be close to the spirit of Valentinianism to place Jewish thought on about the same level as pagan thought. For the Valentinians used images drawn from both of them. They accepted Jewish and pagan language, but as poetic language that could express truths that for them were only fully revealed by the Savior.

5. "Barbelo"

In some Gnostic sects that have links with Valentinianism—we do not want to go into the question of whether they are earlier or later than Valentinus here, we will discuss that below⁴⁵—the Mother is called by the mysterious name of Barbelo. (This name is found in different forms: Barbēlō, Barbēlon, Barbēlos, Barbēlōth, Barbērō, etc.) It is the supreme Mother who is most frequently called by this name, but it can also refer to the inferior

Sophia. Until now the name of Barbelo has rarely been explained satisfactorily. At first sight it seems to mean "Son of the Lord," or "Son of the Husband," after the Aramaic *bar*, son, and *bêl* (Hebrew *baal*), lord or husband. But since it is a matter of a feminine entity, as Barbelo is the *Ennoia* of God and she is spoken of in the feminine, it seems difficult to accept this meaning. Harvey⁴⁶ has attempted to explain it by the association of various words: *B'arbhé Eloha*, that is "God (is) in four" or "in the four (is) God." This would mean that Barbelo was a name given to the tetrad of the highest divine entities, for example to the Ophites' tetrad (Father, Son, Spirit and Christ), or to the first Valentinian tetrad (Abyss and Silence, Nous and Truth), at least if this name was used in Valentinianism. In truth, this way of calling *Ennoia* "*In four is God*" seems quite bizarre. But according to Irenaeus (I, 14, 1), one of Valentinus's disciples, Marcus; claimed that the Tetrad had appeared to him in the guise of a female. He should have added that she had appeared to him in her female form because her masculine form was such that the world could not have endured it. Nevertheless this explanation shows that, for him, the Tetrad was not essentially a female entity. Bousset has suggested that the Greek word *parthenos*, "virgin," could have been deformed in a Semitic language and initially have become *Barthenôs* (a form in fact found among Epiphanius's Gnostics, *Pan.* 26, 1, but here this name refers to Norea, not Barbelo) and then Barbelôs.⁴⁷

This explanation is tempting, for Barbelo is often called "virginal Spirit." But after Quispel's noting certain variants of the name Barbelo, variants such as *Abrbelôth*, *Barbariôth*, *Barbar Adonai*, *Brabel*, *Abraiaôth*, *Abraal*, *Abriel*,⁴⁸ it seems to me that Bousset's explanation, like Harvey's, has become impossible. These variants show that the second element of the name, that is to say *bêl*, can only be one of the names given to God, since it can be replaced by Adonai, El, or Iaô. For the origin of this name, Quispel suggests *chabêr baal*, "companion of the Lord."⁴⁹ For myself, my knowledge of Semitic languages is such that I cannot but be afraid to enter such a debate. But to those who are wiser than myself, I ask: Is it not simpler to suppose that in some of these names *abr* is simply a form of *bar* (by metathesis)? And if this is the case, could the meaning of the word not actually be "Son of the Lord," since at first sight this seems likely and has been supposed from the outset?

It certainly seems strange that a masculine name could have been given to a feminine entity. But the doctrines where this name appears are themselves very strange, very complicated, intentionally mysterious and paradoxical. In chapter 1, 30, of Irenaeus we read that some Gnostics, to whom Irenaeus does not give a particular name but who definitely have close links with the Barbelo-Gnostics of chapter 1, 29, taught that the infinite Light, which dwells in the Abyss, is the Father of all things and is called the First Man; that his *Ennoia* (his Thought), which emanates from him, is his *son* (not his daughter); that they call this Thought *Son of Man* or *Second Man*.

Thus, the thought of God could be called the son (not the daughter) of God.

According to Irenaeus, after the First and Second Man, these Gnostics place the Holy Spirit, whom they call the First Woman. From the First and Second Man, each united with the Holy Spirit, Christ would have been begotten. This account is more than strange, it has hardly any meaning. Bousset⁵⁰ is not mistaken in judging as “monstrous” the representation of the Father and the Son both uniting themselves to the same female being and both begetting Christ, who would thus have two Fathers. The account is even more bizarre in that the Second Man, who, as well as his Father, unites himself to the First Woman, is also a female being, since he is *Ennoia*! One is really obliged to think that this is not in fact a question of mythology; rather it is a question of theological concepts, and it matters little to the author of this account that it seems absurd to those who would transform these concepts into persons analogous to human beings. Similarly, Philo is indifferent to the gender of names when he writes that Wisdom is the daughter of God and that it ought not to hinder the consideration of her as male and able to be father (*De fuga*, 50–52). Moreover, in the work or works summarized by Irenaeus, it is clear that the Holy Spirit has been doubled into two entities: *Ennoia*, who is given the name of Second Man or the Son of Man, because the Father is called Man; and “Holy Spirit,” who is called First Woman. The myth only has meaning if the two Holy Spirits are united in one; or, what amounts to the same thing, if the account is considered an amalgam of two representations: one in which Christ is Son of the Father and *Ennoia*, another in which he is Son of the Father and the “Holy Spirit.”⁵¹ A theology is thus procured in which Christ is the Son of the Father and the Spirit, which is the Gnostics’ normal theology. This theology seems to be deformed here by excessive distinctions and divisions, unless it is Irenaeus who is putting together two different accounts.

Whatever the case, the first of the two Holy Spirits, who is called *Ennoia* and who corresponds to Barbelo, is called the Son (not the Daughter) of God. The translator of Irenaeus could not have been mistaken, nor the copyist, for we read the same thing in Theodoret’s Greek. If someone is mistaken, it is Irenaeus; but it certainly seems that he is not mistaken, at least insofar as he states that *Ennoia* is son and is called Son of Man or Second Man. For in the *Apocryphon of John* it is definitely stated that Barbelo is the first *Ennoia* and that she became the First Man (BG 27, 18–20, and parallels). Here she is First Man, not the Second Man, but what is important is that the appellation is masculine, not feminine. Barbelo is also characterized as “the three times masculine” (27, 21, and parallels), the aeon “masculine-feminine” (28, 2–3, and parallels). When we read such texts we can no longer wonder at the fact that a feminine entity has received a masculine name.⁵² It is clear that these sects delighted in paradoxes and mysteries.

The Valentinian Ptolemy also speaks of Sophia as masculine (Irenaeus, I, 4, 1). The Nag Hammadi text entitled *The Thunder* is entirely made up of paradoxes concerning the Spirit. In particular we find these words spoken by the Mother: "It is my husband who has begotten me" (13, 29–30). The name "Son of his husband" corresponds exactly to the name of Barbelo, the final *o* being the pronominal suffix that plays the role of possessive adjective.

It seems to me then that Barbelo, who is the Spirit conceived of as feminine, according to a very early Christian idea, could well have been called "Son of God," "Son of the Lord," or even better "Son of his husband." Barbelo at once emanated from God and his associate. In Hermas, a Christian in no way Gnostic, and author (in the second century) of the famous *Shepherd*, the name Son of God is given to the Holy Spirit (Similitudes V and IX), and it is the Spirit himself who sometimes appears to have more claim to this name. For in the fifth Similitude the Spirit is the Son of God from the beginning, whereas Jesus Christ is only the adopted Son. Some Gnostics, who distinguish between Christ and Jesus, seem to identify Christ with the Spirit. This is most notably the case with Cerinthus. For him it is Christ who descends upon Jesus at his baptism in the form of a dove (Irenaeus I, 26, 1). The same identification is found in the Valentini-ans, for whom the dove was nothing other than the Savior (Irenaeus, I, 7, 2; 15, 3). Other doctrines and other texts could be cited where the Son and Spirit appear to be confused.

In any case, it is almost certain that Barbelo in chapter I, 29, of Irenaeus corresponds to *Ennoia* in chapter I, 30, who, though feminine, is called Son of Man, which in this doctrine refers to the Son of God. It would therefore not be impossible to explain the name Barbelo in the simplest way, so long as one does not seek too far and one accepts what the texts themselves suggest.

Appendix

1. *Quispel's hypotheses.*

Quispel has tried to explain the Gnostic doctrine of the Mother by means of Jewish ideas.⁵³ It seems to me that he has not entirely succeeded. Certainly there are Jewish elements in this doctrine. First of all, the idea of the Holy Spirit itself; next, the singularity of representing this Spirit as a feminine entity; finally, the idea that (by himself or even more if he is identified with Wisdom) he is linked with Creation. But the Spirit and Wisdom are neither captives of the world nor captives of the angels in Judaism, as they are in Simon, according to Irenaeus. Nor yet is the Spirit (or Wisdom) divided into two figures as in Valentinus, one of whom remains pure but separate from Creation, while the other remains linked to Creation but is guilty of a transgression and gives birth to a false idea of God. If the figure of the Mother comes from Judaism, the myths in which she is implicated can only come from Christianity. They are linked with the sort of pessimistic view of the world that is found in Paul or in John, and to a conception of the Creator such as is found among the Christian Gnostics.

Despite the large number of Jewish texts he adduces Quispel does not explain why, according to Simon, the angels revolt against Sophia and oppress her. He therefore does not explain what is distinctively Gnostic or close to Gnosticism in this myth. When he says that the origin of this myth can only be found in the spirit of the men of that time,⁵⁴ it is an admission of failure.

Nor does it seem that the Greek texts to which he appeals can explain the myth. For example, he thinks that the first seeds of the myth of the Mother are found in the Platonic *Epinomis*; he states that in large part the Mother corresponds to the "world-Soul" and that in the *Epinomis* we see that the world-Soul creates the seven planets.⁵⁵ But first of all, is it true that in large part the Mother corresponds to the world-Soul? It is true insofar as the world-Soul is depicted as creative, as is Wisdom in the Old Testament. But it is not true with respect to the other elements of the myth. However, supposing the Mother does correspond to the world-Soul, the fact remains that the link between the *Anima mundi* and the planets does not clearly appear in the *Epinomis*. In the passage where the demiurgic action of the Soul is mentioned (981b–988e), the latter creates (or rather fashions) everything that exists, not only the planets. So far as the "visible gods" are concerned, that is, the stars, she fashions not seven but eight powers or gods, who are the heaven of the fixed stars and the planets. The word "seven" does not appear in this text, it appears only later and in a different context, where there is no longer any question of the demiurgic action of the Soul but rather of the difficulties of astronomy (990a). To find the myth of the Mother of the Seven in the *Epinomis* one must presuppose it.

Perhaps a recollection of the *Epinomis* was instrumental in Sophia being placed in the eighth heaven, the Ogdoad, because of the link between the Soul and the "eight gods." But in Plato the world-Soul no longer resides in the eighth heaven or in the seven others; he is heaven as a whole (cf. *Timaeus* 35a–37a). She is as much in the planets as in the fixed stars. The planets are not inferior divinities, still less evil.

The fact that the Ogdoad is thought of as the dwelling place of the Mother when she is outside the Pleroma can be explained by several reasons. First of all to attain the eighth heaven or to live in it means that one has passed beyond the region and the religion of the Hebdomad without, for all that, finding oneself in the realm of the true God, which is a purely spiritual realm. Moreover, the heaven of the fixed stars is the one most easily compared to eternity, the one that most obviously appears as an intermediary between the sensible world (the world of becoming) and the eternal world. Finally the eighth heaven is the limit of the sensible world, in a way it unites this world with the eternal, in another way it separates them. Now, for the Gnostics, these worlds *must be separated*. When she is repentant, Sophia desires the existence of Limit inasmuch as it is a separation. In Irenaeus's myth of the Ophites (I, 30, 3) she herself sets up the firmament to separate the two worlds because she fears that the divine Light would suffer damage if it were not separated from this world. The eighth heaven, as a limit and separation, is analogous to the cross. It has an educating and purifying value.

For the rest, this cosmic architecture simply serves as a symbol. Gnosticism is not an astral religion. The eighth heaven, even if it is preferred to the Hebdomad, and even if it is the dwelling place of Sophia, is not divinized. It can itself even become one of the symbols of this lower world which imprisons the divine sparks. We are far from the divine stars of the *Timaeus*.

2. *Wilckens's investigations*

In a study published in 1959¹⁶ Wilckens rendered a great service in bringing together the texts concerning Wisdom in Judaism and in the Gnostics. But the texts he cites concerning Wisdom in Judaism, even when they perhaps imply a mythical conception, in no way imply a Gnostic conception. To explain these passages by the influence of an oriental gnosis would be doubly unjustified, because these passages are not Gnostic and because the existence of pre-Christian oriental gnoses is not attested. It is not necessary to introduce Ishtar to explain the fact that Wisdom was regarded as united to God and to those who welcome her. God being wise, it is natural to say that Wisdom is united to him, that she was with him when he created the world, and so on. When Wisdom is said to have descended to live among human beings, and that, not having found a place among them she ascended to heaven, this myth is in no way Gnostic and is not distinctive to Judaism. It is analogous to the Greek myth in which Justice, the daughter of Zeus, ascended to heaven after the reign of Saturn. This simply means that human beings are not wise, or are not just. When Wisdom is said to illumine and save those who receive her, this is readily understandable, and there is no need to suppose that Wisdom is already a sort of Gnostic Savior.

The idea of Wisdom in Philo and in the *Book of Wisdom* is sufficiently explained by the Old Testament conception, together with Plato's influence. It seems

to me that it in no way implies a pre-Christian Gnosticism that might have progressively penetrated into Judaism.

As for the theory that Wilckens seems to propose, in which the Corinthians may have believed in a Gnostic Wisdom myth, it seems to me that it is very inadequately founded, and that the texts Wilckens cites can be explained otherwise with more credibility.⁵⁷ In the epistles to the Corinthians it is in no way evident that the Corinthians had identified Wisdom with the Savior. It is in no way evident that Paul is opposing a myth that belongs to the Gnostic myth of Sophia.

It is much more the case that Paul seems to identify the Wisdom of God with the Savior (1 Cor. 1:24, 30, and perhaps 2:7–8).⁵⁸ And when he says (2:7–8) that the rulers of this age have not known the wisdom of God, for if they had known him they would not have crucified the Lord of glory, there might be the seeds of a Gnostic myth here.⁵⁹ But it is Paul who speaks thus, it is not the Corinthians. It seems to me that we do not have the right to attribute to them what Paul says in opposing them.

Wilckens often has difficulty in distinguishing the Gnostic idea he seems to attribute to the Corinthians from the ideas of Paul himself.⁶⁰ As we have noted, he himself later defended very different views in relation to the First Epistle to the Corinthians, which correct the former hypothesis he had seemed to propose.⁶¹

3. *Some Remarks in Relation to "Prounikos"*

I wish to speak only very briefly of Prounikos, a name that some Gnostics gave to Sophia. It is usually thought of as a name implying an idea of lasciviousness or licentiousness. Epiphanius in fact states that *prounikos* indicates the pursuit of a life of enjoyment, indolence, licentiousness, indecency, and corruption (*Pan.* xxv, 4). However, Epiphanius's interpretation does not seem to agree with what we are told about Sophia in the original Gnostic texts. Sophia is more than once accused of "simplemindedness"; she is also accused of "audacity" because she thought she could grasp God's grandeur; but rarely or perhaps never is she clearly accused of licentiousness. When in certain passages she seems to be, it is precisely because of the name of Prounikos which is given to her in these passages. For example, in the *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* (50 25–28), Christ says (in R. A. Bullard's translation in *NHL*), "Those who were in the world had been prepared by the will of our sister Sophia—she who is a whore." It is precisely the word *prounikos* that Bullard translates by *a whore*. But the meaning of the word is not clear. If Epiphanius gave it the meaning we have stated, other ancient writers gave it different meanings. To know what meaning the Gnostics had in mind when they made it a name for their Sophia, one would have to make a relatively comprehensive study of the use of this word in classical texts, and in particular in the Gnostic texts. In the passage we have just quoted, one cannot help noticing that the "a whore" comes rather suddenly, without any preparation, and is not explained by what follows. For in the rest of the text, Sophia's action seems to be related to her "innocence," and to the fact that she was not sent and did not agree with the whole of the Pleroma. (Cf. the rest of Bullard's translation, and also that of Krause in *Christentum am Roten Meer*, Vol. 2, ed. F. Altheim and R. Stiehl [Berlin, II, 1973], 109.) She had therefore acted without prudence and without the agreement of the divine world, but it is not a matter of licentiousness. Celsus said that Christians,

whom Origen considered Valentinians (cf. *Contra Celsum* vi, 34–35), spoke of “a certain virgin Prounikos.” The name “virgin” would hardly be fitting for a prostitute, or for the sort of person Epiphanius imagines.

I therefore suspect that there has perhaps been some misapprehension in the usual interpretation of the name Prounikos. The name is formed from *pro* (“before” or “in front”) and a word that seems to be related to the second aorist *ēneika* (analogous to *ēnenka*) of the verb *pherō*, “to carry.” Prounikos could therefore evoke the meaning of “to carry in front,” that is, to promote, to bring, to reveal, to bring to light. *Propherō* might mean to produce, and therefore to beget, to give birth. Now Sophia gives birth to the Demiurge, and we see that, according to one version of the myth, her error was precisely to wish to give birth by herself, as God.⁶² In the *Apocryphon of John* (BG 37, 10–13), in a passage in which Till’s punctuation seems to have been corrected, the text can be understood as meaning: “Because of *prounikon*, who was in her [= in Sophia], her thought could not be unproductive and her work has appeared.” The neuter form of *prounikon* could therefore in some way mean the ability to beget, to give birth, fecundity, the inevitable creativity of thought in an aeon. (We will in fact see below⁶³ that the aeons necessarily beget the object of their thought by simply conceiving it, by representing it to themselves. Nevertheless the object thus begotten does not become a true being unless the aeon thought it by observing certain conditions. Sophia, in desiring to conceive of God’s grandeur in some way, wished to beget it in herself. As it was something impossible, but her thought could nevertheless not be unproductive, she begot a false God.) In the corresponding passage, CG II, 9, 35–10, 3, where the Coptic translator has translated the Greek text a little differently and where he has not preserved the word *prounikon*, Krause’s translation reads: “She [Sophia] manifests it [= manifests the Demiurge] because of the invincible force which is in her. Her thought was not unproductive and an imperfect work was manifested in her.” The Coptic translator has therefore translated the word *prounikon*, which must be found in the Greek, by “the invisible force,” and this force is the power to beget or to give birth by thought alone.

Elsewhere, in BG 51, 3, the Demiurge is called “the archon of *prounikos*,” which could mean “the head of the ability to beget” (although *prounikos* here is no longer neuter). Which reminds us that, in the *Origin of the World*, in the *Trimorphic Protennoia*, and perhaps elsewhere the Demiurge is called the *Archigenitor*, “the arch-begetter.” But in the parallel text, CG III, 23, 19–21, we find: “The Mother now wished to take back the might which she had given to the Archon, in an instinctive desire [*prounikos*.]” Here *Prounikos* seems to be something that belongs to the Mother rather than to the Demiurge. Krause translated this word as *triebhaftige Lust*, and Till has done the same in the critical apparatus of BG 51; but this is because they understand *prounikos* as Epiphanius wished it to be understood. If the word rather indicates the ability to give birth or to beget, which is found in the Mother insofar as she is an aeon, we can understand “the might which she had given to the Archon because of her ability to beget”; or perhaps “the might which she had given to the Archon in respect to the ability to beget.”

Elsewhere it is Sophia herself who seems to be carried “in front.” Irenaeus writes that she “always stretched herself farther out in front” when she threw herself toward God (I, 2, 2). The *Tripartite Treatise* also states this (76, 5). Moreover, by the very fact that she became imperfect, she left the Pleroma, she *advanced*

toward inferior regions. Concerning the Sophia-Prounikos of the Sethians, Irenaeus states: "She stretched herself out and looked toward the inferior regions"(1, 29, 4). In the *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* (50, 34), it is said that she "came out in front" or "outside" (*she came forth* according to Bullard, *sie kam heraus* according to Krause). She would therefore simply be characterized as the *outer* Sophia, the one who left the Pleroma without having been sent. Thus the word *prounikos*, when it is related to Sophia, could simply refer to the well-known episodes of this myth: the birth of the Demiurge, or the exit from the Pleroma, or the impetuous impulse that brought her to move toward God in an imprudent way that was not permitted.

These are only suggestions. Much study is needed to decipher with some probability the meaning of this word when it is applied to Sophia. I simply wish to draw attention to the fact that Epiphanius's interpretation, which is generally accepted by modern scholars, is not a reliable interpretation and that it is imprudent to draw conclusions from it concerning the person of Sophia or Gnosticism in general.

Chapter IV

The God "Man"

Theologians sometimes speak of a Gnostic myth of "Man" as if there were a single myth, the same in all the Gnostic systems, and as if it could be clearly defined. But when these systems are examined from this point of view, varying speculations are found that are difficult to reduce to one single one. The name of Man (*Anthrōpos*) is sometimes given to one divine person, sometimes to another. Sometimes it is the first person of the Trinity who is Man, sometimes the second, sometimes both of them, and the name can even be given to *Ennoia*, who is the Spirit, even though she is a female figure. Or it is given to one of the aeons of the Pleroma, that is, to one of the entities that are divine attributes, in Valentinus, and types of hypostases emanated from God in his disciples. One also has the impression that in certain cases the Man is simply the ideal prototype of earthly man, or his innermost essence. One can therefore ask whether a Gnostic myth of Man actually existed and whether there were not in reality a number of them that did not necessarily have the same origin.

Bousset has tried to gather all these speculations on the Man into a single myth, and further, to link this myth with speculations outside Gnosticism and Christianity. He relates it to Gayomard's Iranian myth and Purusha's Indian myth.¹ But it must be admitted, his framework is unstable and the links between the different parts of the whole are too tenuous. In reality, one cannot move either from Purusha's myth to Gayomard's, or from Gayomard's myth (insofar as it can be considered pre-Christian) to the Gnostics' God "Man."² Even within Gnosticism it might be questioned whether it is really the myth of Man that one finds in the Naassenes' speculations, in the *Poimandres*, and in Manicheism.

Here is what the myth of man would approximately be like, according to Bultmann and theologians of his school. At the beginning of time, a divine and luminous entity, called the Original Man or the First Man, or simply Man, came down or fell into the realm of the powers of darkness, that is, into the world or into matter. These powers take hold of the divine Man. According to some versions of the myth, this man is *in part* saved; helped by other divine entities, he reascends to the realm of light; but something of his essence has been retained by the shadows. In any case, whether he is partly saved or whether he remains wholly prisoner, the powers of darkness break into pieces the luminous substance they were able to take from him, so that fragments of divine light dwell dispersed

and imprisoned in the lower world. These fragments of light are the souls of human beings. The powers of darkness seek to make them forget their origin so as to retain them among themselves. But God pitied these souls and sent them a savior to recall to them their origin and their dignity, so that they could again join together and reascend to the light. The Savior is essentially identical with the first Man, either because the part of the first Man that was saved reappears in him or simply because he is of the same essence. Thanks to the "knowledge" he teaches, souls free themselves of the world or of matter and in reuniting themselves reascend toward their origin. When all the fragments of light have thus been liberated and collected together, the intermixture of darkness and the light will have come to an end, the divine Man and the kingdom of light will have been reestablished in their entirety, while darkness will fall back to its primitive state.

In fact this myth is in general drawn more from Manicheism than from Gnosticism. It is in the Manichean myth of the First Man that one finds all these elements. And one must acknowledge that as far as non-Manichean Gnosticism is concerned, one only finds parts or traces of this myth and these only in a small number of the systems. Bousset acknowledges this when he suggests that the figure of the Man who has fallen into matter has been replaced by the figure of Sophia, the Mother, in Gnosticism, and has only really clearly reappeared in Manicheism. But there is nothing to prove that before the myth of the Mother there was a myth of Man falling into matter. Rather, the myth of the Mother would appear to be the earlier, as Quispel believes.³ The question Schenke raises at the beginning of his book on the God "Man"⁴ can therefore be raised: Did the myth that the theologians presuppose really exist among the Gnostics, apart from Manicheism?

What we find among them are doubtless speculations in which it is sometimes a question of Man (*Anthrōpos*), thought of as a divine being, sometimes of the First Man (*Prōanthrōpos*, *Prōtos Anthrōpos*), sometimes of the original Man (*Archanthrōpos*), or of the perfect Man (*Teleios Anthrōpos*), the essential Man (*Anthrōpos ousiōdēs*), the immortal Man, the Man of light, the true Man, the living Man, and so on. Most often it is God the Father, the first figure of the Godhead who is called Man. It is a fact that Schenke has rightly insisted upon. Bousset certainly did not neglect this fact; at the beginning of his chapter on the *Urmensch*, he cites the systems in which the divine being called Man is the first person of the Godhead. Nevertheless he thinks that among the Gnostics this name was essentially given to the second person, to the "second God," to the Son, and that it is only by extension and as if by contagion that it was also given to the Father.⁵ Schenke, by contrast, thinks that it is the Father whom the Gnostics primarily call Man. He too tries to bring into one all the Gnostic speculations on Man, but by making his starting point something that for Bousset was secondary and derivative.⁶

However, it is not certain that one ought initially to presuppose a kinship between speculation in which Man is the Father and that in which he is the Son. They seem to be distinct and are not necessarily mutually explicable. It would be wise first of all to examine them separately.

1. *“Man” as a Name of the Father*

First, we will try if possible to explain the appellation of Man given to God the Father. It is this feature which at first sight is the most astonishing and the most impossible to explain by Christianity. That the Son, the messenger, the Savior was called Man is much more natural since he appeared as man. Moreover, one of the Gnostics' fundamental ideas was that man recognized himself in him, in the sense that in the Savior he saw his own origin and destination. “See, the Lord is our mirror. Open your eyes, look at them in him, and know the features of your face.”⁷ In the New Testament also reasons can be found for associating the name of Man with Christ. Introducing him, Pilate says: “Behold the man” (John 19:5). And does the name “Son of Man,” which he seems to give himself, not simply mean “man” in Hebrew and Aramaic? It is true that he probably understood it in a particular way, as we will see; but we will also see that this particular meaning very soon ceased to be understood.⁸ In any case, the ordinary meaning allows us to think that Christ referred to himself as “man.” It seems much more difficult to understand why God the Father ought to be called by this name in Christianity.

The explanation Bousset puts forward is obviously insufficient. From the fact that the Son can be called Man, it does not follow that this name can be given to the Father. The Father is not normally given the names of Christ, Logos, or even Savior. These are names reserved for the Son. Doubtless it is the Son who has made the Father known to us, nevertheless, it is the Son who ought to be given the name of man primarily and most often, if he was the first to receive it. This name ought to appear more rarely as the name of the Father. But the opposite happened.

Schenke's explanation seems to be the best, without however being wholly convincing. He appeals to the combination of two factors. On the one hand he thinks that in all Gnostic doctrine there is the idea that in its innermost being humanity is of the divine essence. From this the Gnostics could conclude that God, being of the same essence as the innermost part of humanity, was a sort of man. On the other hand, in interpreting the account of Genesis in the light of this conception, they might have thought that it found confirmation here. From the fact that humanity was created “in the image of God” (Gen. 1:26–27), they may have concluded that God is the prototype of humanity, Man par excellence.⁹

This explanation merits consideration. But first one might wonder at the fact that it appeals to two different motifs, which by chance lead to the same conclusion. Why these two motifs? Not only does the second

explanation seem superfluous, it is not even certain that it can confirm the first. For to confirm it the account of Genesis would itself have to allow for the identification of God and humanity. But we know that numerous generations of Jews and Christians have read this account without being tempted to conclude that God ought to be called Man. And far from supporting this conclusion, the Gnostics' interpretation of this account could on the contrary make it more difficult. For the Gnostics, the fashioning of humanity in the image of God is hardly ever related to God. For them, the human *body* was created by the Archons, in the likeness of the luminous image that had appeared to them (it is in this way that the Gnostics generally interpreted the Genesis account). Indeed, for them it is not in the body, or even in the natural soul distinct from the spirit, that the true likeness, the profound identity of humanity with God is found. What there is of the divine in humanity—at least in certain individuals at certain times—has entered into the body as into something *alien*. The likeness between the body and the image sent by God was merely an imperfect and superficial likeness. In the Manichean *Kephalaia* we read that in forming Adam the Archons copied the image of a divine being, but did not succeed in copying it “in truth.” “They copied, but not in truth. . . . He resembles him, but not in truth.”¹⁰ Moreover, if reflection on this corporeal likeness is going to lead to an idea, ought it not lead to the idea that God has a body? This is, in fact, what is found in certain Jewish theories. But in general the Gnostics are as far as one could possibly get from the idea that God has a body. The only exception I know of is that of the Audians. But again one might wonder when on the one hand one reads that for the Audians the body was evil, but on the other that they attributed a corporeal form to God. One might ask if there is not an error in the heresiologists' accusations here.¹¹ In general, the Gnostics on the contrary emphasized all the ideas of negative theology: God is incorporeal, invisible, without form, ungraspable, inconceivable, un-nameable, and so forth. Despite their accounts of the fashioning of Adam's body in the likeness of a divine image, the Gnostics always seem to say that what is truly divine in man has been sent into a body that *at first did not contain it*. For them, the fashioning was without any great consequence.

And why was it not concluded from the text of Genesis that the Demiurge ought to be called Man? For this is what the biblical account seems to say. Saturnilus is obliged to change the text in order to teach that the human body was made in the image of a light come from the true God. (He makes the Archons say, “Let us make man in the image and the likeness” instead of “in our image and our likeness”). Moreover, some Gnostics taught that material man was “almost like” the Demiurge and that spiritual man is consubstantial with him.¹²

Thus the second motif Schenke suggests is in itself insufficient, and if it is insufficient in itself, it cannot confirm the first one.

But is the first motif sufficient in itself? Strictly speaking, it perhaps would be if it could be proved that the idea that man has *by nature* a divine element within is found among Gnostics from the beginnings of Gnosticism. But is this found among those whom the heresiologists depict as the earliest Gnostics? Is it even generally found among the Gnostics, except perhaps with a few exceptions? It is well known that it is not found at all in Marcion. Even in the other, humanity is not necessarily and universally divine, simply because it is humanity. They often distinguish a number of different types of human beings; indeed if this distinction is taken as the heresiologists describe it, it was one of the most serious reproaches that could be made against them. According to the heresiologists, the Valentinians, among others, would have taught that some are saved by nature, because they have a divine spark within them, but that others are either lost by nature or at least are obliged to make an effort to save themselves. Whether these statements are true or false—we think that in this form they are false—it is nevertheless the case that for the Gnostics human nature was not always and everywhere in possession of something of the divine. To infer something about God from humanity was not possible; one could only infer something about God from the "spiritual" person, because the "spiritual" possessed something that came from God. But then this is to infer something about God from God, not about God from humanity. The first and most solid of Schenke's explanations is itself also insufficient.

It might be objected that in Saturnilus's system all have a "spark of life." But in fact this is not certain; it is even expressly denied, at least in a part of the system that is recounted to us. There is a contradiction in the summary Irenaeus gives: on the one hand, according to Saturnilus, humanity created by the Archons could not hold itself upright if it had not received a spark of life (which seems to imply that all have this spark); but on the other hand, there are two types of human beings: those who have the spark of life (these are the ones who have faith) and those who do not have it (Irenaeus I, 24, 1–2). The only way to resolve this contradiction is to suppose that holding oneself upright was taken figuratively by Saturnilus. In a figurative sense one could say that not all hold themselves upright, but only those who have received the Spirit; the others bustle around upon the earth like animals. It must be noted that humanity created by the Archons is not inanimate; it moves, but it crawls upon the earth. The "life" given by the spark cannot be animal life, since humankind already has that; rather it is life in the Johannine sense, that is, the Spirit, or grace, or salvation, or eternal life. (As we will see below, there is a specific reason for thinking that Saturnilus knew the Fourth Gospel.)¹³ Thus, for Saturnilus also the divine essence is not in all people. As Irenaeus's text states, it is *in those who have faith*.

An explanation must therefore be sought elsewhere for the name of Man given to God. In a passage from the *Apocryphon of John*, which

Schenke uses as a starting point, right at the beginning there is a phrase that is almost always found in myths of this type and that provides, I think, the true explanation. As the Demiurge thinks he is the true God, a voice cries from the highest heaven: "Man exists and the Son of Man."¹⁴ It is a fact Schenke does not pay enough attention to: in these mythical accounts where God is called Man, there is another divine being, his Son, who is called "Son of Man" (or "Son of man," since in ancient manuscripts these two forms cannot be distinguished). Certainly one might wish to suppose that if there is a Son of Man (or of man) in these systems, it is because God is here called Man. The title Son of man would not have been drawn from the Gospels, or, if it was drawn from them, it would only be to confirm a conception that initially resulted from the systems themselves. But this would be a very strange coincidence, the coincidence between the Christian expression "Son of man" and a non-Christian Gnostic idea to which this expression should be so perfectly adapted. Or perhaps it must be thought that Christ was a Gnostic. But there are better reasons that explain why he called himself Son of man.¹⁵ The most probable is that the expression comes from the Gospels and *it is because Christ is here called Son of man that it was thought that God the Father ought to be called Man.*

Schenke clearly saw that there was a link between the expression *Son of man* and the idea that God ought to be called Man (p. 154). But he thinks that the Gnostics explained the name Son of man by the fact that for them God was *already* called Man. He therefore believes in the coincidence. He adds that perhaps, inversely, no longer understanding why they gave the name of Man to God, they may have explained it by the name Son of Man given to the Son of God. But since he himself thinks that this explanation is possible, why seek elsewhere? The other explanations become useless.

We have no proof that the name Man was *already* given to God before the Savior was given that of Son of Man. Speculations on Man do not appear among the Gnostics, who, according to the heresiologists, are the earliest (Simon, Cerinthus, Menander, Saturnilus, Basilides, Carpocrates, Cerdo). If Gnosticism derived from Christianity, which we believe to be at least possible, it is natural that some Gnostics, considering Christ the Son of God and reading in the Gospels that he called himself Son of man, would conclude from this that the true name of God, according to Christ, was "Man." This reasoning is simpler than that which Schenke supposes. More so since the fact that there is divinity in the innermost center of the saints does not hinder the idea that in general there are enormous differences between divinity and humanity. Especially when one believes as Schenke does that Gnosticism derives from Judaism, is it not difficult to efface the fundamental distinction between God and man in Judaism? On the other hand, the name Christ gives himself seems immediately to imply, without there being any need for abstract reasoning on the divine and the

human, that Christ called his father by the name of Man and that he wished to teach us to call him this.

Doubtless, in all probability, this was an error. But all those who have studied this question agree, I think, that the meaning given to the expression "Son of man" by Christ very soon ceased to be understood. It became an enigma, and an explanation had to be sought.

It must be noted that Gnostic writings do not usually say that God is a man, but rather that *his name* is Man, that he is *called* Man. But according to them, who called him this? Probably Christ in the Gospels (by the fact that he called himself Son of man). It must also be noted that in the doctrines where the name of Man is given to God (or to a divine being of whom the Savior is the issue), one almost always finds, at least once, an expression in which this name is placed *in immediate relation* to that of the Son of man. This is the case among Irenaeus's Gnostics, who are generally called Ophites (I, 30, 1 and 13), among certain Valentinians (Irenaeus I, 12, 4) among Hippolytus's Naassenes (*Ref.* v, 6, 4; x, 9, 1), in Monoimus (Hippolytus, *Ref.* VIII, 12, 2 and 4; 13, 3; x, 17, 1), in the *Apocryphon of John* (BG 47, 15-16 and parallels), in the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* (BG 98, 11-12; CG III, 104), in the *Epistle of Eugnostos* (CG III, 85, 10-11),¹⁶ in the *Gospel of the Egyptians* (59, 2-4), in the *Gospel of Philip* (76, 1-2), and so on.

According to the Valentinians of whom Irenaeus speaks in I, 12, 4, the Savior "is an issue of the twelve aeons who are born of Man, and that is why he calls himself Son of Man, as being the issue of Man."

We therefore believe it is quite easy to understand why among certain Gnostics God the Father is called Man, so long as one does not base this on the idea that gnosis could not derive from Christianity.

2. *The "Son of man" in the Gospels*

Does the name Son of man in the Gospels itself imply the Gnostic myth of the divine Man? This is what Reitzenstein thought and what others have also upheld. But this is another of those theories with inadequate foundations into which scholars of this century have often plunged.

As has long been recognized, the use Christ makes of the expression "Son of man" refers back to the vision of Daniel. In the Book of Daniel (7:1-14, 27), it is recounted that during the night the prophet had a vision of four enormous beasts successively coming out of the sea. These beasts reigned over the world in turn, then dominion was withdrawn from them. Then they saw "one like a son of man" coming with the clouds of heaven. This person was brought before God, who pronounced a judgment in his favor and conferred upon him "dominion, glory and kingdom." "All peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom is one." Next someone explains this vision to Daniel: the four beasts are the four great

empires that have successively dominated the world (the Babylonian Empire, the Median Empire, the Persian Empire, and the Greek Empire). The person “like to a son of man” represents “the people of the saints of the Most High,” that is, the people of Israel.

Those who think that this account implies the existence of a pre-Christian Gnostic myth of Man affirm that here it is stated that the prophet saw a celestial person, a divine or almost divine person, who was called “man.” That this person is called “man,” or more precisely, that he is described as “like to a man,” is true, since “son of man” here simply means “man.” But his depiction as a celestial or divine being can perfectly well be contested. It is not at all certain that he comes from heaven; rather he is led there to be placed in the presence of God.¹⁷ The text says that he comes “with the clouds of heaven”; which might mean that he rises up from the earth or the sea, like the four beasts that preceded him, and that he rises with the clouds, drawn or carried by them. It is thus that the author of the fourth book of Esdras understood it (13:3, 25–26). Moreover, the identification of the son of man with the people of Israel excludes his being a celestial being. Israel is led into heaven to appear before God, with a view to the judgment to be pronounced between it and its oppressors, but it comes from earth and returns there.

I see nothing in Daniel 7 that obliges one to distinguish between an early section (the vision) and a secondary section (the explanation given after it), as Colpe does in the *Theologisches Wörterbuch* (7:424–25). The vision seems to be closely linked to the interpretation that follows it. It is not because the angels will be described in chapter 10 as also resembling human beings that the person “like to a son of man” is an angel or supra-terrestrial figure. Was the sovereignty of the future world thought of as having to be given to an angel? It seems to me that it would have been thought of as having to be exercised by God or given to Israel.

I confess I do not see in Daniel’s “son of man” this transcendent, celestial, divine, uniquely glorious being which some commentators have seen. He is not divine. He is not necessarily celestial or transcendent. He is led into heaven, but that shows that he does not originate there. Nor is he uniquely glorious. Daniel states that he has suffered and will suffer again before being received into the Kingdom. Christ read these texts more accurately than our scholars. When he speaks of the Son of man in the Gospels it is almost always to say that the Son of man must suffer. It is not necessary to suppose that if he did this it is because he united the figure of the Son of man with Isaiah’s suffering servant. No doubt he united them, but it is much more likely that the Son of man was already a figure who suffers, and that Isaiah’s suffering servant perhaps also represents the people of Israel.

It is true that in his reply to the high priest (Mark 14:62 and in the apocalyptic predictions of Mark 13 and parallels) Christ speaks of the Son of man as having to descend from heaven, and says that he will be seen

enthroned at God's right hand. But this has to do with the *future* destiny of the Son of man, *after* he has suffered, and *after* he has been brought before God and has received the Kingdom. This does not necessarily imply, even for Christ, that the Son of man is glorious and divine from the beginning. What seems to me to be most probable is that for Christ, as for Daniel, the Son of man was first of all the people of the saints of the Most High, that is, a corporate personality, as Manson has suggested. Only he perhaps identifies this people not with the whole of Israel but with the just, the poor, and the persecuted of Israel, or with the just, the poor, and the persecuted in general, those of the whole earth. It is to these that he promises the Kingdom in the Beatitudes. And it is because he considers himself bound up with them that he describes the destiny of the Son of man as being his own destiny, and that he can use "the Son of man" in speaking of himself. If he evokes the future grandeur of the Son of man in his reply to the high priest it is because he finds himself in a situation where it is not fitting to be humble (being in the power and the presence of his enemies). It is also perhaps because he is not only speaking of himself but of the future destiny of all those who for him represent the Son of man.

What is certain is that more than once he identifies the destiny of the Son of man with his own destiny. If he therefore thought of Daniel's Son of man as being divine in origin—which is not sure—it would be because he considered himself as being divine in origin. In any case, for the Evangelists the Son of man is definitely Christ. It is therefore natural that they thought that when he returns he will descend from heaven, and that from then on he will be seated at God's right hand.

The fanciful theories of some scholars about the seventh chapter of Daniel seem to derive in part from the fact that they amalgamate what is said in this text with what is said in the *Book of the Similitudes of Enoch*, by assuming that this latter book is also pre-Christian. In these *Similitudes* the Son of man is identified with the messiah and seems to be a divine person. Enoch sees him as present beside God in heaven. But are Enoch's visions not prophetic visions? That the Son of man must one day be in heaven does not prove that he originates there. What is predicted of him is what is ordinarily predicted of the messiah, who is normally thought of not at all as a divine being but only as a being *elected* by God. If the name Son of man was declared from the beginning before the "Lord of spirits" (*Enoch* 48:3), it is because the latter knew all and foresaw all, from all eternity. Moreover, the *Similitudes* suggest that the Son of man will come to live on earth, since the kings and the powers will be punished for not having honored him (*Enoch* 46:5). Finally, the supposition that the *Book of the Similitudes of Enoch* is a pre-Christian work has been made more difficult today by the fact that no fragment of it was found at Qumran. A number of scholars now think that this book might be later than the appearance of Christianity.¹⁸ If, as J. C. Hindley suggests, it is dated to the time of Trajan, it is not absolutely certain that it would be independent of

all Christian influence. In any case, from now on it seems that it would be unwise to use this book to explain the figure of the Son of man in the Gospels, and even more to use it to explain the book of Daniel.

To come back to Daniel, it is very likely that we do not have to look for a more or less oriental myth behind his vision. A "son of man," as we have said, simply means a man. The appearance of one like a son of man is simply a human figure whom the prophet opposes to the four "beasts." It is natural that he symbolizes the enemy-empires by the beasts, whereas he symbolizes his own people by a man. There is therefore no mystery in this expression. It is the Evangelists who in translating "son of man" by "son of the man," *huios tou anthrōpou*, introduce some mystery into it.

But in fact because of this translation, and because even the expression "son of man" as an allusion to Daniel and to hopes of national restoration could only be understood by the Jews—and perhaps it was only understood in certain particularly nationalist Jewish circles, in regions like Galilee, where the revolt against Rome fermented¹⁹—most Christians very soon ceased to understand it. It became an enigma that people tried to solve. Ignatius of Antioch (*Eph.* 20, 2) and the Gnostic author of the *Treatise on the Resurrection* (44, 22–33) thought that "Son of the man" was in a sense an expression that was opposed to "Son of God" but that completed it, the first suggesting Christ's link with humanity, the second his link with divinity. Similarly Tertullian (*Against Marcion* IV, 10) says that Christ is Son of man, that is of a human being, insofar as he is the son of the Virgin Mary, and Son of God, insofar as he was conceived by the Holy Spirit. But there was another possible solution: it was to think that since he called himself Son of the man even though he was Son of God, he meant to imply that God ought to be called Man. This is the explanation chosen by those Gnostics who give God the name of Man and who affirm that it is his true and secret name. It is his true and secret name because it was taught to us, in an enigmatic form, by Christ himself.

Thus the name Son of man is not explained by a Gnostic myth. Rather, the Gnostic myth of God called "Man" is explained by the Evangelists' expression "Son of the man."

3. "The Man" as a Name of the Son, or the Manichean "First Man"

Let us now consider the myth that, according to some theologians, is the properly Gnostic myth of Man. As we will see, it only appears clearly in Manicheism, that is, in the Manichean myth of the "First Man."

The idea that the Manichean myth expresses is that souls are like fragments of a divine Man who descended into the world at the beginning of time. This Man was first of all enveloped in darkness, then he was saved and reascended to the divine realm. But he must have left in the power of darkness, his "sons," or his "elements," which form his "soul" and which

might also be called his "members." What does this image mean? Did the divine Man reascend into heaven without arms or legs? In actual fact, the expression "members" as applied to souls is a Christian expression. In the chapter on the Mother we have seen that the Church can be likened to the Spirit, so that insofar as the latter is confused with the Christian people it can be regarded as a captive in the world. But Christians are not only members of the Church or the Spirit; they are also, according to Paul, "members of Christ." They are therefore, so to speak, parts or elements of the Man-God. One can therefore understand why the myth of the Mother and the myth of Man are, as Bousset has observed,²⁰ parallel myths. Instead of saying that souls are the "dew of light" that has fallen from the Mother, it can be said that they are fragments of the divine Man, the Christ, fragments dispersed and imprisoned in the material world.

In the sixth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul calls the bodies of Christians "members of Christ" (verse 15). But it is not only the body but the whole Christian whom Paul refers to in this way. "Now *you* are the body of Christ and individually *members* of it" (1 Cor. 12:27). "For as in one body we have many members, . . . so *we*, though we are many, are one body in Christ" (Rom. 12:4-5). "*We are members* of his body" (Eph. 5:30). This idea is also identical with the conception of the Church as the Body of Christ, a conception that is mainly developed in Ephesians (1:23; 2:16; 3:6; 4:12, 15-16; 5:23, 30), but that is already implicitly found in First Corinthians (10:16-17; 12:12-13), in the Epistle to the Romans (12:4-5), and explicitly in the Epistle to the Colossians (1:18, 24).

In the great edifice that is the myth elaborated by Mani, we know that the same person is found at different stages and with different names. The First Man is obviously one of the Manichean figures of Christ. He is the first, the highest. He is the Son of the first Manichean Trinity: Father, Mother, and First Man. Not only are souls his "members," but it is also said that he is their "Head," another Pauline expression.²¹ "He is the Head in that his sons, his members, are joined to him" (*Kephalaia* xxxi, p. 84, 26-27). "He is like a Head . . . in that he is established in his virgin of light, who is his soul and with whom he is clothed" (*ibid.*, 31-34). Finally, the account of the battle that the First Man led against the powers of Darkness, in the course of which he was taken prisoner before being helped and delivered, seems to be inspired by the fate of Christ. Christ also descended into the world, and it might be said that this was to overcome the powers of evil. In a way he was vanquished by them and was made a prisoner of the tomb; then he was resurrected by God and rejoined the celestial world. And his members, that is, his Church, remain in the world. Thus, the story of the First Man is parallel to the story of Christ. *He is a Christ whose fate was already enacted before the Creation of the world.*

The Manichean writings are full of expressions drawn from Paul and the Gospels. In particular the name of "perfect Man," which the Mani-

cheans give to what they call the "Pillar of glory" (that is, the road where souls who are saved and ascending toward the light gather together), is a name given to the gathering together of Christians, in the Body of Christ, the Church, in the Epistle to the Ephesians. It means the way of salvation for the author of this epistle. "And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to *perfect manhood*, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:11–13).

It would be paradoxical if in the use of the name perfect Man, so similar in both, the Epistle to the Ephesians depended upon a doctrine analogous to Manicheism, since the latter only appeared in the third century.

The use of the verb "to clothe" with a complement such as "new man"²² must also be considered. In Manicheism this metaphor of clothing can seem to contradict the rest of the doctrine. For when the Manichean elect "put off the old man" and "put on" a new nature, this nature, analogous to a dress, is nevertheless not something exterior; on the contrary, it is that which is innermost, it is the true nature of the one who puts it on. This image then is not logically explicable in Manicheism, or in Gnosticism where it also exists.²³ It is explicable because it comes from Paulinism, where man has nothing in him that is divine by nature. In Paul, man "puts on" Christ (Rom. 13:14; Gal. 3:27), he "puts on" the new man (Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24).

The Manichean perfect Man is basically the same as the First Man. He is the First Man reassembled. "O perfect Man, haven of my trust, rise up. You are the First Man."²⁴ Which is to say that the First Man is already the gathering of the elect, the Church, the Body. For the same reason we speak of his "members." It is as the Church that the First Man contains in himself the souls that will be saved.²⁵

It is true that the Manichean First Man is perhaps not only the Church, for he contains not only souls but the purest elements of the world. But as Käsemann has shown,²⁶ in Paul the Body of Christ is not only the Church, or rather the Church is not simply a human gathering; the Body, the Church, is a new creation, it is the new world, identical to the primordial world that came from the hands of the Creator.

We therefore think that the Manichean myth of the Man is essentially drawn from the Pauline conception of the Church as the Body of Christ. If this myth projects the image of the Body of Christ into the past, if it depicts the elect as having been members of the divine Body before creation, these are doubtless simply developments of the Christian idea of predestination. Since there is a predestination, there is a preexistent Church and consequently a preexistent Body of Christ. When Albert Schweitzer, approved by Käsemann, wrote: "Pauline mysticism is nothing other than a

doctrine of the manifestation of the preexistent Church, a manifestation made possible by the death and the resurrection of Jesus,"²⁷ his affirmation makes understandable the link between Pauline mysticism and the Manichean myth. The idea of predestination, joined to the image of the Body of Christ, carries with it the image of the First Man.

There is therefore a difference in *origin* between the myth in which God calls himself Man and the Manichean myth of the First Man. The first was formed on the basis of the Evangelists' expression "Son of the man"; the second was inspired by the fate of Christ and by Pauline expressions referring to Christ and his link with the Church.

4. *The "Second Man" in Paul*

There is hardly any need to discuss the question of whether Paul in describing Christ as the "second man" or the "last Adam" (1 Cor. 45–47) wished to oppose a myth in which the Savior was called the First Man. But something must be said about it because of the suppositions that have been made and might be made again. It seems to me likely that in this text, Paul wishes to oppose no one. His affirmation follows his own line of thought. He wishes to prove that there will be a resurrection for the elect and that they will have spiritual bodies. He asserts that the present "psychical" (animal) body is in the image of Adam, as the "spiritual" body will be in the image of Christ. He therefore stresses the fact that Christ appeared *after* Adam to show that, though the psychical body appeared *first*, one ought not to conclude that there will not *subsequently* be a spiritual body. His statement that Christ is the second man or the last Adam is therefore necessary to his argument.

If he has a doctrine in mind it is probably that of Philo. As we know, Philo distinguished between humanity created in the image of God (as referred to in the first chapter of Genesis) and humanity fashioned from the earth (as in the second chapter). In his opinion the first is an intelligible man (*noētos*), essential, incorporeal, and incorruptible, which amounts to saying that he is the Idea of man, the model, in the Platonic sense. Philo identifies him with the Logos, the divine Word (*De confus.* 41 and 146). He calls him the "celestial man" (*Leg. all.* 1, 31), whereas the other is the "terrestrial man." Thus, for him the celestial man was created first.

To a certain extent Paul uses the same expressions as Philo; he speaks of Christ as the "celestial" man. But for him the celestial man is the "second man." It is therefore possible, strictly speaking, that he wished to oppose Philo. But it must be noted that if he calls the celestial man the second man, this is because he appeared in the world later than the terrestrial man. This does not imply that for him Christ did not *exist* before Adam. Probably from the time of his great epistles and definitely from the time of the captivity epistles, Paul believes that Christ not only existed before his appearance on earth, but even that he existed before the Crea-

tion of the world. He cannot therefore be in profound disagreement with Philo on this point. Indeed, because he identifies the celestial man and Christ, for him this man is *first according to essence*; he is only the second *according to manifestation*. Even if he is thinking of Philo, it is not certain that he really wished to contradict him.²⁸

Certainly the expression "First Man" to refer to Christ is not found in Paul. It came from Manichean Gnostics, who used it in their genealogies of divine beings to distinguish between Man and the Son of Man. But this expression does not suggest that the Manicheans wished to contradict Paul, or that Paul is opposing Gnostics when he speaks of the "second man."

5. "*Man*" as a Name of the Son among the Gnostics Prior to Mani

Is the Manichean myth of the First Man to be found among Gnostics prior to Manicheism? It seems to me that this cannot be affirmed. In order to find it here one is obliged to suppose that it is disguised beneath the form of another myth, that of the Mother.

In fact, the role that the Manicheans attributed to the First Man—we have seen that he not only contains souls but that at least in part he is responsible for the fact that the souls have fallen into matter—is a role that the Gnostics normally attribute to the Mother. It is she who has provoked the descent of souls into the world, either because she herself was held by the powers she created, or because, having committed a fault and undergone a fall, she gave birth to the powers that created the world, and then sent something of her spirit into the human body created by this power.

In order to prove that the myth of the Mother disguises that of Man, the fact is urged that the Mother sometimes appears to be imagined in the form of a gigantic human being. As proof it is suggested that it is a matter of her "head" and that this head is Christ, which presupposes that the body of the Mother is very large. But this simply means that someone has preserved Pauline language. The Mother, being the Spirit, is also the Church, and Christ is the *head* of the Church. The Mother is very large because insofar as she is the Church she contains numerous human beings.

Sometimes, it is true, Christ, not the Mother, deposits souls in this world. But he does not do it, as in Manicheism, because, having descended into the world at the beginning, he was here made prisoner. Rather he *voluntarily* places souls in the world whom he will come to seek out later. Christ does not himself fall into matter; and if he descends into the world, it is not before the moment when he comes to bring it salvation.

For example, in the *Gospel of Philip* (107, 6–4), we read that from the beginning, Christ deposited souls in the world. "It was not only when he appeared that he deposited the soul at the moment he wished; but from the day when the world came into existence, he deposited the soul. At the

time which he chose, he came to take it back. It was in the power of robbers and had been made prisoner, but he saved it." Here then, Christ was not himself prisoner at the beginning; only souls whom he has deposited in the world are. Doubtless one may ask why he deposited them with "robbers." Was he constrained to do it? Does it presuppose a myth analogous to the Manichean myth? It is not very likely, for the text states that Christ deposited the soul "at the moment he wished." There is no question of a fall or an overthrow of Christ before the Incarnation. Apparently he deposited souls in the world because they needed to be "formed" in order to become perfect, which is a Valentinian idea.

We find an idea of the same sort in Hippolytus's *Peratae*. Here we see the Son taking "into his own person" the powers of the Father, and later depositing them in matter. Here the powers are called "imprints" or "characters" or "traits," but it is obvious that it is souls who are in question. Then "just as he brought the traits of the Father from on high, . . . he made them reascend from here" (*Ref. v*, 17, 8). Similarly, in Heracleon the Son of man "sows" spirits of divine origin in the world whom he will later save (*frag. 35*, Origen, *Joh. Comm.* XIII, 49).

It might be said, Christ must himself descend with predestined souls, with what the Valentinians call "the seed," since this "seed" is in one sense himself. But is it not thus in normal Christianity? In a way, Christ is in Christians and this not mean that he fell into the world or matter at the beginning of time. One must distinguish between the idea of Christ as containing Christians in himself from the moment they are Christians and the idea of Christ as having contained all future Christians from the beginning, before they were even born, and as having fallen with them. It might be that the second idea is implied in the first, by virtue of predestination, but this implication is not developed before Manicheism, and in any case it is not this idea that is highlighted in Valentinian texts. In these texts it seems that it is by becoming Christians that people become members of the Body of Christ. A text that is particularly clear in this respect is found in the sixty-seventh extract from Theodotus. Here the Woman, that is, the Mother, is said to have produced the world by her "passions," and that she emitted "substances without form," that is, souls that needed to be formed. Next it is said that the Lord descended to draw us away from "passion" and "*to make us enter into himself.*" It is therefore from the moment of redemption, and probably from the moment of baptism, that the souls of Christians have become parts of the "body" of the Savior. Certainly Christians' souls ought in a sense to have participated in this body from all eternity, because of predestination. But the idea of the divine Man falling with them from the beginning is not explicitly found here.

Is it otherwise in the Naassenes' doctrine? This doctrine is the one that is always referred to when the Gnostic myth of Man is spoken of. Only here—excluding so-called pagan Gnososes—does Bousset believe one can find in Gnosticism proper a myth of Man analogous to the Manichean myth.²⁹

But the Naassenes' doctrine, or rather the account Hippolytus gives of it, is so obscure, so confused, that more than one interpretation is possible. It is not certain that Bousset's is correct, and much can be said for those of Schlier³⁰ and Schenke.³¹ Given the extreme difficulty of interpreting this doctrine with any certainty, it is wise to presume that it is not too far removed from that of Monoimus and the *Peratae*, to which it is definitely related, or from that of the Sethians, the Docetists, and the *Great Revelation*, to which it is also related, albeit less closely. If one examines it by comparing it with these sister doctrines, one realizes that it is doubtful that this doctrine had anything to do with the analogous Manichean myth.

What is called the original Man, or Adamas, in the Naassenes is the same principle that is called Son or Word or *Peratae*, Man by Monoimus, Word by the Sethians, Word or Spirit by the Seventh Power in the *Great Revelation*, and that is described as a group of three aeons that have but a single thought and a single will and that eventually form but one entity by the Docetists. The Naassenes' Man is divided into three natures, like the Christ of the *Peratae* (v, 12, 4), like the Seventh Power of the *Great Revelation* (vi, 17, 1-2), and like the Docetists' three aeons. This Man is called "the first principle of All" (x, 9, 1), but he does not at all seem to be the supreme God. If he were the supreme God, one would not be able to understand the thrice repeated formula: "The knowledge of Man is the beginning of perfection and the knowledge of God is perfection accomplished" (v, 6, 6; v, 8, 38; x, 9, 2). As Foerster saw,³² Man or Adamas is an intermediary principle, the Mediator, he who is found between God and chaos. He is "begotten by himself" (v, 7, 9), like the *Peratae's* principle "born of himself" (v, 12, 3) and like the Seventh Power of the *Great Revelation* (vi, 17, 6), but he is nonetheless begotten.³³ The supreme God (if one can call him this, for in fact there is only one God) is another principle: the "Preexistent" of the Naassenes (v, 7, 9), the unbegotten "perfect Good" of the *Peratae* (v, 12, 2-3).

It is possible that the Naassenes distinguished a number of levels in the second person of the Trinity. Without even mentioning the distinction, frequently made by the Gnostics, between Christ and Jesus, they sometimes seem to distinguish between Christ and the Word. For they say that Christ, "in everything which is born, is the Son of man, having received the form of the Word which has no form" (v, 7, 33). (As for the *Peratae*, that which has no form is for them superior to that which possesses form, the undefined to the defined.) Christ therefore seems distinct from the Word, and since Christ is the Son of Man and has received a form from the Word, it seems that it is the Word who is Man. But elsewhere it seems that the name of Christ can be given to the Word, since Hermes, who is a figure of the Word, is likened to the Messiah, that is, to Christ (v, 7, 32). Moreover, in relation to the "genesis" of Man, Hippolytus states that for the Naassenes it is also the "genesis" of Christ (v, 7, 2). Finally, the distinction between Man and the Son of Man seems to be denied in the summary Hippolytus

gives of Naassene doctrine (x, 9, 1–2). There Hippolytus states that the first principle of the Naassenes is called at the same time Man, Son of Man, and Adamas.³⁴

The Naassenes distinguish this Adamas, Word and "original Man" (*Archanthrōpos*) from the "inner man" who is found in earthly humans (or at least in certain earthly individuals, the "spirituals"). Certainly the inner man can also be called Adamas (v, 7, 36). But does the situation in which he is placed result from a primordial fall of Adamas from above? This is not at all sure. Adamas below has certainly "fallen" from Adamas above: "We, the spirituals, we have come from above, from Adamas, slipping down toward the lower" (v, 8, 41; cf. v, 7, 30). But it is not said that Adamas above fell. How have the spirituals slid down or fallen? According to two passages, they were "sown" or "thrown" into the world (v, 8, 28 and v, 8, 32). Is it the being "without form," that is the Word, Man, or Adamas, who thus sowed or threw them? If one compares this system with that of the *Peratae* this seems probable, and if one also recalls the *Gospel of Philip*, in which, as we have seen, Christ "deposits" souls in the world. If this is the case, the original Man did not fall with the spirituals. He did not fall except insofar as the spirituals are of the same substance as himself. Insofar as he is a separate figure, he has always remained above, at least until the redemption. The myth of man properly so-called does not seem to be found here.

Granted, Adamas is in one sense in the spirituals. But this can also be said of Christ in non-Gnostic Christianity. Christ is in Christians, but that does not mean that from the beginning he himself fell into the world.

But if one does not properly speaking find the Manichean myth of man before Mani, it seems to me that on the contrary one comes close to this myth insofar as, from Valentinus onward, the name of Man is given to Christ when he is thought of in relation to the Church.

The myth of the Naassenes already resembles the Manichean myth in that Man in this myth is the second person of the Trinity. In Valentinus also, Man is the second person. For the first Valentinian aeons, issued from the "Abyss," and among whom Man is included, are obviously the names or attributes of Christ, just as the first feminine aeons are obviously the names or attributes of the Spirit. Moreover—and it is most especially by this that Valentinianism seems to evolve toward the Manichean myth of Man—the aeon called Man forms a syzygy with the aeon called Church, which is to say that he is inseparably linked with it. We have also seen that the Manichean myth of the First Man is primarily explained by the link between Christ and the Church in the Pauline epistles.

The "perfect Man" of the Letter to the Ephesians, who plays a role in Manicheism, appears before this, in the *Tripartite Treatise* (which is probably by the Valentinian, Heracleon), as a name for the Church. It is stated here that the perfect Man received gnosis when redemption was announced, and that by this gnosis he must reach his unity and return to his place of origin (123, 4–11). This perfect Man, who has received gnosis, can only

be the Church. Moreover, the members of the perfect Man are also called "members of the body of the Church" (123, 12–30). As in the Epistle to the Ephesians, the accent is placed on the future unity of all the members. Like the Naassenes' "inner man," the perfect Man was poured out from on high, but no more than in the Naassenes does this mean that the source from which he was poured out is itself fallen from the beginning; it simply means that the elect come from on high, as is stated in the Gospel of John (17:16). We are coming close to the Manichean myth, but we are not yet there. What the Valentinians say does not suppose as a prior condition a myth such as that of the Manicheans, still less a non-Christian myth.

It must be noted that some of the texts where a myth of Man is thought to be found would be absurd if they did not depend upon Christianity but derived from an independent myth. For example, in the *Odes of Solomon*: "The dove flew onto the head of the Messiah, because he is his Head" (24:1). This might be understood by the fact that the dove, the Spirit, is also the Church, and that Christ is the Head of the Church. This metaphor has been linked with the account of Christ's baptism, despite the resulting incoherence (how could the dove fly above her own head?). In the *Acts of Thomas* (6) it is written that the King is seated (or resides) upon the head of the Virgin. This absurd image is explicable by the association of Christ with the Head of the Church. The peculiarities that Schlier himself points out in the supposed myth of Man (Christ is the Body, but at the same time he is the Head, that is, a part of himself; he is the Body, but at the same time he is the Door which alone allows entrance to the Body, etc.) show that this is really not a question of a myth but rather of a group of metaphors drawn from the New Testament, which have not been reconciled.

Schlier and Käsemann were not mistaken in recognizing a link between the Gnostic "myth" of Man and the Pauline doctrine of Christ and the Church; but it seems that they reverse the real link. Pauline doctrine was not drawn from a Gnostic myth; it is much more likely that the Gnostic "myth" was drawn from Pauline doctrine.

6. *The "Essential Man" in So-Called Pagan Gnosis*

It remains for us to examine the case in which the transcendent Man is neither the Father nor the Son but seems simply to be an ideal prototype of earthly humanity.

We find this form of the myth of Man in so-called pagan gnosis: in the *Poimandres* (first treatise of the *Corpus Hermeticum*³⁵) and in the treatise of Zosimus,³⁶ the alchemist.

In the *Poimandres*, the transcendent Man is the child of God, or more precisely, of the Nous of the Supreme authority, who is called God; but he is distinguished from the Word who is properly called Son of God. Man does not even come in the third place, after the Father and the Son, for in

the third place comes the Demiurge. Man appears only after the Intellect-Demiurge. Moreover, in the *Poimandres* this man is not a savior; he is simply a captive who, having fallen from the celestial world, needs to be saved.

This person, who falls into the world following some transgression or temptation (he saw his own face reflected in the water and became enamored of it, like Narcissus), can hardly be a figure of Christ, as the Manichean First Man is. The latter is an absolutely pure being, who by a heroic decision voluntarily descends into darkness in order to overcome it. The Man of the *Poimandres* might rather be likened to the Valentinians' Sophia.

(In fact, in the *Poimandres* God also becomes enamored of his own form [12], but this form is the divine Man, while this latter becomes enamored of a mere reflection, a "form without reason" [14].)

Similarly, in Zosimus, the "spiritual Man" or the "luminous Man" is distinguished from the Son of God, and it is the latter who is the revealer and the Savior. As in the *Poimandres*, the luminous Man fell into matter. He was drawn into the earthly Adam (the human body) by the Archons, who suggested he might be "clothed" with them. Because he was "innocent," that is naive, he did not refuse. This recalls Sophia's "simplicity" in the thought of some Gnostics.

At first sight, these myths simply appear to be interpretations of the account of Genesis, interpretations worked out in the light of Platonism. Genesis provides the thread of the myth. Paradise is interpreted as being heaven. Man is initially created in heaven; he is Philo's "celestial Man." As the "celestial Man" he is an Idea, an essence; hence the "essential Man" (*Anthrōpos ousiōdēs*) of the *Poimandres*. Like Philo's celestial Man, he is neither masculine or feminine, or rather he is both, he is androgynous; the separation of the sexes only took place a little later (after the fall), evoking the Platonic myth of the *symposium*. In Genesis the fall was a moral fall; here it is interpreted as a physical fall, from heaven to earth, in imitation of the fall of souls in the myth of the *Phaedrus*. Moreover, this fall is not the result of disobedience, as in Genesis, but much more of imprudence. It also differs from the fall of souls in the *Phaedrus*, in particular by the fact that it is not exactly a fall but rather a voluntary descent. In the *Poimandres*, having seen the celestial circles created by his brother the Demiurge, the essential Man also wanted to create, and he was given permission by the Father (13). (He did not therefore disobey, and nothing suggests that in wishing to create he wished to make himself equal to God; nothing suggests that he is culpable.) In order to create, Man descended into the realm of the Demiurge, and there, bending over the circles, he looked toward inferior Nature where his own image was reflected in the water. Seeing him, Nature became enamored of him, and he himself, seeing his own image, loved this image and wished to live in it. Soon he did in fact inhabit it. Thus, the union between Man and Nature was made. The latter then produces a human body, in the form of the Man; and Man, who was

Life and Light, like his Father, became the soul and intellect of human beings. His Life became their soul, his Light their intellect.

What strikes me in this account is that the opposition between the divine and the earthly element in human nature is much less accentuated than it normally is among the Gnostics. There is no antagonism, no war, no guile. Nature is not culpable, she is not an enemy of the divine, she is not jealous of him, she did not wish to lay a trap for Man in order to capture him, like Zosimus's Archons, or like these same Archons in the *Origin of the World* found at Nag Hammadi. She loved the human form, but this is permitted and even praiseworthy, since this form is the very form of God. The Demiurge did not intervene in this affair, or the celestial spheres created by him (which are normally the dwelling places of the Archons). It was Man himself who wished to descend, and the main reason that led him to the level of the Demiurge (the desire to create) was approved by God. The second reason, love of his own image, could hardly be faulted, since his image is also the image of God. It can only be found fault with insofar as Man took the image for the reality. The union of Man and Nature seems to be a harmonious union, it was desired by both of them (*erōmenoi gar ēsan*).

Is this myth Gnostic? It hardly seems to be animated by a Gnostic spirit. It is full of a spirit of conciliation, of serenity. It is true that later on it will be explained that in descending below the celestial spheres and in unifying himself with Nature, Man was subjected to a condition that is not his own; that he found himself subject to death and governed by Fate. But up until then, up to the appearance of the earthly man, one does not sense what one normally senses in the Gnostic myths, the desire to underline the inferior level of the Demiurge, his ignorance in respect to the true God, the fact that he is fundamentally separate from him, and that his works are not, at least directly, derived from the will of God. Here, on the contrary, what is produced by the rotation of the planetary spheres created by the Demiurge is produced "according to the will of Nous" (11). Moreover, the Nous and his Word are no less creators of the sensible world than the Demiurge. It is the Word who separates the light elements from the heavy elements (5 and 8); it is "according to the will of the Nous" that earth and water were separated (11); the Word unites with the Demiurge and collaborates with him (10). It therefore seems that initially there is no intention of opposing the Demiurge and the Seven to the Nous and the Word. If something is independent of God and in a sense opposed to God, it is undifferentiated original Nature, since she is derived from the darkness and God is light. (Again, it must be noted that Nature herself is animated by a spontaneous love for the divine image from the moment it appeared to her.) But this opposition of the Good and matter is from Platonism, it is not simply from Gnosticism. ³⁷

If there is not a properly Gnostic intention here, what then is the author's intention and what is his myth of Man aiming at? At first sight,

one might suppose that the author simply wished to explain the double nature of humanity, the nature of a being who is both soul and body, reason and passion, immortal and mortal. Which is to say, he wished to explain humanity as Platonic philosophy sees it. The author of the *Poimandres* may have wished to combine this Platonism with the biblical account of Creation. Genesis would have provided him with the plot, the order of events, but he would have interpreted the events according to Platonic myths and ideas. Above all, he may have adopted the Philonic conception of the celestial Man, who is in some way the Platonic Idea of Man and whose creation, in Philo, precedes that of earthly man. It is true that in Philo the celestial Man does not fall; God created celestial Man and earthly man as two distinct beings. But it sufficed to link them to each other, in making the first descend into the second, to obtain approximately the *Poimandres* myth. And after all, it was natural to wish to link them, to think that there was a continuity between man in the first chapter of Genesis and man in the second chapter. It would therefore be a Jewish-pagan, Jewish-Platonic myth, a creation of Hellenistic Judaism. Christianity and even Gnosticism would not be necessary to explain it.

Nevertheless, I do not think that such an explanation is sufficient. It must first be noted that if a properly Gnostic intention does not clearly appear in the first part of the *Poimandres*, it appears much more clearly in the second. In fact, one can distinguish two parts to this work, the second part of which begins around the end of paragraph 18, with the words "And that he who has nous should recognize himself . . ." From this point Gnostic traits multiply.

As Gnostic traits one might include: 1. The affirmation that the man who recognizes himself "comes to the good which properly belongs to him," particularly to immortality (19–21); that is to say that one's knowledge of one's proper essence is salvation. 2. The statement that all do not possess nous, but only those who are "saints and good and pure and merciful" (22–23). As it is not said all do not have a soul, this seems to imply that the soul is no longer of the same value as the nous. Until now, nothing suggested it. The soul appeared as coming from Life, as the nous comes from Light, and since Life and Light are not only the elements of primordial Man but of God himself, the soul ought to be as divine as the nous. The difference in value that now appears recalls the distinction the Gnostics made between the soul and the *pneuma*. 3. The gifts the primordial Man received from the planets, when he passed through them, do not appear as evil in the first part. In the second, one realizes that they were (25). The seven "Governors" whose creative work is, as we have seen, realized "according to the will of the Nous" (11) therefore now become quite similar to the seven Gnostic Archons. 4. The matter is raised of the "Ogdoadic nature" (26), into which one enters after having passed through the seven planetary spheres. The Ogdoad was not named in the first part, even though the heaven of the fixed stars is perhaps mentioned here (7),

and Man has definitely crossed this heaven in his descent. Now, the Ogdoad plays an important role in Valentinianism, and I have mentioned that speculations on the Ogdoad are probably of a Christian origin.³⁸ 5. In the final hymn God is called "Unexpressible, unutterable, you whom Silence alone names" (31). This evokes the unknown and unknowable God of the Gnostics, and particularly the Valentinian "Silence." Moreover, the one who sees (the man who is supposed to relate the vision in the *Poimandres*) promises to illuminate those of his race who are in ignorance, or, it might also be translated, those who are in ignorance of their race (32). The mention of a race, which is probably that of the predestined, makes one think of the Valentinian distinction between the "spiritual," the "psychicals," and the "materials."

In the second part signs can be found not only of Gnosticism but also of ordinary Christianity. The final hymn has a Johannine resonance, in particular the verse "Holy is God who wishes to be known and who is known by those who are his" (31). The last paragraph mentions *faith*, *grace*, and the act of *giving witness* (*marturō*). The final words, "You have given all authority [*exousia*]" recall Matt. 28:18: "All authority [*exousia*] has been given to me. . . ."³⁹ Finally the man to whom all authority has been given seems to be a sort of Savior. In the first part, God revealed himself directly to the seer, without a mediator. In the second part, although God remains the essential Savior, it seems that there are also mediators. The Word performs the office of mediator, if Reitzenstein's correction in paragraph 30, or Scott and Dodd's equivalent correction is legitimate. But the seer above all, the man who speaks and relates his vision (apparently Hermes Trismegistus), becomes the Savior in the second part. *Poimandres* says to him (26): "Are you not going to be a guide for those who are worthy, so that by your mediation [*dia sou*] the human race might be saved by God?" The visionary obeys and in effect becomes a mediator, a savior (27–29). Like Jesus, he says, "I have come" (*ēlthon*, 30).

What should we think of this enigmatic work, where a part that seems to be Gnostic follows a part that does not seem to be or only very slightly? Ought we to suppose that there are two authors, that the author of the end is not the author of the beginning? This supposition is not wholly satisfactory. For in the first part some elements can already be said to be Gnostic, and these elements can hardly be explained but by a Christian Gnosticism.

1. The most obviously Gnostic element in the first part is the figure of the Demiurge. It is true that this figure remains somewhat vague, and that after having created the seven planetary spheres and their "Governors," the Nous-Demiurge is not mentioned again. But finally he is. He is presented as distinct from the supreme God, and we have seen that this distinction is characteristic of Gnosticism. The Nous-Demiurge in the *Poimandres* is indeed analogous to the Gnostic's Demiurge. He creates the

Seven, but he does not create the fixed stars. These seem to exist before him (7, cf. 26). This cannot be explained by a dependence upon the Platonic Demiurge, for he creates the entire heaven, including the fixed stars and the planets, not to mention other differences. Still less is it explained by Judaism.

2. There is perhaps a sort of Trinity in paragraph 6: the Father, who is the Nous; the Son, who is the Word; and their union, which is Life. The latter might be a designation for the Holy Spirit (a feminine entity, as we have seen).

3. In 8 the word *Proarchon* (the “Pre-Principle,” a name given to the divine light here) is redolent of the Valentinians’ *Proarchē* (Irenaeus, I, 1, 1; I, 11, 3–5, etc.).

4. The association of Life-Light (9, 17, 21, 32) is redolent of the Fourth Gospel (1:4).

5. The first reason for man’s descent is the desire to create (13). According to Hippolytus, it is the same desire that makes Valentinus’s Sophia fall (*Ref.* iv, 30, 6–7). It is also the desire to create that makes Sophia fall in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (94) and the *Origin of the World* (98), similarly in the version we possess of *Tripartite Treatise* (76, 8–12). All these works are Christian Gnostic works.

6. The second reason for Man’s descent comes from the likeness of his reflection to himself and to God. This is the same likeness that in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (87–88) and the *Origin of the World* (112–13) is used by the Archons as a trap to incite the Spirit that issued from Adamas, or the “Man of light” who is Adamas himself, to descend into a human body. The Archons think that the divine will be attracted by the likeness of his image. Already, according to Saturnilus, the power from on high had pity on the man fashioned by the angels and sent him a “spark of life” because he was fashioned in his image (Irenaeus, I, 24, 1).

7. There is a certain resemblance between the picture of primordial nature in the *Poimandres* (4–5) and the picture of this same nature in Hippolytus’s Sethians (*Ref.* v, 19, 2–20) and in the *Paraphrase of Shem*.

We do not know the date of the *Poimandres*, or the dates of the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, the *Origin of the World*, the *Paraphrase of Shem*, or of the versions we possess of the *Apocryphon of John*. These works might be later than the *Poimandres* and influenced by it. But the fact remains that some of the analogies we have mentioned relate to ideas or works that are probably earlier than the *Poimandres*, for example the idea

of the Demiurge as being distinct from God, the Christian Trinity, the Gospel of John, and the doctrine of Saturnilus.

Certainly the gnosis of the *Poimandres* is a very attenuated Gnosticism, especially in the first part. But the Gnosticism of the Valentinians is also an attenuated Gnosticism. It is less attenuated than that of the *Poimandres*; for example, for them the Demiurge does not directly emanate from the supreme God and does not know him. But they acknowledge some sort of collaboration between Christ and the Demiurge, just as in the *Poimandres* the Word joins himself to the Nous-Demiurge.

We have said that Man in the *Poimandres* resembles Sophia. But in fact *he perhaps is Sophia*. For this Man, who is reflected in the waters, is perhaps the Spirit of Genesis, the Spirit of God, who “moved over the face of the waters.”⁴⁰ The Gnostics liken this Spirit to Sophia. Given the fact that the characters who figure as actors in the Gnostic myths are often of indeterminate sex—this is particularly the case with the Spirit—and given that the spiritual part of man is called “man of light” in the *Pistis Sophia*, it would not be very surprising if the Spirit was here called the essential Man. It is not the myth of Sophia that would replace and conceal the myth of Man in most of the Gnostic doctrines. It is rather the myth of Man, as it is found in the *Poimandres*, that could conceal that of Sophia.

The Gnostics distinguished a number of elements that were born within Sophia. One is wholly spiritual and good; it derives from her beginning and the vision she had when the Savior came to meet her. Others are evil or mixed; they derive either from her fault or from her repentance, which was merely sadness and not wholly good. Now some of these elements can be depicted as “men” more or less transcendent and earlier than earthly man. In the *Origin of the World* from Nag Hammadi, the origin of humanity is depicted in three stages.⁴¹ It entails the successive appearance of three distinct “men.” The first is purely spiritual. He appeared on the first day of Genesis. He is called Adam of light, or Adamas. He comes from the Ogdoad, which shows that he is of Sophia’s nature. He descends to earth, but will only remain there a very short time. He reveals himself to the Demiurge and to *Pronoia* (Providence), who is enthroned next to him. *Pronoia* becomes enamored of him (as Nature becomes enamored of essential Man in the *Poimandres*). But he does not unite himself with her. “He detested her because she was in the shadows” (108, 16–17). Unlike the Man in the *Poimandres*, he does not become a constituent element of the earthly Adam. He soon reascends; but since “want” is mixed with his light during his descent, he cannot reascend as far as the place where he was before. He dwells in the large space situated between the Hebdomad and the Ogdoad. The second man appeared on the fourth day. He was created by Sophia-Zoe (Sophia-Life, the daughter of Pistis-Sophia). She destines him to overthrow the Archons’ schemes, who are contemplating the creation of earthly Adam in order to capture Adam of light. Although we read further on that the second man is “psychical” (that is, inferior to

“pneumatic” or spiritual man), he is definitely closely linked with the Spirit. For he derives from Sophia-Zoe, he was created according to her plans (113, 18), and the Archons will remark on his likeness to Adam of light (116, 4). Moreover, he will awake the earthly Adam and provoke a sort of resurrection in him. For this “man” has an androgynous nature, like the Man in the *Poimandres*, and he was created not in a masculine form but in a feminine form, in the likeness of the Mother. (He is therefore a form of Sophia or the Spirit.) He is called “Eve,” that is “Eve of life,” different from earthly Eve. This Eve is older than Adam and superior to him. She is a virgin and mother of the Lord (like the Spirit). After her, earthly Adam will be created. He will appear on the sixth day, but at first he will be unable to stand upright, even after having received the breath of Sophia-Life. Eve of life will instruct him, wake him up, and place him upright on the eighth day, the day of the Resurrection.

It seems that the Man of the *Poimandres* corresponds both to the first and to the second man in the *Origin of the World*. He is both Light, like the first, and Life, like the second. And like them he seems to be closely linked with Sophia. The *Origin of the World* shows with what ease the Gnostics could make a feminine character (preexistent Eve) into a “man” earlier than earthly man. It also shows that preexistent man, whether he is Adam of light or Eve of life, is linked with Sophia, of whom he is a kind of a double or an avatar.

What in any case seems to me very probable is that the *Poimandres* is not a work of early Gnosticism. As Haenchen has observed, the division between God and the world is very attenuated in this work and is not the author’s main concern. The work must have been written quite late in the second century. It would be astonishing if the author did not know of Christian gnosis at this time, and where he is close to it, it seems to me probable that he is inspired by it.

It has been said that this author strives not to appear as a Christian, or even as a Jew, but simply as a philosopher and a pagan. He succeeds quite well in the first part of the work, but as the work progresses it seems that he forgets to be on his guard, as if he were succumbing to his own enthusiasms or as if he thought he had led the reader far enough not to have to watch over him any longer.

That there is a sort of dissimulation in the *Poimandres* is not a gratuitous assumption. For there is definitely dissimulation there. The author does not wish to refer to Christianity, but nor does he wish to refer to Judaism. But it is certain that he is inspired by the Old Testament. He wishes to appear pagan, whereas he is not, or only partially.

To conclude, it seems to me that the author of the *Poimandres* is either a Gnostic Christian, perhaps using a Jewish-Hellenistic work but modifying it, or he is a man influenced by Gnostic Christianity; and he wished to write a work without reference either to Christianity or Judaism, probably so that he could attribute it to Hermes Trismegistus.

It is even more probable that the myth of Zosimus is linked with certain developments in Gnostic Christianity. It is possible to understand it by this Gnosticism and it can hardly be explained without it. Moreover, the text in which it is recounted is only pagan if one takes care, as Reitzenstein has done, to cut out all the obviously Christian passages by declaring them interpolations. Even after these suppressions, traces of a Christian influence remain. For example, the demon Antimimos (the "Imitator" or the "counterfeiter") is found here, who also appears in Gnostic Christianity; the idea is also found that the Son of God "can do all and become all that he desires" (Hippolytus, *Ref.* v, 7, 25; VIII, 15, 1-2; Epiphanius, *Pan.* xxvi, 3, 1); that the Son of God "is with his own until the end of the world" (cf. Matt. 28:20); and all this in passages that Reitzenstein does not regard as interpolated. Reitzenstein admits that perhaps there is a Christian influence in this text, an influence that, he thinks, would be almost unconscious in Zosimus.⁴² In effect, it is possible that Zosimus does not wish to appear Christian, and is not one; he is interested in all sorts of religions and philosophies. But his thought seems to be wholly impregnated with Christian gnosis. His "spiritual and luminous man" is the Adam of light of the *Origin of the World*, the man of light of the *Pistis Sophia*, an entity linked to the Spirit and Sophia. The trap set by the Archons for this luminous man is exactly the same as the one the Archons contemplate for capturing Adam of light in the *Origin of the World*. Given Zosimus's late date (beginning of the fourth century), it is likely that works such as *Pistis Sophia* and the *Origin of the Word* are earlier than his treatise on the letter *omega*.

I do not wish to imply that in the myths of the *Poimandres* and in Zosimus there are not also non-Christian elements. These myths belong to a Gnosticism that had become strongly syncretistic. Platonic elements are evident in the *Poimandres*. Zosimus himself refers to Plato (while also referring to "Nicotheus the unfindable," who is mentioned in Christian gnosis; to an obviously Gnostic Zoroaster; to Hermes, that is, to Hermeticism, which in its Gnostic part seems to me to be influenced by Christianity; and to "Bitos," whom I cannot believe is without some link with the Valentinians' Bythos). It is likely that Philo, with his "celestial Man," also played a role in the formation of these myths. It seems to me that Philo's influence had already made itself felt in Valentinianism, and it is perhaps, at least in part, through Valentinianism that he influenced so-called pagan gnosis.

II

*Can the Principal Characteristics
of the Gnostic Doctrines
Be Understood on the
Basis of Christianity?*

Chapter I

Salvation By “Knowledge”

One of the arguments that have been used to make Gnosticism a religion apart, irreducible to Christianity, is that Christianity is a religion of faith, whereas Gnosticism is a religion of knowledge. In Pauline Christianity it is faith that saves, whereas in Gnosticism one is saved by gnosis.

This view cannot be upheld unless one ignores what gnosis was in the early centuries. The gnosis spoken of by the Gnostics is not ordinary knowledge, worked out by human reason. In fact it is a religious knowledge, a knowledge of *a revealed religious teaching* to which one adheres. That is to say that it is closer to what we call faith than what we call knowledge. Moreover, the earliest Gnostics mentioned by the heresiologists seem to have spoken of faith as much as knowledge, and hardly made any distinction between them.¹ As for Christianity, the faith it teaches is certainly not lacking in any trace of knowledge; above all one ought not to forget that at the beginning it was thought of by Christians as being “knowledge” just as much as faith. The early Christians, like the earliest Gnostics, make little distinction between faith and gnosis. Only gradually did the Church come to emphasize faith and reduce gnosis to a relatively insignificant level.²

This process must have been well advanced by the middle of the second century, since Valentinus, who seems to be the first Gnostic to distinguish expressly between faith and knowledge, gives the name of faith to the way of salvation taught by the Great Church, whereas he gives the name of knowledge to that which is taught by himself and schools analogous to his. Nevertheless, even after this time, gnosis continued to be honored and given a very high value by some Christians in the Great Church. As for the Gnostics, even after Valentinus most of them continued to speak both of faith and knowledge, giving much the same meaning to the two words. We will see that the Valentinians themselves often give faith the same value as knowledge. Other Gnostics, and even whole sects, such as the Mandaeans, also did this.

1. “Knowledge” in Early Christianity

I could content myself here with a reference to an article I have written³ to show that the particular meaning of the word “knowledge” among the Gnostics is also found in Judaism and in early Christianity. Nevertheless,

I think it will be better if I reproduce here a couple of pages of this article, because it will perhaps not be referred to, and because it seems to me to be necessary to make clear what the word “gnosis” means in the way the Gnostics used it.

Their use of it differs from standard usage in that they often employ the word *gnosis* in an absolute way, using “knowledge” by itself to refer to religious knowledge, the knowledge of the true God, as if the word knowledge did not need to be complemented by the mention of a specific object. Also, they differ in that by means of this word they refer to a revealed knowledge, given to humanity by God and not resulting from any effort of the human reason. Such usage certainly seems to be new in the context of the language of the classical world, and perhaps no example of it can be found in pagan texts earlier than Christianity. By contrast, more than one example is found in the New Testament and in texts derived from early Christian communities. For example, in Paul, in Luke, in the *Didache*, in Clement of Rome.⁴ Must we therefore conclude that the early Christians borrowed this usage from pre-Christian Gnostics? It is not at all necessary. Among Christians, this usage could simply derive from Judaism, from the Greek Septuagint Bible. This has been demonstrated very well by Dom Jacques Dupont in the case of Paul.⁵ The Jews spoke of themselves as those who have “knowledge of God,” or simply “knowledge,” and they define Gentiles as those who do not have it. The Hebrew words that mean “to know” and “knowledge” could be used simply to refer to knowledge of God or the Law. Since the Septuagint chose *gnosis* to translate this Hebrew idea,⁶ a Jew like Paul could speak of *gnosis* in an absolute sense to refer to the true religion.

Thus we can easily explain the fact that the early Christians sometimes use the word “gnosis” in an absolute way, and that they also use it (either absolutely or with a complement such as God, Christ, Lord) in a way that seems to imply that for them it meant quite simply the true religion, Christianity. In some texts, *gnosis* seems to be something that belongs to all Christians; it is almost the equivalent of faith, and can be associated with “life,” that is, the true life, salvation. Dom Dupont notes that the parallelism of the expositions in 1 Cor. 8 and Rom. 14 establishes the equivalence of the ideas of *gnosis* (knowledge) and *pistis* (faith) in Paul. One might also cite Eph. 4:13: “Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God”; John 6:69: “We have believed and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God”; John 17:8: “And they know in truth that I came from thee; and they have believed that thou didst send me”; 1 John 4:16: “So we know and believe the love God has for us”; *Didache* 10:2: “Thanks be to thee, holy Father . . . for the knowledge and faith and immortality which thou hast revealed to us through thy servant Jesus.” Similarly *Didache* 9:3: “We give thanks to thee . . . for the life and knowledge thou hast made known to us through thy servant Jesus.”

There are therefore grounds for thinking that in a sense all the early Christians, and not only those whom we call Gnostics, claimed to have "knowledge," that is, the true religion, just as they claimed to be the true Israel; that all Christians and not only the Gnostics thought that "knowledge," that is, the true religion, brings salvation.

The Gnostics did not therefore set themselves apart either from other Christians or from the Jews when they used the *gnosis* in an absolute way and gave a high estimate to what it referred to. It is true that this word often seems to imply the idea of mystery for them, a difficult and hidden knowledge, a secret divine revelation. But here again they were not the only ones to interpret it thus. Dom Dupont points out that in Judaism the word *gnosis* has a more restricted sense than the one we have seen, which applies particularly to a deepened knowledge of the Scriptures, to the knowledge that the doctors of the Law had in the time of Christ.⁷ He also notes that Paul uses it in this way in certain passages in the epistles to the Corinthians.⁸ On the other hand, Father Bouyer has observed that there are links between *gnosis* and the discernment of eschatological mysteries in the New Testament and other Christian texts of the early centuries, as well as in pre-Christian Judaism.⁹ It therefore seems that insofar as it is a technical term, one ought to distinguish two meanings in the word *gnosis*, which are related, but one of which is more general than the other. In its most general sense, *gnosis* approximately means knowledge of the true God or the true way of serving God, that is, true religion. For the Jew it is Judaism; for the Christian it is Christianity. In its narrower sense, on the one hand it is mixed with the idea of a knowledge that is more intellectual than simple faith, but still religious; on the other hand with the idea of a penetration of the mysteries, particularly the mystery of the last things (which had already been partly realized for Christians). In Judaism this *gnosis* could be both a deepened knowledge of the Law and the knowledge of apocalyptic revelations. In Christianity the word could apply—and in fact was often applied—to an interpretation of the hidden meaning of the Scriptures (those of the Old Testament), as it had been unveiled by Christ. (In fact, this interpretation is both knowledge of the Scriptures and knowledge of the eschatological mystery.) This is why *gnosis* sometimes appears to be given to all Christians, but sometimes appears as a particular grace, a privilege of certain Christians. On occasion it is almost the equivalent of faith, at other times, although close to faith, it is distinguished from it.

Actually, *gnosis* and faith are only very rarely clearly distinguished in first-century texts. At this time, the word *gnosis* most often seems to mean the true religion, without excluding its also meaning a revelation of mysteries. For Christianity as a whole could be said to be a revelation of a mystery, being the revelation of God through the paradox of the divinity of Christ. In its entirety, it might also be said to be a revelation of the mystery of the Scriptures, especially as for the early Christians, much more than for those of today, it was the revelation of the hidden meaning of the

prophets, the key to the Old Testament, and the announcement of the coming of times foretold. Nevertheless, after the first century, in the Church the word *gnosis* will be more and more reserved for knowledge in the strict sense, that which is distinct from faith. But *gnosis* in the strict sense will continue to be celebrated and preached in the Church. Without being heretical, more than one Christian in the second century speaks with fervor of *gnosis* as a knowledge of the true meaning of the Scriptures and an understanding of faith. This is the case, for example, with pseudo-Barnabas and Clement of Alexandria. We know that for the latter the *gnostic* is the most perfect Christian. Irenaeus himself does not attack *gnosis*, but only those who falsely claim that they have it. He attacks the *pseudōnymos gnōsis* which the First Epistle of Timothy mentions, the *gnosis* “falsely so-called.” Father Bouyer could write of *gnosis*: “This very rich idea seems to us to be situated at the heart of the thought of the early Church.”¹⁰

2. *Faith According to the Gnostics*

Thus, nonheretical Christians in the early centuries used the word *gnosis* in much the same way as the Gnostics. Reciprocally, the Gnostics used the word *faith* (*pistis*) in much the same way as the Christians, at least up to a certain time. I do not see that, before Valentinus, they intentionally made a distinction between *faith* and *gnosis*. For Saturnilus and Basilides it is *faith* that saves (Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* I, 24, 2, 4). The same is true of Marcion. Basilides, it is true, also speaks of knowledge (Irenaeus, II, 24, 4, 6), but there is nothing to suggest that he attributes to it a greater value than *faith*, or even that he distinguishes them. It seems that for Basilides it is much the same thing to be “a believer” or to “know” or to be “an elect” (Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* v, 3, 2–3; cf. II, 10, 1). The Carpocratians, some of whom claimed to be “Gnostics,” said that one is saved “by *faith* and *love*” (Irenaeus, I, 25, 5).

And was it otherwise for Simon? We have already mentioned the uncertainty of everything concerning Simon. In Irenaeus’s account (I, 23, 3) we read that he claimed to save by knowledge of himself. Let us leave aside for the moment the question of whether it is true that he himself claimed to be the Savior. What matters here is the use of the word “knowledge.” Now a few lines further on, in the same paragraph, we read that Simon spoke of his disciples as those who “hoped” in himself and in Helen. And Hippolytus, in a parallel text that might reproduce Irenaeus’s Greek, says that the disciples in question were “those who had believed” in Simon and Helen (*Ref.* vi, 19, 7). It is therefore possible that Simon sometimes spoke of knowledge, sometimes of *faith*, without making any distinction between them. In any case, Irenaeus does not say that Simon uttered the least criticism of *faith*, or that he distinguished it from knowledge. He could therefore speak of knowledge as Paul and John speak of “knowing.” (John does

not use the substantive "knowledge," but he often uses the verb "to know," which is of the same root as gnosis, and he uses it almost as the synonym of "to believe."

As for Menander, Irenaeus states that by his magic he promised to impart a "knowledge" by which the creator angels could be overcome. But this statement is made rather suspect by the mention of "magic," and perhaps also by the mention of angels thought of as creators. Given that Menander's two main disciples, Saturnilus and Basilides, though quite different from each other, both taught that one is saved by faith, there is reason to think that this teaching goes back to their master, and by him, to Simon. Menander could speak of knowledge and knowing, but as Paul and John spoke of it.

If, a little later on, Valentinus distinguished between faith and knowledge, it is probably in a context in which, by the word "faith," he understood the faith of the Christians of the Great Church. He probably made this distinction after 140, when it became clear that he was not in agreement with the Church of Rome.¹¹ As the Church put its trust in the Creator (the God of the Old Testament) and seemed to make "works" the most important condition of salvation, Valentinus was able to conclude that in a sense it had reverted to Judaism. This is why he links the faith of the Church with the Demiurge and the "psychical" realm, which is that of the Demiurge. The faith of the Church differed from what he held to be authentic Christianity. In order to distinguish the latter he therefore chose the name of "knowledge," which also meant for him the Christianity of the first Christians. But it must not be concluded that he scorned the faith in a general and absolute way. A good number of texts show that, for the Valentinians, there was a faith of the "spirituals," that is, a faith of those who have "gnosis."

In the *Gospel of Truth*, faith is said to have done away with division and brought the fullness of love (34, 28–31). In the *Treatise on the Resurrection*, resurrection is said to be for those who believe (46, 5–21). In this last text, comparing 46, 21 with 46, 23–24, we see that those who believe are the same as those who know. As far as the *Tripartite Treatise* is concerned, I will content myself with citing the note of the first editors of this work on the passage 128, 2–17. On 128, 2–5: "The term 'those who believe' seems to apply to the pneumatics." On 128, 9: "There is no ambiguity: faith is gnosis." On 128, 17: "Faith (line 17) corresponds to gnosis (line 19). We see that here *faith and gnosis are one and the same thing*."¹² In the fragments of Heracleon preserved by Origen, the pneumatic is more than once depicted as *the one who believes*.¹³ In the *Extracts of Theodotus* faith is often represented as the way of salvation, not only for the psychics but also for the pneumatics. For example, in 42, 1, the cross is "limit," since it separates the *apistoi* (nonbelievers) from the *pistoi* (believers), just as "limit" separates the world from the plenitude. In 61, 8, "the pneumatic elements, *those who have believed*," obtain a salvation that

is above that of the psychics. In 67, 2, birth is necessary because of the salvation of *believers* (*tōn pisteuontōn*). (What follows shows that these believers are the pneumatic elements sown in the world by Sophia.) In 74, 2, the Lord descended to earth to transfer from Fate to Providence “those who have *believed* in Christ.” In the Valentinian text cited by Epiphanius (*Pan.* xxxi, 5–6), *Faith* (*Pistis*) is found among the aeons (cf. also Irenaeus, 1, 1, 2). In the *Gospel of Philip* those who have faith “have found Life” (52, 17–18); faith and love are equally necessary (61, 45–62, 1); God makes his realm bear fruit by means of four virtues, which are faith, hope, love, and knowledge (79, 22–30). In the last of these passages faith and knowledge are distinguished from one another, but faith is named first and is in no way inferior to knowledge.

In the first *Apocalypse of James*, which seems to be a Valentinian work,¹⁴ faith as well as gnosis is the condition of salvation (29, 24–29; 42, 15–18). In the *Apocryphal Letter of James*, which is probably Gnostic¹⁵ and perhaps Valentinian,¹⁶ it is stated that sometimes one is saved by faith,¹⁷ sometimes by knowledge,¹⁸ and the author of this epistle celebrates both of them together when he writes, “By faith and knowledge we have received Life” (14, 8–10).

It seems that it was only after Valentinus that some sects or at least some works put the accent almost entirely—sometimes entirely—on knowledge. Is this due to Valentinus’s influence, an influence that was considerable and that seemingly extended to most of the sects? Valentinus had seemed to devalue faith, even though the faith he devalued was but *a certain type of faith*. Or did the same motive that had impelled Valentinus also impel other Gnostics even more strongly? It is definitely the case that in certain, seemingly late, works, faith is no longer mentioned, just knowledge. Moreover, the knowledge that is spoken of sometimes becomes a sort of philosophy. It no longer simply concerns God and salvation but the whole of the universe, the explanation of the origin, organization, and history of the world. Thus, in the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* (BG 79–82; CG III, 92–93), Christ asks his disciples what they are looking for and what troubles them. Philip replies: “The nature [or the substance, *hypostasis*] of All, and the plan [the ‘economy’] of salvation.” The disciples are therefore asking what the economy of salvation is, but they are also seeking to understand “the All.” What Christ teaches them demonstrates that from now on one is on the plane of philosophy. He tells them that there are three types of philosophy that explain the movement of the world, that all three of them are false, and that he will teach them the truth. Gnosis thought of in this way certainly differs from the faith of early Christianity. But it also differs from the conception of gnosis that Gnostics of the first half of the second century seem to have held. The latter can speculate on Genesis in order to define the place of the Demiurge in relation to Christianity; but theories on the origin and organization of the universe in themselves did not interest them. They were more concerned to be saved from the world than to know it.

Even after Valentinus, however, many Gnostics continued to honor faith. I cannot cite here all the texts that would demonstrate it. I will simply cite a few examples.

In the *Gospel of Matthias*, which seems to have been a Gnostic work, and which in any case was used by the Gnostics in the time of Clement of Alexandria, it was written that one ought to make the soul grow "by faith and knowledge" (*Strom.* III, 26, 3).¹⁹ In the group of works called the *Pistis Sophia*, one is saved by having believed in the light. The entity called Pistis-Sophia, that is, Faith-Wisdom, repeatedly affirms that she has believed; this is why she hopes God will save her. In the anonymous treatise from the Bruce codex, published by Carl Schmidt,²⁰ one is saved for having believed in the "spark of light" (p. 345, 4–6); the Savior is the Father of those who have believed (p. 351, 10–11), faith is named among the fundamental virtues (p. 336, 19; p. 349, 1), and so on. In the second *Book of Jeu* published by Schmidt in the same collection, those who are worthy to receive this book are those who have faith in the light (p. 304, 32–38). In the *Apocalypse of Peter* the immortal soul, unlike the mortal soul, is the one who believes (76, 2; cf. 78, 20–21). In *Eugnostos* and the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ*, some passages endow faith with value.²¹ Pistis-Sophia, Faith-Wisdom, is depicted here as being in some way a feminine form of the Savior (*Eugnostos*, CG III, 81, 21–82, 8; *Wisdom of Jesus Christ*, BG 102, 15–103, 9). In the *Hypostasis of the Archons* we rediscover the figure of Pistis-Sophia. Similarly in the *Origin of the World*, where Pistis-Sophia is more often simply called Pistis, Faith. In the *Book of Thomas the Contender*, the Savior invites Thomas to "know," but also to believe (142, 10–15). In the *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* faith is linked with Life, that is, to salvation (66, 26–27; cf. 67, 1–2). In the *Paraphrase of Shem* faith is often mentioned as the attribute of the saved. In the *Odes of Solomon* faith and knowledge are often equivalent ideas, and so forth.²²

Even in so-called pagan gnosis—which is sometimes not so, or not entirely—faith is sometimes spoken of as one of the highest values. Similarly in the *Chaldean Oracles* (frags. 40 and 48, Des Places, ed.); in the *Corpus Hermeticum* (I, 32; IV, 4; IX, 10); in *Asclepius* (29). In the Nock-Festugière edition of the *Corpus Hermeticum*,²³ the editors point out the identity of faith and gnosis in IV, 4 and IX, 10.

Among the Manicheans, it initially seems that a distinction is made between gnosis and faith, which corresponds to the distinction between the Elect and the Hearers. Nevertheless this distinction is not always observed, and in certain expressions faith and knowledge seem to be equivalents.²⁴ The Manichean psalms very often celebrate faith. As for the Mandaeans, they do not separate faith and knowledge; they call themselves "the believers."

Thus neither in the Christianity of the early Church or in Gnosticism is a rigorous distinction unanimously accepted between faith and knowledge. The two notions are almost synonyms in the Christianity of the Church; they also seem to be in the earliest Gnosticism. Only gradually were they differentiated, and it is really only after the middle of the second

century that the Church will speak almost unanimously of faith, and among certain Gnostics, principally or uniquely of knowledge.

3. *The Object of "Knowledge"*

In the preface to his work *En quête de la Gnose*,²⁵ Henri-Charles Puech, supported by a good number of Gnostic texts, said that the first and fundamental object of "knowledge" was the "self," that is, the deep and hidden part of each human being. "Knowledge' . . . is essentially knowledge of self" (p. xviii). He attempted to show that, by a series of feelings and reasonings starting from reflection upon the self, the Gnostics worked out a doctrine we call gnosis. First of all men would have felt inwardly ill at ease with their present condition; they would have been unsatisfied with the world, their own bodies, and with society. "At the beginning, dissatisfaction, restlessness, anxiety" (p. xiv). They would therefore feel like strangers in the world and would have wished to escape from it. Starting from this point, they would have depicted their own being, in its innermost essence, as already situated above their present condition (p. xv). To this picture they would have joined that of an ideal world, "another world," which would be the place of the true life (ibid.). Again, their dream would become a reality in their eyes. They would believe in this other world from which they were temporarily exiled, but to which they were destined to return, indeed, in which they had never ceased to live in their essential being (ibid.). Gnosis would therefore be "the fact of a *me* in search of *self*" (ibid.).

It is certainly the case that in many Gnostic texts the man who has gnosis is depicted as a man who "knows himself," who "knows from where he comes and where he is going." But again we might question whether this is not a theme that appeared at a certain stage in Gnosticism rather than at the beginning. Insofar as it is possible to discern a number of periods in the mass of Gnostic ideas, the accent seems to have been initially placed upon knowledge of *God*. In the pastoral epistles, on the subject of the heretics who are opposed here, it is said: "They profess to know God" (Titus 1:16). It is also said that these heretics, who are perhaps the earliest Gnostics on whom some light has been shed, give themselves up to "stupid controversies" (Titus 3:9). But it seems that these controversies concerned not the actual *me* but rather divine beings. For it was probably "genealogies" of divine beings that they drew up (ibid.). It also appears that they quarreled on the subject of the Law, that is, on Judaism (ibid.). Thus these people argued among themselves but about Judaism, God, divine beings, not their own being.

In the Epistle of Jude, heretics are mentioned who were perhaps also among the earliest Gnostics, or very close to Gnosticism. These heretics "revile the glorious ones" (Jude 8), that is, they speak of angels with scorn. (These angels were probably those who administered the world). These

heretics were therefore dissatisfied with the world, which corresponds to the process described by Puech, but why were they dissatisfied? Is it because the world oppressed them? Was it their own individuality, their own difference that they opposed to the world? Nothing is said about this in the text; but if we judge by Gnostics who are better known to us, it seems likely that it was not for this sort of reason. For when the Gnostics criticize the world and the powers that administer it, they never give personal reasons. They criticize the world and Archons because the world and the Archons seem to them to have been enemies of the Savior and to have wished to hide from humanity the God whom the Savior revealed. It is therefore at least possible that the Epistle of Jude does not have to do with people who were dissatisfied with their own environment, and who derived a religion from this dissatisfaction. They were rather people who criticized the world *because of their religion*.

Let us move on to a time that we know a little better. Ignatius of Antioch, who probably wrote in the second decade of the second century, knew of heretics who held docetic theories on the subject of Christ, and who *perhaps* also discussed the question as to whether the God of the Old Testament was the same as that of the Gospel;²⁶ but he did not know of heretics who spoke of the "self," who sought to know their own self, or who claimed to know it. We might also consider the earliest Gnostics described by Irenaeus: Simon, Menander, Cerinthus, Saturnilus, Basilides, Cerdo. They do not seem to speak of the "self," they do not claim "to know themselves." On the contrary, they thought they knew many things about the true God, the Savior, the Demiurge, the world, the angels, and the Archons, the link between the Old Testament and the Gospel. If they add to this certain ideas concerning the nature of believers, these ideas are linked to their other teaching, not the most essential, and stress is not put on knowledge of the self.

As for the Valentinians, when one reads the *Gospel of Truth* or the *Tripartite Treatise*, one sees that the knowledge usually in question is knowledge of God. Even though God is unknowable in himself and cannot be known but by Christ's mediation, it is God whom it is a matter of knowing, the true God, who has indeed been known, through Christ.

We might also add that for Marcion knowledge of the self as transcendent in essence is excluded. For him the self is entirely sinful, as for Paul. This would therefore oblige one to separate Marcion from Gnosticism, which is what Harnack tried to do, but there does not seem to be a legitimate case for doing so. Moreover, one must admit that Marcion could have formed most of his Gnostic ideas without going through a search for knowledge of the self.

When the Gnostics begin to speak of knowledge of the self, when they begin to say that the Gnostic is a man who "knows himself"—it seems that this theme appears with Valentinus, in any case it is found among the Valentinians—what is it for them "to know oneself"? It is to know "where

one has come from and where one is going." Which is to say, it is not so much a matter of knowing *oneself* as knowing *one's origin and destination*. The knowledge of self is linked to the knowledge of the Gnostic myth—if one can call this basically Johannine doctrine a myth. To know oneself is above all to know that *one is not of the world*, that one is of God, and that, since one is of God, one will return to God. The world also comes from God, according to the Gnostics, but it does not come from him as directly as the inner self of the one who believes or who knows. Knowledge of the self therefore implies knowledge of a complete doctrine concerning God, the human soul, and the world. It results from this doctrine rather than being its source. (How could one otherwise draw from the simple search for the self the diverse figures of Gnostic speculations: the Father, the Mother, the Savior, the Demiurge, the Seven?)

One must also note that for these Gnostics there is a knowledge of the self (or more precisely of the origin of the self), but there is not, properly speaking, a *search* for the self. The knowledge was given without search, by the revelation of the Savior. *It is the Savior who has revealed us to ourselves*. "See, the Savior is our mirror. Open your eyes, see them in him, and know the features of your face" (*Odes of Solomon* 13, 1–2). Knowledge of the Savior is the necessary condition for knowledge of the self, as for knowledge of the true God. Furthermore, the expression "to know where one has come from and where one is going" is perhaps not without links with what Christ says in the Fourth Gospel "I know whence I have come and whither I am going" (John 8:14). In any case, one knows that one is *elsewhere*, because the Savior taught that he is not of the world and that his disciples are not of it either. To make knowledge the result of an individual search is to forget that the knowledge in question is always a matter of *revelation*, that it is always *received* by humanity.

The process described by Puech (dissatisfaction, search for the self, then the depiction of the self as already transcendent, accompanied by the depiction of a superior and divine world) is a process that does not seem to correspond to the history of Gnosticism, as far as we know it, nor to the process by which one acquires gnosis according to the Gnostics themselves.

I add that, whatever my admiration for Puech's immense erudition, whatever debt of gratitude Gnostic studies owe him, and which I personally owe, I cannot regard as right the image of Gnosticism as it appears in this preface. It appears that the Gnostic is essentially a man who is content with nothing, neither with the world, nor with society, nor with his own body; that he invents a doctrine by which he can judge himself superior to all this. His assertion is "proud" (p. xiv). He feels himself "not responsible" (p. xvii), he judges himself "perfect" in nature or in essence (p. xviii). One might describe his attitude as "egoistical" for he "tends to relate everything to himself and his personal salvation" (p. xxi). Gnosticism would be "in principle amoral," since there were libertines as well as as-

cetics among the Gnostics (p. XIX). It seems to me that there is not the least trace of nobility in this portrait. One can scarcely believe that so many people were so mediocre. One gets the impression that Puech, who had studied the Gnostics all his life, finally became so exasperated that he took a dislike to them and often judged them to be somewhat worse than they deserve.

After all, these criticisms can also be leveled at Christianity, which is not such a mediocre religion. To think that "the true life is absent" is also the case with the Christian. This is the idea that converted Claudel. Inventing another world in order to escape reality is Nietzsche's accusation of Christians; but it is perhaps on the contrary, in order to be able to love reality as it is, that one appeals to a light that enlightens it without becoming mixed with it. To dream of salvation is what Christians ought to do, and sometimes it has been held against them as a sort of egoism; but in fact this salvation implies that one loves another as oneself. To have confidence that one will be saved if one has faith (or "knowledge") is that to which the Christian is invited, and is part of faith itself. Since one never knows whether one really has faith (or "knowledge"), this gives no certitude and ought not to lead to pride. "Perfect" is a name that in Paul (1 Cor. 2:6; Phil. 3:15) seems to be given to all Christians. As for the dissoluteness that the heresiologists often seem to attribute to the Gnostics, this accusation has not been confirmed by the discoveries, and hardly seems to be justifiable except in rare cases, attested to at a relatively late and decadent time. In short, one should try to be a little less severe, if only because the attitude of the Gnostics, as Puech describes it, is not without some analogy to that of Christians in general.

Chapter II

Christian Savior and Gnostic Revealer

That there were Gnostic doctrines in which no one appears to play the role of the Savior, as has sometimes been said, is I think, far from being proved. I have shown elsewhere that the reasons given to try to prove that the Nicolaitans, the Archontics, and the Antitacts did not know of a Savior are quite inadequate.¹ In the works found at Nag Hammadi it seems to me that the idea of a Savior is found throughout, except for a few texts that are probably or even certainly not Gnostic.

What is true is that the Gnostic Savior is above all a Revealer. As Foerster saw,² perhaps the most central idea in Gnosticism is the idea of a *call*. The Savior is the one who issues a *call*. He awakens, he teaches, he gives knowledge, and it is thus that he saves.

Is this a characteristic that renders the Christian and the Gnostic depictions of the Savior irreconcilable? Is it true that there is such a difference between the two conceptions that the Gnostic conception could not derive from Christianity.

It is often thought that in Christianity the Savior redeems humanity by his sacrifice rather than by his teaching; that he saves directly by means of a sacrifice that appeases God's wrath. But it is not sure that this way of conceiving redemption is the one found in the earliest Christianity. According to the New Testament, there was certainly a sacrifice, and a redemptive one, but did this sacrifice save directly, by itself, or did it save by what it taught? One can quite well maintain that for the Christians of the New Testament the Savior saved by what he taught. In any case, there is at least one work in the New Testament in which the Savior is depicted as being above all a Revealer, and that is John's Gospel.

The Johannine Christ, like the Gnostic Savior, came into the world in order to teach the truth. "I have come as light into the world, that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness" (12:46). "I have come into the world to bear witness to the truth" (18:37). "For judgment [*krima*, "discrimination"] I came into the world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind" (9:39). This last saying might seem enigmatic; but doubtless "those who see" are the orthodox Jews, who first had a superior knowledge to that of the pagans, but their incredulity in respect to Jesus makes them blind. In any case, Christ came to teach the truth to those who did not know it, and judgment, that is, discrimination between those who are saved and those who are lost, consists in that some

see and others do not see. "This is eternal life, that they *know* thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (17:3). "You will *know* the truth, and the truth will make you free" (8:32).

Without doubt, the idea of redemption by the Christ's sacrifice is not absent from the Fourth Gospel. On the subject of Christ, John the Baptist says: "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29). Christ himself says, "The bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh" (6:51); "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life" (6:54); "I lay down my life for the sheep" (10:15). And in the First Epistle of John we read: "The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1:7). But if there was a sacrifice, it seems that it was because it was necessary to *make something known*. "The ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me; but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father" (14:30-31). The cross is that which saves (3:14-15; 8:28; 12:31-32), but it saves because it is the principal means of revelation. "When you have lifted up the Son of man [on the cross], then you will know that I am he" (8:28). The Spirit that opens one's understanding will not come until Christ has been "glorified," that is, crucified (7:39). The cross saves, but *by the way one regards it*, like the bronze serpent in the desert saved those who looked upon it (3:14-15).

There was a sacrifice of Christ, but it was the necessary condition that truth might be made known. The idea of truth is the primordial idea; it seems to have had an extraordinary power in earliest Christianity. The author of the Johannine writings thinks that Christ is himself the truth ("I am the truth"), and that God is essentially "light." "This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light" (1 John 1:5). Christ is the light that has come into the world (John 1:9; 3:19; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35-36, 46).

As for Paul, the primary founder of Christian theology, is it true that for him the cross of Christ saved *directly* because the sacrifice would appease God's wrath? I do not think so. First, because, according to Paul, the sacrifice of Christ was desired by God. That God desired this sacrifice to appease his own wrath is unintelligible and absurd. Next, it is not true that divine wrath is appeased, since, according to Paul, the world must perish. Those who will escape the wrath of God are only those who have faith. Why would faith be necessary if the sacrifice of Christ should save by itself? It is obvious that it does not save by itself, but because it brings about a change in a person's thoughts, in a person who truly desires to see what it means. It bears an *image* that reveals the vanity of the world's power, and it saves those who accept the contemplation of this image. For Paul as for John, it is probable that the cross saves because it is a *teaching*.

Paul does not say that Christ died to appease the wrath of God. Everything he says suggests on the contrary that the wrath against the world remains. Those who are saved are those who, because they believe in Christ,

are no longer of the world. They are dead with Christ, and it is thus that they escape God's wrath. God wished that, because of the death of his Son, humanity would have the possibility of separating itself from the world, by taking the side of the Son, and thus escape destruction. Salvation comes from God by means of the sign that is Christ's death, because to believe in this death is in some way to die oneself.

Theologians see clearly that, according to Paul, one is saved by belief in the death of Christ, because in holding to this belief one in a sense dies oneself. But they present it as a mystery,³ they ask how Paul could have come to hold such an idea, they appeal to the pagan Mysteries, oriental religions, and so on. It is easy, however, to understand that in holding to someone who has died according to the world and by the world, one detaches oneself from the world, and in a sense dies oneself.

Paul could have come to hold this idea simply because it is a true idea. It is clear that if someone deeply believes that the man condemned and ignominiously killed by the world was in fact just, that God loved him more than those who killed him, that he demonstrated this in bringing him back to life—for someone who thinks thus the world has lost something of its power. For the one who thinks like this, the things of the world no longer have the same importance. If he has distanced himself from the world he is to a certain extent dead himself. In this way he escapes the judgment that, according to Paul, ought to condemn the world.

Paul's idea is simple and coherent. Is it because it is too simple that it is thought to be obscure and is made into a problem? His idea is that for the person who believes in Christ, although one acknowledges Christ's defeat in the world and his appalling death, the world has henceforth lost its power and its hold. This is perfectly true and is no mystery at all.

It must be noted that Paul does not simply say that Christ died for us; he also says that he was *raised* for us (2 Cor. 5:15). "Raised" demonstrates quite clearly that it was not a matter of appeasing God's wrath. If the death of Christ could strictly speaking appease his Father's wrath, what could his resurrection do? It was therefore a matter of instruction. The Resurrection also instructs, in showing that the judgment of the world was brought to nothing by God.

The lesson of the death of Christ, preceded by his perfectly pure life and followed by his resurrection, is that death such as the world knows is not absolute death, and that truth according to appearances is not truth. When one thinks in this way, one is no longer subject in spirit to the world.

It therefore seems that it is not true that for Paul redemption is brought about directly by the sacrifice of Christ. There is an intermediary: knowledge that one has of it, or what comes to the same thing, belief, faith.

Faith is other than knowledge if it is what is called faith in the Synoptics. In the Synoptic Gospels, faith is simply courage, the attitude of someone who dares to act or ask or hope, trusting in God's goodness. But in Paul, as also in John, faith is something else: it is the acceptance of a

lesson, a doctrine; or more precisely, the acceptance of an image, a sign, a figure, which implies a doctrine. This figure is that of the crucified just one. Such a faith might be called knowledge, since this doctrine is truth. We have seen that Paul can identify knowledge with belief as does John.

Whether it is called faith or knowledge, for Paul as for John, it is by adherence to the *truth* that Christ saves.⁴ By this adherence, humanity places something between the world and itself, and it not only escapes the threat hanging over the world but in a sense is already transferred to a higher realm, free of the conditions of time and death.

According to Eugène de Faye, this interpretation of redemption was that of ordinary Christians in the second century. Speaking of Heracleon, he writes: "What does the Redemption consist of? In gnosis or superior knowledge and in eternal life. This is the double grace that Christ brings. He illuminates the soul and gives it imperishable life. . . . This doctrine corresponds in every detail with the belief of the second century Christians. What, according to them, does Jesus Christ bring to men? Two things: Knowledge of the Father and immortality."⁵ (De Faye thinks that this doctrine does not conform to that of Paul; but this is because he understands him as modern scholars understand him.)

If one accepts this idea of salvation, there is little difference between the Savior as the Christians understand him and the Savior or Messenger as the Gnostics understand him; and the distinction Colpe made between the Savior and the Messenger, in order to hold against Rudolph that there were Gnostic systems without a Savior, becomes a contestable one.

Chapter III

Docetism

1. *Different Forms of Docetism*

We call Docetist heretics who, in order to affirm Jesus Christ's divinity, think that they must deny his humanity. We are told that they taught that Christ was only man in appearance, that in reality he was a divine and purely spiritual being clothed in human appearance, like the gods of Greek mythology who took a human appearance in order to visit the earth. How could God have suffered and died? He *seemed*¹ to suffer and die, but this was to teach people the truth.

It is certain that the affirmation of Jesus Christ's divinity at the same time as his humanity posed difficult and perhaps insoluble problems. Christian theologians have perhaps never succeeded in explaining this doctrine in a way that rids it of all contradiction; this is why they call the Incarnation a mystery. But the Docetic heresy, of all the heresies, was perhaps the one that ran the greatest risk of forgetting the fundamental teaching of Christianity. It seems to me that what Christ taught above all else was that suffering and death are not signs of divine condemnation; that a person wholly defeated could be a person loved by God; further, that this person could be God himself. But to teach this by his example it was necessary for him to have truly suffered and truly died. If the Passion had simply been an appearance in order to teach the truth, for this very reason it would have taught nothing. (The Docetic heresy is the only heresy that Simone Weil was said to bear to see condemned.)

We are told that most of the Gnostics were docetists. But it is wise to look closely. They certainly had more than one reason to incline in this direction. First because they were connected to the branch of Christianity that affirmed the original divinity of Jesus Christ, the branch of Paul and John. The other branch, of the Jewish Christians, was that of Christians who, though venerating Christ, tended to think that at first he was only a man.² The desire to accentuate Jesus Christ's divinity as much as possible is the root of Docetism. They also thought, with John and probably with Paul,³ that salvation was brought by the *lesson* of the cross. There is a danger in this conception of salvation, which is indeed the danger of docetism. Insofar as the cross is a lesson, *an image that saves*, one might be tempted to conclude that its virtue lies wholly in the image and that it is not necessary for the crucifixion actually to have taken place. This conclu-

sion would be illegitimate, for if the event was not real, the image itself would no longer have any meaning. By insisting on the image, on the myth, one runs the risk of forgetting *history*; and then the image itself disappears. Finally, reflection on the event that was the cross leads one to distinguish an appearance and a reality in it. For the cross, in appearance the defeat and death of Christ, was, according to Paul and John, Christ's victory over the powers, because it demonstrated their ignorance and mediocrity. One can therefore speak of an *appearance of the cross*, and a *different reality*, hidden behind this appearance.

It is therefore natural that the Gnostics' temptation was Docetism. But there are many contradictions among them on this subject, just as it seems there are in Christianity in general. A certain degree of Docetism has perhaps always existed in Christianity, even in nonheretical Christianity, and a certain degree of belief in the humanity of Christ has never disappeared, even in the heresies that might be thought to be truly Docetic.

Moreover, Docetism is something far less simple than one imagines. When one examines doctrines that are called Docetic, one sees that they are not all docetic in the same way. Simply to say that a doctrine is Docetic does not mean much unless one clarifies in what way. I think that at least four types of Docetism must be distinguished.

I. Docetism can be the affirmation that Christ's sufferings and death were merely appearances. It is this form of Docetism which Ignatius of Antioch opposes around 110 (*Trall.* 6, 2; *Smyrn.* 2; 4,2; 5,3).

This form of Docetism might itself have a number of meanings. It might mean that Jesus Christ did not suffer at all (because he was God, or because he was a pure spirit), and that his death was not a real event. But it might also mean that his sufferings and death were, in a way, the opposite of what they seemed to be. They seemed to be a total defeat; in reality they were a victory. The world was overcome by its own *apparent* victory over the just one.

If one doubts that Docetic formulas could have expressed this idea, one has only to re-read, for example, the third chapter of the Book of Wisdom. Here it is said of the just: "In the eyes of the ignorant they appeared [*edoxan*] to die. Their passing from this world was taken for a misfortune. . . . But they are in peace. . . . Their hope was full of immortality. For a passing pain they will receive great blessings" (2-5). The author of this chapter does not doubt that the just are truly dead, with physical death, nevertheless he writes, "They appeared to die." (This remark in the Book of Wisdom could, besides, have had an influence on the formation of Docetism.)

This formula might therefore simply be the expression of Christian faith. But it was easy to interpret it literally as meaning that Christ did not suffer at all. The words could be the same. When we read in the *Odes of Solomon* (ode 42): "I have not been reproved, even when I *appeared* to be;

I did not perish, even though they condemned me,” this might be interpreted as being Docetic; but it can also be interpreted as being ordinary Christianity. One sees how easy it was to slide from ordinary Christianity to apparent docetism. The same form of words is orthodox or heretical according to the way one interprets it.

II. Docetism could be an affirmation that implies the above but that goes further; the affirmation that Christ was only a man in appearance, that he only took a human form to deceive the devil, to deceive the powers and make the crucifixion possible. Because this apparent defeat was really a victory, it is clear that a trap had been set for the powers and that they had been overcome while believing they overcame. If they had known that Christ was the Son of God and God himself, they would not, as Paul says, have “crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor. 2:8). The speculations one finds in early Christianity on the care and means Christ would have taken not to be recognized by the powers might come from this. It was imagined that in descending from heaven and traversing the heavens inhabited by angels, in each heaven he took the form of the angels who dwelt in it, so that the powers who reign in the heavens could not guess that it was God who descended. Moreover, once he arrived on earth he took care to be a child first before being a man, and this was again in order not to be recognized. We find these speculations in the *Ascension of Isaiah*, a work whose Christian parts seem to have been written around the end of the first century.⁴ Speculation on the descent hidden from the angels is also attributed to Simon the Magician,⁵ and is found not only among the Gnostics⁶ but among nonheretical Christians during the first centuries of our time.⁷

Such legends are obviously linked to the idea of the victory of Christ over the powers, together with the conception of Christ as preexistent. Since he preexisted his birth, since he descended from heaven, it was necessary to explain why the powers that reign in the heavens and were responsible for the crucifixion did not recognize him. It was necessary to explain why he had first been a child. For the one who descended was the eternal Son, the powerful Word of God, the Word. These stories therefore were probably simply aimed at teaching the divinity of Christ and his preexistence while reconciling these teachings with what was known from other sources. But they seemed to imply that his human form scarcely had more reality than the angelic forms he took while traversing the heavens. And the author of the *Ascension of Isaiah* himself seems to think that it is thus when he has the angel who speaks with Isaiah say, “He will be *similar* to your form and it will be *thought* that he is flesh and blood.”⁸

The idea that a trap was set for the powers is more or less implicit in Paul. From what he says in the First Epistle to the Corinthians (2:8) one can conclude that the powers did not know of God’s plan and that this ignorance was necessary for the success of the plan. From this it was easy to think that since his human nature hid Christ and deceived the powers, it was there simply to deceive them and was nothing but a veil. It was even

easier to conclude from this that some of Paul's expressions could lead in this direction. "God . . . sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh . . ." (Rom. 8:3). ". . . Being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form . . ." (Phil. 2:7-8). It is often thought that the hymn of the Epistle to the Philippians is a very old Christian hymn, earlier than the epistle. It might be asked whether the author of this hymn was not a little Docetic in the sense we are considering. In any case, his formula could be interpreted in this sense.

Another expression that might be interpreted in this way is the one in the Book of Daniel concerning the Son of man (Dan. 7:13). In his prophetic vision Daniel did not see a son of man (that is, a man), but one *like* a son of man (that is, like a man). *Hōs anthrōpos* in the Epistle to the Phillipians is doubtless the literal translation of Daniel's *k'var'enāš*. Similarly *k'var'enāš* is faithfully preserved in the Apocalypse: "I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one *like* a son of man" (1:12-13). "Then I looked, and lo, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man" (14:14). This expression is also preserved in the Apocalypse of Esdras (4 Esdras 13:3) and in the *Similitudes of Enoch* (xvi, 1).

It must not be forgotten that, for the most part, the Gnostics are exegetes. Some of their myths seem to have no other end than to justify a sacred text.

Neither this form of Docetism nor the former seems to be linked to the idea that matter, being evil, would be unworthy of Christ, or that flesh, being the creation of the Demiurge, could not be fitting for the Son of the true God. Ignatius opposes Docetism, but it is not clear whether he knows of the distinction between God and the Demiurge. The *Ascension of Isaiah* also does not know of it.

III. Another form of Docetism, which is also very old, is that which Irenaeus attributes to Cerinthus (i, 26, 1). According to Irenaeus, Cerinthus distinguishes Jesus and the Christ, one being the human part, another being the divine part of Jesus Christ. This theory might be considered the first sketch of the theory of the two natures, which the Church would finally approve. But in this first sketch, the two natures were distinct to the point of being two persons. Jesus was a man like other men, the son of Joseph and Mary, but wiser and more just than others. Christ, a divine being derived from the true God whom the world does not know, descended upon Jesus at his baptism, in the form of a dove, and from then on spoke through Jesus and taught the world about the unknown God. At the end, at the moment of Jesus' death, Christ left him and reascended to his Father. Jesus suffered and was resurrected, but Christ could neither suffer nor die, being a purely spiritual being.

Here the Docetism can be linked to Gnostic dualism, that is, to the fundamental distinction between God and creation. According to Irenaeus, Cerinthus taught that the creation of the world was not a work of the true

God but of a power very distant from him, who did not know him. Jesus would have been of the realm of creation, Christ would have belonged to the realm of the true God. Christ descended upon Jesus but could not be absolutely identical with him, since he in no way belonged to our world. He could say of the world what John's Christ says of the Prince of the world: "He has no power over me" (John. 14:30).

But is Cerinthus's Docetism not a deduction founded upon the radical distinction between God and the world? Does it not also have roots in the New Testament? It seems to me that it could have and that they are indeed found in the Fourth Gospel.

One senses in Irenaeus's Cerinthus something like an echo of John's teaching. For Cerinthus, as for John, the world did not know God. For him, as for John, Christ comes from the Father and returns to the Father. John only speaks of Jesus after his encounter with John the Baptist, that is, after his baptism (the moment when, according to Cerinthus, Christ entered into him). And even before the beginning of the Passion, John's Jesus (or the Christ who speaks through him) says: "Now I am no more in the world" (John 17:11).

Other resemblances can be found. Let us consider the Johannine Jesus. It has often been observed that he is a transcendent Jesus, who appears in general to be on a much higher level than the simple humanity of the Synoptics' Jesus. John's Jesus always remains the master of his destiny; he does not submit to anything he has not wished; no one takes his life from him, he gives it if he wishes and takes it back if he wishes (10:18). He is so formidable that when the soldiers seek him to arrest him and he says to them "I am he," the soldiers draw back and fall to the ground (18:6). He does not say, like Matthew's and Mark's Jesus, "Why have you abandoned me?" He apparently always feels united to God. Nevertheless, at certain moments, John's Jesus appears truly human: he is tired (4:6), he is thirsty (4:7; 19:28), he weeps (11:35). Can one not thus be led to distinguish two natures in him? Indeed, should one not think that such a distinction already implicitly exists in this Gospel?

John's Gospel is very mystical, but at the same time very rational. It is the Gospel that can most easily be understood in terms of philosophy. Not only does John not speak of Jesus' miraculous birth or his childhood, but it seems that for him Jesus is, in a sense, simply the son of Joseph and Mary. He is also the son of God, but in another sense. In fact, in his discussion with the Jews, in chapter 6, it is clear that the Jews' questions and Jesus' words are not on the same level, and it is quite possible that in the Evangelist's eyes they are both, in a certain way, true. The Jews ask: "Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" (6:41-42). There is nothing to suggest that in the eyes of the Evangelist the Jews were wrong from their own point of view.⁹ It is the same when the Jews refuse to believe in Jesus because he was not born in Bethlehem and is not of the

line of David (7:41–42, 52). John in no way maintains that they are mistaken, and that Jesus was born at Bethlehem and is of David's line. For him, he is Messiah in another way. Again, it is the same when the Jews, becoming indignant, say: "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" and Jesus replies: "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am" (8:57–58). It is obvious that in the eyes of the Evangelist it was not false to say that Jesus was not fifty years old. Throughout this Gospel there is therefore an implicit distinction between a man who is simply a man and a divine being who speaks through him; between a man who is simply man and an eternal being, united to the eternal God.

The crucifixion, in John, is sometimes also a lifting up, a glorification, perhaps in a way resurrection.¹⁰ This means that the crucifixion and the glorification (or the resurrection) must be placed in different categories; to make one the visible appearance, and the other the hidden reality. They are simultaneously distinguished and united. The distinction of two categories is made necessary by the very fact of identifying two different and contradictory realities.

We might also note that Cerinthus's theory identifies Christ and the Holy Spirit. This makes one think of John's strange theory in which the Holy Spirit cannot be given to the disciples until after Jesus' death (7:39; 16:7). This theory might mean that it is the cross that enlightens, and that before the cross Jesus himself cannot teach truth in its entirety. But it might also be thought that during Jesus' life the spirit was the very same being who spoke in him. It is true that at the end of the Gospel, the Risen One breathes the Spirit upon his disciples (20:22). But this might mean that it is himself, or rather the Word once more incarnate in him, whom he thus installs in them.

All this shows that there may have been a link between the author of the Fourth Gospel and Cerinthus, despite what Irenaeus says about the hostility of the first toward the second. If Cerinthus is not a name under which some have wished to attack the Fourth Gospel (we will note below that this is not impossible¹¹), Cerinthus might first have been a disciple of John, a disciple who was perhaps then repudiated by his master but who tried to explain what he regarded as being the consequences or implications of what the master had said.

It is true that the Johannine epistles seem to oppose Docetism. But this is not absolutely certain. The two verses that appear to oppose it can be interpreted otherwise and frequently have been by erudite theologians.¹² Also, supposing that a type of docetism is opposed here, is it that of Cerinthus? Here again different opinions have been held. Without doubt, since Cerinthus was thought of (on Irenaeus's testimony) as having lived at the same time and in the same town as the author of the Johannine writings, one might suppose that if this author had known a type of Docetism, it would have been that of Cerinthus. But if he knew of Cerinthus's ideas, why did he say nothing about his theory of creation? The author should

have been at least as indignant with that as with Cerinthus's Docetism.¹³ We might also examine his formulas. In his First Epistle he says: "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not of God." (4:2-3). In the Second: "Many deceivers have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh" (7). Note that he says "Jesus Christ" and not "the Christ." Now Cerinthus, as far as we know, did not deny that Jesus had come in the flesh; on the contrary, he made him completely man. For him, it was Christ who was distinct from Jesus and purely spiritual.

It must also be noted that, in the first text I cited (1 John 4:2-3), the opposite of "to confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" is simply "not to confess Jesus."¹⁴ Thus the accent is placed on "to confess Jesus," not on "in the flesh." Clemen has observed that if it was a matter of Docetists, the infinitive "*to have come* in the flesh" would be necessary, rather than the participle "come."¹⁵ The Docetists denied *that Jesus had come* in the flesh (literally they denied "Jesus *to have come* in the flesh"); John's opponents denied *Jesus, who came* in the flesh.

Should the word "Christ" here be considered as a predicate, and not as part of the name Jesus Christ? It would then be necessary to translate: "Every spirit who confesses Jesus as the Christ come in the flesh is of God."¹⁶ But would this not be to attribute to the author of the Johannine writings the same theory as that of Cerinthus? Did the Christ not descend into Jesus for Cerinthus? Jesus was therefore in some way the Christ descended into the flesh, the Christ come in the flesh.

For John the name of Christ has not only a messianic meaning but a transcendent one. This name is approximately the equivalent of "Son of God."¹⁷ When John affirms, as he does in the conclusion to his Gospel (20:31) and frequently in his epistles, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, he affirms that the man Jesus, the historical and earthly man, was at the same time the transcendent Word, the eternal Son, the divine Christ. Is this to oppose those who contested it? Definitely. But it is also because he himself considered these two levels fundamentally distinct. It is because they are fundamentally distinct that he emphatically affirms their union.

Supposing that John opposed docetism, would this not be a Docetism like the one in the *Ascension of Isaiah*? Here, the humanity of Jesus really does seem to be nothing but an appearance. The author of the Johannine writings could have known a doctrine of this type, since the *Ascension of Isaiah* is thought to be of about the same time as the Fourth Gospel.¹⁸ The theme of the *Ascension of Isaiah* is attributed to Simon Magus by Irenaeus (I, 23, 3) and others (Tertullian, Epiphanius). And we shall see that there may have been links between the Simonian school at Antioch and the author of the Johannine writings.¹⁹

Finally let us allow that after all it is Cerinthus who is in question. Where would Cerinthus have got his Docetism? Could it not be from the

Johannine doctrine itself? In reference to the enemies attacked in the Johannine epistles, E. Schweizer writes: "Their doctrine, which perhaps, in docetic fashion, separates the earthly Jesus and the heavenly Christ, puts a question mark against John's Christology, and thereby against his ecclesiology. Must his conception not lead to the idea of a heavenly Christ, without history . . . ? Does the time of the earthly Christ not lose all meaning?"²⁰ As we have suggested, Cerinthus could therefore be a disciple of John, a disciple perhaps rejected by the master, but one who founded or believed he founded himself on what the master had said.

Luise Schottroff illustrates well that John is not docetic in the sense that the humanity of Christ was for him merely an appearance. But she also shows that for him there are two distinct and parallel realities in Jesus: on the one hand a man of flesh, who is born, lives, and dies like everyone else; on the other a divine being who has descended from heaven and who does not really suffer changes or attacks, who is not really affected by the world.²¹ Now this is also a sort of Docetism; indeed, it is that of Cerinthus.

IV. Finally, a fourth form of Docetism is that which consists in thinking that the flesh, matter, would have been unworthy of Christ; being God, he could not really have had a material body, subject to low circumstances or basic functions. This Docetism seems to be linked to a philosophical dualism of spirit and matter, as well as the classical idea that the divine cannot suffer. In Mani, for example, Docetism seems to be based on the fact that he depicted matter as evil (by an exaggeration of Platonic dualism, in which matter is not evil in itself but is the cause of evil when it is mixed with the spirit in a certain way). Nevertheless, at the same time, this form of Docetism is based upon respect and veneration for Christ. This basis clearly appears in Marcion and Valentinus (insofar as they are docetists, for there are statements in them that both affirm and contradict Docetism). Marcion could not believe that Christ was born as all people are born.²² Valentinus seems to have thought that certain functions could not take place in his body as in all other human bodies.²³ There is something ridiculous in these speculations: but in reality they are inspired by a naive piety.

It is also likely that this form of Docetism was in part an argument used to justify earlier forms of Docetism, which were no longer understood.

Indeed, it seems that this fourth form of Docetism is relatively late. It is really only found from Marcion and Valentinus onward. Neither Cerinthus nor the *Ascension of Isaiah* nor Saturnilus nor Basilides nor Carpocrates (who can be called Docetist in a way, since his Jesus received a "power" from heaven that might be analogous to Cerinthus's Christ) founds Docetism on the idea that matter or flesh or bodily functions would have been unworthy of Christ. For Cerinthus, if there are two persons in Jesus Christ, it is simply because one must distinguish two natures in him:

the human, visible, passible being, who is born and dies, and the preexistent, eternal, invisible God. For the *Ascension of Isaiah*, the crucifixion was a trap for the powers; it was therefore necessary for Christ to hide himself in a form that was not his which could deceive the torturers. Saturnilus's Docetism and also Basilides's (insofar as Basilides is Docetist) might either be derived from Cerinthus or from the *Ascension of Isaiah*, or more probably from both of them at the same time. In Basilides, if one believes Irenaeus on this, there is, all together, the idea that Christ, "having appeared as a man," is the *Nous*, the Intellect of the Father, incorporeal and invisible; and the idea that his crucifixion, the mistake and defeat of the powers, was not what it seemed to be.

2. *Contradictions in the Docetism Attributed to the Gnostics*

The idea that the executioners were duped explains the strange ideas Irenaeus attributes to Basilides. The latter stated that it was Simon of Cyrene and not Christ who was crucified. Christ must have changed the figure of Simon of Cyrene into his own, he must have taken the figure of Simon of Cyrene himself, so that when he was crucified, he could mock the torturers who thought they held him.²⁴ This idea is so shocking that it is difficult to believe that Basilides presented it in this form. If the Christ who mocked the executioners was not in some way identical to the man who suffered, his attitude would have been odious. Basilides was a sincere Christian and seems to have been profoundly intelligent; one can hardly believe that he either intentionally or unintentionally depicted Christ in such an odious way. That he chose Simon of Cyrene to represent the human part of Christ in the Passion is not impossible. Simon of Cyrene is the man who *carries the cross*; this allowed a religious thinker who loved symbols to take it as a symbol of the part of Jesus that carried (that is, suffered) the cross. Moreover, Ph. Carrington has shown that this idea could have been suggested by a literal interpretation of Mark's Gospel (15:21–25).²⁵ As Jesus' name is not expressly mentioned by Mark after that of Simon of Cyrene, the pronominal forms (*auton, autō, autou*) in what follows might be interpreted as referring to Simon. Finally, the idea that the cross was a trap that ridiculed the executioners, together with the reference to a psalm that is considered prophetic (Ps. 2:4), might have led someone to say that at the moment of crucifixion Christ "laughed."²⁶ But, for Basilides, Jesus truly suffered. This can be deduced from a passage in his *Exegetica* quoted by Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* iv, 81–85). Here he maintains that suffering cannot be justified unless it is chastisement for the guilty, or, in the case of the innocent, it at least checks the tendency to sin. This conclusion rouses Clement's indignation, but it shows that for Basilides Jesus not only suffered but that as a man he was wholly human. It can therefore be seen that the distinction Basilides makes between Christ who is not crucified and Simon of Cyrene who is crucified can be nothing other than

Cerinthus's distinction between Christ and Jesus. Since Jesus suffered, Simon of Cyrene who suffered could be nothing other than Jesus.

Speculation on Simon of Cyrene is certainly not entirely the product of Irenaeus's imagination. In one of the works found at Nag Hammadi we have proof that there were indeed theories of this type among certain Gnostics. This speculation, however, could be quite different from that which Irenaeus describes. In the *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* (56, 2–19) we read the following words spoken by Christ (or the Great Seth identified with Christ): “But in doing these things, they condemn themselves. Yes, they saw me; they punished me. It was another, their father, who drank the gall and the vinegar; it was not I. They struck me with the reed; it was another, Simon, who bore the cross on his shoulder. It was another upon whom they placed the crown of thorns. But I was rejoicing in the height over all the wealth of the archons and the offspring of their error, of their empty glory. And I was laughing at their ignorance.” This text is not entirely coherent, and one might suspect that the Coptic translation has distorted it. But it certainly seems that here Simon of Cyrene does not play as important a role as he does in Irenaeus's account. Who is this other person, the father of the executioners, in the phrase “It was another, their father, who drank the gall and the vinegar?” It is not stated that he is Simon of Cyrene, indeed it seems much more likely that he is the devil, in reference to John 8:44: “You are of your father the devil.” A theory of this type is found in Origen. “The cross of our Savior Jesus Christ” says Origen, “was double. The Son of God was crucified visibly upon the cross, but it is the devil who was invisibly fastened to this cross, with his principalities and his powers.”²⁷ In the text of the *Second Treatise of the Great Seth*, Simon of Cyrene is not said to have suffered any other hardship than carrying the cross on his shoulder. If an earlier idea lies behind this late and obscure text, it is difficult to know exactly what it was.

I have often heard it said that all the Gnostics were Docetists. This statement ought not to be allowed. The three Gnostics considered to be the most important, Basilides, Valentinus, and Marcion, *both are and are not Docetists*. That Basilides is not Docetist, at least in one way, is proved by the fragments quoted by Clement of Alexandria. Valentinus appears somewhat Docetist when he implies in fragment 3 that the digestion of food did not take place in Jesus' body in the same way as in other men; but this same fragment shows that, for him, Jesus had a body. The *Treatise on the Resurrection*, which might be by Valentinus, states: “The Son of God, Reginos, was Son of man. He brought together the two, *possessing humanity and divinity*” (44, 22–26). The *Gospel of Truth* which might very well be by Valentinus, states that Jesus suffered and died (20, 10–14).²⁸ What it says about a “bodily appearance” is explained by the context: “material” men have been deceived by the bodily appearance of Jesus, that is, they believed that Jesus was simply bodily, whereas he was also

something else. Similarly, the author of the *Tripartite Treatise*, who seems to be very faithful to Valentinus, says that the Savior took death upon himself, as well as human smallness; that he accepted being conceived and born as an infant, that he was man "in body and soul" (*Tripartite Treatise* 115, 3–11). On the one hand Marcion taught that Jesus was not born as other human beings are born, but he also taught that he truly suffered the Passion.²⁹

If what the heresiologists tell us about the Docetism of Gnostics whom we know quite well is not true, it might also not be true of many others.

The Valentinian Theodotus both admits the death of Jesus and also that something in him was not touched by death. He writes: "He is dead since the *Pneuma* which descended upon him at the Jordan has withdrawn from him. Not that this *Pneuma* became a being apart, but he retired within himself so that death could operate. How could the body die insofar as Life was in him? One would have to admit that death triumphed over the Savior himself, which is absurd. It is death which was overcome by the trick. The body being dead, death having mastered it, the Savior, returning the act of power that had attacked it, destroyed death and resurrected the mortal body stripped of its 'passions.'"³⁰

Thus, for Theodotus what dies is the Savior's body; what does not die is the Spirit that descended upon him at the Jordan. But before being baptized in the Jordan, Jesus was not simply a body. What we therefore have here is without doubt Cerinthus's distinction between Jesus and Christ. As in Cerinthus, Christ is identified with the Spirit. In any case, Cerinthus's docetism is here mixed with the philosophical distinction between the immortal soul and a mortal body.

But the principal source of the above can still be clearly seen. Theodotus uses the word "trick" (*dolos*). Christ's death was not what it seemed to be, because in fact it was a trap to overcome death itself. It was the Savior who, in the very moment of dying, triumphed over death. Theodotus believes that death's triumph over Christ and Christ's over death at the same moment are contradictory; to be logical, he distinguishes something that dies and something that does not die. Perhaps he did not realize that the Savior triumphed the more completely over death the more completely death triumphed over him; to lessen the triumph of death was to lessen that of Christ. Paul's and John's idea is no longer completely understood. But this idea nevertheless serves as a support for the whole of the theory.

It seems to me that to understand Paul and John would be to accept the paradox and contradiction without trying to be logical. This acceptance of paradox is found in some Gnostic works. In the *Acts of John*, Christ says: "You think that I suffered, but I did not suffer; and you do not believe that I suffered, nevertheless I suffered."³¹ In a Manichean psalm: "I was seized and I was not seized; I was judged and I was not judged; I was crucified and I was not crucified; I was pierced and I was not pierced; I suffered and I did not suffer."³² Here the contradiction is con-

scious and deliberate. Docetism is taught, but as a paradox and mystery, for it is taught at the same time as its opposite. In *Zostrianus* also (48, 27–28) one finds: “He was there again, the one who suffers even though he is incapable of suffering.” This first two of these texts are poetical ones; it is in poetry that Gnosticism best preserves thoughts that have inspired it from the beginning.

In some of the texts found at Nag Hammadi, which seem to be later than the time of the first Valentiniens, the meaning of the earliest forms of docetism seems to be almost entirely lost. The authors of these works seem to believe literally that the Savior’s death was merely apparent. This idea is preserved in Islam in its depiction of Jesus. Nevertheless, some other Gnostic works, which also appear to be late, for example, the *Pistis Sophia* and *Melchizedek*, expressly repudiate Docetism. The Manichean psalms repeatedly speak of Jesus’ sufferings.³³

3. *Comparison with Non-Gnostic Christianity*

As it is normally conceived, Docetism is an interpretation of Christianity that those who admire, love, and respect the humanity of Jesus Christ above all else cannot help being indignant with. John’s Christ was perhaps sometimes already too conscious of being God. When John ignores or omits the words “Why have you abandoned me?” many prefer to turn to Mark’s or Matthew’s Christ. Not only does it seem historically truer, but it seems greater. In John’s Christ there is perhaps already something of the image that certain apocryphal gospels give of Christ. In these Gospels one sees how much the depiction of a Christ who was too divine risks diminishing what constitutes the true power of the person of Christ. Nevertheless, it is probable that highly sincere and fervent Christians were Docetists, often without realizing it. W. L. Knox observes that a Docetism such as that in the *Acts of John* was probably possible in orthodox circles in the second century.³⁴ Carl Schmidt says that Docetic views must have been quite widespread in ecclesiastical circles.³⁵ A type of Docetism is found in Clement of Alexandria and Origen. Clement states that Jesus was *apathēs* (could not suffer);³⁶ we have just found an interpretation of the Passion that gives rise to Docetic interpretations. Even of Paul it has been said that the object of his faith “is not Jesus as he lived upon earth, but the Kyrios or heavenly Christ who appeared in Jesus.”³⁷ Docetic tendencies can probably be found within the Church in all ages.³⁸

It is probable that in most cases a Docetic interpretation does not change very much. The human person of Jesus Christ remains strongest in the mind of believers. Does it not remain strongest despite all the reasons that, on considered reflection, ought to lead to an idea of Christ, even as a man, as being in a very different situation from other human beings?

In fact, according to widely accepted theology, Christ was conscious of being God. Ought this not to diminish the grandeur of his sacrifice

almost as much as Docetic interpretations? A nobleman in the court of Louis XIV, when reproached by the king for not having sacrificed, like himself, his gold and silver vessels for the needs of the state, replied: "When he died on Friday, Jesus Christ knew that he would be resurrected on Sunday." However shocking this idea is to us, it is not without foundation if one accepts the common view of theology. If he knew that he was God, that he would be resurrected, that he would overcome, was his death, however distressing, not more endurable than the death of ordinary people? Nevertheless this is not normally thought of. We are not so logical. And the "human form," as Alain says, leads us on, very conveniently, to considerations concerning the double nature of Christ.

Moreover it is scarcely possible, even if one thinks that Christ was God and knew it, not to think that at least in his cry of dereliction and his death he had forgotten it. In fact he had forgotten it, as his last words witness.

And we also forget it. And it is precisely because we regard him as a man whom we can at the same time regard as God.

The ways of theology are difficult and deceptive. Those who think they accentuate Christ's divinity on the contrary take from him what truly manifests his divine character. In attributing the consciousness of being God to him, ordinary Christianity itself perhaps takes away something of this character. Perhaps it would be best to say that he had faith in his divine sonship, faith in his resurrection, but not that he knew them, that he was certain of them.

Chapter IV

Realized Eschatology

1. *Eschatology in the Old Testament*

Eschatology, that is, speculation on the last things (= on the end of the world), was developed by apocalyptic Judaism during the last two centuries before Jesus Christ and in the first century after Jesus Christ.

The belief in the end of the world seems to be born of the revolt and despair of a people. In the texts where we find it, it appears as a resort to the one hope that remains possible to a people oppressed by an overpowerful enemy: the hope that in judging and condemning the whole world God will judge and condemn the oppressor. We have already considered Daniel's prediction,¹ which seems to be the dream of a humiliated people: after the appearance of the successive fall of the four empires (symbolized by the wild beasts), the people of the saints of the Most High will receive "dominion and glory and kingdom"; the other peoples will serve them, and their dominion will be without end (Dan. 7:2–27). This has nothing to do with the end of the world, but simply with an enormous change in the relation of forces within the world. The triumph of the people of the saints does not bring history to an end; it is simply the goal and stabilization of history. Nevertheless, when one reads that its dominion will be without end, that the saints "shall possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever" (7:18), one has the impression that one is beyond the normal conditions of life. This is even more the case at the end of the book of Daniel (12:2) when it is stated that many will be resurrected, some to eternal life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. In the book of *Jubilees* we read that the heavens and the earth will be renewed with the whole of creation; that all the luminaries (the stars) will be renewed for the salvation, peace, and benediction of all the elect of Israel, and that it will be thus for all the days of the earth (1:29). It is also recorded (23:18–32) that the earth will be destroyed and that after this destruction there will be, so to speak, a golden age for the just: human life will be longer (almost a thousand years); humanity will always live happily and always be young; there will be no more evil; at death the body will rest in the earth but the spirit will be joyful. (Does this mean that the soul will survive without the body? In any case, death will no longer be felt to be evil).

The idea of resurrection rarely appears in the Old Testament, and when it does, it often seems not to refer to an individual resurrection but

to the resurrection of the nation as a nation. This is probably the case with Isaiah (25:8) and Ezekiel (37).² But in the second book of Maccabees (7:9, 14), an individual resurrection is definitely hoped for, as in Daniel. But will the world in which the resurrected live, whether it is conceived of as a purely spiritual world or a world that is still material and temporal, not be a profoundly new world? Can it not be called another world?

Thus, the idea of a transformation of the power structures within the world became more or less joined to the idea that the world itself, as we know it, will come to an end. Jewish eschatology seems to have oscillated between an *immanent* interpretation of the future promised to the just and a more or less *transcendent* interpretation. In any case, it seems to me that in the Old Testament and pre-Christian apocalyptic works, the immanent interpretation far outweighs the transcendent interpretation.

2. So-Called "Future" Eschatology in the Synoptic Gospels

In the time of Christ, Daniel's interpretation enjoyed great favor in certain Jewish circles that were violently hostile to Roman domination. Christ himself used it to express his faith and hope. When he speaks of the Son of man in the Synoptic Gospels, and says that this Son will suffer, will be handed over to his enemies, but will be resurrected soon after, he is almost certainly referring to Daniel. It is even possible that Manson was right to maintain that in some of Christ's sayings the "Son of man" represents a group, as in Daniel. In certain cases Christ could have referred to the people of Israel, or more precisely a part of this people, the poor and humble, in this way; or to the poor, the humble, the meek, the afflicted, and the persecuted in general, in the whole world, those to whom he promises the Kingdom in the Beatitudes. We can thereby understand why he sometimes applies this designation to himself. The trials that awaited the Son of man in Daniel obviously awaited all those who made up this corporate figure, and himself above all, who was particularly threatened.

Christ refers to Daniel again when he speaks of the Kingdom or the Reign. This Reign Daniel promises to the people of the saints. It is both the reign of the saints and the reign of God. Those who awaited the liberation of Israel thought that one day God alone would reign over them.

But in adopting Daniel's predictions, Christ seems to have profoundly changed their meaning.

First of all, his idea of judgment seems to be no longer inspired by the passionate nationalism upon which it feeds in Daniel and the Galilean revolts. John the Baptist had already made it clear that God will not only judge the peoples but all men individually, and that he will judge them according to their acts.³ Christ also distinguishes individuals within the peoples. He says that the Kingdom will bring joy and glory to the poor

and meek; he does not say that it will bring happiness and glory to the whole of Israel as such. His preaching is a moral and perhaps social one. When he throws the traders out of the Temple, he recalls that the Temple ought to be a house of prayer *for all the nations*.⁴ He seems to have been more struck by the persecutions the prophets had undergone at the hands of their fellow citizens than by the oppression Israel underwent at the hands of a foreign nation. When he speaks of his enemies, he more often speaks of priests and scholars than of Romans.⁵ It is true that the priests at Jerusalem were regarded by patriots as collaborators with the Romans. But it does not seem that Christ derives his argument against them from this collaboration.

Another difference from earlier eschatology is that for Christ the Kingdom often seems to be more clearly beyond this world, so that his eschatology is more truly an eschatology properly speaking. Existence in the Kingdom, as he describes it, seems to be detached from earthly conditions. Men and women will be like angels in heaven; they will not marry (Mark 12:25 and parallels); they will not die (in the "age to come" one receives "eternal life": Mark 10:30 and parallels). Is this future life one for the soul alone? It is a debated point. For some commentators it might be that for Christ, as for Jewish thought in general, the life of the soul is inseparable from that of the body. Nevertheless, the words he addresses to the good thief (Luke 23:43) seem to imply that the soul can survive without the body. (Will the body of the good thief not still be attached to the cross, whereas his soul will already be in Paradise?) Similarly, the saying in relation to the woman with seven husbands (Mark 12:25 and parallels) seems to imply that there will no longer be a body in the future life: "For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven." Christ is perhaps nearer to the Greek idea of the immortality of the soul here than to the Jewish (and Christian) idea of the resurrection of the body.⁶

Whatever the case, the life of the "age to come" seems to have appeared to him as very different from the present life. Moreover, ought not the age to come to be separated from the present age by catastrophes that constitute a sort of death of the world? The sun and the moon will be extinguished, the stars will fall from the sky (Mark 13:24–25 and parallels). It is true that this might simply be a symbolic picture, as in the prophets. Moreover, some exegetes suspect that this sort of apocalyptic could not have been drawn from Christ's authentic teaching.⁷ But statements like "Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away" (Mark 13:31 and parallels) might indeed be his. In any case, he predicts a kingdom that will be so different from the present age that it can be called another world.

In the Synoptics there is therefore an eschatology oriented toward the future that, to abbreviate, can be called a futurist eschatology. This eschatology is inspired by that of the Old Testament and particularly by Daniel;

but the nationalist character of the hope is attenuated, while the transcendent character of the new world is accentuated.

3. *Realized Eschatology in the Gnostics*

Futurist eschatology therefore derives from Judaism (even though certain characteristics of Jewish eschatology are found modified in Christianity). The Greeks thought of things differently. They scarcely placed any hope in time or history. For them time was cyclical and always led to the same things. Often even the course of time appeared to them as a sort of decline rather than a progression. The best and happiest age, the golden age, they located at the beginning of time. Philosophers of the Platonic school thought in terms of a number of levels in the world and humanity rather than in terms of successive stages leading to an ideal end. For them the ideal was above rather than at the end.

It is true that Aristotle, one of the two greatest Greek philosophers, might seem to give more importance to time. Does he not teach that beings first exist "potentially" and then "actually," and does this not amount to saying that time leads to progress? Does the Aristotelian theory of history not also imply that there can be progress in time? However, Aristotle himself teaches that at the beginning *actuality is prior to potentiality*, so that in this way he remains a Platonist and also places perfection at the beginning.

In this respect, as in others, the Gnostics seem to come close to the Greek conception. Van Baaren has observed, as a characteristic trait of their doctrines, that their depiction of the world involves spatial rather than temporal divisions.⁸ By spatial divisions he understands divisions concerning levels. On the whole the Gnostics taught that there were *stages* (to use Alain's terminology) in the world and man, rather than successive *periods*; that there were superimposed realms, a vertical hierarchy, rather than a horizontal *history* leading to the Kingdom of God. Not that there was not also a history and a final completion for most Gnostics, but this was not the essential thing.

One of the earliest attested Gnostic themes is the idea that the resurrection promised to the just is not a future thing but something that takes place in the present life and that has already taken place for those who have faith (or "knowledge"). In the Second Epistle to Timothy this idea is denounced as an error that must be the work of certain heretics. (We might recall that the so-called pastoral epistles, that is, the two to Timothy and the one to Titus, are with reason not generally considered to be by Paul. They seem to have been written around the end of the first century, perhaps even the beginning of the second.) The author of the Second Epistle to Timothy, inveighing against talk he describes as "godless chatter," in particular denounces two men, Hymenaeus and Philetus, apparently Christians from Ephesus, who "have swerved from the truth by holding

that the resurrection is past already" (2:17–18). It is permissible to recognize in these two men very early Gnostics, or at least to think that they were very close to Gnosticism. The idea that the resurrection is passed already implies that the true resurrection is spiritual and results from true faith (or "knowledge"). It implies what theologians call *realized eschatology*. This realized eschatology might be considered one of the characteristic traits of the Gnostic picture of the world and salvation.

The Gnostic world is a world in levels. One is above or below. One comes from above or from below. The one who comes from above is still (or already) above in a certain respect. The fact that one is from above is recognized by the fact that one accepts the Word and understands it. For one cannot understand something without being like it. *One can only become what one is.*

"He who did not exist at all will never come into existence," says the *Gospel of Truth*. And the *Gospel of Philip*: "Blessed is he who is before he came into being. For he who is, has been and shall be . . ." (64, 10–12). This recalls the Gospel saying "To him who has will more be given" (Mark 4:25 and parallels). These thoughts amount to an overcoming of time. One becomes because one is, and one becomes *what one is*. It might also be said that one becomes *what one has been*. He who receives eternal life has already been an eternal being in another world, or at least in the thought of God.

On the subject of the resurrection, the Valentinian letter to Rheginos recalls these words of Paul: "As the Apostle said, we have suffered with him [= with the Savior], and we were resurrected with him and have ascended into heaven with him. Putting him on, we are his rays and we are surrounded by him till our setting, which is our death in this life. We are drawn [attached?] to heaven by him, as rays by the sun, so long as nothing obstructs us. This is the spiritual resurrection" (45, 24–40). And further on: "Separate yourself from divisions and ties, and you already possess resurrection" (49, 13–15). Tertullian witnesses that the Valentinians held the resurrection to be already accomplished (*De Praescriptione haereticorum* 33, 2–7). In the *Gospel of Philip* we read: "If they do not receive the resurrection while they live, when they die they will receive nothing" (73, 3–5). And further on: "If anyone does not receive it [light] while he is in these places, he will not be able to receive it in the other place" (86, 6–7). The parallelism between these phrases probably demonstrates that resurrection is to receive light. On the subject of Christ himself the author of this work says even more audaciously: "Those who say that the Lord died first and [then] rose up are in error, for he rose up first and [then] died" (56, 15–18). The *Gospel of Thomas* shows Christ's disciples asking, "On what day will the new world come?" and Christ replies, "The one whom you await has come, but you do not recognize him" (90:9–12).

Burkitt thought that Gnosticism was perhaps an attempt to resolve the problem posed by the failure of futurist eschatology. The first Christians

thought they lived in the last days of the world. They thought the Parousia was close at hand, that is, Christ's glorious return, and with this return would follow the collapse of the world, the resurrection of all the dead, and the judgment delivered by God. When it was seen that none of these events came about, some Christians would have felt the need to modify earlier beliefs.¹⁰ They would therefore have replaced futurist eschatology by ideas more detached from time, and the opposition of two periods by the opposition of two levels. It is true that Casey has shown that the Gnostics' systems were not necessarily constructed to reply to this problem.¹¹ But the fact remains that Gnosticism has a preference for realized eschatology. Even though futurist eschatology is preserved in many of the doctrines, it has lost its importance for them; the most important resurrection is that which can take place in the present.

4. "Realized Eschatology" in the Fourth Gospel

Where did the Gnostics' preference for realized eschatology come from? Even though the idea of a resurrection that can take place in the present links Christianity with Hellenism, by diminishing the importance of time, it can hardly have been drawn directly from the Greeks, since they do not speak of resurrection. The most natural thing is to suppose that it comes from Christianity itself. In fact, a certain sort of realized eschatology is already found, not opposed but taught, in quite a few passages of the New Testament. Not only does Christ more than once teach that the Kingdom has already come in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke,¹² but there is a work of no little importance in the New Testament in which futurist eschatology has already passed into the background and in which present eschatology is highlighted, and this is the Fourth Gospel. As all theologians know, the eschatology of the Fourth Gospel is to a large extent a realized eschatology. Eternal life in John is usually thought of as already present in those who have faith.

For the Synoptics, eschatological salvation is the coming of the Kingdom or the Reign. John speaks very rarely of the Kingdom or the Reign; rather he speaks of "eternal life." And for him eternal life is already present in those who receive the truth.

"He who believes in the Son *has eternal life*" (3:36; cf. 6:47). "He who hears my word and believes him who sent me, *has eternal life*; he does not come into judgment, but *has passed from death to life*" (5:24). "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood *has eternal life*" (6:54). "My sheep hear my voice. . . . *I give them eternal life*, and they shall never perish" (10:27–28). "The Son . . . *gives eternal life* to all whom thou hast given him" (17:2). "God *gave us eternal life*, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son *has life*; he who has not the Son of God has not life. I write this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that *you have eternal life*" (1 John 5:11–13).

There is still a judgment on the last day for John, but this will only confirm what has already happened by the coming of Christ and the world's attitude toward him. The present judgment is the real decision. John has understood Paul's idea: the world is judged by the Crucifixion. It is judged as the cause of the Crucifixion, but also by its conception of it. When the Passion approaches, John's Christ says, "Now is the judgment of this world" (12:31). He also says, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind" (9:39). It therefore seems that judgment is nothing other than the fact of seeing or of not seeing. Judgment is already pronounced: "He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is *condemned already*" (3:18). "He who hears my word . . . does not come to judgment" (5:24; cf. 28-29). If the one who does not believe is already judged, and the one who believes is not subject to judgment, then the future judgment seems to be rendered useless.¹³

These Johannine sayings evoke one of the most characteristic ideas of Gnosticism: for the Gnostics the one who has knowledge will not be judged. This idea is often expressed in mythological form: when those who have knowledge die, they will cross the Hebdomad, the realm of the God of the Old Testament, who is the God who judges, without injury. The idea underlying this mythology could have come directly from John. It could also come from Paul, for whom the one who has faith escapes the destruction of the world, which is the judgment.

Can it be said that the difference between Paul and John on the one hand and the Gnostics on the other is that for the former one is justified by faith and for the latter one is justified by knowledge? We have already shown that neither in Paul nor John nor in the earliest Gnostics, so far as we can see, is there any essential difference between knowledge and faith.

But to come back to the Fourth Gospel. For the author of this Gospel there is still a resurrection at the end of time; but he thinks of it as a sort of resurrection that has already taken place for those who believe (or know). The latter is reborn: "Unless one is *born anew*, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (3:3).¹⁴ In a way he is resurrected: "For as the Father *raises* the dead and gives them life, so also the Son *gives life* to whom he will" (5:21). "He who hears my word . . . *has passed from death to life*" (5:24). "We know that *we have passed out of death into life*" (1 John 3:14). In fact, he will not die at all. "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me *shall never die*" (11:25-26). "My sheep hear my voice. . . . I give them eternal life, and *they shall never perish*" (10:27-28). "Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down from heaven; that a man may eat of it and not die. . . . If any one eats of this bread, he *will live forever*" (6:48-51). "If any one keeps my word, *he will never see death*" (8:51).

Thus we are brought to understand not only Hymenaeus and Philetus's statement ("the resurrection is past already") but also what the doctrine the heresiologists attribute to Menander, whom they make the second of the great Gnostics, means. The most characteristic feature of this doctrine is the idea that the resurrection takes place in this life, that it is procured by baptism, and that those who are thus resurrected *die no more*.¹⁵ The heresiologists interpret these ideas as having a link with magic, as if they had never read the Fourth Gospel! (Justin had perhaps not read it, though this is very unlikely, but this does not apply to the others.) Menander might have been a magician, like Simon, and it was because they had confidence in his magic that his disciples would have hoped not to die! Justin even says, "There are still some who believe this." Rather than attribute such naïveté to those who would have seen their predecessors and even Menander himself die, it is better to think that they understood it in the same way as the Christians who read John's Gospel.

It is true that, beginning with Irenaeus, the heresiologists said that the baptism Menander spoke of was a baptism *in eum* or *in nomine ejus*, that is, a baptism by which one would adhere to Menander and not to Christ. But Justin, the earliest of those to speak of Menander, and who, being a Samaritan like him, perhaps knew him a little better than Irenaeus, knows nothing of the fact that he baptized in his own name, or that he claimed to be a Savior. It is true that at the beginning of the passage in which he speaks of Simon, Menander, and Marcion (*Apol. 1. 26*) he says that demons raised up men who claimed to be gods. But we will see¹⁶ that in saying this he probably had only Simon in mind. All that he knows about Menander is that he persuaded his disciples that they would not die.

If Menander taught around the end of the first century—we will see¹⁷ that he probably did teach at this time—what he says about the eternal life that conversion or faith procures could derive from the Fourth Gospel, or an oral teaching that must have preceded the redaction of this Gospel. Even more could Hymenaeus and Philetus, who found themselves in the same town in which, according to tradition, the Fourth Gospel was written, have known the ideas of its author.

It must be noted, however, that the same doctrine of the resurrection is attributed by Hippolytus to Nicholas, one of the seven deacons elected by the group of "Hellenist" Christians at Jerusalem (Acts 6:5), the group to which Stephen, the first martyr, belonged. "This Nicholas . . . was the first to state that the resurrection has already come, understanding by 'resurrection' the fact of believing in Christ and of receiving baptism."¹⁸ The first Christian community in Samaria had been founded by another of these deacons, Philip. One might suppose that Philip and Nicholas had many ideas in common, inasmuch as Philip will be a figure much beloved by the Gnostics. This would explain the doctrine attributed to Menander in another way. The latter was Samaritan in origin; his ideas on the resurrection could depend not directly on John but on the Christians in Sa-

maria, instructed by the "Hellenists." John, on his side, could be related to the same current of thought. Recent studies have brought out links between the Fourth Gospel and Samaria.¹⁹ Nevertheless, it is often thought that some of the ideas that the heresiologists attribute to Nicholas were not those of Nicholas himself but of a sect that appealed to him, that is, the "Nicolaitans," whose presence at Ephesus and the region of Ephesus is attested by the Apocalypse (2:6, 15). These "Nicolaitans" could have been influenced by the author we call John, who, according to tradition, may have been active in Ephesus. In this case John might be the one source for both the Nicolaitans, Menander, and Hymenaeus and Philetus.

5. "Realized Eschatology" in Paul

But one must not jump to conclusions. The idea that the resurrection has already taken place is found not only in John, in Nicholas or the "Nicolaitans," in Menander and the heretics denounced in the pastoral epistles; it is also found in Paul. In the Epistle to the Colossians, Paul says: "If then *you have been raised*, seek the things that are above, where Christ is" (3:1). "He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and *transferred us to the kingdom* of his beloved Son" (1:13). "And you were buried with him in baptism, in which *you were also raised with him* through faith. . . . You *who were dead* in trespasses . . . , God *made alive* together with him" (2:12–13). The Epistle to the Ephesians takes up the same idea: "But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when *we were dead* through our trespasses, *made us alive* together with Christ . . . ; and *raised us up* with him, and *made us sit with him in the heavenly places* in Christ Jesus."

It is possible, indeed probable, that the Epistle to the Ephesians was not written by Paul.²⁰ Even though it follows the Epistle to the Colossians very closely in ideas and the order of ideas, indeed, because it seems to copy this epistle while transposing it into other terms, for this very reason it is quite likely that it is not authentic. (It seems to be a translation of the epistle to the Colossians into a language closer to Gnosticism.²¹ Why would Paul have initiated such a translation? It is more likely that a Gnosticizing Christian wished to interpret the Epistle to the Colossians for his companions by translating it into his favorite language. As we shall see,²² Ephesus was one of the first centers, perhaps the first along with Corinth, where signs prefiguring Gnosticism can be definitely found. Now the Epistle to the Ephesians, which probably did not bear the name of its intended recipients in the original text, was probably only called "to the Ephesians" because it found its way into the community at Ephesus.)

But even if one puts the Epistle to the Ephesians to one side, the Epistle to the Colossians remains, and this has a good chance of being authentic. Moreover, the idea of a present resurrection seems to be more or less implied in certain passages of the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Ro-

mans.²³ It is present as a wavering, a to-ing and fro-ing between the idea of a future eternal life and an eternal life that is already present.²⁴ R. M. Grant has shown that there is an evolution in Paul's conception of eschatology.²⁵ Whereas in the earliest of his epistles, those to the Thessalonians, the only thing mentioned is futurist eschatology; and whereas in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, the future resurrection is still of fundamental importance for him; in the Epistle to the Romans, written later on, present eschatology is evident; finally, in the Epistle to the Colossians, written during Paul's captivity at Rome, eschatology is in large part realized eschatology. This change, which manifests itself in Gnosticism and already in John, *had therefore already taken place in Paul's lifetime and in his circle.* In this respect as in others, John has perhaps done nothing but state Paul's thought more boldly and in different terms.

This aspect of Paulinism influenced other writers in the New Testament apart from John. It is found in Paul's disciples. Luke attributes the words that teach that the Kingdom is already present to Christ.²⁶ In the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, future eschatology has already passed into the background, as in John. It has been noted that this epistle almost never mentions the resurrection of the dead²⁷ and only makes two brief allusions to the second coming of Christ (9:28 and 10:37). The author seems to think that Christians have already entered into heaven in some way, when he says that they receive "a kingdom which cannot be shaken" (12:28), that they have already "tasted . . . the powers of the age to come" (6:5). Finally, even if it is likely that the Epistle to the Ephesians is not by Paul, it is at least the work of a follower of Paul.

However, we have seen that, in the Second Epistle to Timothy, whose author claims to be Paul himself, the idea that the resurrection has already taken place is held to be heretical. And one cannot suppose that the heretics whom it denounces understood the resurrection otherwise than Paul or John, who speak of a spiritual resurrection when they think of it as already having come to pass. For what sort of resurrection that has already happened could the heretics speak of but a spiritual resurrection? The author of the pastoral epistles doubtless does not know the Epistle to the Colossians; or perhaps he was frightened by the direction Paulinism had taken and tried to reverse it. *The division of Christians into two parts is already seen taking shape in the New Testament: one that wishes to prolong Paul's later thought and thereby tends toward Gnosticism, the other that protests and reacts against this evolution.*

The Second Epistle of Peter, which is not authentic, strives both to maintain futurist eschatology (3:3-10) and warns Christians against the errors that come from interpreting Paul's epistles wrongly (3:16). Those who are opposed in this epistle, and who are probably Gnostics (since the epistle seems to be quite late, and is perhaps the latest work in the New Testament), therefore appealed to Paul. There is scarcely any doubt that this is the case, since as we have seen ²⁸ the author of the *Treatise on the*

Resurrection appeals to precisely those texts of Paul which are in favor of realized eschatology.

It is therefore not absolutely necessary to bring in John or Nicholas to explain the realized eschatology of Menander or Gnosticism in general. Paul can also explain it. Hymenaeus and Philetus were perhaps simply men who knew the Epistle to the Colossians. (Might one of them be the author of the Epistle to the Ephesians?)

6. "Realized Eschatology" in the Synoptics

But perhaps we should go back still further. In certain passages in the Synoptics Christ also seems to teach a realized eschatology. When it is Luke who attributes this teaching to him, we might suspect that Luke was influenced by Paul. But when it is Matthew, can we do this? Matthew attributes this saying to Christ: "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God is upon you" (12:28).

In Mark also, the earliest of the Evangelists, one can also find traces of this idea. When Christ says to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven" (2:5), and he adds, "The Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" (2:10), he seems to consider the Son of man as a judge, which would imply that in a way he is already king and the Kingdom is already realized.

Moreover, it has been suspected, perhaps rightly, that the first Christians of the first community at Jerusalem accentuated the elements of futurist eschatology in what they handed on to us of Christ's teaching. Some scholars maintain that hints of a progressive development of apocalyptic ideas are found in the Synoptic Gospels, which perhaps came about in the tradition worked out by the community at Jerusalem. They think that Christ's eschatological views were perhaps in reality quite close to those which the Fourth Gospel attributes to him.²⁹

There is one Gospel account that is among those which have a good claim to be considered historical, since it is found not only in Matthew and Luke but also in Mark, that is, in the earliest Gospel. When the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection, ask Christ an embarrassing question in order to illustrate the difficulties involved in the idea of a future life, Christ replies: "Have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God said to him 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living" (Mark 12:26-27 and parallels). I do not know if anyone has noted that, according to this saying, the resurrection of the just who have disappeared seems to be something already realized for Christ, rather than something in the future. If Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are not of the dead but of the living, this not only means that one day they will be resurrected but seems to imply that they are *already resurrected*. If they were simply to be resurrected one day, it could be said that for the present they are dead and that God is a God of the dead.

Insofar as Christ's teaching can be described from the Gospels, there is certainly a declaration of a future Kingdom, a future salvation, a future resurrection. But that future eschatology and realized eschatology are not incompatible, John and Paul witness. Even in the Epistle to the Colossians Paul does not renounce future eschatology (cf. 3:4). John does not renounce it either.

Moreover, there is perhaps not such a profound opposition between Jewish eschatology and Greek dualism as has been supposed, between the *historical* vision of the Jews and the *metaphysical* conception of the Greeks. In Paul and John there is both a historical viewpoint and a metaphysical viewpoint. Ought one to conclude that there is a profound contradiction in their thought? One ought rather to conclude that these two points of view are not mutually exclusive, and that they can be easily associated.

From eschatology conceived as a historical vision one easily slips into what is called dualism, at least into the dualism that, like that of the Greeks, is in reality a belief in a transcendent reality. Eschatology or temporal dualism does not distinguish two worlds but two "ages." Now "world" and "age" have become almost synonymous in religious language, which implies that the two ideas are closely related. In Paul we see that "world" alternates with "age." (In John "world" has completely replaced "age".)

In Judaism belief in the future age was sometimes also accompanied by the idea that the future age already in some sense exists. For example, the idea of a heavenly Jerusalem could be considered a Jewish idea. (It is true that this idea only seems to appear relatively late on, and cannot therefore be completely independent of all Christian influence³⁰). And does the Hebrew word that means "age" not sometimes mean "world"? In the *Similitudes of Enoch* there is a remarkable saying: "God will call down peace upon you in the name of the age to come. For peace has come from it since the creation of the world" (LXXI, 15). If "from it" means "from the age to come", then in a way the age to come exists from the creation of the world.³¹ (But we recall that it is not certain that the *Similitudes of Enoch* are pre-Christian.)³²

On the other hand, according to H. W. Kuhn,³³ realized eschatology is already found in some of the hymns of the Qumran sect. If he is right, one might conclude that realized eschatology could derive from Judaism and that transition through Christianity is not necessary. But since we in fact see that it gradually evolved within Christianity, from Christ to Paul and from Paul to John, it is quite likely that the realized eschatology of the Gnostics ought to be placed in this line of development. Despite everything, Judaism was the most distant stage from this idea.

7. *The Destiny of the Individual after Death*

By realized eschatology one can also understand the idea that souls ascend

to heaven immediately after death, to be judged and to receive their eternal destiny; they do not need to wait in a subterranean place for the last judgment to be saved or condemned. This idea, which is now the common belief of Christians, was perhaps first held by the Gnostics. At least this is Stuiber's opinion, who has shown that in the second century Christians opposed to Gnosticism condemned this doctrine.³⁴ In fact, Justin judges it to be heretical. Irenaeus and Tertullian think that the just sleep while awaiting the general resurrection. If Clement of Alexandria and Origen teach that the just ascend to heaven immediately after death, according to Stuiber, this is because they are influenced by Gnosticism.

However, there are probably points in common with the New Testament in this Gnostic doctrine as in others. It is not as certain as Stuiber, and also Cullmann,³⁵ think that the idea of an ascent to heaven immediately after death is absent from the New Testament. The words of Paul saying that he wished to die and be "with Christ" (Phil. 1:23) have already been quoted against them. Cullmann's explanation of this point is not very convincing. He says that, according to Paul, the "sleep" that would be an intermediate state between death and the general resurrection is "closer to Christ."³⁶ But Paul does not say "closer to Christ," he says "with Christ." Similarly, in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians (5:8), he says "with the Lord" not "closer to the Lord." Moreover, there is really no reason why one should be closer to Christ in the intermediate state, since according to Paul the believer is already in communication with Christ by the Spirit, indeed, it is Christ who lives in him. And how could Paul think that one is closer to Christ in a state where one *sleeps*? Paul certainly predicts a resurrection of humanity, either with a new body, different from and replacing the old one, or with a new body that somehow covers the old, if the end of the world comes when a person is still in this life (cf. 2 Cor. 5:2). But he also conceives of a human state in which the latter is "naked" after death, that is, without a body (2 Cor. 5:3-10). He does not therefore think of the "inner person" as indissolubly linked to the body. (Cullmann admits that this comes close to the Greek distinction between soul and body.)³⁷ It is true that Paul seems to consider the state in which the inner man is "naked" as less perfect than the state in which he is covered with a new, spiritual body. But this does not necessarily mean that the inner man must sleep in a subterranean place while awaiting the general resurrection.

In Luke's Gospel, the poor man Lazarus is separated from the evil rich man by "a great chasm" (16:26) after death, which does not make sense if he is not in heaven. It must also be noted that Lazarus was carried by *angels* to Abraham's bosom, whereas the rich man was *buried* and goes to the place of the dead; that the rich man is *tormented*, as if he were already judged; finally, that to see Lazarus, he had to *lift up his eyes* (16:22-23). In the same Gospel, Christ says to the good robber, "Today you will be with me in Paradise" (23:43). Again, the text does not say "closer to me," but "with me."

Finally, we might recall Christ's reply to the Sadducees, which we have already cited.³⁸ It agrees with the story of the poor man Lazarus in Luke. Lazarus, who as we have just seen is probably in heaven, is "in the bosom of Abraham."

Thus, though the Gnostics probably assured the diffusion of this doctrine concerning survival, they almost certainly did not invent it or borrow it directly from Hellenism. It could be found in Christianity.

Chapter V

Gnostic "Dualism"

1. *In What Way Gnosticism Is Dualist*

As is well known, the word "dualism" first served to characterize two ideas, one religious, the other philosophical. In Hyde, the first to coin the word *dualistae*, this word was applied to religious thinkers who thought of God and devil as two coeternal principles.¹ In Christian Wolff, who first introduced this word into philosophy, it meant philosophers who thought of the soul and body as two distinct substances.² From this comes the fact that the word "dualist" is traditionally used in two different ways. In the history of religions it refers to an idea found, for example, in the Manicheans, or in the Mazdeism of the postgathic Avesta and the Pehlevi writings; among philosophers it is applied to doctrines such as Cartesianism.³

To which of these two types of dualism does Gnosticism belong? It belongs to neither. Manicheism, it is true, constitutes a branch of Gnosticism; but here the properly dualist doctrine is the result of a transformation in relation to other Gnostic systems. In the other systems, what we call "dualism" basically consists of a *profound distinction between God and the world*, a distinction more profound than that which is admitted by normal Christianity. The depth of this distinction is marked first of all by the fact that according to the Gnostic myths, the world is closed, separated from the divine realm by an abyss or by obstacles (which might be heavens, spheres, walls, or rivers). This separation can be overcome by God, who can descend into the world, but nothing in the world can rise above it without divine help. Next, this distinction is marked by the fact that for the Gnostics God is not directly the creator of the world. We have seen that they attribute the creation of the world to powers, which though they issue from God in some way, do not know him. Finally this distance between God and the world becomes an opposition when it is a question of *humanity's* relationship to God and to the world. The Gnostics described the powers of the world as trying to imprison the human soul in their kingdom and as stopping it turning toward God. For his part God intervenes in order to liberate the soul from the domination of the powers. Thus, from the point of view of what a person ought to *value*, from the point of view of the *religion* one ought to hold, there is an opposition, indeed a battle, between God and the world. In the soul these are two opposed forces, that which has true value and that which is false. Even

though the profound separation of God and the world often comes close to the philosophical distinction between ideas and matter, it is not identical with it. H. Jonas rightly notes this. Even less is it identical with Mazdean dualism. For the Mazdeans, the world was created by Ahura Mazdā, and Ahriman entered from outside. And if having entered the world Ahriman mixes his evil creations with Ohrmazd's good creations, the world nevertheless remains good as a whole and in its essence; in no way is it in polar opposition to God.

Moreover, Gnostic "dualism" does not normally concern the first principles. With respect to first principles, some Gnostics are dualists, for example, the Manicheans, but most of them are monists, since for them the world ultimately proceeds from God, even though this is by intermediaries and not directly.

Gnostic "dualism" is therefore not a dualism in the strict sense of the word. It might in addition be said that there is a dualist *feeling* in the Gnostics, if such an expression is permissible. The distance between God and the world is so great for them that in the present state of things they are like two separate realms or spheres, and the way from the realm of the world to that of God can be nothing other than *supernatural*. In the soul the inspirations that come from God and those which come from the world are totally distinct. And since the soul properly speaking, the natural soul (distinct from the spirit), is found on the side of the world, it can only know God if he reveals himself. *Such dualism is nothing other than an extreme accentuation of transcendence.*

It is therefore a misuse of language to say that Gnosticism is simply dualist, without qualifying this statement with the necessary precisions and limitations. If it is convenient to speak of dualism, it must be added that it is a dualism of a particular type. Jonas calls it "an anticosmic, eschatological dualism."⁴ He is right to add qualifications to the word "dualist" in order to modify its meaning. His definition is acceptable so long as the accent is placed on "anticosmic" rather than on "eschatological," as I have noted above.⁵ It must also be made clear that here "anticosmic" does not mean that one ought to be *against the world* but that one ought to be *against adoration of the powers that reign in the world.*

2. *On the Origin of this Form of Dualism*

Where could this particular form of dualism have come from, if indeed it is dualism? Bousset explained it by a combination of Persian dualism and Platonic dualism, that is, by a combination of the two forms of dualism properly so-called, the religious form and the philosophical form. Jonas rightly criticized theories of this type by showing that a vision of the world could not be explained by, so to speak, a chemical combination of two very different visions, each very different from the resulting vision.⁶ One cannot combine two visions of the world, which both have something total

and absolute about them, as if they were two chemical substances. However just this criticism is, Bousset's theory might perhaps contain some truth if it was simply concerned with Manicheism. At the time when that appeared, Gnostic "dualism" was coming closer and closer to philosophical, Platonic dualism. The pole opposed to God was no longer so much the world as *matter*. This evolution is almost complete with Mani. For him it is matter rather than the world that is opposed to God. Insofar as it is an order the world has been organized by God (or by divine emanations) to make the liberation of souls imprisoned in matter possible. On the other hand, Mani seems to have wished to unite his Gnostic-Platonic Christianity with Mazdeism. For him Platonic dualism became a dualism in which the principles are absolute enemies, like Ohrmazd and Ahriman. Here, matter is a principle that is not only independent of God but wilfully opposes him (at least in the mythical form of Manicheism). It is evil in itself, and not only as the result of being mismatched with the soul, as in Plato.

It is therefore true that Mani *seems* to unite these two forms of dualism. But even if it were possible for the simple association of two visions of the world to produce a new vision, these two ingredients, Platonism and Mazdeism, would not suffice to explain Mani's doctrine. For deep down it is Gnostic dualism, properly so-called, that remains with him and dominates his doctrine of salvation. The "Prince of darkness" remains for him the Prince of the world. This Prince, who might be described as the son of Matter or who can represent it,⁷ is the creator and substance of all bodies, and thereby reigns over all earthly creatures who do not receive light from divine revelation, and even over the celestial beings, with the exception of the sun and the moon. This dualism is neither Platonic or Mazdean. It is Gnostic dualism, and this Bousset does not explain.

We have noted that in Mazdeism, the world as a whole and in its essence is good. And in Platonism itself one cannot say that the world is evil. In the *Timaeus* the craftsman of the world is good, and the world he has built is beautiful. Certainly there is a big difference between the optimism of the *Timaeus* and the pessimism of the *Phaedo*. But what are opposed to the Ideas in the *Phaedo* are the *aisthēta*, or sensible things, not the world itself. In Plato the word for world evokes order and beauty, following the meaning of the Greek word *cosmos*. "And wise men tell us, Callicles, that heaven and earth and gods and men are held together by communion and friendship, by orderliness, temperance, and justice; and that is the reason why they call the whole of this world by the name of order (*cosmos*), and not of disorder or dissoluteness" (*Gorgias*, 507e–508a). For Plato the world is not exactly the same thing as sensible things; it is an order that must be perceived behind sensible things.

The source of Gnostic "dualism" cannot therefore be found either in Iran or in Greece. But if we consult the New Testament, we do not have far to look. In John's Gospel the opposition between God and the world is already present in almost as strong a form as it will be among the

Gnostics. For John the world is the opposite pole to God, at least in the majority of the texts where the world is mentioned. It is true that the world was created by God, by the mediation of the Word; but the fact remains that, as far as human beings are concerned, God and the world are the principles of two distinct and opposed natures. Human beings are either "of God" or "of the world." And it seems that there is no way that leads from lower nature to higher nature; the only one who is capable of ascending to heaven is the one who came down from it (John 3:3, 13).

To be of the world and to be of the devil are almost the same thing for John. On the one hand there are those who are of God (or of the Spirit, or of truth, or from on high), on the other hand are those who are not of God and who can be indiscriminately said to be of the devil or of the flesh or of the earth or from below.⁸

But does the expression "to be of" in the Johannine writings really mean a source? Does it not simply mean that as the result of a free choice one finds oneself momentarily belonging either to the realm of God or to the realm of the devil? One might hesitate, for it is true that in the Old and New Testaments, "son of" does not necessarily refer to origin. One can say "son of lies" in order to say liar. Israel can be called "son of God" because God has elected it. Moreover, the author of the Fourth Gospel sometimes says that one can *become* a child of God, or a son of light (1:12; 12:36). One would not therefore be this in origin. Nevertheless it is undeniable that the accumulation of expressions such as "to be of," "to be born of," "to be a child of" suggests origin. It is difficult to avoid the impression that in each of the two groups outlined by the Johannine author there is a community of nature, attributable to a first principle. Böcher saw this well: he showed that all these Johannine expressions, though referring to humanity's (present) participation in one or other of these two kingdoms also referred to an origin.⁹

When John says, "He who is of God hears the words of God; *the reason why [dia touto hoti]* you do not hear them is that you are not of God" (8:47), he certainly seems to be saying that a person's origin causes one's actions rather than one's actions link one to a certain origin.

This is not to imply that John always thinks in this way. It can be seen that on more than one subject his views seem to belong to two fundamentally different realms, and are even contradictory. This is the case with human freedom. The Johannine Christ teaches that in following the commandments persons choose for themselves their eternal destiny; for he says to his disciples that it is because they love him that the Father loves them (16:27), and that he who loves him is he who keeps his commandments (14:21). But on the other hand he says that it is he who has chosen them and not they who have chosen him (15:16); that no one can come to him unless he is drawn by the Father (6:44); that it is the truth that delivers and makes one truly free (8:32, 36). These statements and others like them seem to imply that humanity is not naturally free, but that it must be freed by election or by divine revelation. Similarly with eschatology: the Johan-

nine Christ teaches both futurist eschatology and realized eschatology. Unlike some of his commentators, he does not try to avoid the contradiction by explaining that eternal life is *partly* future and *partly* realized. He attenuates nothing; it even seems that he wishes to make the contradiction obvious when he brings the two ideas together in the same sentence without attenuating them. Concerning the time of the resurrection, he says: "The hour is coming and now is" (5:25). Strictly speaking, this is a contradiction, for if the hour is coming it is because it has not yet arrived. In the same way the author of the Johannine writings teaches *both* faith in a world created by God, which might be said to be monist, *and* faith in two fundamentally divided natures, one of which is God, the other the world, which might be called dualist. When he says that some are not of God (8:47; 1 John 4:6),¹⁰ or that "all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of [*estin ek*] the world" (1 John 2:16), he seems to be saying that God is not the cause of everything. Nevertheless, one cannot doubt that he holds that God created everything, as he states in the Prologue. He therefore wants to teach both that everything comes from God and that something is not of God. Not only does he accept the contradiction, but he highlights and underlines it when he says, "All things were made through him. . . . The world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. He came to his own home, and his own people received him not" (John 1:3, 10–11). Everything is of God, the world is of God, and yet it did not know God, and to be of the world is not to be of God. Everything is of God, but John *never* says, as one finds, for example, in the Qumran texts, *that the spirit of evil also comes* from God. The Father is the source of everything, yet he is on one side.

When one says that the expressions "to be of," "to be born of," "to be a child of" simply mean that as a result of a free decision a person momentarily belongs either to the realm of God or the realm of the devil (or of the world), one thereby admits that John always, and without any ambiguity, affirms human freedom. But this is not the case, as we have just seen. There are perhaps more texts in which he presents human salvation as dependent on election, or predestination, or divine revelation than texts that imply that salvation depends on human choice.

There are therefore two doctrines in John or, if you like, two aspects of a single doctrine, one monist, the other that might be called dualist; and this second aspect is dualist in precisely the same way as Gnosticism is dualist; the world is the principle opposed to God, even though it is not an absolutely first principle. (Just as it is not an absolutely first principle in most of the Gnostics.)

3. *On the Origin of Johannine Dualism*

Now where does Johannine dualism come from? Böcher thought he could reduce it to the relative dualism one finds in post biblical Judaism (Judaism

of the time immediately before the appearance of Christianity).¹¹ But his argument is flawed by the fact that in order to describe this Judaism, he uses texts that might be Christian or influenced by Christianity, in particular the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. He acknowledges himself that there are Christian interpolations in this text; then how can one know for certain just how far these interpolations extend? Moreover, it seems that there are more than interpolations here and that the redaction of the work, as it has come down to us, is Christian (though the Christian redactor has certainly used Jewish sources).¹² If one only considers works that are almost certainly earlier than or outside Christian influence, it is not quite correct to state that John's dualism is the same as these works. John goes *further* than pre-Christian Judaism, and he goes further *in the direction of the dualism that belongs to Gnosticism*. At Qumran, the Angel of darkness is not the prince of the world; the world is divided "equally" between the two spirits, the Prince of light and the Angel of darkness. At Qumran then, as in Jewish apocalyptic generally, the world is divided within between good and evil, but this is not John's world, which is wholly "within the power of the evil one" (1 John 5:19).

In the collection *John and Qumran* (London, 1972, pp. 76–106), which he edited, J. H. Charlesworth compares John's dualism with that of the *Manual of Discipline*. He concludes not that they are identical but that John might have been influenced by the Essenes' terminology, and that concepts belonging to the latter "might have been refracted in the prism of John's originality . . . in such a way that potentially parallel concepts would have been modified" (p. 104). It seems to me that this means that if John's dualism owes something to that of Qumran, it is only in a very minor way and that nothing very clear can be said on this subject.

But if we do not find Johannine "dualism" in pre-Christian Judaism, we nevertheless find it in Christianity before the time of John. We find it in Paul. It is true that Paul remains closer than John to apocalyptic Judaism, since that which he opposes to God is sometimes the "age" (*aiōn*). We have seen that it was not the world that was condemned in apocalyptic but the age; the present age was opposed to the future age. This temporal dualism reappears in Paul, but not only does Paul condemn the age more completely than apocalyptic Judaism did, but he often uses the word "world," *cosmos*, rather than the word "age," to refer to the opposite pole to God.¹³ *Thus the transformation from a temporal dualism within the world to a dualism of a Gnostic type took place in Paul's lifetime and thought.*

If it is Paul who thus transformed the pre-Christian Jewish conception, why did he do it? I have already tried to explain this in relation to the Demiurge and in reference to the Seven.¹⁴ I simply repeat that in my opinion it is the cross of Christ that made Paul understand that from now on there are two fundamentally distinct orders. It is of the cross that he

says, "by it the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal. 6:14).

4. *On Simplistic, or Intolerant Dualism, Which Is Called "Manichean" in France Today*

Kuhn thought that there was a Persian influence on the dualism at Qumran,¹⁵ and neither Huppenbauer¹⁶ nor Böcher¹⁷ exclude this possibility. In fact, this is not impossible, since the dualism at Qumran is closer to Mazdean dualism than Gnostic "dualism." In the Dead Sea Scrolls the world as a whole is not opposed to God; it is divided within between the forces of good and those of evil. It is true that all these forces are regarded as created by God, so that the dualism is not absolute. But it is not certain that dualism was absolute in the oldest form of Mazdeism. In the *Gāthās* of the Avesta, the Evil Spirit is opposed to the Good Spirit, not directly to Ahura Mazdā. The latter appears to be above opposition; and as the two spirits are called "twins,"¹⁸ and as Ahura Mazda seems to be the Father of the Good Spirit,¹⁹ we might conclude that he is also Father of the Evil Spirit. This is what a number of specialist scholars in Iranian studies think.²⁰ The conception of an Evil Spirit that is coeternal with Ahura Mazda would belong to the postgathic Avesta and the Pehlevi writings, not to the *gāthās*.

The oldest Mazdean religion, that of Zoroaster, was therefore perhaps not absolutely dualist. Like the doctrine of Qumran, it perhaps included only one view of the world in which the world and humanity are divided between absolutely good forces and absolutely evil forces. As the sectarians of Qumran thought of humanity as composed of "sons of light" and "sons of darkness," so the Mazdeans saw the world as made up of creatures of the Good Spirit and creatures of Ahriman.

This view of the world might be called a *warlike, simplistic, or intolerant dualism*. To hold that some things in the world are Ahriman's creation amounts to holding that they are absolutely evil. And to think some persons are "sons of the creation of Evil" as the *gāthās* states,²¹ or "sons of darkness," as the people of Qumran held, is the same as saying that they are absolutely evil. It is this sort of dualism which, during the last few decades in France, has often been referred to under the name of Manicheism. More and more French writers and journalists now call Manichean everything that is intolerant, fanatical, simplistic, every idea that divides beings into wholly good and wholly bad, totally black or totally white. This use of the word "Manichean" is new and does not seem to be legitimate.²² For the Manicheans everything in the world was mixed and only the original principles were pure. In the Manichean *Kephalaia* we read: "Good and evil dwell in each man."²³ Moreover, the Manicheans were nonviolent. Even so far as ideas are concerned, they were not particularly intolerant; they taught that there is something good in almost all religions,

and sought to conform their language to that of very diverse religions or traditions. (Someone has written that the Manichean mentality is the mentality of an inquisitor; which is indeed to reverse history. It is not the Manicheans who invented the Inquisition; they were the victims of it, insofar as they can be identified with the Cathars.) The warlike or intolerant dualism was therefore not that of the Manicheans, but it could well have been that of the Mazdeans. Mazdeism gives the impression of being a religion of combat. It seems to invite man to battle, not only against himself (or against the lower part of himself), like Gnosticism, or Manicheism or Christianity, but against external enemies. The reformer who speaks in the *gāthās*, it is true, preaches against violence; but he preaches a justice that might seem abstract, rigid and hard. Thus he says: "He who is good to the wicked is wicked."²⁴ According to Herodotus, the Mazdean priests killed certain animals with their hands, unlike the Egyptian priests who could not shed blood except in the sacrifices.²⁵ The subsequent evolution of the dualism of the *gāthās* toward an absolute dualism is perhaps explained by the *spirit* of the *gāthās*: a spirit of struggle, of irreconcilable opposition, which could lead to the denial of every link, every relation between opponents.²⁶

How could a religion such as Mazdeism have come about? It is a question to which we are far from having the answer. The origin of Persian religion is one of the most obscure problems in the history of religions. The most common opinion, and it seems to me the most likely at first sight, is that Zoroaster reformed the classical Indo-Iranian religion of the *Veda*. In fact there are hints of a profound transformation in the word *daeua*, an Iranian form of the root that, in Indo-European languages, means the gods, and here, on the contrary, means the demons or false gods. There are other hints. The religious rites attested to by the *Veda* are attacked in the *gāthās*. Certain customs practiced by the *Magi*, which for other peoples were impious (the exposure of corpses to birds or dogs, incestuous marriages) seem to indicate a radical break with ancient beliefs. Moreover, in the *gāthās* one finds the desire to transform, to "renew" existence, and this renewal will only be perfected in the future, after a great war. One gets the impression here of a desire to overcome enemies, to convert people to a certain social or political order, to combat a religion that is held to be false (that of the *daeua*) and social powers that are held to be violent or oppressive. Could these texts not express the intransigence and intolerance of a revolutionary reformer, who wishes to found a new order?

What ought we to understand by the "renewal" of which the *gāthās* speak? Molé thinks that it has to do with the renewal of nature, which would have been celebrated at the beginning of each year. But all other peoples, or almost all of them, celebrate the renewal of nature without having a religion analogous to Mazdeism. Moreover, is the renovation hoped for in the *gāthās* not a final and definitive renewal? It is therefore

not the seasonal renewal of nature. It is also characteristic of Molé's interpretation that she completely omits the person of Zoroaster, his role, and the principal features of Persian religion.

One only has to read the index of Molé's book with reference to the words *Ahraman*, *ahramok* (heretic), *ahramokih* (heresy) to realize that this religion was not one of the gentlest. For example on the subject of *ahramok*: "Represents the religion of Ahraman; the worst of men; spreads destruction; ought to be killed to bring in prosperity; Avesta and Zand ought not to be taught to or learned from him; the *ahramok* will be crushed by *Sošans*."²⁷

Cyrus's tolerance is always cited. But first of all it is not at all certain that Cyrus was a Zoroastrian.²⁸ Further, his liberal policy with respect to the Jewish people was perhaps a way he used to weaken Babylon. Was he really a liberal? It is said that he scorned the Greeks because they were merchants and commerce is a mutual deceit. It is true that the Greeks were merchants, but they were much freer than people were in the Persian Empire. Greek ambassadors were the only men who were able to speak with the Great King without groveling at his feet. Cyrus did not understand Greek liberty.

There are certainly attractive things in the *gāthās*; one senses goodwill, courage, and faith here. But a warlike and intolerant attitude is found here more than is normally the case in religious texts.

If this is the case, the same causes that produced a relative dualism in Iran (which must then have evolved toward an absolute dualism) could also have produced the relative dualism of Qumran and that of postbiblical Judaism in general, without it being necessary to suppose a direct Persian influence. The spirit of battle, which perhaps explains the doctrine of the *gāthās*, is also found among the Jews of the postbiblical age and in the sect at Qumran. The postbiblical Jews were violently opposed to the paganism of the empires that surrounded and dominated them. They hoped for a reversal of the balance of power and that one day Yahweh would be worshiped throughout the whole universe. For its part the sect at Qumran was violently opposed to official Judaism, to the priests at Jerusalem. These hostilities probably suffice to explain the existence of "sons of light" and "sons of darkness" for these people. An explanation based on Persian influence is possible, but it is not absolutely necessary.

Renan has observed (but in a passage I have not been able to rediscover) that in the Old Testament everything is either black or white, pushed to an extreme, and that there is no happy medium. God does not say, "Jacob I loved and loved Esau less." He says, "Jacob I loved and Esau I hated" (Mal. 1:2-3). In this the spirit of the Old Testament to a certain extent agrees with Persian religion.

Whatever the case, this intolerant and simplistic distinction is neither the Gnostic distinction between God and the world, or even the Manichean distinction between spirit and matter (though there is doubtless something

of it in the form this latter distinction took with Mani). Gnostic dualism and Manichean dualism are above all distinctions within humanity, not between human beings.

There is a dualism that might be described as horizontal, or rather one that relates to a horizontal world; the division here is made between beings of the same level. Such is Mazdean dualism and that of Qumran. On the other hand there is a vertical dualism, or rather one that relates to a vertical construction; the division here is placed between realities of different levels. Such is Platonic dualism, Christian and Gnostic dualism, Cartesian and Kantian dualism. This dualism of levels cannot be a perfectly balanced, perfectly symmetrical dualism for there is no equality or perfect analogy between realities of different levels. It cannot truly be a system; on the contrary, it renders all systems imperfect. This is why it is perhaps better not to call it a dualism, but to speak of it as a rigorous affirmation of transcendence.

Chapter VI

Freedom By Grace

The question of freedom, “the most heated of all religious questions,” as Carl Schmidt observes,¹ is at the basis of Gnosticism. It is also at the basis of Christianity, and perhaps in the same way.

1. *The Apparent Denial of Freedom in the Gnostics*

Clement of Alexandria and Origen reproached the Gnostics with denying human freedom. The heresiologists also accused them of it. It is true that the Gnostics almost always conclude that humanity is not naturally free; that it is not naturally capable of moving toward the good, nor above all of knowing it, unless one is enlightened by a supernatural revelation which is a grace provided by the Savior. Insofar as one does not know the true good, one is not truly free, even while thinking one is; persons are under the reign of the Powers who hold them captive. For the Gnostics, freedom is salvation itself; but salvation can only be *received* not *effected* by humanity, at least, it cannot effect it by itself. Not only is it necessary to be liberated by “knowledge,” but “knowledge” itself can only be understood and accepted by souls destined to understand it. According to what the heresiologists and the Gnostics themselves say, those who accept “knowledge” already have, unknown to themselves, a “spark of life;” or, according to another metaphor, their souls have already been sown by God, or the preexistent Savior, or the Spirit; or finally, according to some texts, they were the descendents, the mysterious issue, of a divine being. Thus the human will seems to be doubly impotent. Not only is it not naturally free—freedom can only be *liberation*—but it does not even always seem to have the *aptitude* to be freed. If the freed person was predestined to be freed, it seems to follow that not only is a certain grace necessary to be free, but also a certain predestination, which the Gnostics sometimes call a certain *nature*.

Supposing that this was, in general, the opinion of the Gnostics—we will see that there are contradictions and obscurities on this subject among them—supposing therefore that the Gnostics did think in this way, to what extent did they diverge from ordinary Christianity? That salvation depends on grace and that the human will need to be freed because it is naturally enslaved is, if I am not mistaken, Christian doctrine. Could what is particular to the Gnostics be the idea that to be fit to receive grace a sort of

prior grace, an election or predestination was necessary? But this also seems to be found in Christianity. It seems clear that Paul and the author of the Fourth Gospel taught the predestination of believers. Even in the Synoptic Gospels, the parable of the sower shows that good seed is not enough, but that there must also be good earth. Could it be that what is proper to the Gnostics therefore is perhaps simply the description of predestination in the form of a spark of life, or a seed sown by God, or divine filiation? But it must be realized that for the Gnostics one does not know whether a person has a spark of life, or has been sown by God, except by the fact that the person has faith (or knowledge) *at the present time*. It is simply a matter of praising God for salvation insofar as it is *already received*. It is an affirmation that all *merit* in this salvation is God's and humanity has no right to glory in it. But is it not also the desire to attribute to God all merit that is the inspiration of the doctrines of grace and predestination in Christianity? It is not a question of putting a barrier in front of certain people and excluding them *in advance*. It is a question of gratitude for what has *already been received*.

What, therefore, is the difference? Perhaps the difference here must be seen in the fact that the Gnostic metaphors (a spark, a seed, filiation) could suggest that a fragment of supernatural reality already exists in someone who is not yet converted but who is destined to be. These metaphors might mean that, among believers (or those who know), there is a part of the soul, however small, *that has always been supernatural*.

What is strange is that if these metaphors must be understood thus, they in fact lead to a reversal of the basic Gnostic intuition. For the basic Gnostic intuition seems to be that of a *very great distance* between nature and grace, between the world and God. The Gnostics always seem to have wanted to show that salvation comes from above, that freedom is grace, that the liberating revelation was wholly *new* and such that no human being could conceive of it; finally that the Savior has given those who believe in him *a new nature*. Now, in this case, though insisting on all this they would have reverted to saying that those who are freed already have, in the depths of themselves, something of this new nature that was given to them. From transcendence they would have gone back to a sort of immanence. Predestination would be turned against grace.

Such a reversal is not, it is true, impossible. It is even quite easy to see how it might have come about. For the more one depicts salvation as foreign to nature, the more difficult it becomes to explain the fact that some persons can accept the message of salvation. If some do accept it, one is led to think that they could not have done so if they did not already have in themselves something relating them to this "knowledge" that nature cannot understand. The metaphors that the Gnostics use, like the ideas of election and predestination themselves, allow them to explain why some remain obstinately closed to the divine word, whereas others immediately accept it. In the *Gospel of Truth* (21, 32—22, 4) we see that the

insuperable incredulity of some people is invoked as an argument to show that some are called whereas others are not. By a natural dialectic, one can therefore move from the idea of grace to that of predestination, given the idea that there is a hidden nature in the believer, which grace reveals.

It is always the case that in speaking of the spark or seed, or divine filiation which is revealed in the believer, the Gnostics seem to state that in some persons, before faith, there is something that is already saved.

But is this really what they want to say? Do not forget that for those who spoke thus, the predestined person would not be saved without "knowledge."

And where and when did the idea of predestination begin to be expressed by the metaphors of a spark, a seed, and filiation? Are these metaphors found among the earliest Gnostics mentioned by the heresiologists?

2. The Images of Liberation among the Gnostics Who Seem to be the Earliest

We have observed that one of the earliest-seeming traits of Gnosticism is the idea that the resurrection has already taken place. Or put in another way, that resurrection is conversion. Now, this idea seems absolutely contrary to the idea that before faith there is already a seed of the Holy Spirit in the predestined. If the believer is resurrected by grace, this is because that person's first nature must completely die. There was therefore no spark of salvation within before this. Grace has re-created the person. It might imply an election, a predestination, but the fact that it is a resurrection excludes the presence of a spiritual element existing in humanity before grace.

This image of resurrection, representing conversion, is found in particular in Menander, who is one of the earliest heretics mentioned by the heresiologists. It therefore seems that for him salvation did not include any substantial predestination; and that if he believed in predestination, this could not be in the form of a belief in a spiritual substance already present in the predestined.

As far as Simon is concerned, we have already observed that it is not certain that he was a Gnostic. The doctrine attributed to him by Irenaeus can scarcely be earlier than the end of the first century. (It would therefore more likely be that of Menander, or a near contemporary of Menander.) What, in any case, does this doctrine say? We read here that freed persons will be those who know Simon and Helen, and put their hope in them. But their predestination is not mentioned. Or if it is, it is when it is said that Simon promised to free "his own" (*eos qui sunt ejus*, Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 1, 23, 3). But "his own" could have been his disciples, those who put their hope in him. And even if it is a question of the predestined, this would not go much further than Paul's or John's doctrines. There is no question of a spark or seed.

As for Cerinthus—Irenaeus's Cerinthus, since it might be said that there are a number of Cerinthis, and to my mind Irenaeus's is the one who is most likely to be historical²—the section concerning him (Irenaeus, I, 26, 1) teaches us nothing about what the predestination of believers might have been in his thought, nor whether there was one.

It is with Saturnilus that the metaphor of the spark appears (Irenaeus, I, 24, 1–2). It does not seem to be present in any of the ancient literature before Saturnilus, except, strictly speaking, in the Book of Wisdom (or the Wisdom of Solomon).³ In one passage of this book (3:7), the souls of the righteous dead, souls that survive close to God, are compared to the sparks “which run through the stubble.” But the spark that Saturnilus refers to, the “spark of life,” does not seem to represent the soul. It seems rather to represent an element that enters the soul and that gives it the true life. Rather than being the soul as a whole, it could be the divine part of the soul, that is, the Spirit given to those who believe.

In fact, the spark of life, according to Saturnilus, is found *in believers*: “Christ came . . . for the salvation of those who believe in him; these are the ones who have the spark of life in them.”⁴ As we have already noted, this spark is not found in all.⁵ Moreover, if the spark was the soul, as Epiphanius believed (*Pan.* 28, 1), one must hold that before receiving it Adam had no soul at all. But this scarcely agrees with classical ideas on the soul, or with those of the Gnostics. For before receiving the spark, Adam was not inanimate, according to Saturnilus; he “crept upon the earth.” For the Ancients all animate beings, everything that lives, has a soul. As for the Gnostics, most of them distinguish between the soul and the spirit, and for them it is the spirit that comes from God. The soul is, on the whole, placed in humanity by the Demiurge. Moreover, one would have to suppose that the spark of life Irenaeus refers to in I, 24, 1 is not the same as the one he refers to in I, 24, 3, which is difficult. It is therefore probably a question of the Spirit or grace, of Life in the Johannine sense.

But how could this Spirit or this grace have been given to the first man, that is, to Adam, since it is found only in believers? Did Adam believe in Christ? Must one think that Saturnilus was describing a sort of redemption of Adam, who must have received faith with salvation? This is not impossible. The idea that Adam was saved is found in Alexandrian Judaism, and indeed as a metaphor for the spark, in the Book of Wisdom (10:1). Here, Wisdom is said to have enlightened Adam and to have drawn him up from his fall. On the other hand, the Epistle to the Hebrews lists a certain number of Old Testament figures who had faith. Adam is not mentioned in this list, but it demonstrates that for the Christian of the first century, one could have faith before the coming of Christ. If one does not accept this hypothesis, one must hold that the man created by the Archons does not refer to Adam here but to humanity in general, and that the spark given to man was not given at the beginning but *only when Christ had come*. This is also possible. The light that the Archons could not grasp,

according to Saturnilus, is probably the light of the Johannine Prologue,⁶ and this light is Christ. The Archons might certainly have seen the light from the beginning, or seen some image of it, since they created humankind as a copy of a luminous image; but the spark was not given to humankind from the beginning.

In any case, if one allows that Adam had faith and received the spark, one must suppose that he did not automatically pass on this spark to his descendents, since it is found only in believers.⁷ Did he at least pass it on to some of them? Irenaeus tells us that Saturnilus was the first to speak of two categories of humanity created from the beginning, the good and the evil, and one is tempted to suppose that these two categories were those of the predestined and the nonpredestined. It seems to me, however, that this supposition would be false. For these two categories, according to Saturnilus, were created by the angels. Now, the "angels" to which he refers, that is, the Archons, could not have bestowed the spark of life. He is therefore referring to the good and evil in the Old Testament. For Saturnilus, Christ came to help the good, since before his coming the demons had helped the most evil of human beings. Christ therefore helped those who were in a certain way good, with a sort of natural goodness, and he apparently gave them the spark of life, which they did not yet have.⁸ For there is nothing to prove that they already had it. Saturnilus does not say of believers, "It is these who *have* the spark of life." It must also be noted that in order to describe the action of the spark coming into persons, according to Hippolytus, Saturnilus used the word *diēgeire*; which means that this spark "awoke," "resurrected" the person into whom it entered. *Ēgerthē* (from *egeirō*) is the word the Gospels use to say that Christ is risen. Thus, the gift of the spark in Saturnilus resembles conversion in Menander. It is a resurrection. It is not simply the completion of the creation of the first man.

It therefore seems to me that, for Saturnilus, the spark was the Spirit or the grace accompanying faith, and there is nothing to prove that the believers in which it is found already had it within themselves before their conversion. What is true is that Saturnilus seems to depict grace as a sort of nature. A new nature, but still a nature. What demonstrates this is that, according to Irenaeus, he said that at the death of the believer the spark reascends to that which is of the same nature as itself, while one's other elements dissolve into the elements from which they had been drawn. Here the spark definitely seems to be the soul, or at least it seems to be something for Saturnilus that establishes itself firmly in the soul and remains there until death. A person does not seem to be able to lose it for as long as that person lives. Two observations might be made on the basis of this. On the one hand, with the idea that the spark dwells in the soul and that at death it reascends *alone* to the divine world, the meaning of the metaphor in Saturnilus seems to link up with the meaning of the same metaphor in the Book of Wisdom. In this book, the souls of the dead just ones are sparks;

for Saturnilus they are also sparks, since nothing will remain of them but the spark. But on the other hand, the idea that grace becomes a sort of nature in the one who has received it, and that it *dwells* in the soul and cannot be lost, recalls what is said in the First Epistle of John on the subject of the person who is “born of God”: “No one born of God commits sin; for God’s nature abides in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God” (3:9). Doubtless the one who is born of God, is, according to John, the one who has received the grace of *second birth*, the birth from above, that is, the one who has faith. According to John, this person cannot lose the new nature he has received from above. If he did lose it, in John’s eyes it would probably be an indication that he did not truly have faith. The gift that is truly received from above remains and does not seem to be able to be lost, as awakening for some Buddhists leads to a state from which one can no longer fall.

Thus, if Saturnilus’s thought is close to Alexandrian Judaism, it is also close, and indeed closer, to that of John. For in the Book of Wisdom the spark was not related to faith; moreover, this spark did not necessarily come from above. The souls of the just, which have become sparks, are perhaps simply the souls of those who have lived wisely, in justice, and whom God has recompensed in making them rise up to him. On the contrary, for Saturnilus, as for John, nothing ascends to heaven that has not come down from it.

In brief, I think that Saturnilus’s spark was neither the natural soul, which is found in all, or a supernatural element that would have existed before faith in the predestined soul. I think that it was the gift of the Spirit, the grace that makes faith possible. This would therefore be the expression of an idea that also existed in ordinary Christianity. The only difference would be that in Saturnilus’s conception grace more closely resembles a nature, a new essence that would be given to the soul once and for all and that henceforth could not be lost. But this could also be said of the supernatural gift the soul “born of God” received according to the First Epistle of John.

What confirms this is that we find a conception of the same type in Basilides, who was also a disciple of Menander. (I am referring to Irenaeus’s and Clement’s Basilides, for the Basilides of Hippolytus’s *Elenchos* is someone different, probably a relatively late Basilidean.)⁹ Basilides does not seem to have spoken about the spark, but, like Saturnilus, he seems to have depicted faith as a sort of nature. At least Clement of Alexandria reproaches him for this. He states that for Basilides one knows God “by nature” (*physei*); that the thought proper to the elect, a thought he calls “faith,” is close to being an “essence” (*ousia*) for him, and not a freedom (or an ability, *exousia*); that for him it is a nature (*physis*), a “hypostasis” (= an existence, or a substance), and “the infinite beauty of an unsurpassable possession,” but not “the reasoned assent of a free soul” (*Strom.* v, 3, 2). It is therefore possible that Basilides had said that God is known “by nature,” and also that he had spoken of faith as being a sort of essence

or substance in the soul. But it hardly seems that he would thereby have wished to say that the nature that knows God is the empirical, immediate, properly natural nature. For the Basilideans said that “election” (that is, the elect, believers) is “foreign to the world” (*Strom.* iv, 165, 3). If one knows God by nature, this is perhaps because this knowledge belongs to the new nature of the believer, the one received with faith; or that it is conformed to *the essential nature of the soul*. For the second nature of the soul could also be its oldest essence, the one it has had in divine predestination.

What does “nature” mean for Basilides? Langerbeck has observed that for him the soul was not a simple nature, on the contrary it was very complex.¹⁰ The Basilideans considered the passions as elements foreign to the soul, appendages (*prosartēmata*), kinds of weights that cling to the soul and disguise properly human nature in the semblance of animal, vegetable, or mineral (*Strom.* ii, 112, 1–113, 1). Isidore, the son or principal disciple of Basilides, expressed the same idea in speaking of an “adventitious” or “parasitic” soul (*ibid.*, 113, 3), which was like a second life (114, 2). Langerbeck observes that the expression “parasitic” (*prospnyēs*) comes from Plato.¹¹ For Plato the soul is complex, it is a mixture. This is seen in the *Phaedo*, the *Republic*, and also in the *Timaeus*. The body is not exterior to the soul, it is *in it*. It is one of its elements, an element that might dominate the others or be dominated by them. The bondage of the soul, although it comes from the body, is not the same as the effect of an external constraint; for what the body desires, the soul dominated by it thinks it desires. The passions that cling to the soul, which the Basilideans speak of, recall the Platonic comparison of the soul with Glaucis the Mariner, the Mariner god worn away by the waters and so covered in seaweed and shellfish that he has lost a human form (*Republic* 611c–d). But this Platonic conception does not mean that one is not responsible for what one does. Isidore taught that persons are obliged to master their passions and are therefore responsible for their acts (*Strom.* ii, 114, 1). Basilideans distinguished between voluntary faults and involuntary faults, which shows that for them there could even be a will to evil (*Strom.* iv, 153, 4). (In this he was not completely Platonist, since for Plato transgression always seems to be involuntary. He rather bases himself on a passage from the Epistle to the Hebrews.)¹² Basilides must have had even more reason to think that the soul is free in the good. If faith delivers the soul from the parasitic passions that envelop it, how could the soul that has faith not be free? As Paul states, “For freedom Christ has set us free” (Gal. 5:1). Langerbeck has shown that if Basilides draws on Greek philosophy, he draws much more upon the New Testament, particularly Paul and the Epistle to the Hebrews.¹³ The idea of a complex soul that wills and does not will at the same time is forcefully affirmed by Paul (Rom. 7:15).

Thus the soul can be saved *by nature*, that is, by what is most authentic in it, without at all being saved *naturally*. The truest nature must be freed from inferior nature. For Basilides this liberation no doubt comes from a

divine election that gives one faith. For if the true nature of the soul has nothing to do with the passions, this does not however mean that the soul can liberate itself. For Plato, the soul is related to the divine, nevertheless the soul related to the divine can easily lose itself. He even says that if someone saves himself, in our state, made as we are, it might be said that he owes his salvation to a destiny granted by a god (*Republic* 429e–493a). For Basilides, who is also a Christian and follower of Paul, one is saved by faith, but this faith depends upon divine election.

But did he think that a hidden divine particle exists in the soul before liberation which ought to be freed? It is difficult to reply to this question. Basilideans contemporary with Clement of Alexandria thought of election as an element incorporated in their nature (*emphytos*) assuring them of salvation, whatever their acts might be (*Strom.* III, 3, 3). But Clement reproaches them on this point with not being faithful to the thought of their masters (*ibid.*). Clement also says that, according to the Basilideans, there is a faith and election proper to each “level” (*diastēma*), and that the gift of faith is *proportionate* to the hope of each (*Strom.* II, 10, 3). The Basilideans therefore seem to have distinguished different classes of people, as did the Valentinians. Indeed, could they not have adopted certain Valentinian ideas in the time of Clement? From around the middle of the second century it seems that Valentinianism was present in almost all the Gnostic schools. If, nevertheless, this idea really does come from Basilides, one might suppose that election is different for the different people who are the object of it, and that faith is different in the different people in whom it is found, without maintaining that these persons first had a *substantial* predestination within themselves.

In Carpocrates and the Carpocratians we find ideas that seem to be contradictory. On the one hand they seem to attribute great value to the human will when they state (according to Irenaeus, I, 25, 1) that Jesus was at first simply a man like other men, but a man who, possessing a strong and pure soul, remembered better than others what he had seen before his birth, when he moved about the divine sphere. (We see here that Carpocrates was also a Platonist. In this description of Jesus, he used the myth of *Phaedrus*.) It is true that, according to Carpocrates or the Carpocratians, a *virtus*, a power, had been given to Jesus from above; but it was given to him because he already knew how to remember what he had seen before his birth, and because he knew how to raise himself above the Jewish customs in which he had been brought up. Moreover, some Carpocratians said that all who could do what Jesus’ soul had done—that is, raise itself above the Archons, the “makers of the world”—could do the same things as Jesus and yet greater things still. Irenaeus is indignant with this thought, suggested, it seems, because in John’s Gospel Christ says, “He who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do” (John 14:12). However, in what follows of Irenaeus’s account (I, 25, 2) we read that on the subject of those who could do the same things

as Jesus, Carpocrates or the Carpocratians must have said, "*In fact*, their souls descend from the same sphere, and similarly scorning the makers of the world, *for this reason*, they are judged worthy to receive the same power and will return to the same place." There is no longer any question here of a strong and pure soul; salvation seems to depend solely on the *origin* of the soul. At the beginning of the account, one had the impression that all souls had resided in the divine sphere, and that their differences simply came from the fact that some, being more steadfast and pure than others, remembered better what they had seen. Here, on the contrary, it seems that those who scorn the makers of the world are the only ones who descend from the divine sphere. We therefore remain in uncertainty on the subject of what the Carpocratians thought about human freedom.

Marcion, in any case, seems to be wholly opposed to the idea that there could be anything transcendent in the soul before conversion. For him, salvation is entirely a matter of grace and grace is entirely free. He definitely believed in predestination, since he wished to be a disciple of Paul; but for him this predestination could not be the result of the presence of a sort of supernatural nature prior to conversion in certain souls. The soul that does not yet have faith is probably completely alien to God for him. God enters the world and the soul as a stranger. Christ is the Stranger who has come into the world of the Demiurge, and before his coming, men and women seem to have had no community of nature with him.

3. *Predestination in the Valentinians*

It is perhaps with Valentinus that the idea of a *substantial* predestination seems to appear in Gnosticism. The Valentinians distinguished three sorts of "natures": the "pneumatic" nature, that is the spiritual, of those who have "knowledge" and are "sown" in the world by God or by Christ or the Spirit; the "psychical" nature, that of those who do not have "knowledge" but who at least have faith, a nature characterized by the *soul* breathed into Adam by the Demiurge; and the "hylic" nature, that is, the material. Do these natures necessarily belong to different people or can they be found in the same person? The heresiologists seem to state that, according to the Valentinians, they belong to different people. Moreover, if one believes the heresiologists in this, persons of the first sort will necessarily be saved, whatever their acts; those of the second will have free will, and according to their choices and acts might be saved or not (but their eventual salvation will not be exactly the same as that of the spirituals, it will not be entry into the "Pleroma"); as for the materials, they will be incapable of receiving knowledge or even faith, and cannot therefore be saved.

Is this distinction of three types of person really found in Valentinus's teaching? It does not appear in the fragments of his works that remain, rare fragments, it is true, and all quite short. It might be that one of these

fragments (frag. 4) is addressed to the “spirituals,” but it could just as well be directed to Christians in general. On the other hand we have a Coptic translation of a Valentinian work, the *Gospel of Truth*, which, when it was discovered was considered as possibly being by Valentinus himself; and even though this opinion is now rarely held, it is not impossible that it may have been right. (Through the Coptic translation one senses an inspiration and eloquence in this work, which makes it very different from the other Valentinian works we know of. And who but Valentinus would dare to express himself in a form so different from ordinary Valentinian scholasticism? We do not find this scholasticism in this work, even though it is certainly Valentinian; rather we find a lively thought, rich in imagery from which this scholasticism could have been drawn.) It is therefore necessary briefly to examine what the *Gospel of Truth* might contain on the subject of the three natures.

Here it is a matter of those whom the author calls “hylic,” that is, material. These were strangers to the Savior and did not recognize him (31, 1–4). They are probably the same as those who are elsewhere described as being the “works of Forgetfulness” (21, 34–22, 2). Those who are called “perfect” are also treated here, those who “possess something from above,” who are in the Father as the Father is in them, and who are invisibly united with him (42, 11–37). These are apparently the ones who were “sown” by the Father (36, 35–37). But it is not said the first are in every case lost, or that the second are in every case saved. Of the first it is said that they will be destroyed with Forgetfulness *if they remain ignorant to the end* (21, 34–35), which implies that they can still be converted. As for the second, it is probable that they need to be “formed,” since the aeons themselves, the eternal aeons, must be (27, 15–29). In any case, they have to behave in a certain way. For example, they ought to “keep watch,” to break the old “vessels” that are still found in their house and to make this house “holy and silent” in order to receive Oneness (25, 19–30). They must also speak of truth to those who seek it, help the ill, nourish the starving, relieve the tired, not return to their former faults, not take up again what they have already rejected—which implies that the perfect can still commit offenses and might even be lost (32, 35–33, 23). As for the rest, natures are recognized by their fruits (33, 33–35). There is certainly election and predestination for the author of this work (cf. among others 21, 3–5; 27, 26–33; 41, 19–20). But if the predestined in some way exist beforehand, this is simply in the will and foreknowledge of God (27, 26–28, 10). Moreover, *it seems that there is no mention at all of the psychics*.¹⁴

It is also a good idea to study the *Treatise on the Resurrection*, for this is a work that might also be by Valentinus himself. Election and predestination are clearly affirmed here: “Therefore we are elected to salvation and redemption since we are predestined from the beginning not to fall into the foolishness of those who are without knowledge” (46, 24–29). The “we” refers to “those who have known the truth,” which might mean all

Christians. According to the author, as with Saint Paul, there is therefore an election and predestination of Christians. But there is no mention of psychics here either. Still less is there any question that faith is considered the equivalent of knowledge throughout this work. Nor is it said that before faith or knowledge there was a supernatural element *in the soul of certain persons* that destined them for salvation. There is predestination here, but this predestination can only be found in God. It is true that the treatise as a whole tends to inspire the believers' strong confidence in their salvation, by showing them that their supernatural destination is nothing other than their inner nature, and that in a sense they are already, and from the outset, what they ought to be. To know oneself as heading for resurrection, as in a way already resurrected, as belonging to another world, is "to know oneself again as one was at first" (49, 35–36). But the one who thus knows his or her inner nature, is the one who has been enlightened by Christ. Does this supernatural nature already exist, so to speak, in the one who is not yet enlightened as something hidden *within*? This is not certain. For, judging by the *Gospel of Truth*, it is the divine election that is the cause of salvation, and also of the original nature that coincides with salvation in the saved. Election produces a person as a supernatural being (*Gospel of Truth* 27, 26–28, 10). The one who is not yet enlightened will probably never be, so does this person's supernatural being exist? And if it exists, is it really in this person? Christians did not at first find their original being in themselves, identical to their saved being; they found it above themselves, for they discovered it by receiving knowledge. This supernatural being is comparable with those angels that, according to Valentinus, the Savior brought with him to reunite them with human beings whose original selves they already were, but which had at first been separated from them. Up until this moment these persons were *separated from their true essence*.

Thus the two works that might possibly go back to Valentinus himself present a Valentinianism quite different from that which the heresiologists attack, and that differs simply by the fact that at first sight the Valentinian myth is not found in them. It does not seem that the doctrine of these works implies the distinction between three types of persons. It is not even certain that it implies that certain people had a supernatural element *within themselves* that assured them of salvation before they even had faith or knowledge. Quispel thinks that, according to the Valentinians, the true self of the Gnostic, one's *self*, the spiritual part of one's being, is *grace*. This, in fact, is what Tertullian affirms (*Adv. Val.* 29): "*Spiritalem . . . de obvenientia superducunt jam non naturam sed indulgentiam.*" Moreover, Quispel thinks that conjecture about the psychics did not exist in Eastern Valentinianism, but only in Western, and perhaps in Valentinus himself, insofar as, as a member of the Great Church, he would consider those of this Church spirituals.¹⁵ Up to a certain time, Valentinus would therefore have allowed only the distinction between the spirituals and the materials; or, what

amounts to much the same thing for a disciple of Paul, the distinction between the spirituals and the psychics. (Cf. the distinction between the spirituals and the psychics in Paul, 1 Cor. 2:14–15.)

Nevertheless, since the tripartite division of humanity was taught by at least two of Valentinus's immediate disciples (Heracleon and Ptolemy), it must be presumed that, at a certain time, Valentinus himself taught it. Quispel allows that he taught it after his break with the Church.

The psychics are obviously the men and women of the Great Church. And it is by considering the teaching that Valentinus and the Valentinians *attribute to the people of the Great Church* that one can understand what they say about the psychics.

When the Valentinians attribute free will to the psychics this does not mean that they deny it to the spirituals. If they expressly speak of the free will as being the psychics' means of salvation, this is because according to the Valentinians the psychics themselves placed the main part of their hope in acts, and consequently in the free will. *One gets the impression that in describing the destiny of the psychics, the Valentinians are simply describing what they think the men and women of the Great Church themselves think about their salvation.* For the Valentinians these people place their salvation above all in acts, in "works," and thereby think they can *bring it about themselves thanks simply to free will.* Now, for the Valentinians, one is saved by grace, and because in virtue of grace one has knowledge (or faith) with Christ as its object. Valentinus wished to be a disciple of Paul, for whom "works" did not suffice to obtain salvation. This does not mean, for Paul, that the Christian does not have free will, or that he has the right to do anything whatsoever. It was probably the same for the Valentinians.

It seemed to Valentinus and the Valentinians that in emphasizing "works" the Christians of the Great Church had somehow remained within Judaism, in the religion of the Law. This is why they call them psychics, understanding by this that they have the soul given to Adam by the Demiurge, and not the Spirit brought by Christ. Were they right in attributing to the members of the Great Church this idea of salvation by "works"? This is a question we cannot deal with here. But rightly or wrongly, the Valentinians obviously thought that the Church of Rome had remained too close to Judaism and did not understand what was proper to Christianity.

They nevertheless seem to admit that the psychics, that is, the Christians of the Great Church, can be to a certain extent saved by the way in which they trust, the way of works, obedience to rules. But here again they are merely describing a doctrine that is not their own but a doctrine of the Old Testament, which, they thought, had been preserved by the psychics. They also state that the salvation to which these persons come is only the "rest" promised to the just in the Old Testament. It is not union with God. It is a salvation that leaves the soul at the door of the world of truth.

If the Valentinians therefore say that the psychics obtain a certain salvation by meritorious actions, this is simply because, as they see it, *the psychics themselves believe they are saved in this way*, by the sole external observation of rules. It is not that the Valentinians themselves believe that this is a teaching proper to Christianity. *They are simply describing a belief that they do not share.* Nor do they think that the obligation to accomplish meritorious actions is imposed only on the psychics, and the spirituals do not need to do them. What they understand is probably that the true spirituals do not rely on their own merit, knowing that they are saved by grace and “knowledge” whose object is Christ. Finally, they do not wish to imply that the spirituals do not have free will. They rather wish to say that “knowledge” and the inner transformation it brings are, for the spiritual, the source of the acts by which liberty reveals itself, the source of good acts and a true free will, a *freed free will*.

We have seen that when we are told that the Valentinians reserved faith for the Christians of the Great Church, this ought not to be taken literally. Similarly, when we are told that for them free will was reserved for the psychics, this is not to be taken literally. There are a few more comments that must be made on this subject:

1. First, it does not seem accurate to say that for the Valentinians the spiritual is saved *by nature*. If some souls have been “sown” by God, or by the preexistent Christ, or the Spirit, this “seed” needs to be “formed.” If there is a spark in the depths of the soul, this spark needs to be revived, or “enkindled” as they say (*Extracts from Theodotus* 3, 1–2). What forms the seed, what enkindles the spark, is the knowledge brought by the Savior. Without it, the spiritual would not be saved.¹⁶

2. Morality is not a matter of indifference, despite what the heresiologists say. It is possible that there were truly “licentious Gnostics,” it is possible since not only does Epiphanius claim to have known some, but some late Gnostic works (the *Pistis Sophia*, Schmidt-Till, p. 251; the second *Book of Jeu*, Schmidt-Till, p. 304) contain a warning against them. But these must have been marginal types, not only in relation to Valentinianism but to Gnosticism in general. The liberty that those Gnostics who are described as the earliest claimed was a liberty in relation to Jewish Law. The heretics of the pastoral epistles criticized the Law (Titus 3:9; cf. 1 Tim. 1:8; 2 Tim. 3:16). The ones in the Apocalypse (2:14, 20) thought they could eat meat offered to idols, and it is probably this that the “prostitution” they are criticized for relates to (“prostitution” meant idolatry). This criticism is repeated by Agrippa Castor in relation to Basilides (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* iv, 7, 7) and by Irenaeus in relation to the Valentinians (1, 6, 3). There was nothing criminal or impious in that. These meats were simply ordinary meats, those commonly found on sale. (Paul allowed the eating of it, on the condition that Christians who were still very

attached to the Jewish Law were not scandalized.) The accusations of the Epistle of Jude, taken up and amplified by the Second Epistle of Peter, are too vague to be able to attach any importance to them. Jude seems to reproach the heretics for favoring a life without rule, for loose morals; but the pastoral epistles reproach them with the opposite (1 Tim. 4:3–8). It is true that Carpocrates must have taught that no act is either good or bad in itself, and that a soul cannot really be freed before having experienced everything (Irenaeus, I, 25, 4–5). We have seen that Carpocrates was a Platonist. The idea that no act is either good or evil except in relation to circumstances is a Platonic idea. Moreover, Carpocrates might have found in the final myth of Plato's *Republic* the idea that some souls make the wrong choice concerning their destiny, because not having had sufficient experiences in their former life, they are mistaken as to the consequences of their choices. But Irenaeus himself doubts (I, 25, 5) that the Carpocratians put into practice what their theology implies. In any case, if he repudiated formal rules, Carpocrates was not indifferent to all morality, since he thought that one is saved by faith and charity. We learn from Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* III, 5–9) that Carpocrates' son—a young man who died at the age of seventeen—wrote a work in which he claimed a perfect equality for all persons, on the basis of a common sharing of possessions, even of women. He was therefore also inspired by Plato's *Republic*. But this essay of a very young man probably does not express the general thought of the Carpocratians, still less their practice. In any case, Carpocrates and his son are, from this point of view, exceptions among the Gnostics of the first half of the second century. It is only at a later period that one sees signs of deterioration appear in the behavior of certain Gnostics, as also in their thought.¹⁷ One must also ask whether the practices that Epiphanius denounces in the fourth century (*Pan.* 26, 4–5) were the doing of whole sects or of a few individuals. The documents discovered in our century, in particular those of Nag Hammadi, have not confirmed these accusations. Rudolph writes: "It is at any rate striking that thus far no libertine writings have appeared even among the plentiful Nag Hammadi texts."¹⁸ He demonstrates that one ought to take account of the heresiologists' hostility toward those they fought against for more than one reason, and also the fact that in criticizing the value of the Law and exterior acts, and in making the value of inner transformation produced by "knowledge" of primary importance, the Gnostics may have seemed to neglect morality. But to reject the primacy of "works" is not the same as rejecting all morality. On the subject of the Nag Hammadi texts, Rudolph writes again: "It is remarkable and incompatible with certain older views on Gnosis that in these texts a high premium is placed on the exertions of the gnostics toward the just life [*um das rechte Leben*] and that there are also borrowings from the contemporary literature of wisdom and morality."¹⁹ "We have already seen," he adds, "in the portrayal of soteriology and eschatol-

ogy that the thesis put about by the Church Fathers to the effect that the gnostic must be 'saved by nature' is to be taken *cum grano salis*."²⁰

In any case, so far as the Valentinians are concerned, the ethic that the Valentinian Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora* implies is simply ordinary Christian morality, or, more precisely, the morality of the Gospel. If there is something that differentiates the Valentinian ethic and that of many other Gnostics from ordinary Christian morality, it is, it seems, rather a greater severity.²¹

3. There are many contradictions in what one reads in the Gnostics, particularly in Valentinus, regarding the problem of freedom. For example, the metaphor in which conversion to a saving doctrine is a *rebirth*, a *resurrection*, is a metaphor that does not vanish when the idea appears that those converted have simply found their true nature, their true selves, found from the beginning on the other side of the divide, on the side of the eternal world. Schenke²² and Tröger²³ make too deep a distinction between the conception of salvation as rebirth, which would be the conception of the ancient Mystery religions, and the conception of salvation as return to the self or a development of a seed, which would be that of the Gnostics. It is true that these two ideas seem to be contradictory, since one implies a complete change whereas the other implies that there is not really a change and that one simply becomes what one already was. However, these two ideas are *both* found among the Gnostics, and in particular among the Valentinians. For example, the idea of a present resurrection is developed in the *Treatise on the Resurrection*, and is likewise found in Menander and the heretics mentioned in the pastoral epistles, and Tertullian attests that the Valentinians thought of themselves as already resurrected (*De Praescriptione haereticorum* 33). This is what the *Extracts from Theodotus* (7, 5) also imply in reference to the "spiritual resurrection," and the Valentinian account in Codex XI from Nag Hammadi (41, 30–38) in reference to baptism. This is what one frequently finds in the *Gospel of Philip* (56, 18–19; 66, 16–20; 69, 25–26; 73, 1–5; 74, 19–20).

The Valentinians do not seem to be at all disturbed by the contradiction that can be found between this image and that of the seed or return to the self. This shows that metaphors must not be interpreted too strictly. It also shows that there are no grounds for supposing that because it depicts conversion as a resurrection the twelfth treatise of the *Corpus Hermeticum* derives what it has to say on this point more from the ancient Mysteries than from Gnosticism. (Tröger, in a book which is otherwise erudite and interesting,²⁴ would not have needed to look to the pagan Mysteries if he had really tried to take account of Christian Gnosticism, and above all of the work in which the source of all these ideas are found, the Gospel of John. Unless I am mistaken, he does not mention this Gospel once in a work devoted to the idea of rebirth! In John one finds both the

idea that those who believe in Christ come from God, that they belong to God before they were even given to Christ by God [17:6], and also the idea that no one will see the Kingdom unless that person is "born anew" [3:3].²⁵ John does not bother to make his images agree. He is as little concerned with that as the Valentinians.)

This demonstrates again that one cannot simply oppose Paul's anthropology and that of the Gnostics. There is a Gnostic anthropology that seems to be very different from Paul's, but there is also a Gnostic anthropology that is quite simply Paul's. For it implies that there is nothing divine in humanity (in its present state, a state in which it is separated from its true essence) before it has received the Spirit of Christ. For all people reception of this Spirit means an absolute change. Now, far from belonging to two different branches of Gnosticism, these two anthropologies are found together in the same works.

Finally, this demonstrates that one cannot fundamentally oppose the psychics on the one hand and the spirituals and materials on the other by basing this distinction on the fact that they seem to differ in the matter of freedom. The psychics, we are told, *change*, whereas the spirituals and the materials *remain inescapably what they are*. It is true that the psychics change; according to the *Extracts from Theodotus* (57, 1), they undergo a "metathesis" when they are converted. But the spirituals also change, indeed they change entirely since they pass through a "resurrection." And the materials can also change, at least according to the *Gospel of Truth*, since their conversion seems to be possible. Conversely, in the *Tripartite Treatise* the psychics also seem to be as determined by their nature as the materials and the spirituals are. Depending on their origins they are converted or not converted (120, 22—122, 12 and 131, 22—132, 3). Basically, there is not one but two classes of psychics for the author of this treatise, one of which is in the same situation as the spirituals so far as predestination is concerned, and the other in the same situation as the materials. One thereby sees that Gnostics always tend to present the current choice as the consequence of an earlier choice, a metaphysical choice, going back to God and the divine, although this does not mean that for them there is no choice in the present life. Predestination is perhaps one of the elements in all acts, and not only the acts of certain persons; and conversely, freedom can be one of the elements in every act, as much the act of a spiritual or a material as of a psychic.

This view seems to be confirmed by other contradictions found in the Gnostics, particularly the Valentinians, which touch upon the problem of freedom even more directly than the contradiction between the image of the resurrection and the image of immutable nature. We have seen that certain passages in the *Gospel of Truth* imply the freedom of the spirituals and even of the hylics, in the sense that the spirituals can return to the evil life they have rejected, and the hylics seem to be able to be converted. The *Gospel of Philip* also contains passages of this genre. For example, it is

stated here that he who has found Life is in danger of dying—a reference to the death of the soul—indeed, he is alone in running this risk, for he who is in “ignorance” cannot die, since he has never lived (52, 15–18). Thus the spiritual is not necessarily saved. On the other hand, this text states that Christ saves not only the good but also the evil, he saves not only his own but also those who are *strangers* to him (53, 3–14). This certainly seems to be opposed to substantial predestination. Moreover, it implies that one is saved by grace and not simply on the basis of free choice, since it is Christ who saves, and he saves without reference to one’s past. But in addition, one’s good conduct seems to be the condition rather than the effect of supernatural intervention. “If you become a spirit, it is the spirit that will be joined to you. If you become thought, it is thought that will mingle with you. If you become light, it is the light that will share with you. If you become one of those who belong above, it is those who belong above who will rest in you” (78, 33–79, 5). In this Gospel, and in John’s Gospel, one can *become a child of God*: John speaks of becoming a child of God or son of light (1:12 and 12:36); in the *Gospel of Philip* one can “become sons” (of God) (75, 11–13), or, what is the same thing, “become son of the bridal chamber” (86, 4–5). It is expressly stated that one must become this during the present life, not before or after it (86, 6–7). This obviously seems to imply that one can *become a spiritual*. One would therefore not be such originally. In one way perhaps one is such originally, in another one becomes such during this life.

The *Gospel of Philip* also states that knowledge gives freedom, and that he who is free does not sin (77, 15–18). This might mean that the acts of a free person can in no circumstances be considered sins; but it might equally well mean that if a person sins, he or she was not truly free.²⁶ Finally, this text observes that that which inherits the Kingdom is not what is *of us*, but what is *of Jesus and of his blood* (56, 34–57, 3). Thus freed persons do not re-assume their own nature in the other world, but rather that of Christ. The part of a person that will be saved is that which is *of Christ*.

Thus, there is nothing in this Gospel that is not ambiguous with respect to substantial predestination, and generally with respect to freedom.

Was it otherwise with the first Valentinians? In a thorough study of the fragments of Heracleon²⁷ Mme B. Aland has shown that the “natures” he mentions ought not to be understood as meaning that human beings are destined from the origin of their soul, regardless of their acts, for salvation or perdition. The spirituals properly so-called do not exist before Christ’s coming. Before meeting the Savior they are sinners like all other people and would be lost with them. Christ came to save the Spirit that was buried in the world, a Spirit that was apparently given to all humanity in the person of the first man. What distinguishes the spirituals is the readiness and wholeheartedness with which they respond to Christ’s call, and the fact that they completely understand its meaning. Nor, strictly

speaking, do the psychics exist before Christ's coming. Or rather, the word "psychic" is used with two meanings: on the one hand in a general sense all were psychics before Christ's coming; on the other hand in a narrower sense some become psychics after encountering Christ if they hesitate and do not fully understand the meaning of his coming. The psychics in a general sense can become spirituals as well as psychics in the narrower sense, and those who become spirituals do not necessarily do so in virtue of the seed originally established in them. Mme Aland refers to these words of Heracleon in relation to souls who are converted to Christ in the town of Samaria: "Some are sown in the field" (frag. 32). "Sown" is a word that is applied to the spirituals by the Valentinians. Finally, who are the hylics? Mme Aland thinks that for Heracleon they are like those to whom Christ says in John's Gospel, "My word finds no place in you" (8:37). They do not hear the saving message because they believe they already possess salvation. Thus it is partly their own fault that they are excluded from Life. In one way they have chosen, though in another way for Heracleon they are of the devil's nature, who for him does not really have a will but only desires. Mme Aland points out that for the Valentinians evil is essentially ignorance, error, absence of light, and in no way positive. It is assimilated into deaf and blind matter, which itself does not exist positively. What is material does not die because it has never existed. We are very close to Neoplatonism here.

Langerbeck had already considered the fragments of Heracleon, particularly the fact that for him the devil has no will. This demonstrates, Langerbeck comments, how much of a Platonist Heracleon is.²⁸ For Plato there is no evil will; one can only will the good; what causes evil is blind, or constrained by something stronger than itself. Saint Paul, in stating, "I do not do what I want," seems to think the same. A distinction of *nature* between different movements of the soul results from this: on the one hand those which derive from the soul itself, and on the other those which derive from some foreign cause. The latter for the Platonists do not derive from another will (which would be that of a sort of devil) but from an unconscious nature or a matter, which can desire in the sense of tending toward something, moving itself in a certain direction, but which cannot will. This is to say that radical evil, conscious and voluntary evil, does not exist, for the matter does not know what it does and does not will it. But it is also to say that what can provoke evil is something that necessarily exists in the world and in ourselves, since the world and the body are made of matter. To depict evil thus is on the one hand to be indulgent and calm (one cannot bear matter a grudge); but on the other it is to envisage the size and formidable power of that which can lead to evil in ourselves if it is not recognized and governed by us. For Origen, however, the devil is free and wills; the demons are persons, even in the human soul. This is to attribute to them the power that intelligence and trickery procure, but their power is more remote and limited. Langerbeck observes that there is

essentially more mythology in Origen than in Heracleon, since for Origen the demons are actually personal figures.

That demons are in reality a sort of nature does not mean that the soul is necessarily predestined to evil by this nature. Whoever has been overcome by the lower nature once can triumph over it another time. Nor does the higher nature predestine to salvation independently of acts actually accomplished. There is a fragment of Heracleon, cited by Clement of Alexandria,²⁹ in which we see that for him faith (which is the same thing as gnosis in this fragment) cannot be separated from the acts of the life one lives. Heracleon distinguishes the witness Christians give of their faith when they affirm it by words from the witness they give in their life and acts. For him it is only the latter witness that one can be certain is true. This shows not only that the Valentinians did not reserve faith only for the psychics (we have already seen that) but that for them the spirituals are not saved "by nature" independently of their acts.

What therefore does "saved by nature" mean (if it is true that the Valentinians used this expression)? Langerbeck shows that for them, the word "nature" can have a *normative* meaning.³⁰ It can refer to the ideal nature, that which is the true nature of humanity, that which links it to the world above. If you like, it is the eternal part of the soul. But the Valentinians are careful to show that the soul is *separated* from this part of itself, and can only be reunited to it in and by Christ. This is what the myth of the angels who descend with the Savior means. The Savior brings them with him so that each soul can be reunited with its heavenly part. Thus, souls are not saved by a nature that they have *in themselves*, but by a nature that, even though theirs by right, is in fact *above them*.

The Fathers of the Church always seem to presume that the soul is a simple point from which decisions derive, a point that proceeds indifferently to one side or the other. Indeed, in one way one must presume that there is a central point, a unique will, since human beings are responsible. Moreover, human beings think, and thought is inconceivable except as a unity. But in a way the Gnostics do not seem to deny responsibility, or unity. Isidore, the son of Basilides, foresaw and rejected in advance the excuse that some might give in pleading that they did what they did not want to (Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* II, 113–114, 1). There is scarcely a clearer affirmation of freedom and responsibility than that found in the *Apocryphal Epistle of James*, which might well be Valentinian. According to this text, God will favor those who have undergone persecution "from their own free choice" (*proairesis*, 5, 1–6). Christ says to Peter and James, "Woe to you who need grace! Happy are those who have spoken out and obtained grace for themselves" (11, 11–17). He also tells them that no one kills the soul, but that the soul kills itself (12, 8). Similarly in the *Gospel of Mary*, when Peter asks the Savior, "What is the sin of the world?" the Savior replies, "There is no sin [of the world], but it is you who sin when you commit adulterous acts" (BG 7, 13–16). There is therefore responsi-

bility, unity of the soul, but nevertheless it is not a simple point, and there are elements in it that naturally bind it to the body and powers of the world. The decline into evil is not completely analogous to the aspiration toward the good.

Certainly the texts I have just cited contradict numerous other texts, in which the idea of grace is fundamental and the world appears as something that enslaves and imprisons the soul. But one must take account of these contradictions and not falsely simplify doctrines.

4. *The Spark Given to Adam*

According to a myth prevalent among the Gnostics, a spark of life or a seed of the Spirit was given to the first man at the beginning. Without this spark or seed, Adam, created by the Demiurge or the angels, would not have been able to hold himself upright. We have already found this myth in Saturnilus, if we allow that the spark he mentions was given, in his thought, to the first man. For we have seen that there is some difficulty surrounding this point:³¹ Saturnilus taught that the spark is found *in believers*; it is therefore difficult for it to be found in a man before Christ's coming. When Saturnilus said that without it man could not hold himself upright he may have understood "to hold oneself upright" in a figurative sense. If he understood it in his literal sense, all persons, not only believers, would have the spark of life.

But if Saturnilus did not wish to say that the spark was given to Adam himself but rather to the human nature of those who believe in Christ, other Gnostics, who took up this myth, certainly seem to relate that it is Adam himself who was given some sort of illumination from on high. According to a fragment of Valentinus, Adam, created by the angels, received unknown to them a germ, a seed of the essence from on high, and that his creators were appalled when on hearing him speak they understood that he had something in him that they had not placed there.

What became of this spark that was given to Adam? It seems that it ought to have been transmitted to other people, his descendents. But this is not what the Valentinians appear to think, even if we do not interpret strictly what according to the heresiologists they had said concerning the three classes of persons. The spark must have been lost in certain cases, and not entered all human beings. And in fact, if we consider the fragment of Valentinus, we see that it could well have been lost, for Adam himself and for his descendents. When the angels perceived that there was something in him superior to themselves, they quickly destroyed their work, or rather they damaged it, spoiled it, disfigured it. (This is most probably how *ēphanisan* should be translated, since they did not kill Adam.) It therefore seems that, according to Valentinus, there was a sort of *fall* of Adam, or rather a degradation, which his creators made him undergo in jealousy.

And this is perhaps, after all, how Saturnilus's myth ought to be understood. Perhaps, even probably, for him too the spark was given to the first man; but Adam almost immediately lost it, in such a way that it did not reappear until much later, in those enlightened by Christ and believing in him.

The *Apocryphon of John* also includes a sort of illumination of Adam, and indeed even a number of successive illuminations, which seem to have lifted him up, instructed him, and freed him each time the Archons were able to humble or imprison his soul by their machinations. But here too the gift of God is threatened and finally seems lost. The Archons and the Demiurge succeed in making the first human beings forget their true goal and the place where their perfection is found. They are henceforth in darkness (BG 61, 16–62; CG II, 24, 4–8; CG III, 31, 2–5; CG IV, 37, 11–17). In the *Apocalypse of Adam*, a work that comes from the same milieu as the *Apocryphon of John*, Adam tells his son Seth, whom he has lost, and also Eve what true “knowledge” he had formerly (64, 24–28; 65, 9–13).

If Adam lost what he possessed of light, was a new enlightenment given to his son Seth? For the Valentinians there was a great difference between Seth and his two brothers. Seth was the symbol, the prototype of the “spirituals.” For those whom we call Sethians, for example the authors of the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Apocalypse of Adam*, Seth was not only a symbol for the spirituals, he was their father. They spoke of “the race of Seth” as that of the saved. It has been concluded from this that they held that there were those who had a divine spark from the earliest ages of humanity. It is very likely that this conclusion is false. One must beware of the distinction the Sethians make between the divine Seth and the earthly Seth. The earthly Seth may have been thought of as a prophet by the Sethians. (For example, in the *Three Steles of Seth* he is held to be the author of an ancient revelation, which was not understood until much later.) But he is normally distinguished from the divine Seth, who is the father of “the great generation” (cf. *Apocalypse of Adam* 65, 5–9; *Zostrianus* 51, 14–16). The divine Seth was not incarnate in the earthly Seth. According to the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, he was incarnate in Jesus (CG III, 63, 4–64, 9). The “race of Seth” could well be a name given to the “pneumatics” whom the Valentinians refer to and who were, for them, the most authentic Christians.

Insofar as it is possible to understand an obscure passage of the *Apocryphon of John*—obscure and different in the different versions (BG 63, 14–64, 13 and parallels.)—it seems that at Seth's birth a “spirit” was sent by the beings on high. But this “spirit” simply came to prepare the *future* descent of the Holy Spirit, a descent that will happen only after “a certain time.” Whatever the differences among the versions, the *future* descent of the Holy Spirit is foretold in all of them. What therefore is the “spirit” that was given to human beings *while waiting for the Spirit*? Could this be

the spirit of Sophia, who in other passages is called “the power of the Mother”? This power must be the *soul* rather than the Spirit. In fact it can be swayed in a good or evil direction, inclining to one side or the other (BG 67, 4–18 and parallels.) Thus, as Langerbeck and B. Aland admit, all men and women before the coming of the Holy Spirit (which will apparently be given by the incarnate Savior) seem to be psychics in the general sense. This is perhaps also the opinion of L. Schottroff, who observes that the “power of the Mother” is neither salvation nor the certainty of salvation.³²

We will see³³ that some Sethian texts can only be explained as an expression of a symbolism in which Seth, because he is the son of Adam, that is, son of man (Adam means man), is thought of as the image, the likeness of the Son of Man (cf. CG II, 24, 36–25, 1; CG IV, 38, 26–27). The latter is the divine Son of the divine Adam (Adamas, analogous to the Valentinian aeon, Man). He is eternal, he preexists the earthly Seth (cf. *Apoc. of Adam* 65, 5–9), and a good time after having been symbolized by him he incarnates himself in Jesus, the Son of man in the Gospels.

Thus the spirituals are not a race in the biological sense. The spark was not physically transmitted to the descendants of Seth, or to all the descendants of Adam. By the spirit, the spirituals are the sons of the Son of Man incarnate in Jesus.

We will see that there are close links between the Sethians and the Valentinians, and their mutual dependence is not in the direction normally supposed. Now, for the Valentinians the spirit that is in the spirituals is *grace* and not *nature* (cf. Tertullian, *Adv. Val.* 29). It is the spirit of grace brought into the world by the revelation of the cross of Christ.

5. A Certain Idea of Freedom

It nevertheless remains true that the Gnostics particularly insisted on that part of Christianity which concerns grace, election, and predestination. The basis of their thought seems to be the idea that human beings are sometimes incapable of dominating the inferior parts of their nature, that they cannot always free themselves by themselves, and that to rise above this nature, to break with it, they sometimes need a liberator who has come from a completely separate world. The basic idea on which Gnosticism seems to be founded is not, as is often thought, that humanity is by nature divine, but on the contrary, that humanity is naturally sinful, naturally a slave of the great laws that govern the world, slave of the “powers”; that it is subject to the powers who hold it prisoner even in the soul, which are especially dangerous, since, being within they have the appearance of freedom. It is because these powers are not felt as enslaving that people need a call that will awaken them from their slavery. Not only is a call needed but this *call* is so contrary to the forces of nature that it would not be heard by those who hear it had it not been prepared for in advance

by a sort of earlier call, if they had not been elected and predestined in advance. Langerbeck states: "Predestination and the problem of faith are not just a Gnostic theme, but *the* fundamental theme of Gnosticism."³⁴

These ideas of grace, election, and predestination stirred up the Christian world at the time of the Reformation, and they again preoccupied French Christians in the age of Jansenism. Today they seem to have lost much of their interest for most Christians, and when one thinks of Christianity it seems to me that one rarely thinks of such ideas. Moreover, when one actually comes to consider them, it usually happens that they arouse mistrust, and even irritate and scandalize. They seem to offend against ideas of human freedom and the equality of all. Why should there be an elect? Why a predestination that would work one way for some and in a different way for others? Why a grace that, given freely and received without merit, would be a matter of chance rather than justice?

Is salvation not due to all those of goodwill? "Peace to men of goodwill" states the Gospel (Luke 2:14). It is true that we are told that this means "to those who are the objects of (divine) goodwill." But even this revolts and seems insupportable to many.

We cannot discuss these questions at length here. But given the importance of these ideas in Gnosticism, we must at least recall that they also exist in Christianity. They are found in Paul and John, and one cannot deny that Paul and John are Christians. Why do they seem to say that whoever has faith (or knowledge) has been the object of an election or predestination? Doubtless one must suppose that the saint is so persuaded of his own unworthiness that he despairs of his salvation, and that the abyss that separates him from God can only be crossed in his opinion by God himself. This idea is that of absolute transcendence, and it is perhaps this which is called "Gnostic dualism."

One must reflect on how difficult Christian morality is, and that this difficulty could lead an exacting soul to despair of itself. By making the Law more internal, and by showing that true obedience is found in the inner disposition, in a good will, in *goodness*, Christ did not make things easier. Quite the contrary. If need be, an action can be forced, but how can an inner disposition be forced? How can love be forced? One must prepare oneself in advance, Christ himself said this. "Either make the tree good and its fruit will be good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit will be bad. . . . How can you speak good, when you are evil? The good man out of his treasure brings forth good and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings forth evil" (Matt. 12:33-35). The parable of the sower shows that good seed is not enough, there must also be good ground. The parable of the wise virgins shows that the stores must be ready. So also with sayings such as "to him who has will be given."

One must be prepared long beforehand. But even if one has tried to do so, can one answer for what one is, for what one will be, before the event? Of the way in which one will be judged by him who "sees in secret"?

The saint cannot conceive of God's judgment upon him being anything other than condemnation. The saint's hope is that God will be gracious, that he will freely give nature an assistance so effective that he completely transforms it, or that he will hide it from his eyes by clothing it, so to speak, with his own goodness, as with a veil. For Paul faith in the cross is this grace which transforms humanity, or which veils its involvement in a condemned world.

Above all, one must reflect upon the ignorance and unconsciousness that accompanies evil. That they who do evil do not know what they are doing is a Platonic idea, but also a Christian one. ("Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.") The first chapters of the Epistle to the Romans show that above all else Paul wishes to convince people that they are sinners, Jews as well as Greeks, and that they all need grace. He wishes to convince them that they are sinners because they do not realize it; they wish to do the good and think that they do it. The Jews are sure of themselves because they have the Law; but this Law does not stop them from being sinners like other persons. Sin reigns in mortal bodies and holds the soul captive. In John's Gospel Christ's enemies are not conscious of the fact that they wish to kill him (7:19–20, 25; 8:37). They do not believe him when he tells them they are slaves, they believe themselves to be free (8:32–36). The starting point for understanding the need for grace, and therefore of a Savior—the two go together—is that human beings do not always know what they are doing, they are often asleep, in a dream, and need to be awakened.

Whatever Gnostic speculations are on the elevated origin of the person destined to be saved, Gnosticism, like Platonism and Christianity, seems to be based on the idea that in its natural state humanity first finds itself in darkness, that it begins by erring and that it not only needs to think and look by itself, but to be guided in this search by a light that it owes either to a wise man (like Socrates) or to a divine helper. Humanity is mistaken precisely in that which is the most important for it, in the matter of good and evil. The knowledge that the serpent in Genesis promised, the serpent did not give to humankind, or only gave a very small part of it. Humankind desires the good, but perhaps never really knows how to recognize it for sure. The good is replaced by an *ought to*, because it is easier to know. But the morality of ought is a sort of *provisional* morality, like that of Descartes (which moreover is the definitive morality for Descartes). For it is a morality *in the absence of the good*. Moreover, the ought itself is far from being clear. Kant can only just cite a single example of a categorical imperative that is universally valid (do not lie), and even this example is doubtful, as Schopenhauer, among others, has demonstrated. (There are cases when to lie might be an ought.) To know the ought one has quite a number of wise sayings, which can be found in Descartes more easily than in Kant; for example: follow the laws and customs of your country, obey

a resolution taken once and for all. But these are only indications; none of these principles has an absolute value.

Does one at least know evil? It often seems that one can be more sure of what is evil than of what is good. Evil, however, is not always felt to be an evil. As for Socrates' daemon, who never positively suggested any action but warned him when he was going to do something that would turn out to be evil—can we believe that we always have this precious daemon close at hand? If this were the case, one would never do evil except consciously and voluntarily, for one would always be warned. But Plato does not seem to suggest that this is the case, since for Plato, and for Socrates himself, error is always involuntary.

There is therefore a natural ignorance concerning that which is the most important thing to know. All persons need to search, to question themselves, to wake themselves up; but all perhaps also need at some time to be awakened by someone other than themselves. A *call* is perhaps necessary for the one who sleeps too soundly. It happens perhaps when one meets a wise man like Socrates, who, by questioning, evokes the reply from his interlocutor that he does not know what he thought he knew. It can also happen when one comes across a striking image that disconcerts, like the image of the just one on the cross.

Certainly freedom is to choose for oneself, even when one chooses badly. But can it be said that one truly chooses when one chooses blindfold? Does one choose when one does not know what one is choosing? If someone takes off the blindfold, he does not constrain us, he delivers us.

It is true that the idea of grace can have its dangers. Born of the feeling of uncertainty in which we find ourselves, born of humility, it can lead to too much assurance. From the fact that one has been awakened once one might conclude that one has been awakened forever. Since the Christian is renewed, having the spirit of Christ within or Christ himself, can the Christian not believe that henceforth it is Christ who thinks and acts through him or her? But it must rather be the case that the memory of the first awakening warns the one awakened that he or she could fall asleep again. As Glucksmann states, one must always remember the "principle of uncertainty."

As for the idea of predestination, it is doubtless linked to that of grace by the fact that grace, if it is truly free, is not conditioned by human acts and can only be related to a destiny beyond time. But this idea of predestination can be even more dangerous than that of grace, and perhaps it is not permissible to maintain it in order to move from predestination to the good to predestination to evil. It is doubtful that this movement is allowed, doubtful that it was desired by those who originated these ideas. Predestination to evil is simply a secondary and abstract deduction, the result of a logic that would like to apply to everything but is only valid in certain

cases. In reality what interests Paul, and what interests the Gnostics, is predestination to the good. The idea of predestination rests on the idea of grace, which is primary and which expresses the desire to depict not only evil but also the good by relating them wholly to God.

Among the Gnostics there is hardly any mention of the predestination of the wicked. It is simply a consequence of the predestination of the good, and it is clear that the Gnostics did not take pleasure in imagining it. F.-M. Braun juxtaposes the text from Qumran in which the predestination of the impious is mentioned along with that of the just ("You created them for the time of your anger, from their mother's breast you reserved them for the day of slaughter") alongside a passage from the *Odes of Solomon*, in which only the predestination of the elect is mentioned.³⁵ Perhaps the only work in which the future lot of sinners is described with any emphasis is the *Book of Thomas the Contender*, which is indeed one of the least Gnostic works found at Nag Hammadi. The Gnostics usually seem to be rather embarrassed when they speak of the condemnation of the evildoers, the "ignorant," the "materials." They reduce the number of those who will not be saved as much as possible. In the *Apocryphon of John*, for example, everyone is finally saved, with the exception of the lapsed—those who having had "knowledge" fell back into evil (BG 70, 9–71, 2 and parallels). (Again the author refers to the Gospel saying about those who have sinned against the Holy Spirit.) Similarly the *Gospel of Philip* states: "If someone is a slave against his will, he can be freed; but if someone who has been freed by grace sells himself and becomes a slave again, he can never again become free" (79, 14–18). So that, paradoxically, it seems that it is only the spirituals who are in danger of being damned. And this is exactly what the *Gospel of Philip* states (52, 15–18): "A Gentile does not die, for he has never lived in order that he may die. He who has believed in the truth has found life, and this one is in danger of dying, for he is alive." The materials, if they are lost, seem rather to vanish into nonbeing, like matter itself. They no longer exist, but in one sense this is because they have never existed.

A passage from the Epistle to the Hebrews might be the source of the Gnostics' severity toward apostasy (Heb. 10:26–31): "For if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful prospect of judgment. . . . A man who has violated the Law of Moses dies without mercy. . . . How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the man who has spurned the Son of God . . . and outraged the Spirit of grace?" The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews perhaps felt himself compelled to this severity by the saying concerning blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Mark 3:28–29 and parallels). This is why he speaks of outrage to the Spirit of grace. But perhaps he misinterpreted the saying about sin against the Holy Spirit.

Predestination to evil could have seemed to the Gnostics, and to Christians in general, as a necessary consequence of predestination to

good, since, from the fact that predestination to the good can be lacking, since God is free, it seems that if it is lacking, there is necessarily a predestination to evil. But there are inferences that one is forbidden to draw. In certain cases the progress of logic must be brought to a halt. Kant has shown that there are irreducible antinomies in human thought, that is, that in certain cases contradiction must be accepted. If there are cases of this type, the difficult and serious question of predestination is one of them. The ideas of grace and predestination are there to reward, not to condemn.

The idea of predestination only has a negative use. It simply means that nothing that is in time can explain grace. Nothing, if it is not a decision of God. And this decision, not being determined by what is in time, can be likened to an eternal design. On the other hand, everything that is not grace is explained by what is in time. That is why evil comes by chance, and there is really no predestination to evil.

Predestination goes against grace if one interprets it as meaning that the predestined being has a sort of right to salvation. For then one would no longer need grace. In this way R. A. Markus denies that Valentinianism was a doctrine of grace, reasoning approximately along these lines: salvation is due to the Gnostic, since the Gnostic has a divine spark within; it is not therefore granted freely.³⁶ Which is to say that because salvation is wholly a matter of grace, there is no grace; that because not only the revelation that awakens and saves but also that in us which accepts this revelation is something that comes from God, this owes nothing to God. Markus almost states, God was indeed obliged to save what comes from him. Which is as much as to say that he is obliged to save after having predestined.

This shows how easily one idea passes into its opposite in the dangerous realm that is theology.

It is easy to see that Gnosticism is full of contradictions on the subject of freedom. But these contradictions are found in all authentic mysticism, and even in all authentic philosophy, as Simone Weil thought. When we speak of predestination, we are in the realm of irremediable contradictions. Predestination seems logically to imply predestination to evil, and yet there cannot be a predestination to evil. Predestination might go so far as doing away with grace, and yet this path is forbidden, since predestination rests on grace. Predestination could ruin morality, and yet this path is forbidden, for the whole edifice of theology is founded upon morality. Mysticism seems to oppose morality, and yet at the same time it is founded upon it.

The source of these contradictions seems to be the fact that there are two ideas of liberty, both of which are necessary for morality and yet they are contradictory. For moral obligation to make sense, humanity must be free. Moreover, we always think of ourselves as free beings. For example, even to think, to be able to reflect upon freedom, one must believe oneself to be free. For one must believe that one can think good or evil. But in

what way do we necessarily believe that we are free? If freedom is understood as the ability to act *while feeling free*, who would deny that we have this ability, so long as we suffer no external constraint? But if freedom is understood as the power we should have at a certain moment to make a decision without being unconsciously determined by our own physical or psychical nature, or by the chances of surroundings, in this case we are not so sure of always having this ability, and in any case we know that we have not always exercised it. We therefore come to the point of realizing that we were conditioned when we thought we acted or reasoned freely. The Platonic idea of freedom is that he who does evil is not free and does not act voluntarily *even though he thinks he does*. He is mistaken, and the one who is mistaken does not really do what he wishes. The Johannine idea of liberty seems to be the same. "Everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin" (John 8:34). "You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:32).

Foerster saw that Gnosticism is above all a doctrine concerning human freedom, which is opposed to the idea of freedom found in Stoicism and Judaism.³⁷ In Stoicism and Judaism free will belongs naturally to humanity and it can never be deprived of it. "There is no thief of free will," states Epictetus. The free will of everyone suffices to save or to lose, according to a person's choice. One does not need a savior, one can save oneself. The Law, the universal moral Law or the Mosaic Law, suffices, and one is free to obey it or not. In Platonism and Gnosticism by contrast it is not enough to feel free, to be so: it is not enough to *wish* to be free, to be so; it is not enough to *think one wishes*, to truly wish. Bondage might be hidden by apparent freedom. To extricate oneself from certain faults, one might need an awakener like Socrates, or someone who issues a *call* like the Savior spoken of by the Gnostics, who is also the Savior of whom, before them, the Christians spoke.

It is true that in progressing further, or descending deeper into the argument, one realizes that one ought always to presuppose an original free will, something in the one who is enslaved that has *consented* to the enslavement. Despite Plato, it is necessary to be able to be free even in evil. Or what would happen to responsibility? What about moral obligation? Stoicism and Judaism are concerned above all else with morality and that is why they accentuate free will, without considering the matter further. The same concern for morality is found in Judeo-Christianity, which, even when it modifies the old Law, continues to emphasize rules of conduct. Now, it is true that morality is primary and the basis of everything. It does not need a foundation, it is the foundation for all the rest. It is categorical, as Kant states. If it cannot order us, it can at least forbid certain acts *in certain circumstances*. The imperative would have no sense if one was not free to obey it or not. "You ought, therefore you can."

But morality also needs another sort of freedom. The freedom that is needed to obey an ought, that is, a universal Law, is not only a freedom

to choose between two things placed, so to speak, alongside each other, between two things on the same level. It is the freedom to break through the limit between the subject and the universal, between the subject and that which surpasses the subject, between the inferior and the superior. It is the freedom somehow to come out of oneself, to ascend higher. It is *transcendental* freedom. True freedom is vertical, not just horizontal. Descartes said that the freedom of indifference is but the lowest level of freedom. It might even seem not to be freedom at all, since in a state of indifference the feeblest impulse from outside would suffice to make up my mind. Choice must be possible but is not in indifference in cases of complete equality or analogy between the two terms of the choice.

Transcendent freedom might appear not to have its source in the subject, such as it first appears, since even this must be passed beyond. It is not of myself, it seems, insofar as it delivers me from myself, the self I was originally. It is not of myself since I am not always free in this way. It seems *contingent* in relation to myself, even if it is bound to me by the fact that it appears to me as my duty, my vocation, my end. It is linked to me by right rather than in fact. It does not always seem to be at my disposal as a tool, to depend absolutely on my will. If it absolutely depended on my will, would I not always have it? Besides, if it was always united only with my will, would it make me overcome the passionate impulses, which are normally *indiscernible from my will*? What is united with the will is spontaneity rather than transcendent freedom (at least so far as one defines will by this sort of freedom, but this is a matter of words). True freedom in some way breaks with what I am, or at least with *what I originally am*, with what I am at the time when it must itself be passed beyond. In sum, I need to believe not that I am free but that freedom, which is indispensable to obedience to duty, will be *given* to me.

Mysticism also follows morality like its shadow. The ability to do the good seems to be situated, like the good itself, above myself. If I have it, it is perhaps because it was given to me as a grace. If I ought to have it, it is because it will be given to me again. Certainly I must always believe that it will be given to me, but to believe that it will be given to me is not exactly the same thing as believing that I produce it myself. If I (perhaps) had it at a certain time, I cannot make it a matter of personal merit. I must always doubt my own adequacy, without ceasing to act and to hope.

It therefore seems that the morality of duty—which is simply to say morality—implies both freedom of choice and transcendent freedom. Those who realize that they have sometimes needed to be awakened by another cannot boast that true freedom will always be at their disposal. For them it possesses an element of inspiration or grace. One cannot always avoid calling, within oneself, upon another, an irreproachable witness who was once an awakener, and whose questions by renewing our thought make it truly free. There is a freedom that is not *only* ours, even though it is also ours, and this is the truest freedom.

It is not only the belief in a savior like Christ or the confidence in an awakener like Socrates that rests on the idea that the truest freedom does not simply derive from nature. Belief in God perhaps also does this. "No one who denies the Son has the Father" (1 John 2:23). If grace alone were necessary to be free, God would perhaps lack proof. If one could be truly free other than by the idea of a transcendent and absolute Good, it would be very difficult to believe in God. For it is not the order of the world that proves God. Nothing in the world of things clearly bears the mark of an intention, a design organizing things for the good. The Law of things seems to be blind to the good. And it is not certain that the organization of living beings themselves can be explained by the same laws as the world of things. Or could it be society, social order, and therefore social power that must be considered God? But this would be to say that there is no God.

The true God is simply the principle of what the world cannot explain: the holy. The God whom Christians conceive of is essentially the Father of the holy, the Father of Christ, source of the Spirit, the source of true freedom. The affirmation of natural freedom is necessary for morality, but it does not found a religion in which God is known through the holy. Still less does it found a theology like that of Paul or John. It is the affirmation that man is not *naturally* free that produces theology.

Moreover, as we have seen, morality itself does not always remain content with a freedom that remains on the earthly level. In the most difficult choices, in the most painful *cases of conscience*, one turns to a freedom that is not natural freedom, for one turns to something other than one's own will. "Not my will but thine," Christ said. Similarly with Claudel's Sygne, who repeats "And not mine!" We know well enough that when we say "it is necessary," this is not the same thing as saying "I want." It is true that Kant says that the "I ought" is an "I want" that applies to all rational beings. But one must not forget the second half of this statement. Despite everything, it makes a profound distinction between the "I ought" and the "I want." The "I ought" is obedience.

Conclusions of Part 1

I. It is not true that Gnosticism cannot be explained on the basis of Christianity. We have found that the principal Gnostic “myths” are explained most simply and precisely on the basis of Christianity. We have always found links in the New Testament for Gnosticism’s main characteristics.

II. The Pauline epistles and the Johannine writings have a preeminent place among the New Testament texts the Gnostics appeal to and may have given rise to their interpretation of Christianity.

III. The idea of grace—a grace consisting in revelation and freedom—seems to have been a fundamental idea in Gnosticism. It explains their cosmology: the image of a *closed* world in which humanity, ignorant of the true good, finds itself handed over to inferior powers who present themselves as the only good. According to this image, human beings cannot act clearly unless they are first freed and awakened by the free intervention of the good itself. Only the latter can break through the barriers and in revealing itself make men and women capable of choice. The idea of grace similarly penetrates the whole of soteriology: the idea of a savior who sought humankind before being sought by it; who at his own instigation, or sent by God, descended into the world and, persecuted by the powers, thereby made the truth about God and the powers known. Finally, it explains Gnostic anthropology: the idea that the soul is too mixed up with the body and too inclined to worship the powers to be able by itself to know the good and do it; that that in us which recognizes the good is a spirit of truth, placed in the soul by God and the Savior, and which by producing faith and love makes us capable of understanding the revelation of the Savior. This idea of a grace that is above all a purifying, enlightening knowledge, a freely given spirit of truth, seems to me to have its source in the theologies of Paul and John. It is true that the Gnostics diverge from Paul and John in considering that the God of the Old Testament is not the Father spoken of by the Savior. But this questioning of the Old Testament, prepared for by Paul’s criticism of the Law and John’s anti-Jewish polemics, might be explained by the growing tension between Christianity and Judaism, a tension that seems to have come about around the end of the first century or the beginning of the second.

IV. The Gnostics normally express their theology by means of symbolic figures, some of which are nothing else but the figures of Christian theology under different names, while others seem to be personifications of concepts that are also found in Christianity. It is in this way that the Spirit can be called "the Mother"; that God can be called "Man," by deduction from the expression "Son of Man"; that the seven days of creation seem to have been personified in the form of angels associated with the Creator; that "the perfect Man," in texts in which this expression is linked with the Church, is nothing other than the future, perfect Church, assimilated to the "fully grown stature" of the body of Christ, as in the Epistle to the Ephesians. Even though the meaning of these figures is often quite easy to penetrate, this symbolic language, which is very different from normal Christian language, has often misled modern scholars.

V. In the Gnostics' ideas and the symbols they use there are certainly important elements deriving either from Judaism or Hellenism—not to mention less important elements that may come from other traditions. But the oldest and principal Jewish and Hellenistic elements may have been received through Christianity, or explained by its history. The figures of the Demiurge and Sophia certainly come from Judaism; but the characteristics ascribed to these figures, which are so different from those which Judaism attributes to them, show that they do not derive from it directly. These characteristics can only be explained by a radicalized idea of the difference between Christianity and Judaism, and of the superiority of the first over the second. The use of the word "gnosis" to refer to the true religion is already found in Judaism; but it is also found in early Christianity, prior to Gnosticism. The devaluation of the body seems to come from Hellenism; but it is already found to a large extent in Paul and John. Gnosticism perhaps only became more strongly syncretistic at a certain stage in its development (perhaps after the time of the first Valentinians), borrowing a greater number of symbols or modes of expression either from the Old Testament or from philosophies or pagan traditions. But these symbols and modes of expression remain subordinate to the fundamental Gnostic ideas, which cannot themselves be explained by a simple syncretism.

When one says that because Gnosticism often expresses itself through symbols drawn from diverse traditions and can thus appear as a syncretism, it cannot be explained by a single source, this statement seems to be founded upon confusion. The question of the origin of the themes used by the Gnostics must not be confused with the question of the origin of Gnosticism itself. It is undeniable that the Gnostics borrowed ideas and images from diverse traditions. But when one looks at when and where these diverse elements were brought together for the first time into a doctrine that is properly and clearly Gnostic, one finds that this doctrine first appeared within Christianity, toward the end of the first century or the be-

ginning of the second. Moreover, syncretism cannot of itself explain Gnosticism. As Jonas saw, there is an intuition within it that organizes, that interprets the diverse elements, that dominates the syncretism. This intuition cannot be explained either by Judaism or by Hellenism or by any other tradition known to us among those earlier than Christianity—and still less by a simple fusion of diverse traditions. If Christianity can explain its main characteristics, if the point where it differs from it the most, that is, the distinction between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the Christians, can itself be explained by the history of Christianity (a history that is at once bound up with Judaism and separated from it), one certainly has the right to judge that Christianity is by far the most important source, the essential basis of this intuition.

PART 2
How Gnosticism
Could Have Been Formed



Introduction

Hypotheses That Will Be Developed and Supported by Many Reasons in What Follows

I. Gnosticism first appeared neither in Samaria nor in the valley of Lycos. Neither the Samaritan Magus of Acts nor the missionaries opposed in the Epistle to the Colossians are depicted as Gnostics. It is, moreover, unlikely that Simon claimed to be God, and very improbable that he claimed to be the Savior himself. It is also very doubtful that he distinguished the true God from the God of the Old Testament.

II. The account of Acts (8:9–24) might indicate that Simon wanted to be the head of a Samaritan Christian community that had been accorded a certain autonomy in respect to Jerusalem's Christian community. In fact, he wished to be able to administer to his fellow citizens the sacrament that allowed Christians to receive the Spirit. Was this in order to secure an important role? Perhaps. But it was perhaps also to avoid the Samaritan Christians' having to depend too much on the Church at Jerusalem. Samaritan Judaism jealously defended its independence with regard to Jerusalem; it is natural that Samaritan Christianity also wished to be independent, at least to a certain extent. Simon did not request complete independence. The offer of giving money may have meant that he agreed, as Paul had done, to give a contribution to the mother Church. According to the account in Acts, the authorities at Jerusalem rejected this offer with indignation. It was thought that Simon wished to buy the Spirit. This interpretation might have been given after the event, because in fact there had been a division between Simon and the Church at Jerusalem. Another interpretation is possible. One must recall that in fact this Church in Jerusalem was to conclude an agreement with Paul a little later that very much resembled Simon's proposal. Paul states (Gal. 2:10) that the leading men of the Church at Jerusalem had authorized him to preach to the pagans according to his own rules (that is, without obliging them to observe the whole of the Law) so long as he did not forget "the poor." Now "the poor," the *ebionim*, was the name given to the first Christian community, that of Jerusalem; and not to forget them would mean to send to this community the gifts of money that Paul collected in his Churches. Why had Simon been refused what would later be granted to Paul? Why had Paul not been accused of wanting to buy the Spirit? Perhaps Simon had expressed his demand awkwardly and in a damaging way. Perhaps, Samaria being much

closer to Jerusalem than the Pauline communities, the Church in Jerusalem judged that it had the right to keep it closely under its domination. Perhaps it would not yet allow the compromises it allowed a little later. Perhaps, finally, the profound hostility that divided the Jews of Judaea and Galilee from the Jewish heresy, which the religion of the Samaritans was for them, made the agreement difficult. The apostles might have interpreted Simon's request as an expression of this Samaritan separatism which the Jews at Jerusalem detested. Whatever the case, Simon's suggestion seems to have been rejected. If, as is probable, it resulted in schism, Simon's community must have developed outside the communion of the Churches, though one cannot conclude that it was heretical from the beginning.

(This hypothesis takes account of the immense responsibility that the heresiologists attribute to Simon in the origination of the heresy. For schism was detested at least as much as heresy, and it was often confused with it. Moreover, schism could have led to heresy as a result of a separate development. We shall see that it is in the Simonian school at Antioch that Gnosticism proper seems to appear for the first time.)

III. The first indications of a *tendency* toward Gnostic ideas are found among the Corinthian Christians to whom two of Paul's epistles are addressed. In the second of these epistles, as far as we can tell, Paul's opponents are the same as in the first. It seems that it is principally a matter of the followers of Apollos. But these opponents, though opposing Paul's teaching, manifest a tendency that to a certain extent seems to be parallel to that of Paul. It simply goes a little further.

IV. The second stage, and by far the most important in the evolution toward Gnosticism, is constituted by the Fourth Gospel. It is not that this Gospel is properly speaking Gnostic; but often the mode of expression is such that one can *deduce* the principles of Gnosticism from it. In it, an anticosmic attitude is in general very strong, and the criticism of Judaism here is often very violent. In a certain way, the Fourth Gospel agrees with Paul's theology, but its language differs greatly from Pauline language and is often close to Gnosticism. This is why some exegetes of our time say that this Gospel is already Gnostic or semi-Gnostic, while others contest this, each with good reasons.

V. Excursus: These first two movements toward Gnosticism, that of the Corinthians and that of the Johannine author, might not be unconnected. For the same man might be responsible both for the "Gnostic" tendencies of the Corinthians and the "Gnostic" language of the Fourth Evangelist. This Evangelist—definitely a man of genius—might in fact be the strange and remarkable person whom the Corinthians put on the same level as Peter and Paul: Apollos. A good number of reasons incline us toward this hypothesis, which has already been suggested but without taking into account everything that might support it. If Apollos is not the

author of the Fourth Gospel, he might at least have been the main inspiration of the circle from which this Gospel emerged (cf. B. W. Bacon).

(This hypothesis is but a digression. It is not necessary for one to note the links between the tendencies of the Corinthians and the language of the Fourth Evangelist, nor to give one the right to look to Jewish Alexandrian Platonism—Apollon was from Alexandria—for the possible source of the type of expression the author we call John uses.)

VI. It is not John who uses Gnosticism or who was influenced by it; it is Gnosticism that in large part proceeds from John. It proceeds from Paul too, but more directly from John. Nearly all the Gnostics develop the Johannine themes. The only one who seems to avoid using John is Marcion, who wished to hold to Paul. But Marcion himself adheres to a current of thought whose source seems to be John's anticosmic attitude and anti-Judaism.

VII. The first heterodox teaching in which the beginnings of Gnosticism can be seen is Docetism. By overemphasizing Christ's divine nature, some Christians denied, or more precisely *appeared to deny*, his human nature. This is not yet Gnosticism properly speaking; it is but an element, which can also be found among non-Gnostic Christians. Docetism is probably opposed in the Johannine epistles. It might therefore have appeared in the immediate circle of the Fourth Evangelist, and—though finally rejected by him—developed under the influence of his Gospel or his oral teaching.

VIII. The Simonian School at Antioch (Menander, Saturnilus) seems to have known the Fourth Gospel very quickly; either the Evangelist had already had some link with them (his astonishingly favorable attitude toward the Samaritans allows one to suppose this), or this School, as perhaps also the Johannine circle, was outside the communion of the Churches (this common position would have brought the two groups together). The doctrine attributed to Menander already seems to bear the mark of Johannine influence. In fact it is in John's Gospel that one finds the idea that conversion is a resurrection (cf. John 3:3; 5:24; 1 John 3:14), as well as the statement that those thus resurrected do not die again (cf. John 6:48–51; 8:51; 10:27–28; 11:25–26). Perhaps one also ought to see a trace of Johannine influence in the idea that the true God is "unknown," that is, was not known by the world, *not even to the Jews*, before Christ's coming. (When John says that the Jews do not know God [cf. John 5:37–38; 7:28; 8:19, 54–55; 15:21; 16:3; 17:6, 25–26], he probably means the Jews of his time, since they refuse to believe in Jesus; but it might also be understood of the Judaism of the Old Testament.) Still more clearly we see that Saturnilus knew the Fourth Gospel. The light that he says appeared to the angel-demiurges and that they could not master is the light of the Johannine Prologue ("the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it").

IX. If Menander depends on the Johannine Gospel, one must presuppose a lapse of time between his teaching and Simon's (at least if Simon taught). Moreover, this is what the lists of heresies given by Hegesippus suggest (cf. Hilgenfeld, *Ketzergeschichte*, 33, 35, 45). R. M. Grant *Gnosticism*, 99) states that Menander probably taught during the reign of Trajan (98–117). He also says (*ibid.*) that even if one attributes quite exceptional longevity to Menander, it seems difficult to make his encounter with Simon go back further than the year 70. Menander may have heard Simon in his youth, but himself taught much later on, for example, from the last decade of the first century. It is also possible that he was not a direct disciple of Simon but simply a member of the schismatic Samaritan Church which claimed Simon as its founder.

X. It is not very likely that Menander presented himself as the Savior, despite what Irenaeus says. Justin does not say this. It is true that Justin places Menander among those men who "said they were gods." But he also places Marcion among them, which very much weakens the value of his account. In reality, Justin is simply thinking of Simon when he speaks thus (and even when he later gets around to speaking specifically of Simon he simply states that "he was taken for a god"). For Justin as for Hegesippus, Menander figures among those whose disciples were thought of as Christians. It would hardly have been possible to consider these men Christians if for them the Savior was Menander and not Christ. The two disciples of Menander who are known to us, Saturnilus and Basilides, were both Christians; it would be strange if both of them had changed their minds on such an important point of their master's doctrine. (Similarly, it would be strange if Menander had introduced such an enormous change in Simon's doctrine as to substitute himself as Savior. Religious schools are normally more conservative.)

XI. Besides ideas that evoke the Fourth Gospel, Irenaeus attributes to Menander ideas that he had previously attributed to Simon. But since these ideas attributed to Simon seem to imply knowledge that Simon could scarcely have had—for example, knowledge of Matthew's and Luke's Gospels—these ideas seem to have been formed for the first time by Menander, or the Simonian School around the time of Menander. The myth of the divine "Thought" emitting the angels which then enslave it seems to date from the time of Menander and might even be his own work. In any case, he seems to have adopted it. We have seen that this myth might be an interpretation of Pauline thought. It is true that for Paul the angels have not "made" the world, they simply govern it. But Irenaeus could have assimilated Simon and Menander's angels to those of later Gnostic doctrines. In fact, neither the New Testament nor even Ignatius of Antioch seems to know of a doctrine that attributes the *creation* of the world to the angels, and it can therefore be supposed that doctrines of this type are not earlier than the second decade of the second century. Menander seems

to have taught that although the powers of the world issued from divine Wisdom, which for him is the same thing as the Holy Spirit, they persecuted this same Spirit in Christ and in Christians, and that they had at first enslaved the thought of Christians before their conversion to Christianity. He must have joined to this interpretation of Pauline thought the idea that conversion is a resurrection (or *the* true resurrection) and gives us eternal life. One can therefore conclude that his doctrine was primarily a mixture of Pauline and Johannine thought.

XII. But we can conclude something further on the subject of Menander by examining what sort of heresy Ignatius, who was bishop of Antioch at the time Menander taught there or had just taught there, opposes. The heresy Ignatius opposes is Docetism. Just as the two disciples of Menander whom we know of, Saturnilus and Basilides, might both be thought of as Docetists (though Basilides, at least, was only Docetist in a certain sense, if he was one at all), there is some probability that Menander was a Docetist or appeared to be, though Irenaeus does not say this. (Irenaeus's account of Menander is very brief, and moreover, according to Irenaeus, as Menander claimed to be the Savior himself, it is not clear what sort of Docetism Irenaeus could have attributed to him.) We have distinguished between two forms of Docetism. What sort was that which Menander seems to have taught? Ignatius seems to oppose two forms of Docetism without ever stating that they are found in definite heretics. One seems to be the Docetism Irenaeus attributes to Cerinthus (the distinction between the two persons in the Savior, one divine, the other human); the other is the Docetism Irenaeus attributes to the disciples of Menander (the human person of Christ was simply an appearance). If Menander therefore seems to have taught a form of Docetism, one might suppose that this Docetism appeared in two forms, or perhaps that it was in a state of flux, passing from that which is attributed to Cerinthus to that which is attributed to Saturnilus and Basilides.

XIII. The *Ascension of Isaiah*, which seems to be of a Docetic tendency, may have been written (as far as the Christian parts are concerned) within the Simonian School at Antioch, around the time of Menander. Its date of composition is normally placed at around the last decade of the first century. The theme of the main Christian part (the descent of the Savior through the heavens, during which he assumes different forms in order not to be recognized by the angels), is, according to Irenaeus, a Simonian theme (*Adv. haer.* 1, 23, 3). (Cf. Tertullian, *De Anima* 34; Epiphanius, *Pan.* 21, 2, 6). R. M. Grant has pointed out that the text that served as Irenaeus's source (or for Irenaeus's source) must have referred to Christ and not to Simon (*Gnosticism*, 86–87). Moreover, Ignatius seems to know this work (cf. *Ign. Eph.* 19, 1). If the *Ascension of Isaiah* was therefore perhaps written at Antioch in a Simonian milieu inclined to Docetism, we would have here an example of that Docetism mixed up with "old

fables" (that is, with Jewish fables) which Ignatius opposes. But it must be noted that if the context of the *Ascension of Isaiah* is indeed a Jewish legend, its theology is not Jewish, or even Judeo-Christian; it is rather Pauline and somewhat Johannine. The author or authors of the Christian parts try to reconcile the Pauline and Johannine idea of the preexistent Christ, descended from heaven, with the Synoptic accounts. It must also be noted that if Ignatius's Docetists "Judaize," they are not Jews (*Philad.* 6, 1; *Smyrn.* 5, 1–2), they are Christians (*Eph.* 7, 1; *Trall.* 6, 2; *Magn.* 10, 3; *Smyrn.* 6, 2).

XIV. The example of the *Ascension of Isaiah* demonstrates that it is not necessary to think that the Docetism Ignatius opposed had Jewish roots. Jewish legends could be used while adhering to Pauline and Johannine theology. It is possible that if Menander was Docetic, he was such in the same way that the *Ascension of Isaiah* is. On the other hand, we must note that this work is not yet properly Gnostic (although Gnostic sects used it). The seven heavens are mentioned here, but God, the true God, is depicted as reigning in the seventh heaven, which is where the Gnostics placed the Demiurge. This shows that this God is still the God of the seven days, the God of the Old Testament. In this text the angels rule over the world, but they did not *create* it, even though they have ruled over it from the beginning. Such might be Menander's position: close to Gnosticism without being Gnostic properly speaking. It is true that Tertullian attributes to Menander the idea that the human body was created by the angels and not directly by God (*De Resurrectione carnis* 5). If this information is right, it may indicate that Menander knew Philo's ideas on this point, or other, analogous, Jewish theories. But the example of Philo shows that one must not deduce the creation of the world by the angels from the creation of the human body by the angels. Philo is not Gnostic; for him God is the creator of the world. If for him the body was not created directly by God, this is because he thinks of the body as Plato does in the *Phaedo*. If Menander in turn adopted Philo's views on the body, it is because he interpreted Pauline thought as opposing the body and spirit, and this is not without due cause.

XV. Ignatius does not seem to know of the doctrine that expressly teaches that the world was made by the angels; nor that it was made by a Demiurge distinct from and not knowing God. Nevertheless, from what Ignatius says, we might conclude that there had perhaps already been discussions on the question as to whether the God of the Old Testament was the same as the God of the Christians. For Ignatius insists on the unity of God, sometimes seeming to understand by this the unity of the God of the Old Testament and the God of Jesus Christ (*Magn.* 8, 2; *Philad.* 8, 1; 9, 1–2). From this one can deduce that at his time, which is probably more or less that of Menander, the myth of the angels who were thought of as creators of the world was not yet clearly formed in the Simonian School at

Antioch, but that in this School, and perhaps among other Christians at Antioch, the question was already discussed as to whether the God of the Old Testament was the same God as the Father of Jesus Christ.

XVI. From Irenaeus's account of Cerinthus, we might infer that the idea of the Demiurge, that is, the idea that the God of the Old Testament is but a "power" inferior to the true God, first appeared with Cerinthus. But the information that we find in other heresiologists concerning Cerinthus, in particular in Epiphanius, is so contradictory and often in disagreement with Irenaeus that one might well question the value of Irenaeus's account. There are even reasons for asking whether Cerinthus really existed, or whether his name is not the result of some misapprehension, for we will see that the ideas of the *Cerinthians* sometimes seem to have been confused with those of the *Corinthians*. Moreover, the idea of a creative power in the doctrine attributed to Cerinthus by Irenaeus remains vague, and this power is not specifically identified with the God of the Old Testament. Finally, this idea is not accompanied by reasons that might explain and thus confirm it. It might be that Cerinthus did exist, and that he was really the first to have separated the creator God from the true God; so that he would be the first Gnostic, properly speaking, that we know of. But this is merely a possibility.

XVII. On the other hand, we find that the idea that the God of the Old Testament (= Creator) is but an angel, that is, is not the true God, is clearly expressed for the first time in Saturnilus. Even though there are a number of creator angels for Saturnilus, his conception of the God of the Old Testament, whom he intentionally reduces to the level of an angel, is certainly the Gnostic idea of the Demiurge, even though he does not call it Demiurge (against Foerster, *Gnosis* [Eng. tr.], vol. 1, 36). Moreover, his myth of the *seven* creator angels itself seems to be linked with the Genesis account, and a second time links the creative power with the God of the old Law. At the same time in Saturnilus we find the idea that the Father of Christ, "wishing to *destroy* the God of the Jews at the same time as the other Powers, sent Christ into the world for the salvation of those who believed in him." This implies a very strong anti-Judaism. In fact it implies that there is a fundamental opposition between Judaism and Christianity. This conviction explains the fact that Saturnilus abused the God of the Old Testament and confirms that he did it. Moreover, the asceticism he preached manifests a strong anticosmic stance and confirms the fact that he could criticize the idea of the creation of the world by God. It is therefore almost beyond doubt that he did teach the distinction between God and the Creator, and that he is one of the first Gnostics, strictly speaking, whom we know of, perhaps the first. Contrary to the opinion that he must first have linked Gnosticism and Christianity by adapting them to each other, he seems to be the first to have clearly deviated, by this theory of creation, from the Christianity of the New Testament, thereby opening the

way for a divergent *doctrine*, which had existed until then simply as a *tendency*.

But if he deviated from the New Testament on a certain point, one might presume that he did so with the intention of remaining faithful to it on other points; particularly to uphold, and develop, the anticosmic, anti-Judaistic statements of John, as well as Paul's criticism of the world and the Law. He probably simply wished to uphold them, but he went further than that.

XVIII. Saturnilus seems to be the first to speak of the *seven* creator angels. He also seems to be the first to have used the metaphor of the "spark of life." For him this spark must be something other than the soul since before receiving it humanity was far from inanimate. Human beings crawled upon the earth, which ought to be understood morally, not physically. Moreover, according to him, this spark was not in all; nor was it in a race created from the beginning—we have seen that the two types of human beings created by the angels are not to be identified with those who have the spark of life and those who do not; it was *in believers*. It therefore seems that for him the spark of life was grace or the Spirit that gives faith and sustains it. Was this grace or Spirit already in the soul of the believer as a seed before conversion? In other words, was the spark for Saturnilus the ground for predestination? It is likely that he believed in predestination, since Paul and John seem to teach it. But did he think of it as linked to an element already present in the predestined soul, before the advent of faith? It is difficult to affirm this. What is probable is that Saturnilus thought of the spark (in the one who has faith and from the moment one has it) as a sort of *nature*, since, according to Irenaeus, he said that at death this spark returns to "that which has the same nature as itself." This not only implies that the spark is analogous to a nature but that in some way it establishes itself in the soul and remains there until death. The spark would therefore have been something like the seed mentioned in the First Epistle of John (1 John 3:9), the seed that is found in those who are "born of God" and that does not seem to be able to be lost. But for John, "born of God" probably meant "reborn," resurrected by a new birth (John 3:3-5). Was it not the same for Saturnilus? It is very likely that this disciple of Menander, who was also inspired by John, thought of the spark as a *new nature*, raised up in the soul by a sort of resurrection, and not as a nature that the soul would have already possessed within itself from the beginning. However, this image can be interpreted otherwise, and the myth one attributes to the Gnostics seems to be already formed in general outline with Saturnilus.

XIX. From Saturnilus one can follow two lines of development. One leads to Valentinus via Basilides and Carpocrates; the other leads to Marcion via Cerdo. It is true that Marcion does not express himself by means of Saturnilus's myths and metaphors; he wishes to remain as close as possible to Paul. He does not adopt the Fourth Gospel for his Church; he

chooses the Gospel of Luke, the disciple of Paul. But he retains the idea that the God of the Old Testament is other than that of the Gospel and inferior to him, and he attempts to justify this idea, which he owed, according to the heresiologists, to the Syrian Cerdo, by citing texts from the Old and New Testaments. He also preserves Saturnilus's anticosmic attitude, which also is manifested with him in a rigorous asceticism.

XX. The historical Basilides is that of Irenaeus, not that of Hippolytus's *Elenchos* (cf. among others, Hilgenfeld, and more recently B. Aland). (The Basilides of the *Elenchos* is a Basilidean of the end of the second century or the beginning of the third.) However, the information that Irenaeus's account gives ought to be corrected by the fragments cited by Clement of Alexandria. Basilides is both very similar to Saturnilus and also quite different from him. He agrees with Saturnilus on a lot of points: the creation of the world by the angels, one of which is the God of the Old Testament; anti-Judaism and the anticosmic attitude (but both a little less strong than in Saturnilus); perhaps a certain docetism (Basilides could have been Docetic *in one sense*, although in another he most certainly was not); the denial of the resurrection of the body; salvation by faith; the influence of the Fourth Gospel (the series of divine emanations, in Basilides, seems to be partly based on John's Prologue); the Johannine idea of the light that the darkness has not overcome—according to him they have only seized a reflection (a fragment of Basilides in the *Acts of Archelaus*, analogous to Saturnilus's theory of the luminous apparition which the creator angels saw but could not seize). All of this shows that it is without doubt true that Saturnilus and Basilides had the same master. But Basilides is less of a mythologist (or creator of images) and more of a philosopher than Saturnilus. He is steeped in Platonism. He introduces the theory of the divine emanations, eternal, perfect beings, analogous to the Platonic Ideas. He already speaks of Sophia (Wisdom), who with Dynamis (Power) constituted a pair of divine emanations, the two *last* emanations, and he teaches that these last two are derived from the angels, some of whom created the world. In this he is already close to Valentinus, and we can see that there is a continuous line from Menander to Valentinus. However, Basilides' Sophia does not fall. Doubtless, with the Power, he is one of the names of Christ (following 1 Cor. 1:24).

XXI. Like Saturnilus and Basilides, Carpocrates held that there were creator angels. It is beyond doubt that he placed the God of the Old Testament among these angels. It is easy to recognize this God in "the first of the creator angels" he mentions, the "archon," the "judge" (Irenaeus, I, 25, 4). There is therefore indeed a distinction in his thought between the God of the Gospel and the Old Testament Creator, who can be called the Demiurge (against Foerster, *Gnosis*, vol. 1, 36). His anti-Judaism is more pronounced than that of Basilides and close to that of Saturnilus. Unlike Saturnilus and perhaps Basilides, he is not Docetic; for him Jesus is simply

a man. It is true that for him Jesus received a "power" from on high, which might be analogous to Christ whom Cerinthus speaks of (according to Irenaeus), and this would perhaps be a form of Docetism. As much as possible he transforms Christianity into Greek philosophy, and his disciples joined the image of Christ to the images of Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle. (Despite Aristotle's presence in this list, it is clear that Carpocrates, like Basilides, is more a Platonist or a Pythagorean, for he seems to allow the preexistence of souls.) As in Basilides and Saturnilus, for him one is saved by faith, to which he joins charity. There are sufficient links between him and Menander's two disciples to allow us to suppose that he depends on the School that issued from them, probably by Basilides' intermediacy.

XXII. Valentinus is also steeped in Platonism. But he continues the line of Basilides rather than of Carpocrates. For he attenuates even more than Basilides Saturnilus's anti-Judaistic tendency. One sees the appearance of a true reaction against the excessive antinomism of Saturnilus, Carpocrates, Marcion, and even of Basilides. Though he insists, like Marcion, on the newness, the unique and irreducible character of Christianity, he can use Jewish language as a symbolic language to express Christian truths, just as he can use the language of Greek myths and philosophy. The *Odes of Solomon*, Christian imitations of the biblical psalms, might be Valentinian. (Cf. Preuschen since 1910, when the *Odes* were discovered, and the parallels recently listed by Schenke between these *Odes* and the *Gospel of Truth*.) It is certainly following Valentinus and under his enormous influence that symbols borrowed from Judaism proliferate in Gnosticism. It is among the Valentinians that James, the head of the Jewish Christians in the first century, seems to have been positively appreciated. It is among the Valentinians that the Demiurge could be called the prophet and the image of the true God. This was perhaps an attempt to link themselves with the Great Church; but they perhaps also wanted to link themselves with Alexandrian Jewish Platonism (Philo), and the Jewish Christianity that survived in the East. Valentinus seems to have been a conciliator. He seems to have wished to bring together all the branches of Christianity, and perhaps even those who were very close to Christianity in Judaism and paganism. However he distinguished between gnosis and faith, at least from a certain time—probably when he realized that he did not agree with the Church at Rome. He nevertheless thought that one could be saved to a certain extent *by faith accompanied by works*, that is, *by the doctrine of the Church*.

XXIII. The desire to conciliate different tendencies is probably not the only motive that may have inspired the Valentinian reaction against the excesses of anti-Judaism and the anticosmic attitude. The most important motive was probably the desire for a broader agreement with the New Testament as a whole. The example of Marcion shows that from the time

of Marcion and Valentinus, Gnostics could be conscious of having to make a choice: either to suppress certain passages of the New Testament, as Marcion did (thinking that they were the work of disciples who had not properly understood either Jesus or Paul, and who had reinforced the Jewish elements in Christianity); or to achieve as great an agreement as possible with these texts by making a smaller division between God and the Demiurge. Valentinus chose to attenuate the separation by developing the theory of the emanations which was already found in Basilides and the myth of Sophia, a part of which was also found in him. For Valentinus, as for Basilides, Sophia has her place at the end of the divine emanations and is linked to creation; but instead of assimilating her to the Wisdom-Christ of 1 Cor. 1:24, Valentinus assimilates her to the "human Wisdom" or the "Wisdom of the world" of which Paul speaks in the same text (1 Cor. 1-4). It is this Wisdom who in desiring to know God directly without a mediator gave birth to a false image of God. The Demiurge is this false image, but he is nevertheless an image of God, and the cause of his appearance was a love truly directed toward God, a love that only lacked the "knowledge" brought by Christ. According to Valentinus, the true God can only be understood through the Mediator, or, what comes to the same thing, through the *separation* that is the cross. Silence is inseparable from God. Thus Valentinus allows for a certain analogy between the true God and the God of the Old Testament, while at the same time maintaining a great distance between them and preserving the distinction of two levels that characterizes Gnosticism.

XXIV. The doctrines called Barbelognostic, Sethian, Ophite, and others of the same sort are post-Valentinian and not the source of Valentini-
anism (as against Irenaeus, against Hippolytus in the *Syntagma*, who systematized Irenaeus, against Hilgenfeld, Bousset, etc.). In fact, they can scarcely be explained without Valentini-
anism, whereas the latter is understandable without them. Moreover, their very character indicates that they are late. In the form of myths whose characters are more and more numerous and whose names are more and more obscure, they collect together ideas that seem to be borrowed from the main Gnostic masters of the first half of the second century, while, in a growing syncretism, they add to them elements borrowed from Judaism and Hellenism. A study of Irenaeus's statements that suggest that this sort of doctrine was the source of Valentini-
anism leads one to suspect that he may have been mistaken. The only proof he gives for his opinion is the resemblance between these doctrines and Valentini-
anism; but resemblance does not indicate in which direction the dependence lies. The way these doctrines are introduced into his Catalogue demonstrates that he did not learn of them from the earlier heresiologist(s) who guided him in his description of the oldest heresies. He knows about them from original documents which may have been recent. In fact, no one seems to have known of them before Celsus and

Irenaeus. It is to these doctrines that many of the documents found at Nag Hammadi are linked.

XXV. The *Apocryphon of John*, which is perhaps the oldest Barbelognostic or Sethian work we know of—for one can follow the progressive development of the myths of the *Apocryphon of John* in other works of the same type—is later than the first disciple of Valentinus. This is what a close study of the theme of the “four enlighteners” demonstrates, among other things. This theme, which has always been regarded as being of pagan origin, but which has never been completely explained—nor has anyone thought there could be a sound explanation—might be almost entirely understood on the basis of a theory found among the first disciples of Valentinus (Heracleon and Ptolemy). What demonstrates that it is linked with this theory is not only the fact that one can thus explain certain details that remained unexplained, but also and most especially the fact that one can thus bring together the diverse elements of this theme into a single and coherent theory.

XXVI. If the author of the *Apocryphon of John* uses a Valentinian theory, a theory that seems most definitely pagan, how much more would he draw from Valentinianism the myth of Sophia and almost all the rest of his doctrine. It can thus be concluded that in this work Christianity is not “secondary” but early. It also means that the other works called “Sethian,” which all appear to depend on the *Apocryphon of John* and certain works that are probably “Ophite” and appear to be closely related to it, also depend on the Christian Gnosticism that is Valentinianism. One can also find Christian traits even in those Nag Hammadi works that are generally held as absolutely “non-Christian.”

XXVII. Those Hermetic works that may be thought of as Gnostic are also not without certain traits that could derive from Christian Gnosticism, and particularly from Valentinianism. We have seen that one can find such traits in the *Poimandres*, and they can be found even more easily in the thirteenth treatise of the *Corpus Hermeticum*. The discovery of Hermetic works among the Gnostic works at Nag Hammadi shows that there were indeed links between a certain sort of Hermeticism and Gnosticism. It also demonstrates that these links did not necessarily work in the direction that has normally been supposed, in the direction of an influence of the Hermeticists upon the Gnostics. The treatise *The Ogdoad and the Ennead* reveals that the religion of some Hermeticists was not entirely speculative but could include a cult, and that certain features of this cult are redolent of Christianity. Also, the *Poimandres*, which seems to be oldest of the Hermetic works of a Gnostic inspiration, is probably not earlier than the appearance of Christian Gnosticism. Numenius’s Middle-Platonism and Neoplatonism could also have received something from Gnosti-

cism and especially from Valentinianism; similarly, the *Chaldean Oracles* (see M. Tardieu's paper at the Yale conference). Thus so-called pagan gnosés could depend upon Christian gnosis rather than vice versa.

XXVIII. Manicheism basically derived from Christian Gnosticism, although Mani wished to unite Mazdeism and Buddhism with his Christianity. Raised within a Jewish-Christian sect, Mani opposed the teachings of this sect; but to oppose it he appealed to Christian texts. He seems to have constructed his doctrine primarily under the inspiration of Paul and Marcion.

XXIX. Mandeism resembles a mixture of Jewish-Christianity and Gnosticism. Even though the Mandeans hold Christianity to be an enemy and recommend no belief in it at all, they seem to have inherited simultaneously both of the principal branches of early Christian heterodoxy: Jewish Christianity so far as their baptismal rites (their renewable baptism) and certain points of their morality are concerned; Christian Gnosticism insofar as their myths and their attitude toward the world are concerned. Certainly the Mandaean rites might, strictly speaking, be directly derived from pre-Christian Jewish Baptism; but it is much more likely that they come *through Jewish Christianity* (cf. Quispel). We now know that a Jewish-Christian sect (the Elkesaites) was established at the beginning of the third century, in the same places in which the Mandeans later appear. The baptismal rites of this sect were to a large extent the same as theirs, and the Elkesaite regulations for marriage agree with Mandaean morality. Moreover, the Jewish Christians were called Nazarenes, as the Mandeans called themselves. Yet another sign of this direct link with Jewish Christianity, rather than with Judaism, is that the Mandeans' feast day is Sunday, not Saturday. As for the Mandeans' Gnostic myths and their attitude toward the world, there are striking resemblances with those of the Gnostic Christians. They could hardly have derived from Elkesaite Jewish Christianity, since it does not seem to have been Gnostic. It is even less likely that they derive from a pre-Christian Jewish Gnosticism, which remains indiscoverable (despite Quispel, Cullmann, and Rudolph). On the other hand, it might be supposed that the influence of Christian Gnosticism in Syria and Egypt stretched as far as Babylonia. The example of Mani shows that a member of a Jewish-Christian community in Babylonia could be influenced by Gnostic ideas derived from more Eastern regions. One is tempted to suppose, with Pedersen, that the Mandeans were first of all a Christian sect. This sect might have derived from a Jewish-Christian sect of the same type that Mani knew; it would have preserved its rites, and in certain respects its morality. But its attitude toward the world and Judaism would have been profoundly transformed, perhaps from contact with Manicheism, but perhaps also and more emphatically from contact with a literature spread about in the East by the epigones of Valentinianism. Puech has shown that in the fourth century the Audians of Edessa knew the

Apocryphon of John, and Mani must have known "Sethian" literature, since he made Seth one of the true prophets who preceded Jesus. If such were the origin of the Mandaeans, it would certainly be difficult to explain why they are later so distanced from Christianity that they depict it as an enemy, despite the analogies between their morality and Christian morality, despite the analogy between what they relate about their saviors (the activity of Anosh and the "Knowledge of Life" at Jerusalem) and the story of Christ, and why they finally chose to put themselves under the patronage of John the Baptist, about whom they knew nothing save what was derived from Christian Scripture. Some of their texts might nevertheless suggest an explanation, when we see the "Roman Christ" here, that is, the Christ preached by the Byzantine Empire, appearing to them as an oppressor and persecutor, who must be challenged, before whom the Mandaeans must conceal their faith. Where and when did they have this unfortunate contact with Byzantine Christianity? We do not know. Whatever it was, it must be noted that Mandeism is no less critical of Judaism than of Christianity, or rather it is more so, and that this does not stop Lidzbarski and Rudolph from deriving it from Judaism. We therefore think that the idea of a Christian origin is no less defensible, given the present state of research, than that of a Jewish origin, and on the contrary is more likely. If such judgment is allowed, the ancestors of the Mandaeans, who, according to their legends, must have left Palestine very early on and taken refuge first in Haran, are perhaps simply Jewish Christians who left Jerusalem a little before the siege of the city and who emigrated beyond the Jordan. (Cf. the Jewish-Christian document discovered by S. Pines in an Arabic manuscript, which shows that, after leaving Jerusalem around the time of the siege, the Jewish Christians must have passed through Haran, where, moreover, according to Pines, Jewish Christians are found around the fifth century.)

XXX. Second Excursus. I will again mention the *possibility* of a hypothesis, even though this hypothesis is in no way necessary to my basic argument, and though mentioning it can scarcely result (as was already the case with my hypothesis about Apollos) in anything but making my ideas seem very adventurous. I will nevertheless point out this possibility, because I do not see it suggested anywhere else, and to my mind even if it is nothing but a simple possibility it merits one's casting a glance at it. Dositheus, whom the Dosithean sect worshiped (among whom, according to Theodore bar Konai, were the Mandaeans) was perhaps not, as is normally supposed, a Samaritan heretic. This name, which means "gift of God," may have been given to Christ by certain Samaritan Christians who did not belong to the Simonian community, or who were simply a branch of this community, a branch that had not adopted Paulinism. The beliefs of Dositheus in fact seem to have been of the same type as those of the Ebionites. If they were considered heretics, even as early as Hegesippus, it was perhaps because as Samaritans they were jealous of their independence, like Simon, and formed a group apart, distinct from other Christians. This hypothesis,

strange as it seems, would best explain most of the diverse and sometimes contradictory information that has come down to us concerning Dositheus. For example, it would explain the following facts: (1) He was Jewish and not Samaritan (according to Epiphanius and the Samaritan documents). (2) *For the Samaritans he was Christ* (Origen and Eusebius). (3) He was said to have claimed to be the “son of God” (Origen). (4) He claimed to be *Hestōs*, that is, God or the Savior (pseudo-Clementines). (5) His disciples said that he was not dead but still alive (Origen). (6) *He was said to have prescribed baptisms or baths following which one found oneself converted to his faith* (Samaritan documents). (7) He was said to have been a disciple of John the Baptist and was said to have succeeded him; but then Simon (who is often depicted as Paul in the pseudo-Clementines) was supposed to have supplanted him (pseudo-Clementines). (8) *He was said to have been the founder of the Ebionites* (Samaritan documents). (9) He was said to have been (as the Ebionites often were) a supporter of strict observance of the Sabbath (Origen). (10) The Dositheans were also called *Nazarenes* (Theodore bar Konai). I will add that Hegesippus seems to place the Dositheans among the Christian heretics—at least he places them among those who constitute the transition between Jewish heresies and Christian heresies; and that, according to the most recent studies (Kippenburg, Isser), Dositheus must have been almost Christ’s contemporary. All these agreements would be difficult to explain if the character of Dositheus had not at least been *redrawn* following the model of Christ. But his name might also perhaps have been a name referring to Christ himself, as would have been, in my opinion, the name “Knowledge of life” which the Mandaeans gave to the Savior. The Samaritan Christians may have called Christ “Gift of God” (*dosis theou*) because for them he was the prophet raised up by God whose coming they awaited in accordance with the prediction in Deuteronomy (18:15).

It might also be noted that in the New Testament there are only two passages in which a “gift of God” is specifically mentioned (John 4:10 and Acts 8:20), and that both these passages are linked with Samaria. The expression “Gift of God” is found in words addressed to the Samaritans, and thus meant to be understood by them. This might indicate that this expression was more current in Samaria than elsewhere and that it had a specific meaning there. In Luke it seems to refer to the Holy Spirit. In John it might refer to the Spirit, or to the man who can give the Spirit. (Christ’s words could mean: “If you know the Spirit, and that he who asks you for water is the one who can give it . . . ” or “If you know the one who can give the Spirit, and that he who is asking you for water is the very same. . . .”) It is true that the word used for “Gift” is not *dosis* but *dōrea*. But these two synonymous words might be a translation of the same Aramaic word.

But why did those who spoke Aramaic, if they wished to call Christ “Gift of God,” use a Greek translation of this expression? This is a difficulty, which is perhaps insurmountable. Were the Ebionite Samaritans not

Greek speakers? Or would they have written in Greek, while normally speaking Aramaic? After all, the *Kerygmata of Peter* were written in Greek, and this is a Jewish-Christian work that seems to have been written in the East, perhaps in Syria, and is one of the sources for the Pseudo-Clementines. Could the Aramaic-speaking Dositheans not have retained an expression that came to them from works written in Greek by some of their members? Many of the Samaritans must have been bilingual. Greek was the language of culture, the language used in philosophy and theology in certain Aramaic-speaking groups.

Whatever the process by which the name Dositheus could have become a name given to Christ within a certain sect, the fact remains that we find an astonishing number of coincidences between the person of Christ and that of Dositheus. The latter is not normally depicted as a Gnostic; his disciples were rather a kind of Ebionites. But it is possible that from a certain time they adopted Gnostic ideas. In any case, this is what the Mandaean Dositheans did.

It must be noted that in the *Three Steles of Seth* we find a Dositheus mentioned who is depicted as a revealer who has come in the last times, who has understood the ancient revelation of Seth and taught it to the elect. If the work is of Christian provenance this revealer might be Jesus, a supposition that I will demonstrate is at least possible. There is nothing to make us think that this Dositheus was any other than the Dositheus of the Dositheans. He perhaps is some other, but perhaps he is also the same.

Granted, among all the legends that have come down to us about Dositheus, there are some that this hypothesis will not explain. But it will explain many of them, indeed perhaps even most of them.

In any case, If Dositheus did exist as a historical figure distinct from Christ, it can hardly be doubted that this figure was then remodeled upon that of Christ.

Chapter I

The “Gnosis” of Simon the Magician

1. Simon as Schismatic Rather Than Heretic

It is not the texts found at Nag Hammadi that can provide us with definite information on the time in which Gnosticism was born and on what it was at the beginning. For we do not know the time at which these texts were written. We only know that they are earlier than about the middle of the fourth century. For the most part, at least in their present form, they seem to be relatively late. For the earliest period, in which Gnosticism must have appeared, our only sources are still the heresiologists and especially the New Testament. Especially the New Testament, for what we find here on the subject of what happened in the first century is much more reliable than what we find in Irenaeus and the other heresiologists. It is commonly thought that Gnosticism must have appeared or at least been formed by the second half of the first century. Now, the texts of the New Testament were also written during this period, while the heresiological works we have are no earlier than the second half of the second century.

I realize that to touch on the problems posed by the New Testament is a formidable undertaking. What has not been written on each passage (almost) of this book! Although I have myself spent much time studying it, I cannot have an exhaustive knowledge of everything that has been written in relation to each passage; and who can? Nevertheless it is impossible to form an idea of Gnosticism without touching upon the New Testament. Just as those who study the New Testament are obliged to speak of Gnosticism, which they have sometimes not studied in depth, and to take sides on the still obscure question of its origin—those, for example, who study the Pauline epistles or the Johannine writings cannot avoid expressing an opinion on this question, for according to whether they consider Gnostic doctrines to be earlier or later than Christianity (or at least independent of it) or whether they consider it even as derived from Christianity, their exegesis will have to be different—so also those who study Gnosticism are obliged to speak of the New Testament.

On the basis of the New Testament, Gnosticism has been thought of as first appearing in Samaria and in the Lycos valley.¹ As far as the Lycos valley is concerned, this was founded on Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians. We have seen² that the theory that holds that the Epistle to the Colossians

was directed against the Gnostics is simply a hypothesis, and very improbable. Everything seems to point to the fact that it is Jewish Christianity, and not some sort of Gnosticism, that is attacked in this epistle.

As for Samaria: Samaritan Gnosticism has been regarded as one of the oldest, perhaps the oldest, form of Gnosticism that can be linked to a definite place, time, and individual because of the traditions concerning Simon the Magician. But what are these traditions worth?

I have already spoken of Simon a number of times. It seemed to me that it is not certain and is even very doubtful that his doctrine—if he taught something—already presented the characteristic features of Gnosticism, in particular the distinction between the God of the Christians and the God of the Old Testament. We have observed that when Irenaeus describes the Simonian angels as having *made* the world, he is probably judging on the basis of later systems.³ The angels whom Simon referred to—if he spoke of angels—may have been “governing” angels, like those mentioned in Judaism and early Christianity. There are grounds for thinking this, both from what we read in Justin and because the devaluation of the Creator—not the world but the Creator—seems to be unknown in first-century works. It is neither upheld nor attacked by them.

In the *Apophysis Megale*, a work Hippolytus refers to in the third century as a work of Simon's, but that is probably not by him and may have been written in a Simonian School in the second century or at the beginning of the third, there is no evidence of a distinction between God and the Creator.⁴

If this is the case, there is perhaps nothing that is properly Gnostic in the myth of the Mother that Irenaeus attributes to Simon. This myth implies a pessimistic view of the world, but the same view is found in Paul and John. Despite this pessimism, the act of Creation is not devalued, since the Mother creates in obedience to the Father. If God creates through the Mother, that is, the Spirit, this is in no way an idea foreign to Christianity. In the *Veni Creator* it is the Spirit who is called Creator.

Nevertheless, we ought to ask ourselves why this mysterious character Simon was thought of as the father of Gnosticism.

One thing strikes me. Almost all the ideas attributed to Simon by the heresiologists have links with those of Saint Paul. We have seen⁵ that the myth of the Mother can be understood on the basis of some of Paul's ideas. There is even more of a link between the Simonian doctrine of salvation, as Irenaeus describes it, and the Pauline doctrine. According to Irenaeus, the angels whom Simon had spoken of were not simply powers dominating the world, they were also the authors of the Law. This is why Simon's disciples did not have to obey the Law, but had to think of themselves as free to do what they wished, *ut liberos agere quae velint*. And Irenaeus adds: *Secundum enim ipsius gratiam salvari homines, sed non secundum operas justas*, “for men are saved by grace and not by just works” (*Adv. haer.* 1, 23, 3). This is, in a sense, the Pauline doctrine, with

the exception that for Paul one is saved by the grace of *Jesus Christ*. Must it therefore be held that Simon claimed to save by his own grace? This claim is not very likely, especially since in Irenaeus's account characteristics are attributed to Simon that are manifestly those of Christ. Did Simon dress himself up with characteristics borrowed from the figure of Christ? If there is an element of truth in this, one can suppose that it was his disciples who placed him on the same level as Christ, rather than that he placed himself there. But the most probable answer is that having come across a work written by the Simonians, the orthodox Christians or Jewish Christians thought that the words addressed to Christ in this work were addressed to Simon, or that the words spoken by Christ were spoken by Simon.

It is even more difficult to believe that Simon claimed to be God the Father. It has been noted in this respect that there is some resemblance between the name Simon and one of the names by which God was referred to.⁶ This might explain the fact that, according to Justin (*Apol.* I 26), almost all the Samaritans worshiped Simon as the supreme God, which would otherwise be astonishing, even if one allowed that he was deeply venerated by his disciples.

It therefore seems that there is some link between Simon and Paulinism. Some of the Pseudo-Clementine works show that in certain Jewish-Christian circles the name of Simon could cover that of Paul. The latter was attacked under the name of Simon. In some parts of the Clementine novel, Simon represents Paul; in others, he represents Marcion, who wished to be a disciple of Paul.

This leads us to ask whether the confusion of Simon with Paul (and sometimes with Marcion) is not also found in Irenaeus. On the subject of Irenaeus's account, R. M. Grant has written:

Does all this information really refer to the Simonians or does it come from Ebionites who used the figure of Simon in order to attack Paul? Strange though it may seem, such use [of the figure of Simon] is actually found in the *Clementine Homilies* and *Recognitions* and in their sources, which go back to the second century. And we must regretfully add that Irenaeus seems to be acquainted with something like these sources when he tells us that, after the incident described in Acts, Simon "eagerly proceeded to contend with the apostles." In other words, are parts of his account of Simonianism simply derived from Ebionite attacks on Paul? No certainty is attainable, but to me it appears more likely that the Simonians actually were radical Paulinists, at least in some measure, and that at a later point the Ebionites recognized this fact and attacked Paul through Simon.⁷

Thus, for Grant it is likely that the doctrine Irenaeus attributes to Simon was in fact taught in the Simonian School; but that it was there because in fact Simonianism was a radical Paulinism.

Would Simon not have been regarded as the father of all heresies insofar as he was assimilated to Paul? If he is simply seen as the magician

spoken of by Luke in Acts (8:9–24), or if he is simply made the head of a sect, it would be difficult to make him carry such a responsibility. The Simonians were doubtless never anything but a small group, situated primarily in Samaria and without any great influence elsewhere. It is true that through Menander, who taught at Antioch, Simonianism could have been the source of Saturnilus's and Basilides's ideas. But other very early Gnostics mentioned by the heresiologists, Cerinthus for example, do not seem to be linked with Simon. Moreover, even if there is a certain continuity from Simon to Saturnilus to Basilides, new, non-Simonian elements are also interposed, for example, elements that seem to come from the Fourth Gospel. On the other hand, if it was a question of Paul, making him the father of all the Gnostic heresies would not be at all absurd, if one takes account of the fact that the children of Paulinism have often modified the ideas of their father. Certainly the Gnostics can also be the children of Johannine thought; but John's Gospel, and Cerinthus, who may have something to do with this Gospel, can in a certain way be linked to the Pauline current of thought. Langerbeck has shown that the doctrines of the great Gnostics were basically nothing but a radical Paulinism.⁸ The Second Epistle of Peter, an apocryphal work that is perhaps the latest work in the New Testament, attributes heresy (= Gnosticism) to a misguided interpretation of Paul's epistles.⁹

After all, what reasons are there for holding that Simon existed other than in the legend and as the mask of another person? F. Chr. Baur judged that he was never anything but a caricature of Paul. The main reason for believing in his existence is doubtless that by the first century Simon was known to Luke, the author of the Acts of the Apostles, and that Luke's description does not seem to be applicable to Paul. Luke describes a Samaritan magician who, converted by Philip, had tried to buy the power of giving the Holy Spirit from the apostles. How could this story have been invented if it referred to Paul? It seems impossible, and yet, when one thinks about it, one notices at least a number of features in this description that could have been applied to Paul by those who opposed him. Was Simon a Samaritan? But for the Jews "Samaritan" was synonymous with heretic or sinner. In the Fourth Gospel Christ is treated as a Samaritan by his enemies (8:48). Was Simon a magician? Paul, who performed miracles, could have been thought of as a magician, just as Christ was. Did Simon wish to buy the right of giving the Holy Spirit? This may mean that he wished to be the head of his Church and to be able to put new converts in the way of receiving the Spirit, without having to refer to Jerusalem every time. He may have promised in exchange to send his gifts to the "poor" (*ebionim*), as the Jewish-Christian community at Jerusalem called itself. This is exactly what Paul did. Was there a disagreement between Simon and Peter? But there was also a disagreement between Peter and Paul, though on a different subject (Gal. 2:11–14). Was Simon converted by Philip, whereas Philip does not seem to

have played any role in Paul's conversion? Philip was a "Hellenist," as Ananias, who introduced Paul into the Christian community at Damascus, probably was,¹⁰ and as the Christians at Antioch among whom Paul must have received instruction in Christianity were. (These Christians had in fact left Jerusalem at the time of the persecution against the Hellenists.) After Stephen's death Philip was perhaps the most well known of the Hellenists, and conversions could have been attributed to him that were the work of his group.

Certainly, if Philip himself told Luke that he had baptized Simon, Luke could not be mistaken on this point and Simon definitely existed. But is it certain that Luke owes this account to Philip? It is simply a possibility.

I realize that these suspicions go too far. But the resemblance between the accusation implied in the account about Simon in Acts, the accusation of having wished to buy the right to give the Holy Spirit, and the promise made by Paul to send money to the *ebionim*—this promise being part of the agreement whereby Paul was left at liberty to organize his Churches as he wished (Gal. 2:10), and among the rights Paul exercised was the imposition of hands to bring about participation in the Spirit (Acts 19:6)—this resemblance leads one to ask if the confusion of Simon with Paul is not found already in the account of Acts. It will be asked why Luke did not realize that it was Paul, his master, whom someone sought to libel by this account. But Luke, who collected numerous traditions in Jewish-Christian circles, might have reproduced them without much care and without always understanding their meaning. He seems to have had at heart the reconciliation of Paulinism and Jewish Christianity. Being friendly to both sides, he perhaps did not understand and could not imagine how one of these sides thought of the other.

In Acts he gives another reason for the fact that Paul collected gifts for the community at Jerusalem. Whereas in the Epistle to the Galatians Paul presents the promise of sending gifts as part of the agreement he had made with James, Peter, and John, Luke says that Paul and Barnabas were the only intermediaries through whom the Church had voluntarily sent gifts to the Christians at Jerusalem, when a famine raged throughout the Empire (Acts 11:28–30). Was Luke ignorant of the Epistle to the Galatians? or did he not remember it properly? Again his mistake concerning the motive for the collection is another reason he did not realize that what Simon was blamed for could equally well be blamed on Paul.

Granted, if the course of the account in Acts relating to Simon in reality concerned Paul, this would mean that the Jewish Christians denied that such an agreement had been reached. They must have said that Paul proposed it but denied that they accepted it.

As for later traditions, it is even easier to explain them on the basis of a Jewish-Christian polemic against Paul; in particular when they depict Simon as a traveler, a missionary, who had gone to Rome, Paul was a traveler and he went to Rome.

Reasons can nevertheless be found for believing in Simon's existence. First his name: how did he come to be called Simon? Could the Simonians referred to by the heresiologists have only got their name from a fictional character whom they simply knew from Acts? Moreover, Justin and the Clementine works mention his place of birth. If Justin was the only one to give this detail, one might ask if it is worth more than what he says about the statue he thought to be of Simon and which was in fact that of Semo Sancus. This error would never have been suspected if the statue had not been rediscovered. But the agreements between the two traditions seem to give them a certain value (even though it is not impossible that one of them is drawn from the other, or that they come from a common legendary source).

But to doubt Simon's existence is perhaps to push skepticism too far. It is doubtless easier to think that he existed.

Given that he existed, what do we know about him and especially about his doctrine? Do we even know whether he had one, apart from what he had been able to learn from Christianity? We do not know if theories, including the myth of the Mother, go back to Simon himself, and it is really quite improbable. The *Apophysis Megale* as cited by Hippolytus in the third century cannot be by Simon, for it is linked with a whole group of relatively late doctrines. What Epiphanius claims to know about Simon, at the end of the fourth century, is even more suspect than what is said about him in the second and third centuries. For the thought of Simon himself we have only what can be drawn from the account of Acts. Again it must be remembered that this account itself must have been written in the last fifteen years of the first century (around 90 it seems), that it was perhaps influenced by Jewish-Christian polemic against Simonianism and Paulinism, and might be in part legendary.

Haenchen has maintained that what the Samaritans say about Simon, according to the account in Acts, already implies Gnosticism.¹¹ But even if it is true that the Samaritans called him "the great power," in the first century this title is in no way a sign that would reveal the presence of Gnostics.¹² This expression rather seems to be Jewish-Christian or Jewish. Hegesippus, quoted by Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* II, 23, 13), puts it into the mouth of James the Just, the brother of the Savior, and in this text it means "God." Thus, in the account in Acts it simply means that the Samaritans divinized Simon (because of the wonders he worked by his magic). To divinize a man does not imply that he is a Gnostic or that one is a Gnostic oneself. If one holds that Simon took himself to be God (although Luke simply says that he held himself to be "someone great"), one might conclude that he was mad, but to be a fool and to be a Gnostic are not exactly the same thing. Also, is Luke's account exact in every point? The accusation of thinking of oneself as God or allowing oneself to be divinized is a favorite accusation among Christians as well as Jews. In Acts we meet it on at least one other occasion (in relation to Herod Agrippa).

One senses that the source of this entire account is a source unfavorable to Simon and that at least some exaggeration can be found here.

Haenchen does not ignore the fact that our knowledge of Simon is extremely uncertain. Even in the account of Acts there are elements that seem to him to be doubtful. He divides this account into two successive layers of tradition and thinks that the true account, the oldest, has been reshaped, and that it is not this one that Luke gives us. Nevertheless, in the midst of this doubtful account, the sentence about the great power seems to him apparently to merit absolute confidence. But it is as suspect as the rest. Indeed, one might be even more mistrustful of it since it implies hostility toward Simon and betrays a desire to depict him as a man who allowed himself to be deified by his admirers. The use of the words "great power" betrays a Jewish-Christian origin, and the Jewish Christians were precisely enemies of Simon.

We might add that if Haenchen thinks it necessary to divide the account of Acts into two levels of tradition, this is, among other reasons, because he thinks that a magician like Simon must have asked not for the power *to give* the Spirit but the power *to possess* it himself, in order to perform as many miracles as Philip. And he ought to have addressed his demand to Philip; Peter's intervention seems useless. This observation is not without foundation, but really it demonstrates that Simon was not so much a magician as a head of the Church. If he was simply a magician, he had no need of the power *of giving* the Spirit, it was enough for him *to have* it. He therefore wanted something else, and what he wanted, as I have suggested,¹³ was probably the right to procure for the Christians in Samaria himself participation in the Spirit. In other words, what he wanted was the right, on behalf of his Church, to be independent of Jerusalem, at least to a certain extent—and this was natural for a Samaritan. This explains why his demand only took place when Peter and Paul came to Samaria to control Philip's work, thus affirming the authority of the Church of Jerusalem over new converts.

Simon was not only a Samaritan, he had been converted by a "Hellenist," that is, by one of those Christians who did not accept the special value of the Church at Jerusalem. The Church of Jerusalem's claim to primacy resembled the claim made by the priests of the Temple to exercise rights over Jews throughout the world. The organization of Christianity closely copied that of Judaism. Perhaps the Hellenists tended to criticize this centralized organization. In any case, the Samaritans had never accepted it.

We therefore think it possible that Simon, if he existed, was of a schismatic tendency rather than a heresiarch properly speaking.¹⁴ Just as the Samaritans were schismatics within Judaism, so the Samaritan Christians may have wanted to be independent of Jerusalem, at least to a certain extent. The Jewish Christians of Jerusalem may have been deeply indignant with this and made Simonianism the very model of Paulinism, which they

did not like. For to them Paulinism must also have been a sort of schism, insofar as it freed pagan Christians from the Law. The Law, no less than the Temple, constituted Judaism's unity, which the Jewish Christians did not intend to separate themselves from. So far as breaking with unity was concerned, Paul could be likened to Simon.

But the Christians venerated Paul. By opposing him under the name of Simon, he could be accused of what they perhaps did not dare accuse him of directly.

Whatever the case, we know nothing that is characteristic of Simon's doctrine. He may have been particularly interested in the Spirit, but all that can be drawn from Acts is that for him the Spirit was without doubt a supernatural power that allowed one, among other things, to effect miracles, or that it was an inspiration proper to members of the Church and formed it into a group. This scarcely differs from what the Spirit was for many Christians. And even if the myth of the Mother goes back to Simon, which is very unlikely, the idea that the Mother, that is, the Spirit or the Church, is oppressed by the angels, that is, the world, is not a properly Gnostic idea. The Mother is not a form of the Demiurge, because she created under God's order. She created in the same way as Wisdom creates in the Old Testament, or the Word in Saint John, or the Spirit in the *Veni Creator*.

There are therefore no solid reasons for saying that in the New Testament Gnosticism first appeared in Samaria, and there is even less reason to say that it appeared at Colossae. In fact, the earliest documents in which one can see a *tendency* that could become Gnosticism are Paul's epistles to the Corinthians, and it was among the Christians at Corinth that this tendency had appeared.

2. *Remarks on Beyschlag's Book*

It was after writing the preceding pages that I read Karlmann Beyschlag's book *Simon Magus und die christliche Gnosis* (Tübingen, 1974). This book, extraordinarily rich in references, offers considerable support to the thesis I am defending. For Beyschlag the Simon who is described in Acts was not a Gnostic. Simonian Gnosticism only appeared much later, in the second century, and ought to be understood as a branch of Christian Gnosticism, not as a preliminary stage earlier than Christian Gnosticism, which had prepared for it. What is Gnostic in Simonianism is derived from a Christian gnosis later than Simon; what might not be Christian is not yet Gnostic.

Beyschlag's proof seems to me wholly correct as far as Simon's non-Gnostic character in Acts is concerned, and also in what relates to Gnostic Simonianism's dependence on Christianity. I only object to the portrait of the historical Simon that Beyschlag proposes. His hypothesis on this subject does not seem to me to be necessary, or the most likely. For

him Simon was a *theios anēr*, a "divine man" (in the sense that Antiquity gave to this expression). He would have been revered as such by a population that, according to Beyschlag (122), was probably the pagan population at Sebaste. It seems to me that a number of objections can be made to this idea.

First, it seems to me that it does not take account of the fact that in this section of Acts there is not yet any concern with preaching to the pagans. Preaching to the pagans begins only in chapters 10 and 11, when Peter baptizes Cornelius, and the Christians of Antioch, breaking with the early Christian habit of only speaking to Jews, also began to speak with Greeks. And so far as the Eunuch of the queen of Ethiopia (8:26–34) is concerned, he was at least a proselyte, since he had come to Jerusalem to worship God there and Philip found him reading the prophet Isaiah.¹⁵ It therefore seems that Philip did not address pagans but schismatic Jews of some kind, as most of the Samaritans were, and that this could have taken place at Sichem rather than at Sebaste.

Another indication, showing that in Luke's eyes Simon's admirers were not pagans, can be found by comparing this account with that of chapter 12 concerning Herod Agrippa. In Acts 12 the people who divinize Herod Agrippa call him "god" because they are pagans. In Acts 8 those who divinize Simon call him "the great power," which is a Jewish, Jewish-Christian, or Samaritan expression used to refer to God, but not a pagan expression. Beyschlag himself says (110) that the *theios anēr* was not called this. The fact that Luke has Simon's admirers speak thus indicates that he did not consider them pagans.

It is not very likely that a population of the Samaritan religion divinized a man. This remark leads us to a second objection.

Beyschlag takes no account of the fact that Luke's source, in this passage, is probably a Jewish-Christian source, or that in any case it derives from a milieu hostile to Simon. The reason for thinking that it is Jewish-Christian is first that in the very first part of Acts, Luke in general uses Jewish-Christian sources. Also the part of the account in which Peter and John appear is evidently aimed at glorifying the apostles at Jerusalem. Finally, if the expression "the great power" is Samaritan—it perhaps is, but we find no definite proof, I think, before the fourth century—it is even more certainly Jewish and Jewish-Christian. As I said above, the use of this expression is attributed by Hegesippus to James, the brother of the Lord. In the Synoptic Gospels, the high priest says, "the Power" for God, at least in Mark and Matthew. (For Luke adds "of God," as he does in Acts 8, and this shows that there is reason to think that he adds these words in Acts 8, and that his source simply has "the great power.") In the Bible, El, which means God, also means "Power." There is therefore more reason for supposing that the source is Jewish-Christian.

It is true that the first part of the account might derive from a tradition preserved by the "Hellenists," as, I believe, Haenchen thinks.¹⁶ But even in

this tradition, which comes from the “Hellenists,” there was hostility toward Simon. For once again Simon’s deification by his fellow citizens is made redolent of that of Herod Agrippa, who was punished for allowing himself to be called god by the crowd. In Acts 12 Luke avoids attributing the claim to be god to Herod Agrippa himself (perhaps he judged it unlikely); he puts the divine title in the mouths of the people, as he does for Simon. But the intention implied in the two sources he uses is the same in both cases. It is the intention to criticize a man who accepted being put on a par with God. There is therefore hostility toward Simon in the *whole* of this account.

Because of this hostility, we are, I believe, justified in supposing that the historical Simon did not claim to be God, or a god, any more than Herod Agrippa probably did. Even Simon’s admirers, who according to Luke seem to have belonged to the Samaritan religion, and therefore were as monotheistic as the Jews, doubtless never conferred on him a title that made him the equal of God. *This account comes from the opponents of Simon and the Simonians.* The most likely conclusion that can be drawn is that at the end of the first century there was hostility toward Simon and the Simonians among Christians who belonged to the communion of the Churches. The accusation of allowing oneself to be divinized, perhaps even the accusation of magic as regards Simon, may legitimately be attributed to this hostility.

At this time Gnosticism had scarcely appeared. In any case, there is no mention of it in the passage of Acts that concerns Simon. If there is some allusion to Gnosticism in Acts, it is in relation to Ephesus and not in relation to Samaria. In Acts 20:29–30 Paul predicts to the elders of Ephesus that one day they will have “fierce wolves” among them. “From among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.” If this is a reference to Gnostics, Luke depicts Gnosticism as appearing *after Paul*, and not as existing in his time.

What then was the reason for the hostility toward Simon at the time of Acts, if he was not accused of the Gnostic heresy? It seems to me that the cause is quite clear if Luke’s account is examined without any presuppositions. What does Simon ask? As Haenchen with good reason has observed, this magician ought to have asked that he be given the Holy Spirit, in order to perform as many miracles as Philip. But this is not what he asks. He asks for the right *to give* the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands. In other words, he asks for the power *to confirm*, he asks, in fact to be a *bishop*,¹⁷ to have the same powers in Samaria as the apostles in Jerusalem. In the eyes of the apostles the danger he poses is not that of heresy but that of schism, or at least the danger of allowing a group of Christians to set themselves up with a certain autonomy. For Simon does not ask for complete autonomy, since he offers to give “some money.” He offers precisely what Paul will offer to obtain the right to preach the Gospel in his own way to the pagans. In Gal. 2:10 Paul recalls

on what conditions the right was granted to him: "Only they would have us remember the poor, which very thing I was eager to do." To think of the poor was to send money to the community at Jerusalem. The poor (*ebionim*) were the Jewish Christians, who were later called by the same name of Ebionites.

The example of Paul shows that apostles could agree to receive gifts in exchange for a certain autonomy. The gifts were a sign that the autonomy was not complete. Just as the Temple tax linked Jews throughout the world with Jerusalem, so the collection linked all Christians with the mother Church. Why then did Simon's offer annoy them? One can only speculate on this question. If the character of Simon was but a fictional character, if in reality he represented Paul in Luke's source, one must conclude that the apostles had never accepted this sort of contract. Paul was mistaken in interpreting the agreement he came to with them in this way, and he must have made the collection for them in vain. Moreover, in fact, the gift of the collection did not suffice to lessen the Jewish Christians' blind hostility toward him. The trial that James imposed upon him was the cause of his arrest, and if the Romans had not protected him by arresting him it could have been the cause of his death.

But if one allows that it indeed refers to Simon and not to Paul, why did the apostles refuse Simon what they granted to Paul? Perhaps because it was the first time they had been asked, and because at this time Christianity had not yet spread throughout Palestine. It may have seemed natural not to give autonomy, even a limited one, to Churches so close to Jerusalem. Perhaps also because it was a case of the Samaritans. The Samaritans' claim to religious independence had always been insupportable to the Jews of Judaea. The apostles may have seen a manifestation of the same divisive, separatist spirit in the Samaritan Christians' request that the Judaeans had attributed to Samaria for centuries. Just as there was a double Judaism because of the Samaritans, they may have feared the institution of a double Christianity. The fact that Simon was a Samaritan might therefore have meant that he was seen as the same sort of separatist or schismatic. In fact he was regarded in this way. The main accusation leveled against Simon does not seem to have been that of being the father of simony—this accusation only became important later; it was that of being the father of heresy, and this doubtless primarily meant schism, separation.

Beyschlag clearly explains that the historical Simon, who in his eyes was not a Gnostic, may have been "gnosticized" later on. He rightly recalls that the apostle John, the apostle Thomas, and Philip, Mary Magdalene, and Jesus himself were. But it seems to me that this does not sufficiently explain why Simon was considered *the father of all heresy*. To my mind, this might be understood if the community of which he was head was *the first to wish to be autonomous to a large extent*, and if, following the dissension brought about by this demand, it in fact separated itself from Jerusalem. For it would thereby have given the first example of schism,

which is the road of heresy. Moreover, it seems to me that it was in a group derived from the Simonian Church that at the beginning of the second century the first clearly Gnostic doctrines appeared. I will develop this hypothesis later on.

3. *How Justin's Image of Simon Can Be Explained*

It remains for us to explain why Justin states, or rather suggests—for we shall see below that he does not affirm it as clearly as has been stated—that Simon claimed to be a god. It seems to me that this might primarily come from the same tradition that underlies Luke's account. This account shows that toward the end of the first century certain Christians related that before his conversion Simon claimed to be "someone great" and that his admirers spoke of him as "the great power," that is, they divinized him. Why did they relate this? It is probable that Simon was indeed an important person, enjoying great prestige among his fellow citizens (whatever the reason for this prestige was). One cannot otherwise explain the fact that he could ask the apostles for that which, according to Luke, he did ask them for. If he really asked to be a sort of bishop, it is natural that he should have been accused of pride. And it is even more natural still if, after the apostles' refusal, he became the head of a church apart. To depict the pride he was accused of, it may have been said that he claimed to be a god, or God, and it is perhaps Luke who attenuates the accusation by putting the divine title in the mouths of the people. Perhaps he also attenuates when, following "great power," he adds "of God," to distinguish perhaps between the title given to Simon ("great power of God") and God himself.

But in spite of these attenuations, Luke's account might indeed be understood by some as meaning that Simon presented himself as a divine being. The Jewish Christians could have recognized the expression "the great power" in Luke's periphrasis, if they did not know it through a direct tradition. And although Luke puts the words in the mouth of the people, and not that of Simon, more than one reader could have disregarded the difference. It was easy to make the accusation fall on Simon himself, and more than one commentator still does. Moreover, Luke placed Simon's glorification in the time when he and his followers were not yet converted; after conversion, he shows that Simon acted more humbly with respect to the apostles. But again this is a nuance that few readers must have been aware of. The end of the account made less of an impression than the beginning, and we see that it has often been disregarded or transformed by writers who cite this account. Finally Justin's mistake on the subject of the Roman statue which he takes to be a statue dedicated to "the god Simon" (because the inscription ran *Semoni deo Sanco . . .*) may also have played a role. Joined to the title of "great power," understood in its true sense, this mistake about the statue adequately explains why for Justin Simon claimed to be a god or God.

Although a Samaritan, Justin seems to have known little from a tradition derived directly from the Simonians, or even from the traditions preserved in Samaria. Most of what he says about Simon he draws from the Acts of the Apostles.¹⁸ Moreover what he thinks he knows I think he may have learned not from the Simonians or the Samaritans but rather from the Jewish Christians. Justin is of pagan origin; he was born of Christian parents at Nablus, the new town that had been built near the old town of Schechem, and whose inhabitants were probably mostly pagan. He probably knew very few of his compatriots who belonged to the Samaritan religion. When he says that almost all the Samaritans held Simon as the first God, one can wonder about it. The Roman community was probably Jewish-Christian in tendency—it perhaps was in Paul's time—and Justin in particular seems to have had a sympathy for Jewish Christianity, which he does not consider heretical. He may have had links with Jewish Christians from the East.¹⁹ From them he may have learned some of their traditions, about the Samaritans in general and about Simon in particular. What he must have learned would have made it even easier for him to believe that the Roman statue was that of Simon and that he had come to Rome. I do not wish to say that he knew exactly the same traditions as those of the pseudo-Clementines; for there are differences between what he says about Helen and what the pseudo-Clementines say about her. Even so far as Simon is concerned, there are differences, for the pseudo-Clementines depict him less as claiming to be a god than as claiming to be the Savior. But if Justin knew other traditions than the authors of the Clementine novel, these traditions might equally well have been Jewish-Christian.

And finally, what exactly does Justin say? First he says (*Apol.* 1, 26): "The demons raise up men who claim to be gods." Then he speaks of Simon, of Menander, and Marcion, who are apparently the men who claimed to be gods. But in the paragraph he then dedicates to each of them, he does not repeat this accusation, even so far as Simon is concerned. He simply says of Simon that *he was taken for a god*, which agrees with the account in Acts. Similarly in the other passages in which he speaks of him (*Apol.* 1, 56; *Dialogue* 120). Here again Simon is taken to be a god but does not himself claim to be such. Even less does Justin say of Menander and Marcion that they claimed to be, or were even taken to be, gods. Thus his first statement becomes doubtful when one compares it with the rest of his text and with his other texts on the same subject. It is later heresiologists who, using what he says, exaggerate it and neglect the difference between what he suggests once, in a general, vague sentence, and what he then states more constantly and in texts more precise. Thus they amplify the legends.

Foerster thought that great value ought to be attached to the heresiological tradition in which Simon and Menander claimed to be gods. He made the observation that they were the only Gnostics of whom this was

said, and that the heresiologists could not have invented this feature by founding what they said on later examples.²⁰ But we see that the earliest heresiologist, who is the source of this entire tradition, does not really state this (if one examines his most unambiguous texts and the statements he *repeats*). If he nevertheless says it once, he says it of three heretics and not only of Simon and Menander. His repetition of Simon's being taken for a god may be explained by something other than the truth of the fact.

Chapter II

The “Gnostics” at Corinth

1. *Paul’s Opponents in the Epistles to the Corinthians*

The epistles to the Corinthians are, I believe, the only authentic epistles of Paul in which he opposes an attitude that might lead to Gnosticism. Neither the Epistle to the Colossians nor even more obviously the Epistle to the Galatians is directed against the Gnostics. As for the pastoral epistles, they definitely oppose doctrines that tend toward Gnosticism, but they are not authentic. They were revised well after Paul’s death, around the end of the first century or the beginning of the second.

Only the epistles to the Corinthians show Paul fighting on a front different from the one he normally fights on. Whereas he normally fights against observance of the Law, against Jewish Christianity, against what might be called the right wing, the conservative wing of Christianity, in the epistles to the Corinthians he seems to discover a new opponent on his left and the necessity of fighting on a second front. In effect he sees that some of the Corinthian Christians seem to wish to exaggerate the freedom he himself had preached to them. They seem to think that “everything is permissible” (1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23). Far from being tempted to comply with all the prescriptions of the Jewish Law, they did not even always obey morality. On the other hand, the questions they ask on the subject of marriage seem to reveal tendencies toward asceticism among them. Thus the mixture, or rather the double tendency that will be denounced among the Gnostics toward asceticism on the one hand and licentiousness on the other, seems to be manifest among them. Finally the sort of assurance that Paul thinks he brings to light among them is redolent of the proud attitude with which the Gnostics were to be reproached later on.¹

Paul in fact leads us to understand that the Corinthian Christians think they have already arrived at the supreme goal, they think they are already wise (1 Cor. 3:18; 4:10), already “kings” (4:8); that they are too proud of having “knowledge” (8:1–2), of having “the Spirit” (7:40; 14:37). They judge other Christians (5:12). In their enthusiasm they often surrender themselves to charismatic manifestations, such as those which consist in speaking “in tongues,” that is, in uttering unintelligible words (14) at the inspiration of the Spirit. They are too indulgent, not only to the pagan way of life, but to the pagan cults, to idolatry (10:7, 14). Finally, Paul is indig-

nant that some of them dare to say that “there is no resurrection of the dead” (15:12).

Thus the Corinthians, or at least some of them, appear to us in Paul’s first epistle. In the second also, the compliments he addresses to them, some of which seem ironic, seem to demonstrate that he judges them to be too sure of themselves. “Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in utterance, in knowledge . . . ” (8:7); “For you gladly bear with fools, being wise yourselves” (11:19). And here again he warns them against looseness of morals (12:20–21) and against idolatry (6:14–7:1).

In both epistles, Paul often uses the word “knowledge” (gnosis). As he normally uses it much less, it seems that this was because this word was in favor in the Corinthian Church.

What had happened in this Church between the time Paul founded it and the time he wrote the first epistle? Had the Corinthians merely not developed the ideas or rules of conduct that Paul himself had taught them? This is not impossible; for the permission not to observe the Law rigorously and the idea that the Spirit of God—a transcendent, eschatological Spirit—is already present among believers are principles that might lead a long way. But one sees from the epistle itself that influences other than Paul’s could have been exercised at Corinth. It was made up of groups, and Paul’s was only one of them. “It has been reported to me,” says Paul, “that there are divisions among you. Some of you say ‘I am of Paul’; another ‘I am of Apollos’; another ‘I am of Cephas’; another ‘I am of Christ.’” Is it not possible that one of these groups is responsible for the Corinthians’ “Gnostic” attitude?

If this was the case, which one ought to be accused? First of all, what do we know about them? Scholars have speculated on the “Christ’s party,” but in fact we know nothing about this party, not even whether it was a party. The statement “I belong to Christ” may mean that one does not wish to take sides, that one contents oneself with faith in Christ, the common faith of all the tendencies.² That there was a party of Peter (Cephas) is obviously possible, although the Corinthians could only have heard it said that there were certain disputes between Peter and Paul. But would Peter’s influence have been exercised in the direction of a too great freedom? It was precisely on the question of freedom that Peter and Paul confronted each other, and it was Paul who defended freedom. More particularly, can one imagine Peter’s influence provoking or encouraging doubts on the subject of the resurrection? These doubts, which are quite natural in a Greek country, are not necessarily to be attributed to a Christian preacher. They might derive not from an attitude that was already “Gnostic” but simply from a difficulty in believing this sort of thing. In any case, such doubts do not seem to be very compatible with the confidence people had in Peter.

Apollos remains. And here we are on firmer ground. First of all because we know that Apollos did in fact stay in Corinth, where he was very useful

to the Christian community in polemicizing against the Jews (Acts 18:27–28). Also because a large part of the First Epistle to the Corinthians (and perhaps, as we shall see, even a large part of the Second) seems to be directed specifically against Apollos and his admirers.

The place held by Apollos in the First Epistle to the Corinthians and Paul's attitude toward him have perhaps not been given their full value. Apollos is usually thought of as a disciple of Paul. It is thought that Paul lays the blame on his followers but not on him; that in his eyes he is a faithful disciple who is not responsible for the fact that some of the Corinthians attached themselves to him rather than to Paul. I must admit that my impression is quite different from this. It is true that this impression is founded only on indications that may perhaps be judged too slight; but these indications exist and some exegetes have experienced a feeling similar to mine.

First note that in reality there were only two parties in the Corinthian Church, or in any case these parties counted for more to Paul than the others. For he begins by listing four of them, as we have seen, but a little later on he mentions only two: "For when one says 'I belong to Paul' and another 'I belong to Apollos' . . ." (1 Cor. 3:4). Further on, the authorities the parties claim are again mentioned; they are Paul, Apollos, and Cephas (3:22). But in 4:6, again, there is no mention of Cephas, but only of Paul and Apollos. It should probably be concluded either that these two sides were the main ones or that Apollos's rivalry was the one that most wounded Paul.³

Perhaps there were only two parties, and moreover, Apollos's seems to have been very numerous, for Paul seems to address the whole community in his reproaches.

My impression is that Paul finds it difficult to avoid the feeling that Apollos has entered into a realm that was his, Paul's, and that he has to a certain extent supplanted him. It is not a matter of personal jealousy, but Paul seems to fear that Apollos's *doctrine* has supplanted his own. He tells the Corinthians that he is sending them Timothy, who will remind them of his ways. "I am sending to you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church" (4:17).

In fact, the whole of the first part of the First Epistle to the Corinthians obviously concerns Apollos and his supporters. When Paul declares that he is not skillful with words, wise in human discourse, but that on the other hand his language is inspired by the Spirit, it is clear that he has Apollos in mind, whom Luke describes as eloquent. He himself says this, a little before the end of the first part: "I have applied all this to myself and Apollos for your benefit" (4:6).

Many farfetched explanations have been made of the first part of the epistle. Since Paul criticizes a certain wisdom here, it has been thought that the Corinthians had adopted a "Gnostic" myth concerning divine Wisdom.

This supposition seems to me to be gratuitous and absolutely useless.⁴ The wisdom Paul criticizes he specifically states is the “eloquent wisdom,” *sophia logou* (1:17), in other words the science of speaking. It is this wisdom which he calls the wisdom of the world, a wisdom of men, a wisdom sought by the Greeks. He says himself that he did not come to preach “in lofty words or wisdom” (2:1); that his message was not “in plausible words of wisdom” (2:4). (This means “in wise and persuasive speech,” for according to Hebrew usage, Paul often uses the genitive noun instead of the adjective.) On the other hand he says that there is something in his speech that is worth more than the art of persuasion. “The Kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power” (4:20). All this shows that he is defending himself against those who preferred someone more eloquent than himself. Now according to Luke, Apollos was *logios*. This might mean eloquent or knowledgeable, but it primarily means eloquent. Even when this word seems to refer to knowledge, it refers especially to the ability to speak, to reason, to hold forth on a subject.⁵ Since Apollos was eloquent, it would be truly necessary to be an enemy of simple explanations not to realize that when Paul defends himself against those who admire “eloquent wisdom” or “persuasive speech,” he is defending himself against Apollos’s supporters.

It therefore seems that throughout this part Paul is thinking of Apollos and his followers. It must be admitted that he has at times spoken quite violently: “According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and another man is building upon it. Let each man take care how he builds upon it. . . . Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—each man’s work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. Do you not know that you are God’s temple . . . ? If any one destroys God’s temple, God *will destroy him*” (3:10–17).

There is no reason for supposing, with, for example, C. S. C. Williams (*Peake’s Commentary* [London and Edinburgh, 1963], 955), that the person Paul is speaking about in these verses is not the same person whom he previously spoke of, that is, Apollos. The one who built on the foundation laid by Paul is Apollos, not his admirers. There is nothing to indicate that they are Peter’s disciples, as Barrett supposes.⁶ It is obvious that verses 10–17, by their place and their meaning, are the continuation of verses 6–8; they refer to the same subject and in all probability to the same person. In verses 6–8 Paul says: “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything [which is to say they are servants, as Paul has said above], and each shall receive his wages according to his labor.” Although the expression is less severe here,

the idea is still the same as verses 10–17: Apollos continued the work Paul began, but the work of each of them ought to be distinguished, and it is God who will judge and will give wages according to their labor. Certainly Apollos and Paul are both called servants and even fellow workers with God (3:5, 9); but one can help unskilfully, and if Apollos did this, his work will not be approved.⁷

One also gets the impression at the end of the epistle that Paul dryly notifies the Corinthians, who had apparently asked whether Apollos was coming back to them, that there is no question of that at the moment. "As for our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to visit you with the other brethren, but it was not his will to come now. He will come when he has the opportunity [*eukairēsēi*]" (16:12). Doubtless, it is Paul who has generously insisted that Apollos return to Corinth, and it is Apollos who has refused. But from his curt and imperious tone, one senses that he is not annoyed by this refusal and that he is replying coldly to a request that has wounded him.

It is moreover permissible to suppose that if Apollos has refused, it was perhaps because he had understood Paul's feelings.

It must also be noted that Paul makes no effort to give a precise justification or an important reason for Apollos's refusal, to excuse him in the Corinthians' eyes.⁸

Finally, it must be noted that in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians Paul will not name Apollos among those who declared the Son of God to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 1:19). He only names Silvanus, Timothy, and himself.

It follows from all this that in the texts where Paul speaks of Apollos, in those where it is almost certain that he is speaking about him, and in those where he ought to mention him and does not, he manifests little sympathy toward him, in fact as little as normal charity and Christian fraternity permit him. He calls him "our brother," but this simply means he regards him as a Christian. He certainly does not seem to consider him his disciple.

If one shares this impression, if one admits that in Paul's feelings toward Apollos there is a distrust and even a more or less guarded antipathy, one will, I believe, have far less difficulty than one normally has in identifying Paul's opponents in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians.

It is usually held that the opponents in the Second Epistle are not the same as those in the First. In the First it is a matter of Gnostic or Gnosticizing opponents; in the Second it is a matter rather of Jewish Christians. But what sort of Jewish Christians were they? This is what no one is able clearly to define. They cannot be Jewish Christians in the ordinary sense, for Paul is not opposing observance of Law here. The opponents he speaks of are not seeking to impose circumcision, or the observance of the Sabbath, or food regulations. On the contrary, Paul warns the Corinthians against idolatry, that is, against those who were most severely condemned

by the Jews and the Jewish Christians. Thus there are ever-renewed efforts among exegetes to understand who these opponents could be. The hypotheses follow one another without arriving at any generally accepted solution.

Wendland, for example, studies the problem in his commentary on this epistle. He honestly declares that he has in no way arrived at a satisfactory solution (12th ed., 1968, p. 259). He sees clearly that the opponents are not Jewish Christians, or at least are not Jewish Christians like the ones opposed in the Epistle to the Galatians. They are Christians who are Jews by birth, but it is no way evident that they wish to impose the observance of the whole Law upon Christians. He realizes that some features link them with the "Gnostics" of the first epistle. But he thinks we cannot identify them with the latter, because in the second epistle they seem to especially attack Paul's apostolic authority, they criticize his inadequacy in the art of speaking, the mediocrity of his appearance and his "pneumatic" gifts. He concludes from this that they are a third type of opponent. They are Christian missionaries of Jewish origin, who would have attached great importance to "pneumatic" gifts and the art of speaking. Wendland declares that this hypothesis does not satisfy him, but that he thinks it is all one can say.

How did he not see that the portrait he paints of these opponents agrees perfectly with the portrait one can legitimately make of Apollos, or his admirers? (For in what Paul says it is sometimes a case of Apollos himself and sometimes his followers.) Apollos is a Jew, but at the same time he does not seem to have been Jewish-Christian in the normal sense, for it is in no way evident that the Corinthians were tempted to obey all the Law rigorously after his visit, quite the opposite. That he was full of pneumatic gifts is probable, since Luke describes him as "fervent in spirit" or "fervent by the Spirit" (Acts 18:25), and because the Corinthians who had heard him preach and teach obviously had a great enthusiasm for his gifts. Moreover, in the First Epistle to the Corinthians Paul felt obliged to affirm that he, Paul, also had the Spirit of God (7:40). Finally and most especially he was eloquent. What is astonishing about the fact that his admirers judged Paul to be relatively poor in eloquence and pneumatic gifts?

Contrary to what Wendland (and many other commentators) think, Paul's opponents in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians are the same as in the First. It is not true that the situation was fundamentally different; it is simply more serious, at least according to some passages. It is already clear in the First Epistle that Paul was reproached for his lack of eloquence (we have seen that he defends himself on this point) and his lack of pneumatic gifts (cf. 7:40). Some already questioned his apostolic authority (9:1: "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?"). He already felt he was judged (5:13: "Is it not those inside the Church whom you are to judge?"; 4:4-5: "It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore do not pro-

nounce judgment before the time"). Moreover, a text of Scripture that he quotes at the beginning of the First part seems to show that he regarded his rival as a doctor of the Law, a "scribe" (*grammateus*, 1:20), and this was doubtless what Apollos was. The Epistle to Titus describes him traveling with a "nomist," a doctor of the Law (3:13). It is true that since this epistle is apocryphal, one can conclude nothing for certain. But what Luke says about Apollos is enough (Acts 18:24): "well-versed in Scripture." Paul must have been considered surpassed, not only in eloquence but in knowledge.

Thus the reasons Wendland gives in no way prove what they aim to prove. Moreover, a large number of signs ought to make one suspect that in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians as in the first, the opponent is Apollos or his party.

The most striking is perhaps the mention of the "letters of recommendation." Paul speaks with some scorn of those who needed to present the Corinthians with letters or a letter recommending them. "Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you?" (2 Cor. 3:1). Now, we know from Luke that Apollos left Ephesus for Corinth with a letter (or letters) recommending him to the Christian community of the latter town (Acts 18:27). Certainly others might have done the same thing; but in Apollos's case, we know of it.

A second sign is the eloquence that Paul attributes to his opponents or his rivals. "I think that I am not in the least inferior to these superlative apostles. Even if I am unskilled in speaking, I am not in knowledge" (2 Cor. 11:5-6). The name "superlative apostles" (*hoi hyperlian apostoloi*) seems to indicate that the opponents or rivals give themselves the title of apostle (cf. 11:13). But this in no way means that they were sent by the community at Jerusalem. Christian missionaries who had not belonged to the first community gave themselves the title of apostle up to the time of the *Didache*.⁹

A third sign is that these opponents or rivals introduced themselves into another's territory, that is, into Paul's territory, and profited from his work. They are men who "boast beyond limit in other men's labors," men who "boast of work done in another's field" (2 Cor. 10:15-16). It is true that this might be said of any missionary who came to preach at Corinth after Paul. But for Apollos we know that this was the case, and this recalls the link Paul made between himself and Apollos in the First Epistle to the Corinthians. "For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Jesus Christ through the gospel" (1 Cor. 4:15). Paul is the founder, Apollos is only the continuator (1 Cor. 3:5-17).

Yet another sign is that the missionaries seem to have stayed at Corinth at the expense of the Christian community. Otherwise one could not explain why Paul so often repeats that he was not a burden to the community, that he ruined no one, exploited no one (2 Cor. 2:17; 7:2; 11:7-21;

12:13–18). This is moreover what he means when he says to the Corinthians, “For you bear it if a man makes slaves of you, or preys upon you, or takes advantage of you [or steals]” (11:20).¹⁰ In First Corinthians Paul already made it evident that he asked nothing of the Christian community during his stay at Corinth (1 Cor. 9:6–18).

Moreover, the character Paul attributes to his opponents or rivals is not dissimilar to that which Luke gives Apollos. Luke says of him that he was fervent in spirit (or by the Spirit), that he spoke boldly, that he “powerfully” refuted the Jews in public (Acts 18:25–28). Now, Paul thinks of his opponents as those who put on airs, as being almost fools. “For you gladly bear with fools, being wise yourselves! For you bear it if a man makes slaves of you, or preys upon you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face” (2 Cor. 11:19–20). These opponents or rivals were Hebrews, Israelites, of the race of Abraham (2 Cor. 11:22). This causes no difficulty, since Apollos was Jewish.

It is true that the word “Hebrew” was perhaps used rather to refer to Palestinian Jews than those of the Diaspora.¹¹ But Paul also declares himself to be a Hebrew. This shows that a Jew born in the Diaspora could be called a Hebrew, at least if his family had lived in Palestine until recently. This is doubtless the case with Paul (cf. Acts 23:16), but was perhaps also the case with Apollos.

The latter, an Alexandrian Jew, might bring together in himself the traits of Hellenism and Judaism that seem so difficult to reconcile in Paul’s opponents in Second Corinthians.

Doubtless Paul speaks of his opponents in the plural: “these superlative apostles,” “they are Hebrews,” and so on. But it is not certain that he had a number of people in mind in these passages. One often uses the plural to veil, attenuate an attack, to avoid a too obvious dispute with someone, while having the singular in mind. For example, one says, “there are people who . . .” whereas it is a matter of a single person. However, Paul also uses the singular: “If someone comes and preaches another Jesus . . ., you submit to it readily enough” (2 Cor. 11:4). “You bear it if a man makes slaves of you, or preys upon you, or takes advantage of you . . .” (2 Cor. 11:20).

Moreover, it is likely that Apollos did not travel alone, that he had one or a number of companions with him. It might be that in certain cases, Paul associates the people who accompanied him with him.

What deceives exegetes is not only the plural; it is the fact that one does not think that Paul could speak of Apollos as he speaks of his opponents in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. “For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is not strange if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds” (11:13–15). We know that Paul can be violent. In the Epistle to the Philippians he writes: “Look

out for the dogs, look out for the evil-workers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh" (3:2). Paul can be very tender, but he can also be very hard. The opponents he speaks of in 2 Corinthians were in any case Christians (cf. 11:4, 13, 23). If he speaks of Christians in this way, why not Apollos?

One needs only to conclude from this violence that between the First and the Second Epistle the situation in Corinth had become much more serious in his eyes, or that he more fully realized the seriousness of it.

But we cannot speak of only one situation in relation to 2 Corinthians. For if, in some chapters, the situation in Corinth in fact seems very serious, in other chapters, on the contrary, Paul seems reassured and reconciled with the Corinthians. Most exegetes think that this epistle is made up of a number of letters which Paul has brought together. We cannot avoid considering the difficult problem that the composition of this epistle poses.

2. *On the Composition of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*

It is often assumed that this epistle is made of texts drawn from a number of separate letters. For example, it is said that the passage 6:14—7:1 could be drawn from the "precanonical" letter mentioned in 1 Cor. 5:9—13. Chapters 10—13, with the exception perhaps of the last few verses, might constitute the severe letter, written "with many tears," of which Paul speaks in 2 Cor. 2:3—4 and 7:8—12. If one thus separates three parts, the chronology of these parts would be the following: first 6:14—7:1, a text that would be earlier than the First Epistle to the Corinthians; next chapters 10—13, which would be placed between the First Epistle to the Corinthians and chapters 1—9 of 2 Corinthians; finally these chapters 1—9, with the exception of 6:14—7:1.

Now, first of all, I wonder whether it is really necessary to detach 6:15—7:1 from context. It is true that 7:2 follows on well from 6:13. But Paul, like everyone else, sometimes takes up an earlier idea after having digressed for a moment in another direction. The digression is not long; it is not, strictly speaking, even a digression; it is simply a group of more precise exhortations added to the exhortation "open to us your heart." There is nothing exceptional in the fact that after having brought in these precisions Paul takes up the idea: "Make a place for us in your hearts." It is even more natural for this repetition to take place after an interval.

Moreover, what Paul says in 6:14—7:1 does not correspond exactly with what he has said in the "precanonical" letter. According to 1 Cor. 5:9—13, he had advised the Corinthian Christians to separate themselves from those who had behaved particularly badly; but he did not tell them to separate themselves generally from all shameless, covetous, or idolatrous persons, for to do that, he states, they would have to "leave this world." He did not speak to them of pagans but simply of corrupt persons who claimed to be Christians. Here, on the contrary, it is pagans and unbelievers

whom he advises them to avoid. There is therefore some reason for thinking that it does belong to the precanonical letter.

It is said that in this passage Paul uses special vocabulary, a vocabulary redolent of that of Qumran. It is possible. But why should Paul not use such vocabulary in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians as well as the precanonical letter.

It therefore seems to me that it is not absolutely necessary to put 6:14—7:1 to one side, and when something of this kind is not absolutely necessary, it is always better not to dismember the text.

On the other hand, insofar as chapters 10–13 are concerned, the idea that they are drawn from another, earlier letter seems to be much better founded. The abrupt beginning of chapter 10, its tone, which is so different from that of chapters 1–9, the violent irritation of this whole section, when what preceded it was of a measured and often warm tone, the fact that the chapters concerning the collection (8–9) would be better placed at the end of the letter than the middle, all justify those who see in 10–13 another letter, written in different circumstances.

But is this the letter written “in tears”? Certainly the tone of these chapters, Paul’s violence, the threat to “speak bluntly” if he again comes to Corinth, the agitation of spirit in which he is found all correspond quite well with what he says about the severe letter that must have distressed the Corinthians. What seems to me to be even more convincing is that certain passages, in chapters 1–9, almost certainly allude to chapters 10–13 as an earlier letter. In fact, in 3:1 and 5:12–13 Paul recalls that he “commended himself,” that is, he blew his own trumpet, and he adds that he had been foolish (“beside himself”, *exestēmen*). “Are we beginning to commend ourselves again?” “We are not commending ourselves to you again. If we are beside ourselves, it is for God.” And indeed, in chapters 11 and 12 there is a long passage in which Paul sets forth his merits and excuses himself for doing so by saying that he is speaking like a fool but he asks that he be allowed to. “I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me. . . . Let no one think me foolish; but even if you do, accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little. What I am saying I say not with the Lord’s authority but as a fool, in this boastful confidence. . . . But whatever anyone dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that. . . . I have been a fool! You forced me to it, for I ought to have been commended by you . . . ” (11:1—12:11).

It therefore seems that chapters 1–9 cannot *in their entirety* be earlier than chapters 10–13. If chapters 1–9 form an indissoluble whole, if they are a single letter, they are necessarily *later* than chapters 10–13. In this case, chapters 10–13 are very likely the letter of tears, or at least come from this letter.

It is true that some commentators, for example C. K. Barrett (*A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* [London, 1973], 106), think that verses such as 3:1 and 5:12–13 might be explained not as allu-

sions to chapters 11 and 12 but as allusions to reproaches made against Paul, whose truth he ironically admits. But this I cannot believe. Paul says not only that he commended himself but that he did it in a bout of madness. But it is not clear that his opponents had reproached him with being mad. It is not even clear that they reproached him with pushing himself forward. The reproaches leveled at him were of a different type. What some criticize in him is his lack of personal authority, that he has no eloquence, that he does not possess sufficient spiritual gifts, that he does not know how to be forcible except in letters. Moreover, to reproach someone with pushiness together with being a fool is not something that is a matter of course. One can be pushy without being a fool and be a fool without being pushy. If Paul places these two things together in chapters 11 and 12, it is because, forced to push himself forward so as to defend himself, he excuses himself saying: allow me to be a fool for a moment. How can it not be obvious that this allusion to self-praise and to madness *together* can only be an allusion to chapters 11 and 12 where the two things are also together? It is an allusion to the (occasional) practice he used to excuse his defense. And why should one suppose a fact that Paul does not mention and of which we know nothing, when we definitely have a letter in which he in fact speaks of his merits and declares himself to be mad?

It is therefore almost certain that verses 3:1 and 5:12–13 are later than chapters 10–13. Only we cannot establish for certain that the *whole* of the section made up of chapters 1–9 is later than 10–13. For this section might itself not be a single piece; it might be made up of a number of parts. It must be noted that the two passages in which Paul recalls that he had praised himself and that he had been mad are found in the long digression that interrupts the account of his journey between Troas and Macedonia, the digression that runs from 2:14 to 7:4. More than once, and particularly in recent works, it has been held that this digression is in reality a separate letter. It has also been thought that though not a separate letter it ought to be linked with the letter in chapters 10–13 rather than to the text in which it is found. These are possibilities. But it must be noted that if the digression is linked with chapters 10–13, it ought to be found *after* these chapters; and if it is a separate letter, contrary to what recent commentators have thought, this letter is necessarily later than chapters 10–13, not earlier, since Paul *recalls here* that he commended himself and that was foolish.

If one thus detaches the digression from its context, one is no longer obliged to regard chapters 10–13 as a letter earlier than that which contains the beginning of the epistle and section 7:5–9:15. Chapters 10–13, "the four chapters," as they are called, might strictly speaking be left in place. Or, if they are a separate letter, this letter may be later, not earlier, than sections 1:1–2:13 and 7:5–9:15 of the epistle. If it was later, it would obviously not be the letter of tears. In fact, if most commentators

are agreed in making the four chapters a separate letter, they are in total disagreement over the chronological place of this letter. Some make it a letter earlier than the first part of the epistle, others, a later letter.

There are therefore a number of possible orders. I believe that the hypothesis that the four chapters are the letter of tears is the simplest and the most likely. It does not imply a repositioning of the digression (2:14—7:4), and it is always better to leave a text where it is, when this is possible without absurdity. Especially when the digression does not lack some link with what precedes it and especially with what follows it. If the link with what precedes it seems weak, and even if it can be shown that there is a break between 2:13 and 2:14, it does not follow that it is the same for the link between the end of the digression and what follows. At the beginning of 7:5 there is a *kai gar* (“and in fact”) which it would be difficult to explain if the digression was left out and one wished to link 7:5 to 2:12–13. It would therefore have to be supposed that the author, who had sown together his texts, dared to add *kai gar* to create a link between them. Or that these words were part of a sentence that has disappeared and been replaced by the letter that was inserted. These solutions are possible, but they are far from satisfying.

Moreover, it is more natural to suppose that the storm that breaks in chapters 10–13 preceded the letter contained in the first nine chapters, which is a letter of reconciliation. Furthermore, this avoids having to suppose events for which we have no definite proof; pessimistic reports received by Paul during his journey in Macedonia, a renewal of irritation, analogous to the irritation which caused the letter of tears, then, for the second time, calmness regained.

What is important is not so much the order of the letters as the ability to explain the situation that gave rise to them. The hypothesis that the four chapters were the letter of tears provides a sufficient explanation, indeed the best one, for what is found in this section. In these chapters one sees that Paul has just made a visit to Corinth that was his *second* visit (cf. 12:14; 13:1–2). This visit is what the theologians call the “intermediate visit.” It is necessary to suppose an intermediate visit, for Paul envisages a return to Corinth for the *third* time. It was probably not after the long visit he made there on his return from Macedonia, when he had to take the proceedings of the collection to Jerusalem, that he envisaged coming back for another visit; especially as he thinks of this visit as close at hand, perhaps immediate. Now the intermediate visit seems to have been distressing for him. Even if one supposes that the incidents he alludes to in 2:5–10 and 7:12 (someone had acted in such a way that Paul was grieved by it, someone offended Paul or one of his fellow workers), even if one supposes that these incidents did not take place during the visit but were reported to him a little while afterward, it is in any case clear, from what one reads in the four chapters, that Paul could have realized that there was a feeling among the Corinthians that was not favorable to him. Someone

had compared him to one or a number of persons who were preferred to him; someone contested his apostolic authority, someone even contested his teaching, some had allowed themselves to be initiated into "another Jesus," "another Spirit," "another Gospel." He did not learn all this from the reports that had occasioned his First Epistle to the Corinthians, or at least he had not suspected the evil was so deep. Being present he was able to establish for himself the attitude of some of the Corinthians. He was also able to inform himself better on the conduct of the person or persons who were preferred to him, and some facts that were recounted to him—were they the truth or exaggerations? we do not know—annoyed him. This may explain why if it was a matter of Apollos Paul's disposition toward him became much more severe. I believe that one of the signs of this new disposition might indeed be the fact that this time Paul does not name him. He prefers to speak of him by allusions to what he is or what he has done, as if it hurt him to pronounce his name. From now on, for him he is no longer one of those who teach the truth.

3. *On Some Recent Interpretations*

I am not unaware of the fact that it will be very difficult for me to convince anyone that Paul could have treated Apollos, a Christian whose merits Luke acknowledges, as a "false apostle" and a "slave of Satan." It is difficult to accept the fact that there could have been serious disagreements in the early Church. In Acts Luke already seems to wish to silence or soften anything that might give the impression of serious disagreements in the Church. Nevertheless we know, in particular from Paul's epistles, that there were diverse tendencies and clashes between men who represented these tendencies. There are always disagreements and confrontations where a living, new, and strong thought develops. To acknowledge it is not to diminish the value of this thought. In any case, in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians we see that Paul rises with passion against men whom he ironically calls "superlative apostles," who preach "another Jesus," "another Spirit," "another Gospel," and whom he later accuses of being false apostles and ministers of Satan. Now these men, whoever they may have been, Apollos or others, were definitely Christians, since they preached Jesus.

Käsemann's (*ZNTW* 41, (1942): 33–71) and Barrett's (*Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*) interpretation, which F. Chr. Baur had already made, and which aims to distinguish on the one hand the "superlative apostles" and on the other the "false apostles"—the first were the heads of the Christian community at Jerusalem, while the false apostles were their envoys—is, I admit, an interpretation that strikes me as being very difficult to uphold. First because Paul's opponents though Jews are not Jewish Christians. By wishing to make them Jewish Christians Barrett is left with the complicated hypothesis that the envoys from Jeru-

saalem must have been changed by the atmosphere in which they had to preach at Corinth, in such a way that they adopted certain characteristics of Hellenistic thought and thus modified the mission that the Church at Jerusalem had entrusted to them. How much simpler it is to hold, with Georgi and Friedrich, that since they are Jews, they are Hellenistic Jews, and not envoys from the Church at Jerusalem. Soon after using it Paul explains the expression *hoi hyperlian apostoloi*, as we have seen. "Even if I am unskilled in speaking, I am not in knowledge" (11:6). The superlative apostles therefore stand out by the fact that they excel in the art of speaking, and not because they were recognized authorities.

Käsemann's objection is, How could Paul say that he is in no way inferior to those whom he proceeds to describe as slaves of Satan (12, 11)? This objection is not insurmountable. For Paul might think that he is not inferior to these superlative apostles in certain respects, and that he is nevertheless very different from them in others.

More to the point than Käsemann's and Barrett's views, insofar as the problem of 2 Corinthians is concerned, seem to me to be those of D. Georgi and G. Friedrich. Georgi's book (*Die Gegner des Paulus in 2. Korintherbrief*) and Friedrich's article ("Die Gegner des Paulus im 2. Korintherbrief," an article earlier than the publication of Georgi's book, but written after Friedrich knew of Georgi's work through Bornkamm's consideration of him) are the two works in which the problem is studied most carefully. They are indispensable for the study of this problem, and though Friedrich criticizes Georgi in certain respects, their conclusions are basically very similar. But it seems to me that the authors of these two excellent works stopped at the very threshold of the true solution. While seeing clearly that it is a question of Hellenistic Jews, or rather Christians derived from Hellenistic Judaism, they do not reflect, or not enough on the fact, that it may be a question of a single Christian from Alexandrian Judaism whom we know for certain went to Corinth, preached there, and gained and kept partisans there. It would, I think, have been enough to make this clear to them, if they had judged that there are enormous differences between what is attacked in 1 Corinthians and what is attacked in 2 Corinthians. However, if it is true that there are differences, there are nevertheless many common features. (See above, pp. 252-54.) The differences are rather in the intensity of Paul's reactions than in the picture one can justifiably paint of his enemies. Strictly speaking, it might be said that the *situation* is different, because Paul no longer has the same attitude toward his opponents: his distrust toward the principal opponent changed into outright opposition, and he is also harder on his supporters. But his opponents can be the same. If Georgi and Friedrich exaggerate the differences, it is because they rely too much on certain specialists of Gnosticism, who hold that it is Gnosticism properly speaking that is opposed in 1 Corinthians. Georgi and Friedrich in fact both believe that Paul is attacking "a Gnostic myth of the Savior," and they rightly state that this myth does not appear in 2

Corinthians. But it does not appear in 1 Corinthians either. There is certainly something Gnosticizing in the attitude Paul denounces, but this attitude is far from being Gnosticism properly speaking, and the Gnostic myth does not appear at all, at least among the opponents. Nowhere does Paul oppose a myth in which Wisdom is personified, or a Gnostic myth of the Savior. Rather it is Paul who suggests, in 1 Cor. 2:8, an interpretation of the links between the world and God and with Christ which is close to the Gnostic myth. It is Barrett who very correctly treats this point in the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 46 (1963–64): 283. Koester had already made the point that it was not the Corinthians but Paul who likened Christ to Wisdom (in *Gnomon* 33 [1961]: 590–95).

Georgi and Friedrich also think that in 1 Corinthians the opponents were Docetists. But this is because they rely on Schmithals's interpretation of 1 Cor. 12:3. According to Schmithals, it was Gnostic Docetists who cried "Jesus is cursed." Origen's astonishing statement about the Ophites in the third century ought not to be transposed to the first century. It is not that Origen's good faith can be doubted, but he may have been deceived by links based on a false interpretation of what the Ophites said. Irenaeus knows of a sect in which we can recognize those whom Hippolytus will soon call Ophites; but neither Irenaeus nor Hippolytus knows of the fact that they pronounced oaths against Jesus, and they think of them as heretical Christians. There are works that might be thought to derive from the Ophites in the texts found at Nag Hammadi; it is not evident in these that Jesus was cursed. Quite the contrary. Whatever they are, it is not a matter of Gnostics, or even Gnosticizers or Docetists, in the Pauline text in question. Paul gives the Corinthians practical rules on the subject of "graces." He teaches them a method for discerning by which spirit those who believe themselves to be inspired are really animated. Whoever sides with Jesus, despite the ignominious condemnation he suffered, is definitely enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Whoever, on the contrary, holds with the condemnation that applies to Jesus, one can be sure that it is not the Holy Spirit who inspires that person. Paul takes an extreme example to show that it is not everything to appear inspired, but that account must also be taken of the content of the words spoken by the one's who believe themselves inspired or who appear to be.

These inaccurate ideas on the First Epistle to the Corinthians lead Georgi and Friedrich, with a good number of other exegetes, to suppose that the *new opponents* arrived in Corinth between the First Epistle and the Second. But besides the fact that Luke does not mention this at all in Acts, this idea seems to me to be useless. If the situation is more serious, at least in chapters 10–13 of the Second Epistle, this is because during his intermediate visit Paul realized that the impression left by "the opponents," or rather the opponent, was much deeper than he had supposed. Moreover, he knows, or thinks he knows, more than he knew previously about the conduct of the opponent at Corinth, and what he had been told about it

makes him think, rightly or wrongly, that he had been arrogant and violent. He also knows his teaching better, and now judges with more assurance that this teaching is not the same as his own. But nothing obliges us to think that it is a matter of another person. There are enough common features in what is opposed in the two epistles to put this hypothesis aside.

So far as the differences, which are not very numerous, between Georgi's interpretation and Friedrich's interpretation are concerned, it seems that Friedrich was right when he criticized Georgi's idea that the opponents claimed to be *theioi andres*, "divine men." It is true that the Corinthians were close to considering the preacher who was probably the principal opponent thus (the others were simply his followers, or people who accompanied him). But this does not prove that the opponent or his friends claimed to be such. What does seem to be true is that the opponent or opponents tended to depict Christ as a *theios anēr* (cf. Georgi, 286–90), but this was Christ and not themselves. Paul is convinced that they have a high estimate of themselves, but he does not go so far as to say that they presented themselves as divine men. Friedrich might also be right when he notes certain links between Paul's opponents and the Hellenists in Acts. His idea might be right that the Hellenists were more opposed to the Temple cult than to the Law, whereas Paul was more opposed to the Law (insofar as it was the first principle of salvation) than the Temple cult (insofar as the cult was the acknowledgment of an organization that had Jerusalem as its center). It agrees with the fact that Apollos seems to have been outside the ecclesiastical organization centered in Jerusalem, while Paul insisted on being linked to this center.

Among the more recent interpretations I know of, in particular that of Kümmel in his *Introduction to the New Testament (Einführung in das Neue Testament* [Heidelberg, 1965; Eng. tr., London, 1966] and that of Barrett (1973) which I have already mentioned, seem to me to contain less truth and represent a regression in comparison to Friedrich's and Georgi's interpretations.

Kümmel sees clearly that the opponents probably have nothing to do with the Judaizers of the Epistle to the Galatians, or with the apostles at Jerusalem. He nevertheless wants them to be Palestinians who boasted of their knowledge of the earthly Jesus. To state that they were Palestinians is probably to interpret the word "Hebrew" too narrowly; Friedrich thinks that this word does not necessarily have a strict meaning. As for their contact with Jesus, the opponents could have stated that they knew well what his life had been like—according to Luke, Apollos (Acts 18:25) "taught accurately the things concerning Jesus"—without claiming in any way to have had direct contact with him. Finally Kümmel's hypothesis, that at Corinth these Palestinians were linked with the "Gnostic" opposition denounced in 1 Corinthians, implies an overestimation of the Corinthians' Gnosticism, and simply demonstrates that one cannot avoid making a link between the opponents attacked in the two epistles.

Much the same thing can be said of Barrett, who also supposes a combination of different tendencies. Moreover, one of the tendencies he supposes would have been very difficult to combine with the other. Returning to the Judaist hypothesis, it seems that Barrett does not take account of all the difficulties this hypothesis raises. He holds to the distinction between the superlative apostles and the false apostles, even though this distinction can scarcely be defended. He does not take account of the fact that the letters of commendation did not necessarily come from Jerusalem, since Paul presumes he can ask the Corinthians for one, and Apollos brought one that came from Ephesus. He supports his opinion with the fact that there was a party of "Cephas" at Corinth; but this does not prove that envoys from Jerusalem came here, still less Peter himself. Apollos, who knew Christianity by means other than simply Paul's disciples, may have known that Pauline Christianity was not the only form of Christianity. He may have known, not only from Paul's disciples, that there was a dispute between Paul and Peter. He may have spoken to the Corinthians about Peter's Christianity, as a Christianity a little different from Paul's, and some Corinthians may have been seduced by this Christianity which was more faithful to Judaism, especially since some of the Corinthian Christians were of Jewish origin, for example Crispus, the former head of the synagogue. During his stay at Corinth, Apollos, who may have been there quite a long time, could have had more than one chance to speak about Peter and the community at Jerusalem. This does not mean that he was himself a follower of Peter and that his own followers were Jewish Christians. Apollos's Christianity was not exactly Peter's, just as it was not exactly Paul's, since Apollos's party was both distinct from Paul's and Peter's. It was apparently a third form of Christianity, and it is against this form that Paul is fighting. We therefore ought to try to understand what this third form might have been.

Let me simply add that recent research on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, though it does not exactly agree with my hypothesis, at least opens up avenues that might lead to it, just as Georgi's and Friedrich's research might lead to it in respect to 2 Corinthians. For on the one hand it is far less frequently thought that it is Gnosticism properly speaking that is attacked in this epistle. R. McL. Wilson's article "Gnosis at Corinth," published in 1982, which we have already mentioned elsewhere (e.g., in n. 1 of this chapter), cites a number of recent works in which it is evident that the "Gnostic" traits do not in reality imply the basic ideas of Gnosticism properly speaking. On the other hand, one of the articles cited by Wilson, that of R. A. Horsley, "Gnosis in Corinth: 1 Corinthians 8:1-6" (*NTS* 27 [1981]: 32-51), tends to show that the Corinthians' "gnosis" might simply have been a Christianity influenced by Jewish-Hellenistic theology, such as we find in Philo and the Book of Wisdom. This tends to establish that an Alexandrian influence was at work in Corinth. It is astonishing that Horsley does not seem to link this Alexandrian theology, which

must have been influential at Corinth, with the fact that a Christian of Jewish origin who came from Alexandria had in fact preached at Corinth; just as it is astonishing that Georgi and Friedrich do not think of linking the adversaries opposed in 2 Corinthians, adversaries who according to them were Hellenistic Jews and whose arrival at Corinth is purely hypothetical, with Apollos, a Hellenistic Jew who really went there. It must be a very big obstacle that prevents anyone from entertaining this hypothesis. I think that this obstacle might be the fact that Apollos is traditionally considered a disciple of Paul, although there is nothing to indicate this in the Pauline texts. (If, strictly speaking, Apollos might be considered partially a disciple of Paul, since Paul's disciples perhaps added something to his Christianity, there is nothing in Paul's letters that shows that he ever held him to be his disciple; there are rather signs that Paul regarded him quite differently.)

Whatever the case, no one, to my knowledge, actually considers Paul's opponents in 2 Corinthians, as in 1 Corinthians, as being of Apollos's party. But I see that some scholars, in showing that the source of opposition to Paul in one or other of these epistles was a Christianity influenced by Hellenistic Jewish thought, *in fact make a link between what is opposed in one and what is opposed in the other*. I also see that since Apollos was Jewish and from Alexandria these scholars are now coming very close to what seems to me to be the most probable solution.

Chapter III

The Possible Sources of Apollos's Teaching

Though we know little about Apollos, the little that we do know is enough to show that he may be a crossroads for diverse influences. This is what we read in Acts (18:24–28):

Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, well versed in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit [or by the Spirit], he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue; but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him and expounded the way of God more accurately. And when he wished to cross to Achaia [= for Corinth], the brethren encouraged him, and wrote to the disciples to receive him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace believed, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

This text suggest three possible sources for his teaching, three possibilities that also do not mutually contradict each other.

On the one hand, Apollos's ideas might to a large extent be Pauline, since Paul's disciples completed his instruction. Priscilla and Aquila were disciples of Paul, whom he knew at Corinth where he lived with them. They had then accompanied Paul when he left Corinth, and, once arrived at Ephesus with him, they stayed there while he continued his journey. One might presume that they knew his doctrine well, having been so closely linked with him. Apollos might therefore have assimilated some of Paul's ideas thanks to them. Once instructed by them, he must even have seemed to be one whose doctrine did not obviously differ from Paulinism, since Priscilla and Aquila put so much confidence in him. It was apparently they who encouraged him to leave for Corinth and, personally knowing members of the community, gave him a letter of commendation. They certainly did not think that he might teach ideas other than those of Paul, or that he might do him an injustice before the Corinthians.

Apollos must therefore have seemed very close to Paul. It is not impossible, given the fervent character Luke attributes to him and which comes out in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians (if we are right in thinking it is aimed against him), that he *exaggerated* some of Paul's ideas; that, while relying on him, he went further than him. After all, this would

explain why Paul later did not recognize his own teaching in that of Apollos.

But there are also other possible sources for Apollos's teaching. His Christianity did not derive entirely from Paul's disciples; it was older than their meeting. It is even probable that it does not come from one of the Churches linked with the community at Jerusalem. For if it is true that Apollos knew only the baptism of John the Baptist, he probably did not know of the baptismal rite in use in these Churches. What Luke later says about the "Johannites" at Ephesus, who also only knew John's baptism, shows that they did not know this rite. However, Apollos "taught accurately the things concerning Jesus." Where did he acquire this knowledge of Jesus? According to a variant of the Acts text, he had been instructed in Christianity "in his homeland," that is, in Alexandria. Of what value is this variant? Is it part of the original text? If it is only an interpolation, at what date was it added? Did the author of it really know the life of Apollos, or was he simply expressing a presumption of his own? It is impossible to reply to these questions. But in any case, even if the variant has some value, it scarcely helps us. For we do not know what Alexandrian Christianity was like in the first century. All that we can say is that it must have existed, since Alexandria is so close to Jerusalem that it would be almost impossible that Christianity was not known there from an early date.

If we do not know in what form Christianity was preached at Alexandria in the first century, we nevertheless know to a certain extent the Alexandrian Judaism of this time. Now Apollos was a Jew. Wherever he got to know Christianity, it is most likely at Alexandria that he was instructed in Judaism, and once a Christian he must have retained some of the ideas that his Jewish surroundings taught him. He must have studied with learned Jews in Alexandria; and it is here that he doubtless acquired his remarkable knowledge of the Scriptures.

The Alexandrian Jews were, it seems, the most Hellenized of the Jews. It was among them that in the first century the admirable synthesis of Judaism, Platonism, and Stoicism was formed, which is the philosophy of Philo. It is also among them that the Greek book called the Wisdom, or the Wisdom of Solomon, seems to have been written either in the first century before Jesus Christ, or the first century after, or partly in one and partly in the other.

One of the features that distinguishes Alexandrian Judaism from Palestinian Judaism is that under the influence of the Greeks it allows a deeper distinction between the soul and the body, and conceives of a survival of the soul independently of the body after death. The Book of Wisdom is the only book of the Old Testament in which the word immortality (*athanasia*) appears. On the subject of the just put to death by the impious it is said: "They *seemed* to die," that is, in a sense they are not really dead (3:2). It is also said that after death the souls of the just are "in the hand of God" (3:1) and that the faithful "will abide with him in love" (3:9).

There does not seem to be any question of the resurrection of the body. The idea of survival here is Greek rather than Jewish. The distinction between the soul and the body is so strong that in some passages (8:19–20; 9:14–15) it even seems that the soul preexists the body.

Philo, for his part, believes in the immortality of the soul, or rather in the immortality of a part of the soul. He seems to say that what is immortal is not the whole soul, but only that part of it which knows intelligible realities. For him, the knowledge of these realities is eternal, like the realities themselves. Thus immortality, or rather eternity, can be attained in this life by the highest part of the soul. Does he think of the resurrection as the Jews generally thought of it, when they believed in it? That is, does he think that the soul cannot be without the body and that one day the soul and the body will be resurrected together? It certainly seems that such a belief never appears in his thought.¹ For him if the *dianoia* is immortal, the body is mortal (*De opificio* 135). He foresees a survival for souls as beings without bodies (*De cherubim* 114). In dying Moses became a pure intelligence, and thus he became immortal (*Vita Mos.* II, 288).

It is therefore possible that owing to his Alexandrian origin Apollos had a particular conception of the resurrection. That he completely denied the resurrection is impossible, since he was a Christian. He must have given some meaning to Christ's resurrection. But he might also have emphasized eternity, an eternity that can be present in the soul in this life. The doubts of some of the Corinthians on the possibility of the resurrection perhaps did not annoy him as much as they annoyed Paul.

For Philo the possibilities presented to the soul in this life seem to be more important than its fate after death. It may have been the same for Apollos.

According to Käsemann (quoted by Georgi, p. 14), Paul's opponents in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians were "ecstatic pneumatics." What interested them were the inspirations of the Spirit. On such inspirations they founded their right to direct souls. We know what value Philo attaches to inspiration, to "enthusiasm," to the "sober inebriation like that of the Corybantes" (*De opificio* 71). "Therefore, my soul, if thou feelest any yearning to inherit the good things of God, leave not only thy land, that is the body, thy kinsfolk, that is the senses, thy father's house, that is speech, but be a fugitive from thyself also and issue forth from thyself. Like persons possessed and Corybantes, be filled with inspired frenzy, even as the prophets are inspired. For it is the mind which is under the divine afflatus, and no longer in its own keeping, but is stirred to its depths and maddened by heavenward yearning, drawn by the *truly* existent and pulled upward thereto . . . —such is the mind, which has this inheritance" (*Quis rerum divinarum heres* 69–70).

This idea, that the soul might be seized by a divine inspiration and drawn beyond itself to God, to that which is higher than itself, is not unlike what Paul's opponents seem to have thought. If Paul appeals to his own

visions, his own experience of ecstasy (2 Cor. 12:1–5), it is apparently because someone set against him the visions, the ecstasies of someone else. And when he protests against those who say that he acts in a worldly fashion (2 Cor. 10:2, 4), when he states that *he also* has the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 7:40), and when he states that *he also* belongs to Christ (2 Cor. 10:7), one senses that the Christianity of his opponents was more mystical and more passionate than his own. Such a Christianity might have its roots, or some of them, in Alexandrian mysticism.

The third source from which Apollos's ideas may have come is that of the circles linked with John the Baptist. In stating that Apollos knew only the baptism of John, Luke leads us to suppose that he had some link with these circles. Perhaps he came across them in Ephesus, perhaps in Alexandria, perhaps also in Palestine; for there is nothing to make us think that he came directly from Alexandria to Ephesus.

But what did the Baptist preach? We find some information on this in the Gospels. Here we see that John did not take much account of Jewish nationalism; for him it was not enough to be a son of Abraham in order to be saved (Luke 3:8). He stood apart from the Temple and the priests of the Temple and certainly did not see them in a good light (Matt. 21:32). He seems to have been baptized in Samaria (John 3:23). He preached an ethic of love, like Christ (Luke 3:10–11), and like Christ he had no disdain for certain types of people whom pious Jews normally hated: soldiers, publicans, prostitutes (Luke 3:12–14; 7:29; Matt. 21:32). One might therefore presume that, like Christ, he taught that certain inner dispositions are more important in the eyes of God than being faultless according to the Law. On the other hand, John the Baptist emphasized eschatology, the end of the world and future judgment, and it seems that for him this idea was linked with the idea of the Holy Spirit. He seems to have thought of the Spirit in Stoic fashion: as a sort of divine fire which one day will set fire to and destroy the universe. The baptism in the Spirit, which he predicted, seems to be linked for him with Wrath and the celestial fire, which he announced were near (Matt. 3:10–12; Luke 3:9, 16–17). This eschatology does not easily fit into the predominantly Platonic philosophy of Alexandrian Judaism. Nevertheless the two might be united. Eschatology appears in the Book of Wisdom and is not completely absent from Philo (cf. *De praem.* 93–97). The Fourth Gospel, also, unites future eschatology with a present eschatology which evokes Philo's idea of an eternal *dianoia*.

But the ideas we have just mentioned (eschatology, a morality of inwardness) are also found in Christianity. If Apollos inherited them, he may have inherited them from Christianity. Moreover, in the epistles to the Corinthians, we do not see that Apollos especially emphasized eschatology. We therefore do not see what he could have learned directly from the Baptist or his disciples. Perhaps the only thing he had in common with them was a certain way of keeping his distance from the Churches linked with Jerusalem, as John the Baptist had kept his distance from the Temple.

Perhaps his only link with John's disciples was that, like the Johannites at Ephesus, he did not know that baptism ought to be followed by the transmission of the Spirit by the mediation of an apostle—not to know it or *not to want to know it*? For did he really not know it? We see that, once instructed by Paul, the Johannites allowed themselves to be rebaptized and to receive the Spirit by the imposition of Paul's hands. But we do not read in Acts that Apollos was ever rebaptized, or that he received the Spirit according to this rite. Perhaps he thought he had no need of this rite to be visited by the Spirit. He seems to have been an important person, sure of himself and quite different from the humble Johannites. Perhaps it was he who converted them to Christianity, and not they who had admitted him into their group. In this case, he had converted them without speaking to them of the necessity of receiving the Spirit by the mediation of an apostle, that is, of the necessity of being linked with the Church at Jerusalem. And this was perhaps not because he did not know of this necessity, but because he did not recognize it, because he did not wish to be too closely linked with this Church. This is at least a possibility.

It must also be noted that, even after being instructed by Priscilla and Aquila, he did not teach his friends or his disciples—if the Johannites were his disciples or at least his friends—the duty of “receiving the Spirit.” It has sometimes been concluded that in reality he had no link with them; but one can draw a very different conclusion. One might conclude that it was not through ignorance that he did not teach them this duty, even before his encounter with Paul's disciples. Or should one suppose that Priscilla and Aquila did not teach him it? This is possible, but they had judged his Christianity to be incomplete, and what could he be incomplete about if he taught accurately the things concerning Jesus? Was it on the questions of ritual and organization, on the authorities he ought to be linked with? There was perhaps a tendency in Apollos to stay apart from organized Christianity. This perhaps linked him with the “Hellenists,” that small group of early Christians who were opposed to the privilege of the Temple and who had had a number of disagreements with the community of the Twelve Apostles (disagreements that Luke's explanations, in Acts 6, do not make perfectly clear). The Hellenists had also not received the imposition of hands before their agreement with the apostles; at least one might conclude this from Acts 6:6, where the apostles are seen imposing hands on seven of them following the conclusion of the agreement. In any case, when Philip, a Hellenist, converted the Samaritans, he did not lay hands on them or impart the Spirit to them; it was the apostles, who came from Jerusalem as if to check his work, who did it. Does the reference to the Baptist, in relation to Apollos and the Johannites, not simply refer to the tendency toward a wider Christianity, one more open, less attached to a definite center, than that which was linked to the community at Jerusalem? It is quite possible. However it must be realized that it is simply a *perhaps*, a possibility.

In summary, we can allow that Apollos's ideas could principally have come from, on the one hand, Alexandrian Judaism, and on the other, from Christianity, which he knew both from an unknown source (perhaps close to the Baptists or the Hellenists) and through Paul's disciples.

We can scarcely draw more from the account in Acts. But perhaps we will be able to throw a little more light on what Apollos may have been by examining what happened in Christian circles in Ephesus at this time, or a little after it.

Chapter IV

The Signs of Gnosticizing Heresies at Ephesus

We know that after his stay in Corinth Apollos went back to Ephesus, and have no reason to think that he did not henceforth stay there. For him Ephesus seems to have been more than a place to pass through. As we have seen, he found persons who shared his ideas there and perhaps even disciples. What Luke says about the “Johannites” at Ephesus is no less astonishing than what he says about Apollos and certainly ought to be linked with it. While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul went back to Ephesus, and meeting “some disciples,” that is, some Christians, he asked them: “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They reply: “No, we have never even heard that there is a Holy spirit.” Paul asks: “Into what then were you baptized?” They reply: “Into John’s baptism” (Acts 19:1–3). If these Christians had really belonged, more directly than other Christians, to a sect derived from the Baptist, it would be astonishing if they had never heard the Holy Spirit spoken of, since according to all the Evangelists, John the Baptist spoke of the Spirit. It would also have meant that they had no knowledge of the Old Testament.¹ We probably ought to understand their reply as meaning that they had not “received the Spirit” according to the rite in use among the first Christian communities. Which is to say that they were outside the organized Church, the Church linked with the mother community at Jerusalem. Paul’s question “Did you receive the Holy Spirit?” probably means that he had some doubt about their belonging to the Church. He must have been warned as far as Apollos was concerned, and he suspected, not without reason, that these unknown Christians were of the same sort as Apollos.

I have said² that one ought not to conclude from the fact that before his departure for Corinth Apollos did not warn the Johannites of the necessity of receiving the Spirit that he necessarily belonged to the same group. It is rather a sign that Apollos did not attach great importance to the organization. Georgi remarks (*Die Gegner des Paul im 2. Korintherbrief* [Neukirchen-vluyn, 1964], 245) that Paul’s opponents in 2 Corinthians neither were nor wished to be representatives of an institution; they thought they were personally inspired by the Spirit. Apollos might have thought that it was enough for his disciples to be guided by himself or directly by the Spirit. The notion of the Holy Spirit seems to have been in no way strange to him; on the contrary, he seems to have attached great

importance to it. This can be deduced from the fact that after the time when he had taught them the Corinthians had a passion for the Spirit and spiritual gifts, and also from what Paul says: "I think that I have the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 7:40). Paul does not accuse his opponent of not having taught the Holy Spirit but of teaching or rather making people receive "another Spirit" ("If you receive a different spirit from the one you received . . ." 2 Cor. 11:4). One must beware of this expression; to receive another spirit might be an attempt to, say, participate in another Church.

We can therefore assume that there really was a link between Apollos and the Johannites at Ephesus; and we can assume that the latter, like Apollos, knew of the Spirit. It was thought that they did not know it because they had not received the sacrament of the laying-on of hands and even because they thereby formed a group independent of the organized Church.

What could have become of this group? The Johannites whom Paul encountered (a dozen men, Luke says) were in some way regained by him for the Pauline Church at Ephesus. Paul took care to have them rebaptized and he himself imposed hands on them. But when Apollos came back from Corinth did he himself enter into the Pauline community, the community linked with that of Jerusalem? There is nothing that proves it. When Paul speaks of Apollos's decision not to return immediately to Corinth, he speaks of it in the past, which seems to indicate that he did not meet him often. ("It was not at all his will . . ." If he met him often, would he not have said, "It is not at all his will"?) And if I was right in interpreting the epistles to the Corinthians as I have done, if it is true that in the first epistle Paul shows little sympathy for Apollos, and in the second speaks of him with strong animosity, it is very likely that Apollos did not enter the group of Paul's disciples, or that, if he did join it at one time, he did not stay.

It is true that in the Epistle to Titus (an apocryphal epistle) pseudo-Paul advises Titus to help Apollos and Zenas in their journey. "Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they lack nothing" (3:13). But even if we assume that the author of this epistle knew well the things that had taken place between Paul and Apollos—and it is not certain that he did know them well—what he says does not prove that he thought of Apollos as a disciple of Paul. He simply attributes to him the normal conduct of a Christian toward another Christian. What he says demonstrates once again that, for Paul, Apollos was a Christian.

Moreover, when pseudo-Paul then says "our people," it is not certain that he is not opposing them to Zenas and Apollos. For it does not refer to the two travelers but to those who receive them. "And let our people learn to apply themselves to good deeds, so as to help cases of urgent need" (Titus 3:14). The mention of urgent needs might also make one think that he is appealing to a sense of duty rather than of friendship in the recipient of the letter.

Another document, also from the end of the first century, might also be used to show that if Apollos was not properly speaking a Paulinian there was at least no deep disagreement between him and the Christians who venerated Paul, or those who, like the Church of Rome, venerated both Peter and Paul. This is the *Epistle to the Corinthians* of Clement of Rome. The latter, writing to the Corinthians whose Church was torn by a sort of schism—some Corinthians had rebelled against their presbyters—reminds them that in the time of Paul there were already divisions and parties among them: the parties of Peter, of Paul, and Apollos. “But, he says, forming parties was a lesser fault than it is today. For at least you either favored apostles of the highest repute, or a man tested by them” (1 Clem. 47). Thus, according to Clement, Apollos was a man tested (or approved of, *dedokimasmēnos*) by the apostles Peter and Paul. But might it not be asked, as in relation to the Epistle to Titus, whether Clement knew the personality of Apollos well and what the situation of the Corinthian Church was in the time of Paul. Perhaps he is only judging it from the First Epistle to the Corinthians, which he knew and probably interpreted as most modern scholars do. Or perhaps he wishes to suggest, as Luke does in Acts, that there were never any serious conflicts in the early Church. The most probable thing is that he did not know very much about Paul’s relations with Apollos, and he judged them according to his interpretation of the First Epistle to the Corinthians.

(In fact, however, Paul is not said to have “tested” or “approved” of Apollos’s word; he says that it is God who will put it to the test. But since so many modern scholars have read this epistle without seeing anything in Paul’s feelings toward Apollos other than those of a master toward his disciple, Clement could well have done the same.)

Thus, all we know for certain about Apollos, after his stay in Corinth, is that he went back to Ephesus, and as I have said, there is no reason to think that he did not for the most part stay there afterward. Even if he made other missionary journeys, Ephesus could have remained the center of his activity. As we have seen, the Epistle to Titus says that he will make a journey during which he ought to pass through Crete, but being apocryphal, we do not know if this information is true. Apollos may have been mentioned to reinforce the appearance of authenticity, because he is named in an authentic epistle. Even if he did make this journey, there is nothing to prove that he did not return to Ephesus, as he did after his journey to Corinth.

If he in general stayed at Ephesus and was not linked with the Pauline Church of this town, what might he have become? Whatever he was, could he have remained silent? Can one imagine that he did not continue to preach and to make disciples? If some of his friends or disciples were incorporated into the Pauline Church at Ephesus by Paul, during his absence, there perhaps remained some who had not been incorporated. Above

all, being the person he was, he would have had no difficulty in making other disciples. It is therefore possible, one might even say probable, that a group of Christians existed around Apollos outside the Pauline Church at Ephesus.

This possibility is of no small importance for the history of the origin of Gnosticism. For if there is a place where the appearance of heresies of a Gnostic type are attested by the earliest signs, this place is neither Colossae nor even Samaria, it is Ephesus.

The signs in question are the following:

1. The epistles to the Corinthians, which are without doubt the oldest documents witnessing to a tendency that might become Gnosticism, show that this tendency manifested itself after the visit to Corinth of a preacher who had come from Ephesus, Apollos. And this preacher returned to Ephesus.

2. The epistles to Timothy place speculations that were almost certainly Gnostic at Ephesus. It is true that there are also warnings against these speculations in the Epistle to Titus; and according to this epistle, Titus was in Crete. But besides the fact that this epistle looks forward to Apollos's journey to Crete, which might indicate that a number of Apollos's friends or disciples were found there, disciples he was perhaps going to visit, besides this, the warnings have only a general character, whereas in the epistles to Timothy pseudo-Paul gives details; he names some of those who give themselves up to these speculations, and they were apparently the Christians at Ephesus.

3. In Acts Paul tells the elders of Ephesus that after his departure (or rather, after his death) fierce wolves will come among them, and that in their very community "men will arise speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them" (20:29-30). It is not certain that the author of Acts thereby wishes to refer to the Gnostics or the Gnosticizers, but it is very likely and even quite probable.

4. The Epistle to the Ephesians is perhaps the closest to Gnosticism among the epistles attributed to Paul (cf. the work of Schlier). Or, if it is not by him, it is possible, if not probable,³ that it must have been written at Ephesus. For it seems that in the original text it did not carry the name of its addressees. Thus, if it was called "to the Ephesians," it is probably because it was rediscovered among the community at Ephesus.

5. The Apocalypse indicates that there were Nicolaitans at Ephesus toward the end of the first century (2:6). It is true that the same book shows that there were also some at Pergamon and at Thyatira (2:14-15, 20-24). But these towns, which were close to Ephesus, belonged to the province of Asia, of which Ephesus was the center. We do not know exactly what the Nicolaitans taught during this period, but later they were thought

of as Gnostics, and even in the Apocalypse they are accused of eating meat sacrificed to idols, which is what the Corinthians were tempted to do and which evokes Gnostic freedom.

6. According to tradition, the Johannine writings, which are so close to Gnosticism, were written at Ephesus. I think that this tradition is probably worthy of belief.⁴

7. Finally, the polemics we find in the Johannine epistles may have been partly directed against the Docetists. Docetism, apparent or real, seems to have been like *a first stage in the formation of Gnosticism*. If the Johannine epistles were written in Asia Minor, at the end of the first century, there were probably Docetists in this region.

Thus when the New Testament documents that lead us to suspect the birth of heresies of a Gnostic type are linked with a definite place, they always lead us to Ephesus.

If *Gnosticism properly speaking* perhaps began in Syria, the *Gnosticizing tendencies* that preceded it and prepared for it direct us rather toward Asia Minor.

I think that the secret of the origin of Gnosticism must be hidden at Ephesus. I believe that the key to this secret can only be found in the circle of John's Gospel.

Chapter V

(*Excursus*)

Apollos and the Fourth Gospel

1. *Apollos and the Epistle to the Hebrews*

We know that, in the eyes of a very large number of scholars, the origin of the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine epistles remains a mystery. Harnack said that it was the greatest enigma of the history of early Christianity. The traditional attribution of his Gospel to the apostle John raises great difficulties. We do not wish to enumerate here the reasons that make it very improbable. Others have done this. The reasons are in general of two types. Some are based on the reception given to this Gospel in orthodox Christian circles. The Gnostics seem to have been the first to use it. If orthodox Christians did *perhaps* sometimes use it, up to the last third of the second century, they did so without naming it, without clearly referring to it, without attributing it to an apostle or even to a man named John, as if they used it with reticence and suspicion. This would be very astonishing if it were true that his Gospel was the work of one of the principal apostles. On this question one might refer to an old but very good book whose arguments have hardly lost their value, that of Benjamin Wisner Bacon, *The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate* (London, 1910). The work of J. N. Sanders, *The Fourth Gospel in the Early Church* (Cambridge, 1943), has also brought some very strong arguments to bear against the attribution to the son of Zebedee. The other type of argument is drawn from the comparison between what the New Testament teaches us about the son of Zebedee and what the Fourth Gospel teaches us about the man who wrote it. This comparison shows that there is almost nothing in common between the two men. Their interests and their characters seem to be very different. Their history is also very different, for there are very important facts that the son of Zebedee ought to know, if one is to rely on the Synoptic Gospels, that the author of the Fourth Gospel does not seem to know; and conversely, there are things that the author knows that would be very improbable in the son of Zebedee. Arguments of this sort are enumerated, for example, in the article by Pierson Parker "John the Son of Zebedee and the Fourth Gospel."¹ Oscar Cullmann also, in his book *The Johannine Circle* (London, 1976, pp. 66–67), briefly enumerates the characteristics

of the Fourth Evangelist, and draws the conclusion that this Evangelist could not have belonged to the group of the twelve apostles, that his culture, his contacts, his origin, and his history seem very different from those of the Galilean fishermen who were Christ's companions. We must also note that the Gospel and the Johannine epistles on the one hand and the Apocalypse on the other cannot be by the same author; their inspiration and style are too different. And if one of these works can be attributed to the son of Zebedee, it would rather it seems to me be the Apocalypse than the Fourth Gospel (if at least some parts of the Apocalypse can be regarded as older than the last decade of the first century). For on the one hand the style of John the Apocalypticist (a very beautiful style, but one that does not presuppose any culture other than a biblical one), is much closer than that of John the Evangelist's to the style one would suppose in a Galilean fisherman (even if one allowed that this fisherman had remarkable gifts and that he could extend his knowledge throughout his life). And on the other hand, the character that the visions betray, the anger of the Apocalypse, is not without analogy to that which the Evangelists Mark and Luke attribute to the sons of Zebedee.²

Scholars have put forward many hypotheses about the mysterious author of the Fourth Gospel. They have tried to identify him with different people. Among these one sometimes finds Apollos, but only very rarely. The hypothesis that he could have been the author of this Gospel was upheld in the nineteenth-century by J. T. Tobler,³ and in 1911 by H. Dechent.⁴ I do not know whether it has been upheld by others. In the work I have just been speaking of, B. W. Bacon seems to wish to move in this direction when he writes on the subject of Apollos (whom he holds to be a faithful disciple of Paul): "Such a disciple of Paul must we conceive as originator of the type of doctrine embodied in the Fourth Gospel; for it is in terms of Jewish Alexandrianism that the Christology of Paul is here interpreted. We have no means of proving that Apollos ever touched pen to paper; yet it is permissible to say that if any identifiable spirit speaks through the Fourth Gospel besides that of Paul it is such a spirit as that of Apollos."⁵ Similarly in his conclusion to the book: "Back of the indirect evidences pointing to authorship at Ephesus by some such Paulinist of Jewish origin and philosophic training as we might imagine Apollos to have been, lie certain others affecting the structure of the Gospel."⁶ Bacon does not, however, formally put forward the hypothesis; he finally states that the Gospel is by an unknown author. On the other hand the figure of Apollos might be present in Bultmann's thought when he writes that the author of the Fourth Gospel most probably belonged to a community of disciples of the Baptist who had become Christians.⁷ But to my knowledge he does not expressly put forward the view that Apollos is the possible author of the Gospel of John.

This hypothesis has therefore rarely been upheld, and when it has been it has not had a great success. Very good studies of the Fourth Gospel

do not even mention it. However, to my mind, it would merit renewed examination.

When I read the Acts of the Apostles for the first time in Greek, I was struck by the word *zeōn*, "fervent," a qualification by which Luke characterizes Apollos. This word immediately made me think of the author of the Fourth Gospel. If there is a New Testament writer who might be said to be fervent, it is him. This word cannot be applied, I believe, to any other writer in the New Testament except Paul. In particular, it can scarcely be applied to the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. When it has been supposed that Apollos could be the author of one of the works of the New Testament, it is usually Hebrews that is thought of. More than one scholar, and not lesser ones, have suggested seeing in him the author of this epistle, and Father Spicq has upheld this hypothesis afresh in a relatively recent work.⁸ But the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is not fervent. He is erudite and a good writer, as Apollos could have been if he wrote; but he is a prudent, moderate man, whose reasoning advances with a slow wisdom, continually relying on quotations drawn from Scripture. If one had to lay a bet on the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, I would wager on Luke. There are in fact strong resemblances between Luke's language and that of this epistle. Moreover, there is a tradition according to which he was the "translator" (for, according to this tradition, the letter had been written in Hebrew by Paul). It is scarcely possible, in fact, that it is a translation or that Paul is the author, but someone may have recalled that Luke had some part in it. Origen assumed it was either by Luke or Clement of Rome, in a way that makes the second idea unlikely. One objection to the hypothesis of Luke's authorship is that Luke is not a theologian but only a historian. This is not exact; as has been recognized for some time, Luke is also a theologian, in his youth he might have been more a theologian and less a historian than in his old age. We do not know exactly at what date the Epistle to the Hebrews was written, but it was written in Italy, and it is very likely that Luke, who had followed Paul in Italy, wrote it soon after the death of his master, at a time when the death of the great apostle must have discouraged the communities he founded. These communities may have been tempted to renounce Christianity, a Jewish heresy, and simply adhere to Judaism, which was tolerated by the Roman State. They had to be given new proofs that the Christian variant of Judaism was true.

In this respect I might be allowed to point out that the letter is not necessarily directed to Christians of Jewish origin, as is usually stated. The title "Epistle to the Hebrews" is simply a traditional designation that dates from the second century; no mention of its receivers is made in the text. It was not only Christians of Jewish origin who may have been tempted by Jewish Christianity or simply by Judaism. If the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews constantly relies on texts drawn from the Old Testament, it is because he is using the same method as his master Paul. When Paul

wishes to demonstrate something, he almost always refers to texts of the Old Testament, even when he is addressing Christians of pagan origin.

The epistle was definitely written after violent turmoil. The author is still a prisoner, or at least confined to one place (he says: "pray that I might be given back to you soon"; he also says that Timothy has just been freed). This turmoil might well have been the Neronian persecution, for the temptation to which the recipients of the epistle are inclined, the temptation of Judaism, would be more understandable before 70 than after.⁹ Also, the cult of the Temple as a present reality is mentioned in this letter (8:4-5). The only part of the epistle that might suggest a late date, I think, is that in which the persecutions already undergone by the Christians are mentioned. But the Christians, at least those who were not Jewish Christians, had undergone persecutions from the beginning. It is enough to recall the Hellenists obliged to flee from Jerusalem, Stephen stoned, Paul persecuted, the Christians at Rome obliged to leave their city at the same time as the Jews during the reign of Claudius, finally the Neronian persecution in which Paul perhaps met his death.

Thus Luke, if he is the author of the epistle, may have been much younger than when he wrote his Gospel and Acts.¹⁰ This might explain why he does not yet limit himself to expressing his theological ideas in the form of history. This epistle, a veritable theological treatise, may have been addressed to one or to a number of the Churches founded by Paul, not long after the latter's death. It certainly has a Pauline author who wishes to defend the work of his master, shaken by some terrible blow. It was written by a scholar who was also a good writer, and we know that Luke was both. Finally, as we have said, the style and vocabulary very much resemble Luke's.

It has been said that it could only have been written by a Jew. It is not at all certain. Père Spicq has observed, not without reason, that the knowledge of Judaism here is a scholarly knowledge, bookish, rather than the knowledge a man might have who was brought up within Judaism.¹¹ It must also be remembered that if Luke is not Jewish by birth (cf. Col. 4:10-14), he is passionately interested in Judaism, knows his Greek Bible well, and loves to show that he knows it. He may have been a proselyte before being a Christian. At the beginning of his Gospel, he imitates the narratives and poetry of the Old Testament. In the same way the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews wishes to show that he knows Judaism in depth, and this might even indicate that he is not Jewish; whereas the author of the Fourth Gospel, who is almost certainly Jewish, does not seek to show his knowledge of Judaism, but he knows it profoundly and from the inside.¹²

Finally we note that there is a sort of priestly spirit, an interest in the Jewish priesthood, in the Luke's Gospel (cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* III, 11, 8), as in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

On the other hand, Apollos does not seem to have been considered by Paul as his disciple, and nothing, to my mind, allows us to assume that he

belonged to his close friends. We have already pointed out that when he speaks of Apollos's decision not to return shortly to Corinth, in the First Epistle to the Corinthians (16:12), he speaks of it in the past, which seems to indicate that they did not meet often.¹³ There is nothing to indicate that Apollos might have followed him in Italy or that, after his death, he could have in some way officially assumed his heritage, by writing an epistle in which Paul's style is imitated, or some of his expressions taken up. The author of the letter is a Paulinian who clearly presents himself as such; he makes allusion to Paul's teaching and is known by his correspondents as belonging to the group of his companions. Even if Apollos was perhaps less severe in respect to Paul than Paul is to him, even if he owes some of his ideas to Paul, the epistles to the Corinthians show that he at least had great independence. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, on the contrary, wishes to link himself closely with Paul.

2. *Apollos and the Fourth Gospel (Hypothesis)*

On the other hand there are a number of reasons for thinking that Apollos may have had some part, even a large part, in the composition of the Johannine Gospel and epistles.¹⁴

1. The first reason is the very grandeur or force of spirit and eloquence that we can attribute to this person according to what we know of him. Who else, among the Christians the New Testament makes known to us, could have written the Fourth Gospel, this work of genius? No other writer in the New Testament can be said to be full of genius except Paul. Only the author of the Fourth Gospel can be weighed against Paul. Now, at Corinth Apollos did in fact seem to be able to be weighed against Paul. A good number of Corinthian Christians preferred him to Paul as a master and an authority. It is easy to say that the Corinthians were mistaken, that they were deceived by a pretender. But why should one decide a priori that these men were mistaken, that they did not know how to judge? Did those who had known how to recognize the beauty and truth of Paul's teaching have such bad judgment?

Certainly there may have been a Christian of genius whose name appears nowhere in the New Testament, or in the earliest Christian writers. But we see from the Johannine epistles that their author was in correspondence with certain Churches, apparently situated in regions other than his own; that he sent missionaries there, that he exercised a certain authority there. Just as Paul threatens the Corinthians that if he returns to Corinth he will prove strict, so the Johannine author threatens that if he comes to a certain Church he will call in question the conduct of Diotrefes, a man who opposed him and his envoys (3 John 9–10). He was not therefore an obscure or completely isolated Christian.

Ought we not to ask why Luke speaks at length about Apollos and Johannites at Ephesus, whereas in this part of Acts he usually only enlarges on facts that might glorify Paul? What he says about Apollos and the Johannites is certainly not unfavorable to Paul, but at first sight it does not add very much to his glory. To have completed, either directly or by means of his disciples, the knowledge of a few people who already had some idea of Christianity is not a great feat. And why does Luke make this account strange and a little ambiguous, in a way that shows that he both wishes to do justice to Apollos and is perhaps not entirely favorable to him? (For on the one hand he mentions his eloquence, his knowledge of the Scriptures, his vigorous defense of Christianity against the Jews. But on the other hand what he says might make one think that Apollos's Christianity was incomplete, that this man needed to be instructed by Paul's disciples, that he was therefore inferior to Paul, that his own disciples were ignorant and not very numerous.) Could it not be because Luke could not leave a person like Apollos unmentioned, but that he did not inspire in him a complete sympathy? Could this not be because Apollos was someone important, had exercised an influence, and still exercised it, that without declaring himself openly hostile to this influence, Luke nevertheless tries to put Christians on their guard?¹⁵ Apollos's influence was therefore still felt around 90 and appeared to Luke as being possibly a danger to that of Paul.

2. The fact that Apollos was eloquent must be particularly considered. What Luke says and, even more, what Paul says show that his eloquence was undeniable. Now, the Fourth Gospel is a work of eloquence. It relates fewer incidents but more discourse than the other Gospels. One has the impression that the author is more an orator than a writer. As a written work, this Gospel is far from being well composed (at least if it is for the most part the work of a single writer and has not been extensively reshaped, interpolated, and mutilated). Exegetes criticize its faults of composition, a certain disorder, inconsequences, and a sort of unfinishedness. The Gospels of Matthew and Mark are much better composed. But with John the prose takes wings, so to speak, each time he reports words; it leaves the earthly paths of writing and becomes an admirable inspired discourse. These ardent, lyrical discourses, which the author gives to Christ, no doubt reflect the author's own way of speaking. If this author was Apollos, one could understand the Corinthians' enthusiasm.

In the second and third Johannine epistles, which are very short, the author writes in closing that he has still much more to say, but he does not wish to do it with pen (a reed) and ink; he would rather say it all in speaking when he visits his correspondents. This is perhaps because it takes longer to write a lot of things than to say them; but it might also be because this author prefers speaking to writing and trusted his speaking rather than his pen. If he nevertheless wrote a whole Gospel and a long epistle, it was

perhaps because having arrived at the end of his life he thought he ought to leave a lasting witness, or because his disciples asked him for it.

3. A third reason is that Apollos was a Jew. Although the Fourth Gospel is very hard on the Jews, it is extremely likely that the author was a Jew himself. His knowledge of scripture—an intimate and deeply assimilated knowledge; his knowledge of Rabbinic teaching;¹⁶ of Jewish customs; the political situation of the Jewish people; the penetration he betrays on the subject of the mentality of the people who followed Jesus, as well as that of his opponents; his understanding of the motives that led the Jerusalem priests to denounce him; the expression “the Gentiles” in the Third Epistle of John; finally the saying “salvation comes from the Jews,” all show that it would be difficult if he had not been a Jew himself. Account must also be taken of the undeniable Semitisms in his language which have led some commentators to assume that his Gospel was translated from the Aramaic. It is true that this hypothesis is generally rejected;¹⁷ but it is probable that he was bilingual, and though writing in Greek, he sometimes (like Paul) thought in Hebrew or in Aramaic.

He was therefore most probably a Jew. And if he nevertheless attacks unbelieving Jews, this is indeed what Apollos did (cf. Acts 18:28).

R. M. Grant has forcefully shown to what extent the Fourth Gospel is opposed to orthodox Judaism.¹⁸ For J. L. Martyn the polemic against the Jews is to the fore in John’s Gospel.¹⁹ For other commentators the aim of this Gospel was to convert the Jews of the Diaspora.²⁰ Now, according to Luke (Acts 18:28), Apollos’s main action at Corinth was “vigorously to refute the Jews in public.” This is what he also did at Ephesus; Priscilla and Aquila had met him while he “spoke boldly” in the synagogue (Acts 18:26).

4. A fourth reason is that he was an Alexandrian Jew. If it seems that the Fourth Evangelist knows Rabbinic Judaism well, his knowledge of Hellenistic Judaism is still more evident. His theology of the Logos has always been linked with Philo’s teaching on the subject of the divine Logos. (For Philo the Logos is the “first-born Son of God,” the intermediary through whom God has created everything, the mediator between God and the world.) It is true that if formerly the resemblances between the two doctrines were brought out, nowadays it is the differences that are emphasized. There are certainly differences, but that there is no link remains difficult to believe.²¹

Of all the sources cited as witnessing to a current of ideas that might have influenced the Fourth Evangelist, Philo is after all the only one who is definitely earlier than him. All the other sources—Mandean manuscripts, Gnostic works in general, the *Odes of Solomon*, Gnostic *Hermetica*, the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, *Hekkalôth* Jewish literature, and so on—are or might be later than John’s Gospel (and some of them much later). As far as Gnosticism in general is concerned, the resemblances between Gnostic

thought and that of John are incontestable, but it is at least possible,²² to my mind very probable, that it was John who influenced Gnosticism rather than the contrary. The only element of Gnosticism that probably existed from the time of John, apart from Johannine thought itself, is Docetism, and the author of John rejects it. Moreover, it is not certain that this tendency is completely independent of him, for he might himself be the source of a certain form of Docetism.²³ As for the writings of the Qumran sect, they are, it is true, earlier than John, but there are more differences than fundamental links between the sect's religious thought and that of the Fourth Evangelist.²⁴ The dualism of Qumran, for example, is not at all that of John.²⁵ One is therefore on firmer ground when one underlines the resemblances between John and Philo. Those which Dodd enumerates (*The Interpretation*, 54–73) are many and striking. They concern not only the Johannine Prologue but other parts of the Gospel too.

The Fourth Gospel, though profoundly Jewish, is at the same time the most Hellenistic of the Gospels. It is certainly steeped in knowledge of the Old Testament, but at the same time it is steeped in a mysticism that is rather inspired by Greek philosophy, in particular by Platonism. (The Old Testament is more ethical in spirit than mystical). This blending of thoughts or expressions derived from the Old Testament with philosophical mysticism derived from Hellenism, as Dodd remarks (*Historical Tradition*, 16), is not superficial but belongs to a very profound level and, whatever one says, evokes Alexandrian Judaism.

5. Yet another reason is the particular nature of the Fourth Gospel's teaching on the subject of John the Baptist. The author of this Gospel sometimes seems to address those for whom John the Baptist and not Jesus was the Messiah. It is perhaps for this reason that he states from the beginning (1:8) that John the Baptist was not the light but a witness to the light. Or perhaps—this is a hypothesis that I believe has not been entertained and that seems possible—he wished to justify himself in the eyes of those who considered him a disciple of the Baptist and not of Christ.²⁶ Whatever the case, he seems to have had links with a Johannite group or one that appeared to be; he might even have belonged to such a group (cf. Bultmann²⁷). Now, we have seen that at the beginning of his preaching Apollos taught a doctrine in which Jesus was known and presented precisely enough, but he knew only the baptism of John the Baptist; either he belonged to a Johannite group at Ephesus or, having belonged to such a group elsewhere, he then founded one himself at Ephesus.

We have said that it is difficult to know what particular parts of his teaching Apollos may have received from a circle linked directly to the Baptist; that perhaps his only link with such a circle was a tendency to remain apart from the Churches that had their common center in Jerusalem.²⁸ But this tendency would already be something very important. It would agree with the tendency of the Fourth Evangelist. The latter consid-

ers the Temple cult abolished, and not only for a certain time but definitively. He thinks that the worship of God is not tied to a definite place, that God can be worshiped "in spirit and in truth." It must also be remembered that Paul, rightly or wrongly, did not recognize his own Christianity in that of Apollos, and that the Corinthians distinguished Apollos's teaching from both Paul's and Peter's. Now, according to Cullmann, the Fourth Gospel represents a type of Christianity that differs both from the Pauline type and from the type of the Synoptic Gospels.²⁹ Cullmann thinks that this Christianity must be that of a Christian group partly derived from the disciples of John the Baptist.³⁰ He also demonstrates that this group had links with the "Hellenists," who were opposed to the privilege of the Temple.³¹

6. Paul thinks of his rival or adversary as imperious and violent (2 Cor. 11:20). Who cannot sense a natural imperiousness and a certain violence in the author of the Fourth Gospel? His sovereign authority, his direct and fearless attacks, his elevated and piercing vision like that of an eagle, to whom he has been compared, all show that if the religion of love and peace that he received and that he preaches could have softened a passionate, spirited, and dominating character, it has not changed it beyond recognition.

One might also note in the Johannine author not only a conviction of being inhabited by the spirit of Christ, to the point of being able to attribute the latter with discourses he probably composed himself,³² but also a missionary ardor, a passion for mission (cf. Cullmann, *The Johannine Circle*, 16 ff., 100–101), which is also evident in Apollos. Käsemann noted that the author of the Johannine epistles not only directs a center of mission, but also seeks to establish links for his organization with foreign communities not founded by himself.³³ This is exactly what Apollos did at Corinth.

7. Paul accuses his rival, that is, for us, Apollos, of preaching "another Jesus," "another Gospel" than the one he preaches himself. When Paul speaks of Jesus without calling him Christ, he is speaking of the earthly, historical Jesus (cf. Georgi, *Die Gegner des Paulus im 2. Korintherbrief* [Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1964], 283, and G. Friedrich, "Die Gegner des Paulus im 2. Korintherbrief," in *Abraham unser Vater . . . ; Festschrift für Otto Michel* [Leiden, 1963], 189). Now, the historical Jesus whom Paul preaches is that of the Synoptic Gospels. The account of the Last Supper in 1 Cor. 11:23–25 is very close to that of the Synoptics, in particular to that of Luke, and very different from that of John. J. A. T. Robinson has shown that apocalyptic ideas one finds in the epistles to the Thessalonians are based on the same traditions as the Matthew's Gospel.³⁴ He also shows that other traditions in these same epistles seem to derive from sources similar to those of Mark and Luke.³⁵ If Apollos recounted the life of Jesus as it was recounted in John, one could understand very well why in Paul's

eyes he preached another Jesus, another Gospel. Doubtless he could have taught something completely different that we know nothing about. But from what we know of first-century Christianity, we find a different account of the earthly Jesus from that which is related in the Synoptics, and we find this in the Fourth Gospel. That the Johannine tradition existed well before the writing of the Fourth Gospel is very likely. That certain elements of this tradition may have been taught from the years 53–54 is not at all impossible.³⁶

Georgi shows that the Jesus depicted by Paul's opponents must have been more glorious, even in his earthly life, than that of Paul. He thinks that they must have described Jesus as a *theios anēr*, a "divine man," that is, a divine man not only in essence but also in appearance, in his earthly behavior (*Die Gegner des Paulus*, 286–90). He bases what he says solely on an analysis of 2 Corinthians and has no intention, it seems, of linking Paul's opponents with the Fourth Gospel. But it is precisely in the Fourth Gospel that Jesus is in fact depicted as a *theios anēr*.³⁷

But here a difficulty arises. If Apollos related the life of Jesus much as it is related in the Fourth Gospel, would Luke have said that he taught accurately (*akribōs*) the things concerning Jesus? Luke's own Gospel is quite different from the Johannine Gospel, even though he betrays more points of contact with it than the other Synoptics. He should therefore have thought that Apollos *inexactly* reported what concerned Jesus. However, we have shown that Paul's opponent or rival in 2 Corinthians can hardly be anyone but Apollos, and Paul accuses him of teaching *another Jesus*. There is therefore a great difference of opinion between Paul and Luke on this point. Whether or not Apollos is the author of the Fourth Gospel, Paul does not appreciate his teaching about Jesus in the same way as Luke. One might suppose that Luke was not very well informed about Apollos's teaching; that by "all that concerned Jesus" he simply means certain ideas on which all the Evangelists are agreed (that is, that Jesus is the Son of God, that he is the Savior of humankind, etc.); and being less intransigent and calmer than Paul, he considered the differences between Apollos's teaching in a short account and differences of the tradition he had received himself as negligible. The first hypothesis, in any case, is quite likely; for although Luke's Gospel is the closest to John of the three Synoptics, it does not show that Luke knew the Johannine tradition in its entirety.

8. Apart from the difficulty we have just mentioned, which is not insurmountable, the rest of the portrait Luke draws of Apollos agrees perfectly with the author of the Fourth Gospel. Luke says not only that he was eloquent and fervent, that he was bold and powerfully refuted the Jews in public, he also says that he showed by the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ. Now, it can be said that the Johannine author relies on the Scriptures, for there are numerous passages in which he shows that the Scrip-

tures foretold Jesus and witness to him. One can cite 1:45; 2:22; 5:39, 46–47; 7:38; 8:56; 12:14–16, 38–41; 13:18; 15:25; 19:24–28, 36–37 20:9. His thought is also nourished by knowledge of the Old Testament, and it is not only where he expressly quotes it that he acts on its authority. His Jesus states that the Scriptures bear witness to himself, that Moses wrote about him. Finally, as he states in his conclusion, the goal of his work is to show “*that Jesus is the Christ*” (20:31). This is also, in the same words, Apollos’s goal: he shows by the Scriptures “*that Jesus is the Christ*” (Acts 9:22; 18:5). But if Apollos was in perfect agreement with Paul over this, he was also in perfect agreement with the Fourth Evangelist.

9. If the traditions concerning the earthly Jesus seem to have been quite different in John on the one hand and in Paul and the Synoptics on the other, this does not stop Paul and John being very close to one another in their theology. Their language is different, but their ideas are very similar, especially when one considers the Pauline captivity epistles. It might be said that the whole of the Logos doctrine, save the word, is already present in Paul’s epistles. In the Epistle to the Colossians one finds John’s preexistent Christ, the eternal, divine entity by which God created the world. (Although Paul’s Christ seems to be assimilated to Wisdom rather than to the Logos, this does not make a great difference, and the hymn in the Epistle to the Colossians might be just as well explained by the assimilation of Christ to the Logos.) In the First Epistle to the Corinthians (15:47) the “second man,” that is, Christ, already “comes from heaven.” In the same epistle (8:6) Christ perhaps already appears as the instrument of creation.³⁸ If there is a large step to be taken to move from the Christ of the Synoptics to John’s Christ, this step had already been almost wholly taken by Paul. Also, in John as in Paul, election and divine predestination are the conditions of salvation, and the means by which God saves the elect is *faith* in the cross of Christ, or, what amounts to almost the same thing, *knowledge* of the cross. To believe and to know are in general synonymous words in John, and even in Paul.³⁹ Did the author we call John form his doctrine independently of Paul? Is it not more likely that he knew Paul’s teaching, as Apollos knew it, but that already having his own Christianity, as Apollos had, he expressed Pauline teaching in his own way?

We have seen that, instructed in part by Paul’s disciples, Apollos must have seemed to his disciples as completely sharing their faith, without which he would not have been commended to the Corinthians. In a sense it is therefore true that he was a disciple of Paul, even though he probably never belonged to a group of disciples *recognized by Paul*. As we know, it sometimes happens that a master does not recognize himself in his most brilliant disciple and wishes to oppose him, either because this disciple has changed some point of his doctrine or because he has gone further than him or finally because the two personalities are as strong as each other and cannot get on very well for any length of time.

10. As I have said, there are particular links between Luke's Gospel and John's Gospel. But these links are such that one cannot conclude that the author of the Johannine Gospel had read Luke's Gospel, or that Luke had read the Johannine Gospel.⁴⁰ If there is no literary dependence between the two works, one must assume some link between the authors. They must have belonged to the same circle or one of them had access to the circle to which the other belonged. Now, although to my mind Apollos did not belong, or not for very long, to the circle of Paul's disciples, he knew the Pauline milieu. And Luke, who accompanied Paul from his second missionary journey, could at least have known echos of Apollos's teaching.

11. A tendency toward Gnosticism appeared at Corinth after Apollos's visit. Now, a tendency toward Gnosticism exists in the Fourth Gospel. Granted, this might be explained by the fact that Gnosticizing ideas circulated at Ephesus and could have reached both Apollos and the Johannine author. Only we must note that we know of nothing that properly foreshadows Gnosticism, at Ephesus or elsewhere, before the epistles to the Corinthians. (We have demonstrated above that Simon cannot be called Gnostic or even Gnosticizing, and we will see below that even his school does not seem to have existed before the end of the first century.) Where did these Gnosticizing ideas derive from that circulated at Ephesus? A man with a strong personality, such as Apollos was, as the Johannine author also certainly was, might well have created such a tendency rather than have received it.

12. Dechent has pointed out that the third Johannine epistle might be addressed to a Christian at Corinth. It is addressed to a certain Gaius, whose charity and generosity toward Christian travelers the Johannine author praises. "Beloved, it is a loyal thing you do when you render any service to the brethren, especially to strangers, who have testified to your love before the Church. You will do well to send them on their journey as befits God's service. For they have set out for his sake and have accepted nothing from the heathen" (3 John 5-7). Note in passing that the author of this epistle found it natural, as Apollos probably did, that itinerant preachers should be maintained and provided with the necessary resources for their journey by the Christian communities they visited. But this is not the most important point. The most important thing is that Paul also speaks of a certain Gaius or Caius (Rom. 16:23; 1 Cor. 1:14), who was a Christian at Corinth and whose hospitable, generous character he mentions: "Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole Church" (Rom. 16:23). If these men only had their name in common, this would be of little importance, since the name was very common. But that these two men, who were both members of one of the first Christian communities, both had besides the same name the same particularly hospitable character, and a situation that allowed them to offer hospitality and to give generously to passing guests, makes the coincidence more improbable. It is therefore at least possible that it is a question of the same man. If it was the case, who better than Apollos, who had preached at Corinth,

who seems to have stayed there at the expense of the community, and who moreover had kept watch over the followers (at least until the “letter of tears” and perhaps longer), would have known the hospitable Gaius, have counted him among “his children,” and commended his envoys to him?

What we believe we have found concerning the links between Paul and Apollos permits us to add yet more to Dechent’s argument. For if the author of the epistle is Apollos, and if the letter is written to a Corinthian, one could easily explain why the community to which Gaius belonged was divided. The author in fact says that a certain Diotrephes, who was apparently the head of this community, refuses to receive his envoys and chases from the Church those who receive them. This is readily comprehensible if Diotrephes was a follower of Paul. The latter seems to have triumphed over his opponents’ party since his third stay in Corinth. His followers could have remained as guides of the community after his departure. One might even hold that Paul himself organized the community so that authority would be exercised by men who were the most faithful to him. Diotrephes may have been a sort of bishop, who was either given this position by Paul or invested with this charge by the community that was reconciled with Paul.

The Gaius of the Epistle to the Romans, who was certainly devoted to Paul, since Paul was his guest at the time he wrote this letter, in a community reconciled with him that had become peaceful, might nevertheless have retained some admiration and friendship for Apollos. He may not have associated himself with Diotrephes’s intolerance.

Each of these arguments might appear inadequate in itself; but it seems to me that together they give quite a lot of strength to the arguments formerly voiced by Tobler and taken up by Dechent. Some of Tobler’s arguments were, it is true, not very convincing; to my mind he was wrong to seek to make Apollos both the author of the Fourth Gospel and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Dechent may also have been wrong in part of his argument. But the idea itself might be right; it can be maintained by more reasons than Tobler and Dechent have given for it. If one dares not conclude from these reasons that the mysterious author of the Fourth Gospel could be called Apollos, one might at least assume, with Bacon, that Apollos played an important role in the school from which this Gospel derived. In any case, it can be affirmed that *we know of no other person of the time who as much as Apollos unites the qualities and conditions necessary to allow one to attribute the Johannine writings to him.*

3. Difficulties That This Hypothesis Might Leave Unanswered

Granted, this hypothesis would not overcome every difficulty. Why the name of Apollos has completely disappeared from the tradition concerning the Fourth Gospel, and why this Gospel was attributed to the apostle John would remain to be explained.

Was the name of the Johannine author not somewhat forgotten in his lifetime? In his letters he refers to himself simply as "the Elder" or "the Presbyter" or "the Priest" (according to the translation preferred for *presbyteros*), as if he were no longer known by his correspondents but by this title, as if his name was no longer spoken and he himself preferred that it should be forgotten. That he does not name himself in his Gospel is not at all astonishing; the other Evangelists do not name themselves either. But that he does not name himself in his letters is less natural, for it is contrary to classical usage. One gets the impression that he surrounds himself in mystery, that he wishes to address only his faithful friends, who know him better by the title they give him than by his name. Perhaps this name was not a recommendation with some Christians; perhaps it recalled old quarrels. It seems to me that this was certainly the case if it was a matter of Apollos. The First Epistle to the Corinthians, which was certainly read in more than one Church—Clement of Rome already knew of it—depicted Apollos as a possible rival to Paul, even if it was not clear that Paul attributed the fault to him. Whatever the case, this preference for not naming himself must have contributed to making the author's name forgotten. What is not written down, what is known only by a small circle, can easily be forgotten, especially in time of persecution.

We have said that the Johannine author was not completely isolated. In fact, he not only had disciples around him but in other places. Meeks could say of the Johannine circle that it was a sort of "sect".⁴¹ But really a sect is usually a rather closed circle, rather isolated from the outside world. That the Johannine "sect" was relatively isolated in comparison with other Christians is proved by the ignorance (or mistrust) of the Fourth Gospel demonstrated by orthodox circles during the whole of the first half of the second century. To the extent that these circles *perhaps* knew it, they seem to have held it in suspicion, as if it were the work of a heretic. On this point I will content myself with referring to Bacon and Sanders, who give numerous proofs of the strange silence that for a long time surrounded this Gospel in nonheretical circles.⁴² As I have said, the Gnostics seem to have been very much the first to use it.

Apollos may have been rejected both by the Paulinians, faithful out of deep feeling for Paul (if our interpretation of the epistles to the Corinthians is correct), and by the Jewish Christians, because of his attacks against the Jews. The Johannine author seems to have been rejected in the same way. Käsemann has rightly seen that in the dispute that sets the author of the Johannine epistles against Diotrefes, it is the latter who is conscious of representing the authority of the Church, or the Churches. In the Third Epistle the Johannine author appears as a man who feels himself to be excluded, who is put on the defensive, and who cannot copy his opponent by excluding him in return. He cannot excommunicate Diotrefes, not because he is more tolerant than him (for in the Second Epistle he excommunicates those whom he regards as heretics), but because for him Dio-

trephes has the authority of the ecclesiastical institution. The Johannine author is not completely isolated, for he has his own Church, but this is an *ecclesiola in Ecclesia*, a little Church, founded simply upon the works of an inspired man.⁴³

Rejected by the Paulinians, among whom perhaps was Diotrephes, among whom was certainly Ignatius and Polycarp, who perhaps knew his Gospel but do not mention it, the Fourth Evangelist must have been still more rejected by the Jewish Christians, whom his attacks against the Jews of his time must have scandalized. There are certainly parallels between the Fourth Gospel and the Apocalypse that can only be explained by the fact that one of the authors must have known the doctrine of the other, or because they lived in the same environment.⁴⁴ But this is not to say that these two works could have derived directly from the same circle, as Barrett assumes. Despite common features, the spirit of the Apocalypse is too deeply opposed to that of the Fourth Gospel for their authors to belong to the same group.⁴⁵ It might be said that if the Fourth Gospel is the most anti-Jewish work of the New Testament, the Apocalypse is the most Jewish. The author of the Fourth Gospel may have been among those whom the Apocalypse accuses of usurping the title of apostle—it probably has Paul and the Paulinists especially in mind, but from a number of points of view, Apollos could be assimilated to the Paulinists—or among those whom the Apocalypse compares to Balaam, apparently because they allowed the eating of meat sacrificed to idols—Paul allowed this to be done, and Apollos did not, it seems, turn the Corinthians from it. For his part the author of the Fourth Gospel not only attacks the Jews of his time but perhaps also the Jewish Christians. Annie Jaubert observes that in 8:31–59 it is the Jews *who have believed*, which is as much as to say the Jewish Christians *avant la lettre*, whom Christ depicts as not knowing God.⁴⁶

After Paul's death the Paulinists drew nearer to the Jewish Christians. Luke's work is the proof of this. The hostility of one group toward the Fourth Gospel might have grown from the hostility of the other. Indeed, perhaps one of the causes of the link between them was the desire of some Paulinists to overcome the dangerous influence of Christianizing Gnosticism which is that of the Fourth Evangelist.⁴⁷

This atmosphere of mistrust and hostility might explain the silence and obscurity that surrounds the origin of the Fourth Gospel. More than one early Christian, ashamed at having to fight against other Christians, preferred to suppress the name of those he considered his opponents. Ignatius states that he prefers not to name those whose doctrines he condemns. Paul himself, if he names Apollos in the First Epistle to the Corinthians because he is only moderately irritated with him, does not name him in the Second Epistle, no more than he names his opponents in Philippians or Colossians. Among those who knew of his relations with Paul only Luke names him. The author of the Pastorals and Clement of Rome also name him, but it is probable that

they only know him through the First Epistle to the Corinthians and did not guess, or hardly guessed, Paul's feelings toward him.

Whether the author of the Fourth Gospel is Apollos or not, in any case, the name of this author has not been preserved. The work has remained; it was so fine that it overcame quarrels and silence; but the traditions that ought to have accompanied it have disappeared. The mystery is the same, whether Apollos or someone else is the author.

As for the attribution to John the apostle, it seems to have been founded on a double assumption concerning the enigmatic figure of the "disciple whom Jesus loved." This mysterious figure appears three times in the Gospel properly speaking (13:23-25; 19:26-27; 20:2-7) and reappears in the appendix, added after the completion of the work (21:7, 20-24). The double assumption made is that, on the one hand, the "disciple whom Jesus loved" is the author of the Gospel, and on the other, that the disciple was John, the son of Zebedee.

The first assumption appears already, not as an assumption but as a definite fact, in the penultimate verse of the appendix: "This is the disciple who is bearing witness to these things, and who has written these things; and we know his testimony is true" (21:24).⁴⁸ Who is speaking thus? Someone who obviously is not the author of the Gospel, his very statement proves it. He speaks on behalf of a group ("we know," he says). Was this group that of the immediate disciples of the Evangelist? This is possible, but we are not certain. The last two verses of the appendix, or at least verse 24, were certainly written by an admirer of the Johannine Gospel, but there is nothing to prove that this admirer knew the intimate thoughts of the Evangelist well. Moreover, we do not know if the author of verse 24 is also the author of what precedes it in the appendix. It seems on the contrary that everything that precedes it is of the same style as the Gospel. Now, if it was the Evangelist who wrote verses 20-23 of the appendix, it seems clear that for him the beloved disciple is dead. He in fact says that it was believed that he would not die, because of something Christ said that had been misunderstood. If the disciple is dead for the Evangelist, the Evangelist cannot be the disciple himself.

(At most it would be thought that if the Evangelist believes himself to be this disciple he wishes to say: "The rumor has spread that I will not die, but Christ did not exactly say that." Is it likely that many believed he would not die? And that he himself, while showing that it is not certain, does not say that it is probably a mistake? But after all, perhaps it was thought that Christ's glorious return was close at hand.)

For myself, despite verse 24 of the appendix, and despite the long tradition that has continued to identify the Evangelist with the beloved disciple, I am inclined to think that the Evangelist cannot be this disciple. I find it difficult to think that a man would have referred to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Merejkowsky writes with reason, "Could he

so obstinately say of himself . . . : 'I am the disciple whom Jesus loved'? One would have to be incapable of 'hearing' the human soul, and have no 'ear,' not to discern here a false, terribly discordant note."⁴⁹ Who would dare to speak of himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved? It is true that Cullmann thinks that the words "whom Jesus loved" could have been added by the editor of this work, and that perhaps each time we read "the disciple whom Jesus loved" the original text simply had "a disciple" or "another disciple."⁵⁰ For my part, I do not know if we have the right to assume that the editor would have dared to interpolate and correct the work. Moreover, Dodd observes that in the one passage in which the Evangelist expressly and clearly appeals to an eyewitness, 19:35, it is more natural to understand that this witness is someone other than himself (*Historical Tradition*, 14). (Why should he use the perfect, *memarturēken*, "he witnessed"? He would say "I witness" or strictly speaking "he witnesses.") Now this witness "who saw" is probably the beloved disciple, who was mentioned a little before and, according to the Evangelist, seems to have been the only disciple present at the foot of the cross.

The fact remains that this designation "the disciple whom Jesus loved" has an air of mystery, and one might suspect the Evangelist of having wished to remain silent about the name of this witness. Now, what more plausible reason can be imagined than this: the Evangelist did not wish to say who it was because it was himself. However, the author could have had other reasons. He might not have known the name of the disciple himself. The information he had gathered might have been provided by persons who were not able to give him anything more precise. Or perhaps the beloved disciple might have been nothing other than an ideal type, the symbol of the perfect Christian, as Bacon and Bultmann think. Cullmann points out that since verses 20–23 of the appendix seem to imply that the disciple is dead, he must have been more than an abstraction.⁵¹ And if, as we have thought possible (to be absolutely rigorous), he was not dead, the Evangelist at least wished to say that perhaps he was *mortal*. In this case again, it is not a case of an abstraction.

I therefore think that for the Evangelist the beloved disciple must have been a real, concrete person. But that the Evangelist uses this figure to represent himself seems to me more than doubtful.⁵² Not only because of the difficulty in thus describing oneself; not only because of the reason Dodd has given and which seems to me very strong; but also because this Gospel does not seem to be the work of an eyewitness. One gets the impression of *distance* between the human person of Christ, whatever it may have been, and the gaze of the Johannine author. The latter sees Christ not, I think, inexactly but at a distance, from afar. His transcendent Jesus is Jesus "as eternity finally changes him into himself;" this is not the one his companions would have seen. Mark's Jesus, whatever his grandeur, whatever the astonishment and veneration he inspires in his companions, gives the impression of a figure directly grasped by the regard of those who surround

him, contrary to John's Jesus who, despite certain realistic traits that attest to his humanity, gives the impression of being above all God incarnate, grasped through theological reflection. He is close to Paul's Christ, and Paul, indeed, was not an eyewitness. John's Jesus even seems to presuppose a theological development more advanced than that of Paul.

The Johannine author almost certainly visited Palestine. The knowledge he has of it proves this. But nothing proves that he lived there long, or during Jesus' lifetime. His vision of Palestine might be that of a foreigner. This would be why he says a lot about Jerusalem and little about Galilee. Foreigners who visit France above all know Paris. Similarly his interest in the Baptist might come from the fact that, seen from a distance, the movement instigated by the Baptist and that of Jesus, movements linked to one another, might have seemed even more closely linked.

Thus the assumption that the Evangelist wished to represent himself by the figure of the beloved disciple is probably incorrect, but it was quite a natural thing to do.

As for the second assumption, that "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was the apostle John, we have seen that the attribution of this Gospel to the apostle John is rejected by many exegetes, for reasons that seem to be well founded. If the beloved disciple ought to be identified with the apostle John, this would be another reason for doubting that this disciple is the author of the Gospel. But it is a natural temptation to link the two figures. The sons of Zebedee do not appear in the Gospel properly speaking; they appear only in the appendix, and even there they are mentioned only briefly, both together, and not by their own names but simply as "the sons of Zebedee," in the group of disciples who are fishing on the lake ("Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee and two other disciples"). There is no link necessary between them and the beloved disciple, who is mentioned later, for he may have been one of the two disciples who were not named. However, it is no doubt because the sons of Zebedee do not appear in the Gospel properly speaking, and hardly appear in the appendix, whereas in the Synoptic Gospels they are depicted with Peter as being the disciples closest to Jesus, that it has been thought that John, who could not be absent, was "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Why John and not James? Because James, having been executed around 44, could not have borne witness until the end of the first century; moreover, because John often appears in Acts in the company of Peter, like the beloved disciple in the Fourth Gospel; finally, perhaps because there was a Jewish-Christian prophet called John (the seer in the Apocalypse) in the region of Ephesus, or a group of Jewish Christians who claimed John as an authority and among whom was the seer of the Apocalypse. (It was perhaps because the seer was convinced that he spoke in the name of John the apostle that he says "I, John.") This Jewish-Christian John would also have been considered as possibly being the Evangelist, who lived in the same region as he.

Nevertheless, one must wait for Theophilus of Antioch and Irenaeus, in the last quarter of the second century, for the name of John to be spoken in the Church in relation to the Fourth Gospel. It was doubtless mentioned among the Gnostics a little earlier, since Valentinus, cited by Irenaeus, attributes the Fourth Gospel to "John, disciple of the Savior." But the Valentinians may have based their ideas on a study of the contents of the Johannine Gospel, for the reasons we have stated (the assumption that the author is the beloved disciple, together with the assumption that this disciple is the apostle John). It is not necessary to think that they had specific information on this question.

It is true that it is a little strange that the Fourth Evangelist does not mention the sons of Zebedee. But first, this is no more strange in relation to John than in relation to James, who in any case does not appear at all in the Gospel properly speaking. Also, there are a number of Christ's disciples named by other Evangelists whom the Fourth Evangelist does not know of. He knows some the others do not know, and he does not know some the others know. It seems that he owes his information concerning Christ to a small number of disciples whom he was able to question, and this information is quite different on a number of points from what Mark probably owes to Peter, which forms the substance of the Synoptic Gospels. Perhaps these disciples hardly spoke to him about the sons of Zebedee. It is also possible, judging from what Luke and Mark say about them,⁵³ that the sons of Zebedee were not highly regarded by the Paulinists and still less so by an Evangelist who from more than one angle is an ultra-Paulinist. If this was the case, it would be ironic if this Evangelist was forever after confused with one of them, and an even greater irony that the care he perhaps took not to speak of them was among the reasons for this confusion.

Appendix

I could be criticized for having said nothing about the hypothesis that the Fourth Gospel is the work of the “presbyter John.” It is therefore necessary to say a few words about it. This hypothesis, once proposed by Harnack, is always reappearing in new forms. (For example, again rather recently, J. Colson, *L’Enigme du disciple que Jésus aimait*, Paris, 1969.) It is based on a fragment of Papias, preserved by Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History*, III, 39, 3–4).

In this fragment of a work written around 125–130, Papias relates that he formerly made inquiries of travelers to learn what men could witness about Christ. “I made inquiries of the words of the elders [or: the presbyters]: what did Andrew, Peter, Philip, Thomas, James, John, Matthew, and other disciples say of the Lord? And what do Aristion and John the elder [or: the presbyter], disciples of the Lord, say?”

When Papias wrote these lines, the period about which he made inquiries was long passed, since he says that he has preserved the memory of it. Let us suppose that at the period in question he was about thirty. This would therefore be around 90, if, as is assumed, he was born around 60 (cf. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2d ed. [1974], 1028). At that time there was a John who was dead—this was the apostle—and a John who was still alive—this was the one Papias calls the “elder” or “the presbyter” (*ho presbyteros*). In fact, Papias asked, “What did Andrew, Peter, . . . John, . . . say? What do Aristion and John the elder say?”

Since it is thought that the Fourth Gospel must have been completed between 90 and 100, the fragment of Papias indicates that around this time the apostle John was no longer alive, but that there was another John, the one whom Papias calls the elder or the presbyter.

It is tempting to suppose that the traditional attribution of the Fourth Gospel to John the apostle comes from a confusion of the apostle with the other John.

Only we know nothing about this John the elder, not even whether he lived in Ephesus or in another region. First of all Eusebius says that Papias knew him; he says that Papias “heard Aristion and John the elder” (III, 39, 7). But he adds: “At least he often mentions them by name in his writings and relates their traditions” (ibid.). Thus Papias nowhere specifically affirms that he knew them. Hierapolis, where he lived, is not far from Ephesus; if John the elder lived at Ephesus, would Papias not have found some way of questioning him himself, instead of making inquiries about what he said?

Moreover, what sort of “traditions” were they which Papias held to be from Aristion and John the elder? Eusebius, who had read Papias’s work and who therefore knew what Papias related about these traditions, is tempted to see in John the elder the author of the Apocalypse, but in no respect the author of the Fourth Gospel. For Eusebius, like Denys of Alexandria before him, inclines to the opinion at the time he writes these chapters of the *Ecclesiastical History* that the Apocalypse is not by the same author as the Fourth Gospel, whom he believes to be John

the apostle. One is therefore led to think that as far as Papias relates them the traditions of John the elder had very little in common with the Fourth Gospel, and that they rather seem to have some link with the Apocalypse. Moreover, some sort of resemblance between the type of thought that these traditions imply and that found in the Apocalypse is quite likely, if one thinks of the sort of traditions that Papias seems to have related in general. The latter, who is a millenarian and of a Jewish-Christian persuasion, relates legends that seem to be derived from Jewish-Christian circles.

The only certain link between John the elder and the Johannine author is that they were both "elders" or "presbyters." This is not enough to identify them. There was more than one elder, even at Ephesus. Around 90 Apollos must also have been considered an elder or a presbyter.

The main reason that led Harnack and others to think that the name of John the elder could provide a solution to the Johannine problem is probably the conviction that if the author of the Fourth Gospel is not John the apostle, he must at least be called John. Thus one might explain the traditional attribution by the similarity of names. But we have shown that the traditional attribution to John the apostle does not after all rest on a possible confusion of names. It rests above all upon reasons drawn from the contents of the Gospel. Since this is the case, there is no necessity for the author of the so-called Johannine Gospel to be called John. As Bacon says (*The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate*, 444), he could just as well be called Alcibiades or Melchizedek.

It is true that Irenaeus says that in his youth he heard Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, speak of a person he had once known who was called John (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, v, 20, 5–6). Irenaeus thinks that the person in question is John the apostle. It is generally accepted that he is mistaken in this and that Polycarp could hardly have had any relation with the apostle John. But could this John whom Polycarp mentions not at least be the author of the Fourth Gospel? It cannot be said to be impossible, but such an assumption cannot rest on nothing. Even more than he seems not to know the apostle John, Polycarp does not seem to know the Fourth Gospel. If you wish, the John whom Polycarp speaks of might be John the elder, but a John the elder not linked with the Fourth Gospel; or another John, for example John the Apocalypticist, at least if this John is different from John the elder.

If one wants to insist that the author of the Fourth Gospel is called John, this would not be absolutely irreconcilable with my hypothesis. Apollos is a Greek name (an abbreviation on Apollonios or Apollodoros). Now, Jews who had a Greek or Roman name often also had a Jewish name. It is possible that Apollos's Jewish name was John. It is also possible that he took the name of John, either from attachment to his "Johannite" origins (if it is true that he had such origins), or from an attraction to John the apostle, if the unlikely hypothesis is to be believed that it is John the apostle he wished to refer to as "the disciple whom Jesus loved."

At Ephesus there were two tombs, both, according to Eusebius, who probably got this information from Denys of Alexandria (third century), called the "tomb of John" (cf. *Ecclesiastical History* III, 39, 6; VII, 25, 16). One of these tombs may have been that of John the apostle, if it is true that he ended his days at Ephesus, and if this is not simply an assumption that was made because he was believed to be the author of the Fourth Gospel. But who was the other John? The author of

the Fourth Gospel? The author of the Apocalypse? John the elder? Or some other John? Denys of Alexandria writes: "Many, I imagine, have had the same name as John the apostle, men who because they loved, admired, and esteemed him so greatly, and wished to be loved as he was by the Lord, were more than glad to be called after him" (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, VII, 25, 14).

Chapter VI

Cerinthus

1. *The Opponents in the Johannine Epistles*

The Johannine author, whom some Christians have held to be a heretic,¹ had his own heretics to deal with. In his First Epistle he speaks of some who had separated themselves from him and his group and whom he calls Antichrists. “Many Antichrists have come; therefore we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out, that it might be plain that they all are not of us” (1 John 2:18–19). A little further on: “Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the Antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the son has the Father” (1 John 2:22–23). Again, in the same epistle: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God. This is the spirit of Antichrist, of which you heard that it was coming, and now it is in the world already. Little children, you are of God, and have overcome them; for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” (4:1–5). Finally, in the second Johannine epistle: “For many deceivers have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh; such a one is the deceiver and the Antichrist. Look to yourselves, that you may not lose what you have worked for, but may win a full reward. Anyone who goes ahead and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God; he who abides in the doctrine has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into the house or give him any greeting; for he who greets him shares his wicked work” (2 John 7–11).

These texts are not without some obscurity. It is not absolutely certain that they concern Docetists. In fact, one sees that the opposite of “to confess that Jesus has come in the flesh” is “not to confess Jesus,” or “to deny that Jesus is the Christ,” or “to deny the Son,” in other words not to be Christian. Those who do not confess that Jesus has come in the flesh would therefore simply be unbelievers. It is also possible to consider “Christ” as a predicate, in 1 John 4:2 and 2 John 7, rather than as belonging to the name Jesus Christ.² One can translate, “every spirit that confesses

that Jesus as the Christ has come in the flesh is of God," which would be to say, "Every spirit which confesses Jesus as the Christ incarnate is of God." Now, in John "Christ" is almost synonymous with "Son of God." To confess Jesus as the Christ incarnate is nothing other than to confess him as the Son of God incarnate; it is therefore simply to be a Christian. Moreover, it is to unbelieving Jews that he mostly applies the warning "No one who denies the Son has the Father." It was above all them who denied that Jesus is the Christ. The Johannine author's great preoccupation in the First Epistle, as in the Gospel, is to show that Jesus is the Christ, that is, the Son of God. This not only appears in the texts we have quoted but also elsewhere. For example: "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (1 John 5:1); "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God" (1 John 4:15); "Who is it that overcomes the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:5). And the conclusion of the Gospel is that it was written "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John 20:31).

However, some of the texts I have cited can really only apply to those who had been Christians, at least for a certain time. "They separated themselves from us. . . ." "Anyone who goes ahead and does not abide in the doctrine . . ." And the recommendation not to receive these men would be incomprehensible if they had not been, apparently, very close to the Johannine author. If many passages are best understood as directed against unbelievers, and especially against unbelieving Jews, others can hardly be understood unless they refer to Christians whom the author considered heretics.

What did he blame these Christians for? According to the two possible traditions, he accuses them "of not confessing that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh," or "of not confessing that Jesus as the Christ has come in the flesh." The alternative is not unimportant, for in the first case it is a matter of Docetism like that of Saturnilus, in the second, it might be a matter either of unbelievers, or of a Docetism like that of Cerinthus. In fact, in the first case the heretic would have held that Jesus in no way had flesh, except in appearance; in the second, he would have held that Jesus and the Christ were not identical, even if Christ spoke and acted through Jesus. According to Irenaeus (*Adv. haer.* 1, 26, 1), this was what Cerinthus taught. He taught that Jesus had been a man like others, that he was the son of Joseph and Mary, but because he was more just and wiser than others, Christ had descended upon him at his baptism, and from then on Jesus had declared the unknown Father and performed miracles; that at the end Jesus died and was resurrected, but that Christ simply returned to his Father; that he could neither suffer nor die, being a purely spiritual being. One might therefore say that in one sense Jesus was not the Christ for Cerinthus; Christ was purely Spirit and the Son of God, whereas Jesus was purely man. On the other hand, one could not say that for him Jesus' body was just an appearance.

Cerinthus is described by Irenaeus as having lived *in Asia*, that is, in the province of Ephesus, the same province of Asia Minor in which, according to tradition, the Fourth Gospel was written. Therefore if the author of this Gospel knew of a Docetism, it is probably that of Cerinthus. (Yet we will see below that the Johannine author may have been in contact with certain circles in Antioch or Samaria, and could therefore have known a Docetism analogous to that which Ignatius of Antioch opposes.) On the other hand, the variant "every spirit that annuls Jesus" in 1 John 4:3, a very early attested variant, would apply well to Cerinthus, since he made such a profound distinction between the divine nature and the human nature in Jesus Christ that he made him into two persons, thereby appearing to annul the unity of the Savior.

It therefore seems to me that Docetism perhaps appeared even during the lifetime of the Johannine author, and perhaps first with a man called Cerinthus, who lived in the same region as him.

2. *Irenaeus's Cerinthus*

According to Irenaeus (I, 26, 1) Docetism is not the only doctrine Cerinthus may have taught. He also taught that the world was not created by "the first God" but by "a certain power strongly separate and distant from this first supreme authority which is above the universe." Moreover, he said that the creative power "did not know God who is above all." Thus Cerinthus may have been the first Gnostic properly speaking, since he separated the true God and the creative power and considered it a power that did not know the true God. However, Irenaeus does not say that he identified this power with the God of the Old Testament.³ If he did not do this, the Creator he speaks of would lack an essential characteristic of the Gnostic Demiurge. But could he not have done this? What would this creative power be if it was not the God of the Old Testament? Assuming that the God of the Old Testament remained the true God for Cerinthus, what reasons would he have to say not only that the creative power is not this God but that *he did not know him*? That the world is badly governed is not an adequate reason for blaming the creative act itself. Did Cerinthus judge the act of Creation unworthy of God, as the Maghâria perhaps did, which said that God had not created the world himself but *had had it created* by an angel?⁴ But the Mahgârian angel knows God and obeys him, such that God remains the creator in intention, even if he does not create directly. Was Cerinthus inspired by Simon Magus? According to Irenaeus, Simon's God conceives the thought of creating the angels and the archangels; his Thought then springs from him and, knowing what his Father wishes, gives birth to angels and powers; then these angels and powers "make" the world, but he (God) remains totally unknown by them. In fact, these creators know only the being from which they were directly derived, that is to say, Thought. But here in Cerinthus the figure of

Thought, who alone stands between the creators and God and explains the fact that the creators do not know God, is lacking. We have also seen⁵ that Simon's angels were probably only administrators and that for him God remained the Creator, since in instigating the process that leads to the creation of the world, Thought "knows what his Father wishes." We have also seen that the distinction between the creator God and the true God is probably not earlier than the end of the first century, and that it is linked to the idea that the God revealed by the Savior was not yet revealed, not yet known, in the Old Testament. If for Cerinthus the creator does not know God, it is probably because he is a power that knows, that teaches, and not a simple material force that would know nothing. It therefore seems that the creative power Cerinthus speaks of, and who is separate from God, could only be the God of the Old Testament. But Irenaeus does not say this, whereas he states very clearly on the subject of Saturnilus, for example, that for him the God of the Jews is numbered among the creator angels.

Where could the thoughts that Irenaeus attributes to Cerinthus have come from? Did he find these ideas in an earlier Gnosticism? Did he not have a Christian doctrine very close to him that could suggest these ideas to him?

The story recounted by Irenaeus (III, 3, 4) of the meeting between the Johannine author and Cerinthus in the public baths—the Johannine author, having recognized Cerinthus, rushed headlong from the baths crying, "Flee for fear that the roof fall, for Cerinthus, the enemy of truth, is here"—this story (which is perhaps only a legend, since everything relating to the Johannine author in Irenaeus ought to be treated with care) in any case demonstrates that, according to Irenaeus, the Johannine author and Cerinthus knew one another. Now we have seen⁶ that in John's Jesus there is a profound duality, much more profound than in the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels. On the one hand Jesus appears to be man like other men, born at Nazareth, thought to be the son of Joseph and Mary; on the other hand he is identified with the eternal Logos, who *descended from heaven*, and his behavior more often seems to be that of a God walking *above* the earth rather than upon it. Käsemann characterizes the Christology of the Fourth Gospel as a still "naive" Docetism that is not recognized as a danger.⁷ L. Schottroff denies that it is properly a matter of Docetism, since the humanity of Jesus is not questioned; but she shows that the divine and the human in the Johannine Jesus are like two parallel planes that remain distinct. On the one side is a man who is born, lives, and dies like all the others; on the other is a divine being who dwells in him and who does not really suffer change or limit, who is not really touched by the world.⁸ Now this is also a Docetism; it is that which Irenaeus attributes to Cerinthus.

That Cerinthus's Docetism might perhaps be deduced from the Johannine Gospel does not stop the Johannine author from condemning it. He could have fought against ideas derived from his own, but that went further

than his own. For John sometimes seems to suppose a very intimate union between the divine Jesus and the earthly Jesus, in particular when he says, "And the Logos became flesh" (1:14). L. Schottroff has some difficulty explaining this verse in accordance with her theory.⁹ If Käsemann is right in criticizing traditional exegesis, which makes this verse the central and essential teaching of the Fourth Gospel,¹⁰ it nevertheless remains the case that this verse exists, and that Käsemann and L. Schottroff are not entirely convincing on this subject. Above all, one cannot say, with Käsemann, that there is no theology of the cross in John.¹¹ No doubt the cross, in John's eyes, is the victory of Christ, but it is this too in the eyes of Paul.

We have seen that on certain subjects John is not afraid of admitting contradictory depictions at the same time, and even sometimes seems to want to bring out the contradictions he admits.¹² He believes in present eschatology but preserves futurist eschatology. He opposes children of God and children of the world, as if there were two primordial origins, but he thinks that one can *become* a child of God, just as he thinks that the Logos *became* flesh. He says that to be saved one must be reborn, as if *all* in man had to be changed, but at the same time he seems to say that the one who is saved belongs to God from the beginning, that this person was destined to salvation. In sum, it cannot be reduced to a system.¹³ The opinion attributed to Cerinthus would oversimplify Johannine Christology by a strict logic that is not in John's style.¹⁴ It is nevertheless possible that this opinion resulted from reflection upon the Gospel.

As far as creation is concerned, the opinion attributed to Cerinthus is much more difficult to deduce from the Johannine Gospel. It certainly contradicts what John says at the beginning of his Gospel: "The Logos was with God . . . all things were made through him." But here again is it not possible that although Cerinthus contradicts some of John's statements, he depends upon him? He may have drawn the inferences of an anticosmic attitude and anti-Judaism from John. According to John, the world *did not know God* (17:25), and cannot even receive the Spirit of truth (14:17). It is true that this is insufficient to enable one to say that according to him not only the world but he who created it does not know God. For is it not possible that the world has diverged from its creator's purposes? But one might perhaps reach this point by joining John's anti-Judaism with his anticosmic attitude. John frequently states that the Jews do not know God. They think they know a God who is essentially the creator of the world. One might conclude from this first that this creator is not the true God, next that he does not know him. For is it not he who instructed the Jews by his Law? If he did not instruct them about the true God, it is because he did not know him.

However, this would also be to contradict John. For John affirms that the Old Testament witnesses to Christ. He does not therefore think that the Old Testament was completely ignorant of the truth about God, a truth that is known by those who know Christ. Cerinthus would therefore have

to have gone much further in his criticism of Judaism than the Johannine author, who attacks the Jews of his time but not the Old Testament. Certainly it is possible that in following the line of John he prolonged it. But there is no sign in Irenaeus's account of Cerinthus to indicate a profound and passionate anti-Judaism like that implied, for example, in Irenaeus's account of Saturnilus.

It is therefore much more difficult to link John with Cerinthus's doctrine concerning creation than with his doctrine about Christ. Also, this doctrine of creation remains quite fluid. It does not state that the Creator is the God of Judaism, nor does it state that he is an angel.¹⁵ Finally, it must be noted that this doctrine appears to be *later* than the Docetism attributed to Cerinthus. For if John perhaps knew Cerinthus's Docetism, he does not seem to have known his doctrine of Creation. If he did know it, he would be at least as indignant with it as with his Docetism. Nor does it clearly appear that any other work in the New Testament knows this doctrine, and Ignatius of Antioch does not clearly demonstrate that he knows it, whereas he is acquainted with Docetism. In sum, if we can believe that Cerinthus was Docetist, and think we can discern a possible reason for his Docetism, we have much more difficulty in understanding what exactly his doctrine of Creation was, and where it could have come from, and in addition *we have reasons for thinking that it is not as old as his Docetism*. We therefore still have some doubts about Irenaeus's statement in which he attributes this doctrine to Cerinthus; he may either have confused Cerinthus with a later school, perhaps derived from him but later than him, or he perhaps (he or his source) slightly distorted and exaggerated Cerinthus's ideas on this point.

3. *Contradictory Traditions on the Subject of Cerinthus*

Other reasons also oblige us to ask whether Irenaeus's account of Cerinthus is really an exact picture of historical reality. In fact, if we examine the other early traditions concerning Cerinthus, we see that they are confused and contradictory. Sometimes Cerinthus appears as an ultra-Johannine and a Gnostic; sometimes he appears as a Jewish Christian. Sometimes, as in Irenaeus, he is an enemy of the Johannine author, sometimes he is confused with the author himself.

According to Irenaeus's account, Cerinthus seems to be a Gnostic, just as he is in Pseudo-Tertullian, probably based on *Syntagma* of Hippolytus, who was himself inspired by Irenaeus. But later heresiologists though taking up the information given by Irenaeus combine it with a very different portrait: that of Cerinthus the Jewish Christian, even particularly eager to defend Jewish Christianity (which is to say, the contrary of Gnosticism, or in any case a very different interpretation of Christianity). He is said to have held that circumcision was necessary for Christians; to have opposed Peter because he baptized Cornelius, a pagan; to have opposed Paul because

he did not circumcise his disciple Titus; the Cerinthians are said to have rejected Paul's epistles, and so on. Another important contradiction concerns the link between Cerinthus and the author of the Fourth Gospel. Irenaeus makes Cerinthus John's opponent, even his principal opponent; according to him, John wrote his Gospel against Cerinthus (III, 11, 1). But around the same time as Irenaeus was writing, Christians in Asia Minor held, on the contrary, that this Gospel was not by John but by the heretic Cerinthus.

It is therefore very difficult to get a clear and accurate idea of who Cerinthus was. We run the risk of taking him to be the exact opposite of what he in fact was. Was he the first Gnostic properly speaking, or on the contrary a representative of a Jewish Christianity even more intransigent than that of James, the Lord's brother? Was he the enemy John wanted to overcome, not only in his epistles but in his Gospel, or was he *the very author we call John*? It seems that his person and doctrine were already uncertain at the time people started to talk about him. For—and this is another reason to distrust what is said about him—people only began to talk about him long after the time he is supposed to have lived. Neither Ignatius nor Polycarp nor Hegesippus¹⁶ nor Justin knows of him. Among the heresiologists, Irenaeus is the first to name him (around 185). Again Irenaeus only knows him vaguely; he says "a certain Cerinthus in Asia," and he gives very little information about his doctrine. Neither Clement of Alexandria nor Tertullian speaks of him. He is named in the *Epistle of the Apostles*, an anti-Gnostic apocryphon that seems to have been written in the second century, but it is not known whether it was in the first or second half of the century.¹⁷ In it he is associated with Simon Magus and with him forms a double symbol of the heresy; but no detail is given about his doctrine, and he already seems to be a legendary figure.

Nevertheless we must try to pierce through these legends and contradictions. First we may try to understand why he could be regarded both as a Gnostic and as a Jewish Christian. Certainly many of those who are presently studying Gnosticism, being persuaded that Gnosticism derives from Judaism, would no doubt deny that there is any contradiction. They would say that it is indeed because he was a Jewish Christian that he was also a Gnostic. But it is not possible that a Jewish Christian taught that the true God is not the creator of the world, and that this creator did not know him. Only the idea that Jesus was at first only a man like others could have linked Cerinthus to Jewish Christianity. It is also because of this idea that Irenaeus speaks of the Ebionites soon after having spoken of Cerinthus, although apart from this idea the Ebionites had nothing in common with Cerinthus as he depicts him.¹⁸ But we have seen that this idea might, in a certain way, be deduced from the Johannine Gospel.¹⁹ If this is the case, why was Cerinthus linked with Jewish Christianity? It is more natural to link him with the Johannine author, with whom tradition links him.

Moreover, the texts describing Cerinthus as a Jewish Christian are much later and more subject to doubt than those describing him as a Gnostic. These texts are essentially those of Epiphanius and Filaster. But Filaster perhaps only reproduces what he finds in Epiphanius, as Carl Schmidt thought.²⁰ Hence we are left with Epiphanius (*Pan.* xxviii). Now the latter is far from being a reliable witness. He is liable to negligences which make him commit confusions and errors. Irenaeus is earlier and more trustworthy. We have also seen that the *Epistle of the Apostles* associates Simon with Simon Magus, which would scarcely be possible if he was not held to be a Gnostic. Finally, let us consider the opinion of the "Alogi," who according to Epiphanius attributed the Johannine works to Cerinthus (*Pan.* 51, 3). The earliest testimony concerning them seems to be that of Irenaeus (III, 11, 9). For it is probably they whom Irenaeus accuses of rejecting John's Gospel. He does not call them Alogi (this name is given to them by Epiphanius, who congratulates himself on having invented it), and he does not say that they attribute the Johannine writings to Cerinthus; but he speaks of men who reject the Fourth Gospel, and what he says about them (that they do not accept the idea of the Paraclete as it is found in John's Gospel, and that they reject the prophetic spirit) shows that they were probably the opponents of the Montanists. Epiphanius's Alogi very probably were too, since he says that there were Alogi at Thyatira, a town in Lydia, where the Montanist sect was in favor until just after the middle of the third century (*Pan.* 51, 33). Irenaeus does not treat them as heretics but as "unfortunates"; Epiphanius says that they were in agreement with the Church about everything except the matter of the authenticity of the Johannine writings (*Pan.* 51, 4). Now, Irenaeus says that they reject John's Gospel, but, unlike Epiphanius, he does not say that they reject the Apocalypse. If therefore, from the time of Irenaeus, the Alogi linked certain Johannine works with Cerinthus, it seems they would have attributed him with the Fourth Gospel rather than the Apocalypse, and this might indicate that they held him to be a Gnostic rather than a Jewish Christian. The three oldest testimonies, the *Epistle of the Apostles*, Irenaeus, and the Alogi in the time of Irenaeus, seem to concur in making Cerinthus a Gnostic.

That he was later regarded as a Jewish Christian might be explained by at least two reasons. The first, if one believes Irenaeus, is that he held that before his baptism Jesus was simply a man. Even if this idea is the result of reflection on the Johannine Gospel, it definitely links Cerinthus and Jewish Christians. And just as Irenaeus speaks of the Ebionites immediately after having spoken of Cerinthus for this reason, so Pseudo-Tertullian quite naturally makes Ebion, the supposed master of the Ebionites, the "successor" of Cerinthus (*Adv. omnes haer.* III, 3). This absurd idea was perhaps already found in Hippolytus's *Syntagma*. If it was found here, one must not be surprised to find Epiphanius and Filaster, who themselves depend on Hippolytus's *Syntagma*, making Cerinthus into a sort of

Ebionite. Epiphanius even seems to confuse Ebion with Cerinthus (*Pan.* 30, 24). Lipsius had already observed that the source Epiphanius uses in his portrait of Cerinthus must concern the Ebionites (that is the Jewish Christians) and not Cerinthus.²¹

The second reason is that the Alogi, who in the time of Irenaeus probably only attacked the Johannine Gospel by attributing it to Cerinthus, appear soon after as attributing the Apocalypse to him as well; perhaps because the Church considered the two works as being by the same author; doubtless also because the Alogi were opponents of the "prophetic spirit" and the Apocalypse is a prophecy. This was to give rise to a double picture of Cerinthus: that of a Gnostic (drawn from the Johannine Gospel) and that of a Jewish Christian (drawn from the Apocalypse). If, in fact, there are two Cerinths, it is perhaps because there are two Johns. The tradition of the Church having brought the two Johannine authors together, it is natural that the Alogi brought them together, too.

Since the Apocalypse was a book whose authority had been long discussed in the Church, the idea that this book was by the heretic Cerinthus was obviously more warmly welcomed than the view attributing to him the Fourth Gospel. It is no doubt for this reason that from the third century there was a tendency to depict Cerinthus's doctrine primarily from what is found in the Apocalypse. Caius, a Roman priest of the beginning of the third century, who seems to have been a very orthodox Catholic, attributes to Cerinthus ideas that he finds in the Apocalypse because he believes that he is the author of it (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* III, 28). Denys of Alexandria (third century) knows that some people attribute the Apocalypse to Cerinthus, and, though he does not dare to share it, this idea interests him, because he has observed that the Apocalypse can scarcely be by the same author as the Fourth Gospel. But he does not seem to know that the same men who attribute the Apocalypse to Cerinthus also attribute the Fourth Gospel to him, or if he does know, he attaches no importance to it (*ibid.*, III, 28 and VII, 25). Theodoret (*Haeret. fabul.* II, 3) will think of Cerinthus as a millenarian because he bases his ideas on Eusebius's Caius or on Denys of Alexandria.

Nevertheless, Caius himself knew that some also attribute the Fourth Gospel to Cerinthus, and he shared this opinion. Against him Hippolytus defended the authenticity of the Johannine Gospel as well as that of the Apocalypse, that is, he defended the attribution of these two works to John the apostle. We know this from a commentary by Denys Bar-Salibi (twelfth century). It has been said that this commentary proves that Hippolytus already drew the same portrait of Cerinthus as Epiphanius.²² This is not certain, since the quotation from Hippolytus is only found in the first two lines of the passage referred to. This passage is as follows:

Hippolytus Romanus dicit: Apparuit vir nomine Caius, qui asserebat Evangelium non esse Johannis, nec Apocalypsum, sed Cerinths haeretici ea

*esse. Et contra Caium surrexit beatus Hippolytus et demonstravit aliam esse doctrinam Johannis in Evangelio et Apocalypsi et aliam Cerinthi. Ille quidem Cerinthus docebat circumcisionem, et iratus est in Paulum quod non circumciderat Titum, et vocat Apostolum ejusque discipulos in quadam e suis epistulis apostolos falsos et operarios fallaces. Docebat enim mundum ab angelis creatum esse, et cibum et potum materialem et multas blasphemias.*²³

Hippolytus of Rome says: "A man appeared named Caius, who stated that neither the Gospel nor the Apocalypse is by John, but both are by the heretic Cerinthus." And the blessed Hippolytus rose up against Cerinthus and demonstrated that John's doctrine in the Gospel and the Apocalypse was one thing, and that of Cerinthus another. This Cerinthus taught circumcision, and he grew angry with Paul because he had not circumcised Titus, and in one of his epistles he calls the apostle and his disciples false apostles and workers of treachery. He taught that the world was created by angels, material food and drink,²⁴ and many other blasphemies.'

It is obvious that from the words "And the blessed Hippolytus rose," this is no longer a quotation from Hippolytus. And from *Ille quidem* the text might summarize, not Hippolytus's argument but the ideas that Denys Bar-Salibi may have found in writers such as Epiphanius and Eusebius.²⁵ It is nevertheless possible that Cerinthus's heresy had already been linked with Jewish Christianity in Hippolytus because of the order in which Irenaeus presents these heresies.

Pseudo-Tertullian might give some idea of what was in Hippolytus's *Syntagma*. He seems to follow Irenaeus, but in a confused way, attributing to Cerinthus some of Carpocrates's ideas (in Irenaeus he comes immediately before Cerinthus) and some of Cerinthus's ideas to Carpocrates. This is why he says that for Cerinthus the Christ (he means Jesus) was only a man, and he forgets to mention the divine Christ that descended upon Jesus according to Irenaeus's Cerinthus. Moreover, he links Cerinthus closely with Jewish Christianity when he makes Ebion Cerinthus's successor. But at the same time he attributes to Cerinthus the idea that the world was created by the angels, the idea that the God of the Jews is only an angel, and the idea that the Law comes from the angels, all of which are obviously Gnostic ideas.²⁶

We can therefore conclude with some likelihood that Cerinthus, if he existed, was more a Gnostic than a Jewish Christian. The portrait of the Jewish-Christian Cerinthus seems to be the work of relatively late heresiologists, deceived by the proximity of the account concerning Cerinthus and the account concerning the Ebionites in Irenaeus; deceived also by Cerinthus's Christology, which links him with the Ebionites even though it probably derives from a different source; deceived finally because some Christians, who perhaps had at first only attributed the Fourth Gospel to Cerinthus, also attributed the Apocalypse and the ideas they found in it to him.

Let us now try to explain the second contradiction. We have seen that Cerinthus's Christology (his particular type of Docetism) may have been deduced from the Fourth Gospel by someone who was trying to systematize it. And even the idea that the world comes not from the true God but from a power inferior to him might be an extreme deduction from John's anticosmic attitude and anti-Judaism. Thus, Cerinthus may have been a disciple of the Johannine author, but a disciple going further than him, and deducing from his teaching ideas he himself did not profess. It would therefore be natural that the Johannine author had protested against this interpretation of his doctrine and that he had thrust aside Cerinthus in horror. This would explain both their hostility and the resemblance of their ideas. One does not have to conclude that the Fourth Gospel was written against Cerinthus; it rather seems to be directed against the unbelief of orthodox Jews. But the First and Second Johannine Epistles, which seem to be later than the Gospel, might well attack the Docetic interpretations that Cerinthus had claimed to draw from the Gospel. As for the Alogi, they may have attributed the Johannine works to Cerinthus because they had noted the resemblance of their doctrines. Or perhaps they exploited this resemblance to attack the Johannine Gospel through Cerinthus, as the Jewish Christians attacked Paul through Simon.

4. *Some Reasons for Doubting His Existence*

We have therefore perhaps now sketched a relatively coherent picture of Cerinthus. This picture finally leads back to the portrait Irenaeus draws. But we ought to remember that this portrait remains vague and abstract, and that the doctrine he presents brings together two ideas that do not seem to be from exactly the same time. We have also seen that Cerinthus is only mentioned quite a long time after the time in which he was supposed to have lived. Justin, who had stayed at Ephesus, does not know of him. Ignatius of Antioch knows of Docetism, but he does not mention Cerinthus and it is not certain that he knows of the heretics who distinguish the true God from the Creator. In the *Epistle of the Apostles*, which is perhaps the oldest work among the ones we know of that speak of him, Cerinthus already seems to be a legendary figure, almost mythical, the symbol for a heretic like Simon Magus.

Moreover, it is not absurd to ask whether Cerinthus really existed, or at least if he really held the ideas attributed to him. Eugène de Faye shows that Irenaeus really only attributes to Cerinthus ideas that are generally those of second-century Gnostics. "How could a doctrine be preserved intact throughout an entire century, all the elements of which are found in the authentic fragments of Gnostics such as Marcion and others, and which would therefore be easy to confuse with other systems? An idea or a particularly outstanding feature might strictly speaking survive its author

by impressing itself on the memory, but not doctrines that had become common and banal from the time of the second generation of Gnostics.”²⁷

De Faye adds that Filaster’s account is full of even stranger confusions. He might have said the same about that of Epiphanius, from which, moreover, Filaster’s account could have been drawn. The one idea that seems interesting to him in Filaster’s account is “the singular idea that Jesus Christ was not yet raised, but that he will rise one day.” Now, I think that this singular idea is perhaps simply due to a mistake in Epiphanius. In the fragment quoted by Eusebius, Caius, believing Cerinthus to be the author of the Apocalypse, wrote: “Cerinthus . . . says that after the resurrection Christ’s reign will be earthly, that the flesh will come to life again in Jerusalem and will serve the passions and pleasures” (*Ecclesiastical History*, III, 28, 2). Is it not possible that Epiphanius knew this text of Caius (either he had read his work directly or he had found it quoted in Hippolytus or Eusebius), and he interpreted the word “resurrection” as referring to the resurrection of Christ, whereas it referred to the general resurrection?

To this possible misunderstanding he also joins a contradiction. For, if in *Pan.* 28, 6 he says that according to Cerinthus Christ was not yet resurrected, a little before, in *Pan.* 28, 1, he says that according to Cerinthus Christ is resurrected. I therefore think that there is no reason to attribute to Cerinthus the singular idea, which, according to Eugène de Faye, would be the only distinctive mark of his doctrine.

Moreover, it seems to me that some heresiological traditions might even lead us to doubt Cerinthus’s very existence. It must be noted that numerous ideas attributed to him, and numerous facts that scholars claim to know about him or his school, have links with the epistles of Paul to the Corinthians. Epiphanius says that chapter 15 of the First Epistle to the Corinthians was directed against Cerinthus, and that, according to certain *Cerinthians*, there was no resurrection (*Pan.* 28, 6). This is what Paul says in reference to certain *Corinthians* (1 Cor. 15:12). Epiphanius also says that among the *Cerinthians* there existed a baptism for the dead (*loc. cit.*). Now this custom also existed among the *Corinthians* (1 Cor. 15:29)! According to Epiphanius Paul called Cerinthus and his disciples “false apostles and workers of wickedness” (*Pan.* 28, 4). This implies that the Second Epistle to the Corinthians was also written against Cerinthus (*cf.* 2 Cor. 11:13). In his account of Cerinthus Theodore Bar-Konai states: “Cerinthus belonged to a Jewish family and lived in Corinth.”²⁸

The links between Cerinthus and Corinth, and the *Cerinthians* and the *Corinthians* lead one to think that they may have been confused with one another because of the similarity of their names. Might this confusion not have come about among Eastern Christians, speaking a language in which only the consonants were written? In Greek the confusion would not have been so easy. “Corinthian” in Greek is *Corinthios*, whereas “Cerinthian” is *Cerinthianos*. In an Eastern language it was perhaps easier to confuse *Cerinthians* and *Corinthians*. Epiphanius, who was a Palestinian and knew

Semitic languages, may have found the confusion he seems to make between Cerinthians and Corinthians in his Eastern sources; he did not necessarily do it himself. Thus, if it was possible to confuse Corinthians and Cerinthians, could someone not have created a heresiarch called Cerinthus from "Corinthians," as the heresiarch Ebion was created from "Ebionites"? He may have been called Cerinthus and not Corinth, since in Greek Corinth was simply the name of a town, whereas the name Cerinthus, which might refer to a town, also existed as a man's name.

It is true that Epiphanius is not the first to speak of Cerinthus. But the first to speak of him perhaps owed the vague pieces of information they give about him to Eastern texts translated into Greek, or oral information that came from the East.²⁹

Might one go further and make a link between the man who aroused the troubles at Corinth, according to me Apollos, and the heretic Cerinthus? If Cerinthus is simply a name that may have been formed from the Corinthian "heretics" as Ebion is simply a name deduced from the Ebionites, Apollos and Cerinthus may be the same man. One might even conjecture, but this would be even more hazardous and is not necessary, that Apollos was nicknamed "the Corinthian" (*ho Korinthios*) or even "Corinth" (*Korinthos*) by enemies who wished to recall his ill-fated intervention at Corinth. In Hippolytus's *Elenchos* there is a treatise that would permit one to link Apollos and Cerinthus. According to Hippolytus, Cerinthus had been "instructed in Egypt" (*Ref. x, 21, 1*), or "instructed in the school of the Egyptians" (*Ref. vii, 33, 1*). In everything else he says about Cerinthus in the *Elenchos* Hippolytus simply follows the text of Irenaeus; he differs from it only on this point, and he does it intentionally, since he does it each time he speaks of Cerinthus. He therefore regarded this information as certain. Carl Schmidt explains this by the fact that Hippolytus attempts to link Gnostic heresies with Greek philosophy, which was principally cultivated in Egypt. But Hippolytus was more of a scholar when he wrote the *Elenchos* than when he wrote the *Syntagma*, and his testimony is not negligible. He may have read this information in Caius, who had perhaps himself read it in one of the Alogi, or taken it from Praxeas, the enemy of the Montanists.

This does not necessarily mean that Irenaeus, or those who have handed down his text to us, were mistaken in placing Cerinthus *in Asia*. A man who taught in the province of Asia may have been of Egyptian origin; this was the case with Apollos.

The affirmation of the Alogi that Cerinthus was the author of the Fourth Gospel in one way is opposed to my hypothesis concerning Apollos's link with this Gospel, but in another way it tends to confirm it. For if "Cerinthians" was a deformation of "Corinthians," and if a heretic called Cerinthus was derived from this name, or if the name Cerinthus is perhaps a deformation of some nickname given to Apollos, the affirmation of the Alogi would be close to my hypothesis. In any case these are only

speculations that are probably too risky. If we doubt the historicity of Cerinthus to some extent, it is because the heresiologists only knew of him a relatively long time after he lived, and because we know very little about him. The resemblance between his name and Corinth casts only a shadowy hint on the way in which this heresiarch may have been invented, if he was invented.

5. Conclusion

Whatever we do, therefore, there remains much obscurity surrounding the person of Cerinthus. There are some reasons for doubting that he existed, either he may have been invented to explain the name of a sect—the sect itself is mysterious, at least insofar as it has to do with Paul's Corinthians, since the Corinthians seem to have very quickly disappeared—or someone who had another name was called this. If he did exist, it is after all not impossible that he was the author of the Johannine Gospel, as the Alogi held. For the Alogi were from the same country from which this Gospel derived; and whatever the motive is that inclines us to link Apollos and the Fourth Gospel, we cannot be sure that Apollos was indeed the author. It might be that the author was a certain Cerinthus. If the attribution to John the apostle is impossible, and if one wants the true attribution to be upheld by a tradition going back to antiquity, the attribution to Cerinthus is an opinion that is at least found in antiquity, which is not the case, for example, with the attribution to John the elder. Renan wrote about the Johannine works in this respect: "Cerinthus . . . , it seems, is one of the makers of these singular books. . . . He simultaneously passes for the opponent that the Johannine writings want to overcome and for the true author of these writings. Such is the obscurity that hangs over the Johannine question that one cannot say that the last attribution is impossible. . . . It would explain the mystery as to where this book [the Fourth Gospel] was during almost fifty years and the strong opposition made to it. The particular passion with which Epiphanius opposes this idea would invite the belief that it was not groundless."³⁰

No one today, I believe, thinks that Cerinthus is the author of the Fourth Gospel. But this is perhaps because heretics have been given an extraordinary image. If Cerinthus was the author of the Fourth Gospel, this would mean that Irenaeus, or rather his source, excessively simplified and even seriously deformed his doctrine. It is on the basis of the Fourth Gospel that a judgment should be made.

Finally, if he existed, and is not the author of the Johannine Gospel, it seems that in any case he had something to do with its author. Given the type of Docetism that Irenaeus attributes to him, which might be linked with Johannine ideas, he may have belonged to the group that, according to 1 John 2:18–19, separated itself from this author. Basing himself on the Fourth Gospel, he may have elaborated *theories, which were perhaps the*

first, on the distinction between the divine nature and the human nature in Jesus Christ. In truth, he may have distinguished these two natures so strongly that he created two persons. But one should not be surprised that, in a first attempt, the goal was exceeded and the attempt needed to be corrected.

As for the theory attributed to Cerinthus concerning the creation of the world, I think it is possible that Irenaeus confused Cerinthus's doctrine on this point with that of the second-century Gnostics, as he probably did in the case of Simon. Cerinthus, or the group of disciples who separated themselves from the Johannine author, were perhaps opposed to this author only in the matter of docetism. Like the author, he might also have thought that the world does not know God, that it is dominated by a power that is very different and very distant from the Father, but that this power was a *creative* power for Cerinthus remains somewhat doubtful, because we find no trace of this doctrine among Christian writers before about 110, and because we do not find other features that might confirm in Cerinthus, for example, an anti-Judaism that goes further than John's. Nevertheless, one must note that this doctrine may also have been deduced from the Johannine Gospel by someone who pushed the anticosmic and anti-Judaistic tendencies of this Gospel to their extremes, moreover *it perhaps testifies to the same careful analysis, the same concern to make clear distinctions, as the Christology attributed to Cerinthus.*

In fact, when Cerinthus divides Jesus Christ into two persons, he seems to want to make clear the Johannine doctrine in which Jesus sometimes behaves like a God who barely touches the ground, and sometimes like a man in the same state as others. One can imagine that, in the same way, he wished to explain the fact that in the Johannine Gospel the *world* sometimes appears as the work of God, sometimes as the enemy of God; that sometimes Christ says that he came to save it (12:47; cf. 6:33, 51), and sometimes that he does not pray for it ("I do not pray for the world," 17:9). In order to avoid this apparent contradiction, he may, like the Johannine author, have first distinguished between what is "of God" and proceeds directly from him, and what is "of the world" and therefore proceeds from God only by the intermediary of the world. But could the world itself proceed *directly* from God, since it is against him? Cerinthus may therefore have invented a new intermediary, a creative power of the world that was neither God nor the Logos, but was very distant and actually separate from them, even if it ultimately proceeded from them. (For it is certainly probable that for Cerinthus this power could not be an absolute principle like a second God. This would be to go as far as Manicheism in a single leap, which only appeared in the third century. It is true that, in speaking of a "first God" Irenaeus seems to imply that for Cerinthus there was a second. But this manner of speaking, common to heresiologists, is not even accurate insofar as the second-century Gnostics are concerned, since for them the inferior power was not a "God." Moreover, to name what should be the second God, Irenaeus uses the vague term "power.")

We ought also to take account of this possibility, since as well as his account of Cerinthus, we find another observation about him in Irenaeus, an observation that might be another example of the taste he perhaps had for meticulous analyses and distinctions intended to resolve the difficulties of a text. Irenaeus says (III, 11, 1) that Cerinthus distinguished between the *Monogenēs* (the only Son) and the Logos (the Word). This would confirm for us that Cerinthus (if he existed under this name) reflected upon the Gospel of John. It is John who speaks of the *Monogenēs* and the Logos, and the distinction between these two figures might be based on certain verses of his Prologue. In particular on verse 18: "No one has ever seen God; the only Son who is in the bosom of the Father [or: who is turned toward the bosom of the Father, *ho ōn eis ton kolpon tou patros*], he has made him known." Instead of understanding "he" as referring to the *Monogenēs*, it might be linked with Jesus Christ who is named in the sentence before. One might therefore read: "the only Son [is] he who is in the bosom of the Father [or: is turned toward the bosom of the Father]; [whereas] he (= Jesus Christ, the Logos) has made him known." (The *Monogenēs* is in some sense the thought of the Father, who remains in him and knows him, whereas the Word that goes outside *makes him known*.) The same distinction can be drawn from verse 14: "We have beheld his glory, glory *as* of the only Son from the Father [or: a glory that comes from the Father like that of an only Son.]" The glory of the Logos would be *like* that of the *Monogenēs* but not that of the *Monogenēs* himself.

But was it really Cerinthus who distinguished between the *Monogenēs* and the Logos? The Valentinians also make this distinction (Irenaeus, I, 8, 5), and they refer to John not to Cerinthus in this matter. Had they nevertheless found it in Cerinthus? Perhaps, but they themselves had an excessive love of making such distinctions.

Let us, however, allow that they owed this distinction to Cerinthus. This would be another indication revealing that he was a painstaking, fastidious exegete, devoted to making a text clear by introducing distinctions that were not found in it, or that at least were not very evident. This might lead to the assumption that, in the same way, he wished to make clear the difficult question of the link between God and the world in the Johannine Gospel by introducing a creative power that was not as closely linked to God as the Logos. But it must be admitted that this reason (for believing that he in fact separated the creative power from God) remains weak when faced with the silence of the Johannine author and Irenaeus concerning the idea of a Creator distinct from God. Moreover, in wishing to make the Johannine author's intentions clear, Cerinthus would be discarding what he expressly says. He would be opposed to him even more than he was in his Christology or his distinction between the *Monogenēs* and the Logos. Finally, besides Cerinthus's distinction between God and the creative power, Irenaeus does not attribute to him an anticosmic attitude or an anti-

Judaism more pronounced than those of John that might explain or confirm an idea leading to the abasement of the Creator.

Thus, we can say nothing on the subject of Cerinthus that achieves a reasonable degree of probability. In particular, we remain in doubt on the question as to whether he really upheld the theory of Creation Irenaeus attributes to him, and, in this instance, what it exactly meant for him. If he really held this idea, and if the creative power was the God of the Old Testament for him, he would be the first Gnostic properly speaking that we know of. But he could only have held this theory at a stage in his teaching that the Johannine author could not yet know. What is most probable about him is that if he existed he must have been in touch with the Johannine author and reflected upon his Gospel.

Chapter VII

Menander

1. *Menander and the Fourth Gospel*

Menander not only brought the Simonian schism to Antioch, he seems to have had his own ideas, quite different from those of Simon; otherwise Justin would not present him together with Simon and Marcion as the three main heretics with whom he is particularly indignant. Unfortunately, we know little about him. As Irenaeus describes him (*Adv. haer.* 1, 23, 5), he seems to be linked on the one hand to Paul (perhaps through Simon or certain Simonians) and on the other with John. He may have inherited from Simon, or the Simonian School at Samaria, the figure of creative *Ennoia*, a figure that comes from Judaism but that was also preserved in Christianity in the form of the creator Spirit. The idea of the angels dominating the world who must be overcome might come from Paul rather than John. For it is Paul who generally depicts the world as governed by manifold powers, whereas John gathers the cosmic powers together into the single figure of the “prince of this world.”¹ But the expression “to overcome the world” is an expression of John’s (16:33; 1 John 5:4–5), not of Paul’s. Thus, when Menander speaks of “overcoming the angels,” he seems to amalgamate Paul’s language with John’s. The idea of already present eternal life is, as we have seen, found both in Paul and in John, but John emphasizes it much more and it is he who expressly says that those who have faith will never die.² Finally, the idea that the true God (“the first power”) is unknown to all, though it is already attributed to Simon (Irenaeus, 1, 23, 2), might be related to John rather than Paul. For if Paul says that the rulers of this age have not known the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 2:8), he does not seem to say that God was unknown to the Jews, or even to the pagans (cf. Rom. 1:21). Whereas John states that the world has not known God (15:21; 17:25) and that the Jews themselves do not know him (8:19, 54–55; 16:3); that it is Christ who has revealed the name of the Father (17:6, 26).³

Menander most probably was acquainted with the Johannine works, or at least with the oral teaching of the Johannine author, a teaching that must have preceded the redaction of the Fourth Gospel. That is to say that the doctrine attributed to him can hardly be earlier than the last decades of the first century.⁴ Unlike the Paulinists attached to the group of Christian communities, the Paulinists derived from Simon’s community⁵

seem to have entertained no prejudice against the Johannine Gospel, or against the oral teaching of its author. Quite the contrary. They are doubtless the first, or among the first, who accepted and used it. Saturnilus, a disciple of Menander, certainly seems to depend on John when he speaks of the "luminous image" that the angels cannot grasp.⁶ Basilides, another disciple of Menander's, seems to use the same passage from the Johannine Prologue in the fragment preserved by the *Acts of Archelaus*,⁷ and his succession of divine beings (Irenaeus, 1, 24, 3) seems to be partly based on this same Johannine Prologue.

It is not unlikely that the Simonians at Antioch very quickly got to know John's Gospel, or at least the oral teaching of the Johannine author. Links between the Johannine circle and men derived from Samaria have more than once been suggested. Cullmann writes: "It is manifest that the Johannine group was very soon enlarged by the reception of Samaritan converts."⁸ Similarly W. A. Meeks thinks that the "Johannine Church" must have been partly made up of members from Samaritan circles.⁹ Doubtless, these are only hypotheses. But the opinions of these two scholars show that these hypotheses are possible if not probable.

The rapid influence exercised by the Johannine tradition on the Samaritan school at Antioch suggests that links might have existed between this school and the Johannine author, even before the redaction of the Fourth Gospel; for this Gospel to be known and adopted so quickly by this school would it not be necessary for there to have been links, an open door, between the Johannine circle and the circle of Menander? One can find additional arguments for this hypothesis in the Johannine Gospel itself. C. H. H. Scobie notes "The astonishingly favorable attitude of the Fourth Gospel toward the Samaritans."¹⁰ In fact, one sees Christ asking a Samaritan for a drink in this Gospel, which means that he broke with Jewish custom in respect to the Samaritans (4:4-9). Here one sees Christ convert numerous inhabitants of a village in Samaria in two days (4:39-42). Here one sees that the Samaritans, like the Jews, looked for the Messiah, and that Jesus affirms himself to be this Messiah whom they await (4:25-26). Here one sees that in order to avoid the persecution of the Pharisees he takes refuge at Ephraim, a town that apparently belonged to the tribe of Ephraim and was therefore a Samaritan town (11:54). Finally, one sees here that Christ himself is treated as a Samaritan by the Jews (8:48). What he says after his conversation with the Samaritan woman ("the fields are white for harvest," 4:35) seems to indicate that he considered the Samaritans ready to receive the truth. His disciples, he says, have only to harvest what others have sown (4:38). (These others are probably John the Baptist and his followers, as J. A. T. Robinson thinks,¹¹ or the "Hellenists" as Cullmann thinks,¹² or Christ himself.) One might almost say that he regards the Samaritans as more disposed to receive the truth than the Jews. J. Bowman observes that in this chapter 4 of the Johannine Gospel, though

criticized, the Samaritans are more favorably depicted than the Jews in chapter 5.¹³ The Johannine author's attitude goes beyond the quite favorable attitude Luke demonstrates toward the Samaritans, and is certainly totally opposed to the feeling that moves the author of Matthew's Gospel when he has Christ say, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:5).

H. Odeberg has suggested that the fourth chapter of the Johannine Gospel was aimed at a circle made up of Samaritans.¹⁴ Bowman suggests that the Fourth Evangelist wished to present the Christian message in a form acceptable to the Samaritans, thus making his work (and not only the fourth chapter) a sort of bridge joining together the Samaritans and the Jews in Christ.¹⁵

The interest in Samaria suggests that this Evangelist had had links with people from this country; and the Samaritans he knew could have been members of the community founded by Simon. He was much freer to have links with a schismatic group, since he was probably outside the communion of the Churches himself.¹⁶ In addition, let us also recall the link we thought might be supposed between the Fourth Gospel and Apollos. The latter, who "did not know the baptism of John," may have had links with the communities claiming the authority of the Baptist. Now, the pseudo-Clementine works depict Simon's School as deriving from John the Baptist. It seems that one of the places in which the latter baptized (Aenon, near Salim, John 3:23) was in Samaria; and according to a tradition preserved by Eusebius, John the Baptist was buried in Sebaste.¹⁷

But if one supposes that there were links between the Johannine author and the Simonian Samaritans, before the composition of the Fourth Gospel, could one not suppose that the Johannine author owes the ideas that link him with Menander to Simon's School? This hypothesis allows us to find ourselves in agreement with Bultmann's views, for whom a Gnostic community venerating the Baptist gave the Johannine author some of his ideas. However, we have seen that if Simon's School was probably schismatic, it was probably not Gnostic, at least at the beginning. It could probably only have given the Johannine author ideas of a Pauline variety. But the Johannine author could have known Pauline ideas more directly at Ephesus and in the Churches founded by Paul. Only from Menander onward does Simon's School present ideas analogous to Johannine ideas. Was it therefore Menander who influenced John, and not the reverse? This is not impossible, neither is it very likely. One idea that seems to have been most important to Menander, the idea of creative *Ennoia*, we do not find in the Johannine author. For him, it is the Logos who is creator. On this point, Menander follows Simon, not John, and still less does John follow Menander. Moreover, Menander attributes an important role to the angels, whereas John hardly mentions the angels, and when he does, does not

consider them forces that must be overcome.¹⁸ Thus important elements of Menander's doctrine are not found in John. Certainly many elements of John's thought are not found either in what we know of Menander, but we know so little about him that this ought not to surprise us. Nevertheless, in Menander and in John we find the idea of a present resurrection, of present eternal life. Now this idea seems to be so closely linked to the joy that the Johannine Gospel breathes that it seems difficult to consider it something that was borrowed. It no more resembles something borrowed than Johannine expressions in general. If it is permissible to rely on an aesthetic judgment, the very beauty of this work is a sign that the author invents his own ideas insofar as he sets them forth and has not taken them willy-nilly in order then to sew them into a patchwork text. We cannot help thinking that if the Samaritans had been the creators of such a powerful theology, their works would have been so beautiful that they would not have disappeared as completely as they have done.

In order to prove a Samaritan influence on the Fourth Evangelist one might point to the presence of a particular idea in his Gospel, the idea of a "prophet who is to come," an idea Meeks has shown links the Johannine Gospel with both a Samaritan theme and an Alexandrian theme.¹⁹ But first, Samaritan theology is known to us, I think, only through relatively late documents, much later than the Gospels. Also, this idea does not seem to have existed in Simon or in his School. Finally, if one must choose between a Samaritan origin and an Alexandrian origin, I would incline rather toward an Alexandrian origin, because other ideas in the Fourth Gospel, especially that of the Logos, seem to be Alexandrian.

As for the Mandaean parallels that have been appealed to in favor of a Gnostic influence upon the Fourth Gospel, I cannot enter here into a thorough discussion of this problem. I only say that the influence of the Fourth Gospel on Mandaean poetry (through Christian *gnoses*) seems to me infinitely more probable than the influence of Mandeism (or rather a proto-Mandeism) on the Fourth Gospel. The parallels are certainly real, but the hypothesis that Mandaean terminology is earlier than Johannine terminology rests on very weak arguments. It is said that because Mandeism is more systematic from certain points of view, it is likely to be earlier than Johannism, which is less so. This is a questionable idea. The opposite might even appear more likely. It is more natural to systematize and unify a doctrine than to introduce contradictions into it. When we allow the possibility that the Johannine author knew Samaritans who were perhaps disciples of John the Baptist, this in no way confirms the Mandaean hypothesis, given the fact that the link between Mandeism and John the Baptist seems to have been late.²⁰

We therefore think that the links between the Fourth Gospel and the ideas attributed to Menander are better explained by the influence of Johannine doctrine on Menander than vice versa.

2. *Menander and Docetism*

Irenaeus does not speak of Docetism in relation to Menander. Nevertheless there are reasons for thinking that he may have been, or appeared to be, Docetic. In his master Simon, as Irenaeus describes him (I, 23, 3), there were at least elements of Docetism. Menander's two disciples, Saturnilus and Basilides, both appear to have been Docetists. Cerdo also, who is linked with the Simonian School in Syria (Irenaeus I, 27, 1) was Docetic according to Hippolytus's *Syntagma*.²¹ Ignatius of Antioch, who was bishop in the very town where Menander taught and at about the same time, knows of and opposes mainly Docetic heretics. The *Ascension of Isaiah*, which seems to be of Docetic tendency and which has links with theories attributed to Simon by Irenaeus (I, 23, 3), might be a work composed in the Simonian School around the time of Menander.²²

If therefore Menander may have been Docetic, of what type was his Docetism? Was it analogous to that which is attributed to Cerinthus (the distinction of two persons in Jesus Christ), or to that of Saturnilus and Basilides, who, if one believes Irenaeus, said that Jesus only appeared to have human nature? It must be noted that Ignatius opposes these two forms of Docetism either successively or together, and does not say that they are found in different heretics. He opposes the division of Jesus Christ into two persons when he passionately affirms his unity;²³ and he opposes the idea that he only appeared to have human nature.²⁴ His date might therefore be that of a transition from one form to the other. Having perhaps drawn part of his doctrine from reflection upon John's Gospel, Menander may initially have taught a Docetism analogous to that which is attributed to Cerinthus, and then transformed this Docetism by insisting more and more on the divine person and less and less on the human person. He may have been moved toward this transformation by some of Paul's expressions. For example, Rom. 8:3 ("in the *likeness* of sinful flesh") or Phil. 2:7 ("being born in the *likeness* of men").

If Menander was Docetic, the attacks one reads in the Johannine epistles perhaps concerned Menander and his school. Thus even less would remain to attest to Cerinthus's existence. We would have lost the one contemporary indication of Cerinthus himself.

3. *Doubts Concerning Some of Irenaeus's Statements*

In Irenaeus we read that Menander claimed to be the one sent, the Savior, and that the baptism by which he claimed to give eternal life was a baptism *in eum*, "in himself"; that is, that the name spoken over the baptized would have been the name of Menander. But it must be noted that Justin, who is earlier than Irenaeus, says nothing of this, at least in what is preserved of his work. Justin, it is true, seems to number Menander among the men

who "claimed to be gods," but although he speaks in this general and vague way at the beginning of the passage in which he attacks Simon, Menander, and Marcion, he does not repeat this accusation later in the paragraphs he devotes to each of them. In speaking of men who claimed to be gods, in reality Justin is thinking only of Simon, and we have seen why he might think thus. (Essentially because of the title "great power" and because of the statue.)²⁵ As far as we know, nothing similar could prompt him to believe the same thing of Menander, or Marcion.

If he did not claim to be a god or God, did he at least claim to be the Savior? One must bear in mind that Irenaeus, like Justin, Hegesippus, and the other heresiologists, places Menander among the Christian heretics. Could he have been regarded as a Christian if he attributed to himself the role that is Christ's in Christianity? His religion would not have been Christianity but "Menandrianism." He must have been even less Christian than his master Simon, who, if one believes Irenaeus, at least considered Christ one of his manifestations. Non-Christian, Menander must also have been non-Simonian, for by replacing Simon by himself in the role of Savior, he must have changed the doctrine of his master at its very center. His disciples, in turn, must have been non-Menandrians, since for Saturnilus and Basilides, it is Christ who is the Savior. We might add that although Ignatius of Antioch knew of docetists and also, it seems, of Christians who formed a group apart—these were perhaps the same as the Docetists—he does not seem to know of a heretic claiming to be the Savior.

In saying that Menander claimed to be the one sent, Irenaeus attributes Johannine language to him. Paul also says that God has "sent" his Son (Rom. 8:3), but he uses this word far less often than John. It is very likely that Menander did in fact speak of the one sent, since other marks of Johannine influence are found in him; but it is likely that by this word he referred to the one who in John's Gospel so often says he is "sent," that is, Christ. Some misunderstanding, together with the hostility of certain Christians for a group different from their own, might have led to the belief that he spoke about himself.

It must be noted that an expression like "the baptism of John" can be taken in two different ways. It can be understood as a baptism whose rite was simply an imitation of the baptism of John the Baptist and which did not include the transmission of the Spirit; or as a baptism in which the name pronounced over the baptized would have been that of John. When Luke speaks of the "baptism of John" in relation to Apollos and Johannites, he probably understands it in the first way, whereas later, when the Johannites were rebaptized, he makes it clear that they are baptized "in the name of Jesus" (Acts 19:5). In fact, one sees no one trying to demonstrate to Apollos or the Johannites that Jesus and not John is the Savior. Nor does one see Apollos teaching another Savior than Christ at Corinth, or even that he drew special attention to John the Baptist. Nevertheless, it was easy to use this expression in the first sense and then to understand it

in the second. Thus, the “baptism of Menander” was perhaps spoken of first of all to refer to the baptism that was given in Menander’s community, which perhaps only differed from ordinary Christian baptism by the fact that it was given in a schismatic community and did not include the transmission of the Spirit; and soon it would have been understood as meaning that Menander baptized in his own name and claimed to be the Savior.

If Saturnilus and Basilides had been baptized in the name of Menander and were then converted to Christ, would there not therefore be some trace of a polemic against Menander in their doctrines? In affirming that Christ is the Savior, would they not have added “and not Menander”? We find no trace of a polemic of this type in what the heresiologists report.

As for the accusation of magic, it would be enough for Menander to have belonged to the community of Simon for men to tend to see him as a magician. Moreover, it was easy to turn the promise of immortality into magic.

Finally, did Menander really believe that the world was *made* by the angels, as Irenaeus states? We have shown in the first part of this work²⁶ that the angels Menander speaks of, like those Simon mentions, were perhaps only the “administering” angels, those which figure in Judaism and early Christianity. One of the reasons for assuming this is that Justin does not attribute a heretical doctrine of Creation to either Simon or Menander. It is Marcion whom he blames for having introduced such a doctrine.

However, it seems that at the time of Menander certain questions were perhaps already being asked at Antioch concerning the relation between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the Christians. If it is true that no *clear* statement is found in Ignatius showing that the heretics attributed the creation of the world to the angels or a Demiurge, it can be seen from this that Ignatius is already insisting on the *unity* of God, meaning by that, it seems, that the God of the Old Testament and the God of Jesus Christ are one and the same God.²⁷ Thus this unity was perhaps already questioned by certain Christians. Moreover, Ignatius insists that one believe the prophets and says that they were already Christians, while also recommending that one rely even more on the gospel.²⁸ This might also be a sign that certain Christians were tending to separate the two Testaments.

Tertullian attributes a theory about the creation of the human body (not of *the world*, but of the human body) by the angels to Menander,²⁹ and it might be that this information is right; for this theory is also found in a disciple of Menander’s, Saturnilus. If it is true that Menander held it, how did he come to form it? Did he know the works of Philo where it is said that the human body (or the irrational part of the soul) was not directly created by God but by the angels, because it was not fitting for God to create directly what might cause sin?³⁰ Did he know of other Jewish theories of the same type? It is not at all impossible that Menander knew either Philo or other Jewish authors who said the same thing. In any case

it is clear that this theory implies a strong devaluation of the body and links Menander's Christianity with certain currents of Greek philosophy. It may have arisen in a mind influenced by Hellenistic Judaism, but also in a mind directly influenced by Hellenism. Moreover, one finds a similar devaluation of *matter* (Rom. VI, 2; VII, 2) in Ignatius, a contemporary and probably a fellow citizen of Menander. However, it seems that the *form* in which the devaluation of the body finds expression in Menander (the description of the body as created by the angels, a description probably based on the plural used in Genesis, "Let us make man") derives from Philo or from Hellenistic Judaism. But one must remember that Philo is not a Gnostic. Menander may have been inspired by him without denying that the God of the Old Testament, the Creator of the world, is the true God.

If Menander and Ignatius are inspired by either Philo or directly by Hellenism on the subject of the body or matter, it is doubtless because on this point Hellenism appeared to them to agree with the ideas they found in Paul. And perhaps these ideas of Paul are really Hellenistic rather than Jewish.

For Paul, sin is linked with what he calls "the flesh." A distinction is usually made in his language between the flesh and the body; for him the flesh can be the cause of sin, but not the body. If he makes a distinction, it seems to me to be a very weak one. He speaks of "this body of sin" (Rom. 6:6), of "this body of death" (Rom. 7:24). It is true that he can conceive of a "spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:44), but it seems that he also conceived of a spiritual flesh. For in the same passage he says, "Not all flesh is alike" (1 Cor. 15:39). The spiritual body is something different from the body properly speaking and does not exist in the world of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:44).

It might be demonstrated by more than one example that Paul often speaks of the body as he speaks of the flesh. In Rom. 7:14–25 he relates the cause of sin to the flesh. But in the same passage he also speaks of "members" and of the "body" as if these were simply different names for the flesh: "For I delight in the Law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another Law at war with the Law of my mind and making me captive to the Law of sin which dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (7:22–24). In 1 Cor. 15:39–41, where he distinguishes a spiritual body and a physical body, he speaks indifferently of different sorts of flesh and different sort of bodies. In Rom. 8:5–9 the antithesis spirit-flesh corresponds to the antithesis life-death, but in verse 10 it is the body that is dead. In Rom. 8:13 to live according to the flesh is the equivalent of not putting an end to the works of the flesh in oneself, by the spirit. In 2 Cor. 5:9, "to rest in this body" is "to remain in the flesh" in Phil. 1:24. In 1 Cor. 6:16, "body" and "flesh" are used as equivalents. We cannot study this question in any depth here; but often what Paul says leads us to think that he *might seem* to devalue the body as much as he devalues the flesh.

Menander seems to stand at a turning point. His angels are creators in a sense, if it is true that they are creators of the human body; but, as in Philo, they might not be creators of the world. If, according to him, God made the angels appear by the mediation of his *Ennoia* (Irenaeus, 1, 23, 5), and if this *Ennoia*, like the one Simon mentions, “knew what his Father wished” (Irenaeus, 1, 23, 2), it is not yet the Valentinian Sophia, guilty of transgression and become imperfect; it is still the Sophia of the Book of Wisdom, about whom it is said to God: “She knows what is pleasing in your eyes” (9:9). God therefore remains the true Creator. However, we have just seen that in the time of Menander, at Antioch, the God of the Old Testament seems set to descend from the supreme level in the eyes of certain Christians, since Ignatius, affirming God’s unity, sometimes seem to address those who doubt that the God of the Old Testament is the same as that of the Gospel, and because he thinks he ought to commend belief in the prophets. We are perhaps at the point when Gnosticism properly speaking is about to be born. And in fact, we will see that it finally appeared clearly with Saturnilus, a disciple of Menander. Perhaps it also arose in another quarter with Cerinthus, but we have seen that one cannot be sufficiently sure because of the problems that the figure of Cerinthus poses. Saturnilus is a much less obscure figure than Cerinthus. We find in him not only a more precise doctrine but reasons that might explain this doctrine and thereby confirm that he held it.

Appendix

On the "Ascension of Isaiah"

The work called the *Ascension of Isaiah*, which seems to be approximately contemporary with Menander, might give us some idea of what his doctrine might have been, and also who the heretics were who were opposed by Ignatius of Antioch.

The *Ascension of Isaiah* is formed of two main parts. The first (chapters I–V), which relates the martyrdom of Isaiah, might be a Jewish work containing Christian interpolations. The longest of these interpolations (III, 13–V, 1) contains a prediction of the coming of Christ, his death and resurrection. The decline of the Church founded by him, the coming of the Antichrist, and finally the glorious return of Christ with the general resurrection and the Last Judgment are also predicted here. The second part (chapters VI–XI) is almost wholly a Christian work, relating how Isaiah, seized by a vision, left his body, and, led by an angel to the seventh heaven, there received a revelation of the future descent of the Son of God to earth, of his earthly life and his return to God. A passage in the second part that concerns the earthly life of Christ (XI, 2–22) is often thought to be an interpolation, due to an author different from that of VI, 1–XI, 1 and XI, 23–40, but possibly the same as the author of the long interpolation in the first part (III, 13–V, 1). There would therefore be three more or less independent main sections, not counting the shorter interpolations. But these diverse Christian texts have enough in common for it to be possible to attribute them if not to the same author at least to the same school. As for the dates they were written, these dates must be quite close to one another around the end of the first century. R. H. Charles (*The Ascension of Isaiah* [London, 1900]) places part III, 13–V, 1 between 88 and 100, and part VI, 1–XI, 40 toward the end of the first century, which is to say they are from about the same time. J. Daniélou seems to have all the Christian parts in mind when he places the *Ascension of Isaiah* between around 80 and 90 (*Theology of Jewish Christianity* 13). The editors of the *Apocryphal Epistle of James*, found at Nag Hammadi (*Epistula Jacobi apocrypha* [Zurich, 1968], 40) think that the *Ascension of Isaiah* must have been written between 80 and 100; and by the *Ascension of Isaiah* they understand at least the part concerning Isaiah's vision, since they refer to IX, 16. On the other hand, J. Flemming and H. Duensing (in Hennecke-Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 2 [London, 1965], 643) state that this same part, the "Vision of Isaiah," may be from the second century. Choosing a middle way, we might assume that the Christian texts must have been written between around 90 and 110.

These Christian parts of the *Ascension of Isaiah* are not properly Gnostic, even though this work was used by certain Gnostic sects. It is true that one can find *Gnosticizing* traits in this work. For example, the word "foreign" applied to

the world (vi, 9), to the body (viii, 14, Tisserant's translation), and to the inhabitants of the earth (ix, 1); a strong anticosmic attitude (iv, 18; viii, 23–24; x, 12); the idea that an evil Power rules over the firmament (vii, 9; a Greek legend, ii, 9–11); an opposition between the angels of the world and angels from the seventh heaven (vi, 13); the idea that Christ has even spent 545 days on earth after his resurrection (about eighteen months), an idea found in the Valentinians (Irenaeus, i, 3, 2) and the "Ophites" (Irenaeus, i, 30, 14). If the angels of the world are not its creators, they have at least ruled over it from the beginning, and already speak, or very nearly, the words the Gnostic Demiurge will speak: "We alone, and apart from us no one" (x, 13). Similarly, the Prince of this age, when he comes in the form of Antichrist, will say: "It is I who am the Lord, and before me was no one" (iv, 6). The statement that the name of the God of the seventh heaven "was not sent into the world" (i, 7) might have more to do with the Gnostic idea of the "unknown God" than with the banal idea that God is unknowable, or the Jewish rule of not pronouncing the name of Yahweh. (For it is not said that this name ought not to be pronounced, or that it is absolutely unknowable, but that at the time of Isaiah it had not been sent into the world.) However, the distinction between God and the Demiurge is not really seen in these texts. The Prince of this age is not the Creator and does not seem to be identified with the God of the Old Testament (even if, having become Antichrist, he appropriates the words of this God). The true God, who reigns in the *seventh* heaven, is apparently still the God of the seven days, those of Creation. The only way in which the *Ascension of Isaiah* seems to diverge quite clearly from ordinary Christianity is a strong tendency toward Docetism. The author of the "Vision of Isaiah" certainly seems to be Docetic when he says of the Savior, in ix, 13, "one would think he is flesh and blood." In xi, 1 the Latin translation and the Slavonic translation might well interpret Daniel's prediction in a Docetic sense: *Et vidi similem filii hominis et cum hominibus habitare*. Finally a strong Docetic tendency seems to be implied throughout the account of successive transformations by which Christ hides his divinity when he descends to earth. So as not to be recognized by the angels, he successively takes the *form* (or *appearance*) of all the classes of angels, from the highest to the lowest, finally taking that of men. *His transformation into a man seems to be thought of as analogous to his transformations into angels*. His humanity seems to be only an appearance meant to hide him. For example, in xi, 17, it is said about his infancy: "And I saw that in Nazareth he sucked like a child, as was customary, that he might not be known." This might mean that he was not really a child.

We therefore have here a very early Christian work, which expresses a Christianity of a Docetic tendency in the context of a Jewish legend. Might this work not illuminate the hints we find in Ignatius of Antioch of a heresy that was perhaps a proto-Gnosticism? I wish to ask scholars a question: Why could the Docetism mixed with Jewish fables, which Ignatius opposes, not be a Docetism analogous to that of the *Ascension of Isaiah*? The question of who the heretics were that Ignatius opposes, and where they came from, has been much discussed. Insofar as he reproaches them with Judaizing, to that extent he thinks of them as Docetic. Is it a question of two adversaries, or of only one? The *Ascension of Isaiah* allows us to answer this question, for here we find *both the Docetic tendency and the Jewish fable*. Being very early, Ignatius could have known this work. Some scholars have even thought that he did know it. For Charles, the beginning of chapter xix of

Ignatius's *Epistle to the Ephesians* depends on the account of Jesus' birth in the *Ascension*. (Cf. J. Daniélou's opinion, *Theology of Jewish Christianity*, 13.) Ignatius's opponents may therefore have been of a single type. They may have been a group like that from which the *Ascension of Isaiah* derived.

It is true that one does not find the sayings Ignatius attributes to the Docetists in this work. It is not stated here that Jesus merely appeared to suffer. But the idea that Jesus's humanity was simply a veil intended to hide him is perhaps the same as thinking that he merely appeared to suffer, and some of those who used the *Ascension of Isaiah* may have expressed themselves in this way. Or perhaps it is Ignatius who attributes this saying to his opponents, because it could be a consequence of their tendency toward Docetism.

But from what milieu could a work like the *Ascension of Isaiah* have derived? Would it not have been a predominantly Pauline milieu, developing the Pauline idea that the crucifixion of Christ resulted in the salvation of those who had faith in him, and that it would not have taken place if the Powers had recognized him as the Lord of glory? On the other hand, it must be noted that there is one striking resemblance between the main theme of the *Ascension of Isaiah* (the hidden descent of Christ) and the myth attributed to Simon Magus concerning the descent of the Savior (Irenaeus, I, 23, 3; Tertullian, *De Anima* 34; Epiphanius, *Pan.* XXI, 2 and 6). This theme might therefore be of Simonian and not of Jewish-Christian origin. It could not have been expounded by Simon himself in the *Ascension*, since this work seems to have been written around the end of the first century. But it may have been written by a Simonian, around the time of Menander.

Against the idea that the *Ascension of Isaiah* may derive from a Simonian milieu might be set the fact that, in the first part of this work, the diabolical Belkirā is described as born in Samaria. But this is found in the part of the *Ascension* that most critics consider to be a purely Jewish work, a work neither by the same author nor of the same time as the Christian parts. It is true that the author or the authors of the Christian parts, or at least the last editor of the work, accepted the Jewish legend when he joined the Christian texts to it. But it is not impossible that a Samaritan (or a member of a school of Samaritan origin) accepted a legend in which one of his compatriots, supposed to have lived in the time of Hezekiah or Manasseh, was depicted as ungodly. One does not always necessarily defend one's compatriots; on the contrary, it often happens that one is more severe toward that which is closest to one. In adopting Christianity, Simon and his School separated themselves from Samaritan religion; they may have been in conflict with their compatriots as Christian Gnostics were generally in conflict with Judaism.

If this work is really of Simonian origin, as we are allowed to suppose on the one hand by the fact that heresiologists depict the central theme as Simonian teaching, and on the other hand by the fact that this work was used by Gnostics, this would confirm not only that Simon himself was not Gnostic, but that even his School was not yet properly speaking Gnostic at the end of the first century; that only in the time of Menander can one find *Gnosticizing* and Docetic tendencies. This would confirm that neither Simon nor Menander claimed to be Saviors, still less gods. (It is beyond doubt that in the *Ascension* the Savior is Jesus.) This would also show that Irenaeus is probably mistaken when he depicts the Simonian and Menandrian angels as creators of the world; that he is also perhaps mistaken in saying that, according to Simon, the prophets were inspired by the angels of the world, which would imply that Simon

totally rejected the Old Testament. (In the *Ascension of Isaiah* there is at least one prophet who is honored, that is Isaiah). Finally—and most important—if one allows that this work may have derived from the Simonian School, one might draw from it hints as to the sources of the thought of the first Gnostics.

What ideas do we in fact find in this work? We do not find the sort of Jewish-Christian Gnosticism to which Ignatius's polemic seems inevitably to lead us. This is not a Jewish-Christian Gnosticism, first because this is not yet Gnosticism properly speaking, and second because it is not Jewish-Christian. The Jewish context ought not to mislead us. If the context is a Jewish legend, the ideas are Pauline. According to Dillman (quoted by Tisserant, p. 48 of his translation), the author of the "Vision of Isaiah" was inspired by 1 Peter 1:10–12 (the prophets foretold Christ); by 1 Cor. 15:47 (the second man, that is, Christ, comes from heaven); Eph. 1:21 ("far above all rule and authority and power and dominion"); by Col. 2:15 ("he has disarmed the principalities and powers—that is to say, he disarmed them of what they held as their own—and made an example of them"). To my mind he was perhaps even more inspired by 1 Cor. 2:6–8 ("a secret and hidden wisdom of God . . . , which none of the rulers of this age understood, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory"). In fact, the fundamental theme of the *Ascension* is that God organized everything so that the rulers of this age could not understand the divinity of Christ, and that, in this ignorance, they did him to death, which was necessary for the salvation of humanity.

It must also be noted that the doctrine of salvation in this work is a Pauline doctrine: one is saved by *faith*, and by faith in the *cross* (III, 18; IX, 26). This has nothing to do with Jewish Christianity.

This value attached to the cross seems to be the opposite of Docetism. But we have already noted that it is precisely in theologies in which salvation is founded on the revelatory value of the cross that the divinity of Christ is affirmed and accentuated, in such a way that certain expressions could lead to Docetism.

Besides Pauline influence, one can find some signs of Johannine influence in the *Ascension*. The expression "the prince of the world" might come from John. It is true that the Slavonic version has "the prince of this age," which shows that the expression might come equally from Paul as John. (Paul speaks of the "rulers of this age," of the "god of this age," and Ignatius, who is much more Pauline than Johannine, says "the prince of this age.") But at least the expression "the only Son" (VII, 37; cf. Slavonic version, VIII, 7 and 25, and the Latin version, VII, 25) seems to come from John (1:14: "the *Monogenēs*"). The phrase "they did not know where he was from" (XI, 14) might be inspired by one of the fundamental themes of the Fourth Gospel.

These Pauline and perhaps Johannine influences, as well as the knowledge of the Synoptic Gospels and Trinitarian theology, show that in spite of what links them with Irenaeus's account of Simon, the Christian parts of the *Ascension of Isaiah* cannot go back to Simon himself. If their authors are Simonians, they must be from the time of Menander. Might one think of Menander himself? There is nothing that specifically suggests this. The idea attributed to Menander, that the baptized are already risen and will not die, is not found here. In truth, it is likely that Menander understood this as the author of the Fourth Gospel understands it, and consequently may well have thought, like the latter, that in another sense there will one day be a general resurrection. Whatever the case, the authors of the *As-*

Ascension of Isaiah speak of a future judgment and resurrection (iv, 18), of a future heavenly beatitude (xi, 40). (But it must be noted that for them the body will not be resurrected, for they state that the saints "will leave their flesh in this world" and will receive other "clothing" [iv, 16–17; xi, 40]; this might make one think of the devaluation of the body we have pointed out in Menander.) On the other hand, nor are the ideas that Menander seems to have held in common with Simon on the "Thought" of God, the *Ennoia*, to be found in the *Ascension*.

Whoever the man or the men were who wrote this work, they belonged to a Pauline tradition rather than a Jewish-Christian one. Their aim is to divinize Christ as much as possible (hence their tendency toward Docetism). It is also to place the widest distance possible between God and the world (which is why they place him in the seventh heaven, which they regarded as the most distant). Through their sources of inspiration they are very close to Ignatius, even though they were perhaps precisely the adversaries he opposes. Ignatius is a Paulinist, who is at the same time a faithful reader of Matthew's Gospel, and who is perhaps inspired to an extent by the Fourth Gospel (without quoting it). Now, the authors of the *Ascension* are also Paulinists, who mix their Paulinism with traditions they draw from the Synoptic Gospels, especially Matthew, and who are perhaps also influenced by the Fourth Gospel. This is why, if it is them Ignatius has in mind, it is not surprising that he does not dream of reproaching them except for their Docetism and their use of Jewish fables.

But is it possible that Ignatius is so passionately opposing a Docetism as little marked as that which is found in the *Ascension of Isaiah*? One is tempted to assume that if Ignatius's opponents were men of the same milieu as those who wrote this work, Ignatius exaggerates their statements and hardly tries to understand them. He therefore perhaps had more than one reason to be hostile to them. His concern is above all else the unity of the Church, a unity organized around the bishops. Now one has the impression that the *Ascension of Isaiah* is the expression of a group apart. One finds quite severe criticisms of "iniquitous presbyters" and "ministers who oppress their sheep" in it. These ministers are accused of loving gold and the glory of the world, of being scandalmongers and jealous (III, 21–31). This suggests that this work is by a group who was in opposition and resistance to the organization of the Church. This might also make us think of the Simonian community. The latter, which had probably been schismatic from the time Simon's claim was rejected, must have remained separated from the communion of the Churches. Ignatius has the greatest distrust, and more than distrust, toward those who hold themselves apart, separated from the bishop. The Churches are sometimes just as severe toward schism as toward heresy, and when there was schism, men sometimes suspected and sought to show that there was also heresy.

Chapter VIII

Saturnilus

1. *The God of the Old Testament in Saturnilus*

We hesitated to attribute to Cerinthus the initial idea of a Creator distinct from the true God. We have seen that Cerinthus was a figure whose characteristics do not appear clearly and whose historicity might be doubted; that if his Docetism is perhaps known by the Johannine author, his theory of Creation is not and seems to belong to a later age. We have seen that this theory is still vague; that in it the creative power is not expressly identified with the God of the old Law; and finally, that this theory is not accompanied by a motive that, when explained, would confirm that Cerinthus actually held it.

In Saturnilus, on the other hand, we see much more clearly the figure of a Creator who is not divine *and who is the God of the Old Testament*. We also see the motives that could have led to the introduction of this figure.

In truth, there is not only one creator in Saturnilus, there are seven, who are angels. But one of these angels is “the God of the Jews,” and the latter seems to be more important than the others, since Christ came into the world “for the destruction of the God of the Jews and for the salvation of those who believe in him [Jesus Christ].” This is what we read in the Latin translation of Irenaeus summarizing Saturnilus’s doctrine (*Adv. haer.* 1, 24, 2), and also in the Greek text of Hippolytus (*Ref. vii, 28, 5*), which perhaps gives a literal translation of Irenaeus’ Greek.¹ It is almost beyond doubt that for Saturnilus, as for Basilides (who belongs to the same school), the God of the Jews is the *head* of the creator angels (cf. Irenaeus, 1, 24, 4). He can therefore be spoken of as the principal creator.

Thus, according to Saturnilus, the God of the Old Testament is in reality an angel; that is, he is not the true God. As for the reasons that led to the devaluation of this figure, we find them without difficulty in an anti-Judaism and an anticosmic attitude that go much further than those of John. If there is anti-Judaism in John, it is in respect to the Jews of his time, and he would not have said that Christ came into the world to destroy the God of the prophets and the old Law. To say this is to say that Christianity and Judaism are conflicting religions, enemies.

We also learn from Irenaeus’s account that, according to Saturnilus, up to the coming of Christ the demons helped the wickedest human beings,

and that this is why Christ came, in order to help the good and destroy the evil and the demons. This seems to mean that the persons in the Old Testament who are depicted as having been prosperous, happy and victorious were in general the most evil, which is to say that the Old Testament depicts men and judges history contrary to the truth; it is to open the door to those Gnostics who declared themselves in favor of the reprobate in the Old Testament. Irenaeus also says that, according to Saturnilus, some prophets came from the creator angels and some from Satan. (Saturnilus does not confuse the creator angels with Satan. The latter was also an angel, but an angel opposed to the creators and especially the God of the Jews.) This seems to mean that many prophets, perhaps all of them, were inspired either by an inferior power or even by a diabolical power.

All this manifests an anti-Judaism, or more precisely an *antinomianism*, a criticism of the Old Testament, that is not found in John (or in Cerinthus, within the limits of what we know about him). This antinomianism may obviously be what led Saturnilus to devalue the God of the Old Testament, and to depict him as an angel and no longer as God.

Saturnilus's anticosmic attitude tends in the same direction. For the ethics of his School indicate that he pushed his anticosmic attitude further than the Johannine author, or at least, he drew from an anticosmic attitude practical implications that this author did not draw from it. If one can believe Irenaeus in this, the Saturnilians said that to marry and to beget children are things that come from the devil, and many of them abstained from meat. This asceticism, which the Johannine author does not seem to teach and which does not seem to have been taught by Cerinthus either, is the sign of a more profound anticosmic attitude.

If we ask therefore, in which heretic do we find, besides the figure of the Demiurge, ideas that might lead to the depiction of this figure, we are obliged to reply that it is in Saturnilus rather than Cerinthus. We can therefore be more certain (or less uncertain) that he indeed held this doctrine.

For Bousset, Saturnilus was the first Gnostic to "Christianize" Gnosticism, by introducing the figure of Jesus into a system that Bousset presumes is pre-Christian. It seems to me, on the contrary, that Saturnilus was the first Christian who, on the basis of the relation between Christianity and the Old Testament, decisively set himself apart from the Christianity of Paul and John, while probably believing that he was deepening and confirming it, and that he was *the first almost certain example of Gnosticism properly speaking*.

2. *Saturnilus and the Seven Angels*

As far as we know, Saturnilus is not only first to clearly reduce the God of the Old Testament to the level of an inferior power. He is also, to my knowledge, the first to speak of the *seven* creator angels. In the first part

of this work, we looked at what the origin of this idea might have been.² It seemed to me that astronomy and astrology were insufficient to explain it; that it also ought to be related to the biblical doctrine of the seven days of Creation, and with the idea that the "eighth day" (the day of the Resurrection, the Christian Sunday) is superior to the seventh (the Sabbath).

This does not stop astronomy or astrology from having some part in this doctrine. They were certainly used later by many Gnostics, who found in the image of eight superimposed heavens (the seven planetary heavens and the heaven of the fixed stars) an image that favored the idea that the God of the seventh day and the seventh heaven was not the highest God. Before Saturnilus astronomy was probably already responsible for the fact that a religious work like the *Ascension of Isaiah* teaches that there are seven heavens above the earth and that God reigns in the seventh. This presupposes some knowledge of astronomy, but at the same time it demonstrates that it was not known perfectly (perhaps all that was known was what one could learn from the planetary week, when it began to be used in the East), or that the views of the astronomers were corrected to accommodate the idea that God is linked with the Hebdomad. In the *Ascension of Isaiah* God reigns in the seventh heaven because he is still the God of the seven days, the God of Creation, and therefore the seventh heaven is the highest heaven. Jewish mystics similarly continued to place God in the seventh "palace."

Did Saturnilus use the image of a series of superimposed heavens? We do not know. But given the fact that the *Ascension of Isaiah* perhaps derives from a Simonian milieu, and most especially given the fact that Basilides, a disciple of Menander like Saturnilus, is interested in astronomy, it is likely that Saturnilus was also interested in it. He may have drawn from this an additional argument for reducing the God of the seventh day to the level of an inferior power. However, it is probably not the case that it was primarily a scientific interest that inspired his anticosmic and antinomian passion, to which his devaluation of the God of the Old Testament is linked.³

3. *Saturnilus and the "Spark of Life"*

Yet another idea—also an important one—that we find for the first time in Saturnilus is that of the spark of life. By this Saturnilus again seems to be the inventor of one of the characteristic elements of the Gnostic myth. According to Irenaeus (I, 24, 1), he said that human beings were fashioned by the angels in imitation of a luminous image that appeared to them and that they could not grasp. But humanity thus fashioned could not hold itself upright because of the weakness of the angels, and it crept upon the earth like a worm. Then the power on high, taking pity upon humanity

because it was made in his image, sent a spark of life that allowed it to stand up and to live.

We have already shown that the spark of life spoken of by Saturnilus could not be a physical life.⁴ For if it was physical life, all would have it; but all do not have it, only those who have faith, those who believe in Christ (Irenaeus, 1, 24, 2). It is therefore a question of life in the Johannine sense, that is to say, of salvation or grace, of already present eternal life. Humanity created by the angels was not inanimate, since it crept upon the earth; but it did not have true life that is properly human life; it lived a life similar to that of the animals.

The power that gives the spark, the “luminous image,” is probably nothing other than the light of the Johannine Prologue,⁵ that light which the darkness has not overcome (John 1:5). According to John, this light is in the Logos, that is to say, in Christ.

If this is the case, the spark of life is not something that belongs to human nature from the beginning. It is not certain that, for Saturnilus, it was given to the first man. If Adam had it, would he not have passed it on to his descendents? Man fashioned by the angels is perhaps not simply Adam, or, if he is Adam, it is perhaps in the sense in which Adam is the symbol for all humanity prior to the revelation of Christ, the symbol of the old man. Man who has received the spark is the new man, he who has been transformed thanks to Christ. Adam would have received the spark, but only when Christ came. Barbara Aland has shown that for Heracleon, a disciple of Valentinus, “the spirituals in the strict sense do not exist until after the coming of Christ.”⁶ Similarly, perhaps, for Saturnilus, there was only a divine spark beginning with Christianity.

If the spark was given to the first man, according to Saturnilus, one must assume that Adam then lost it, so that it had to be given again by Christ. This is what Valentinus seems to suggest, who is perhaps inspired by Saturnilus in this and does nothing but interpret his myth. According to fragment 1 of Valentinus, the angels who created man, afraid of finding in Adam something they did not put there (something higher than themselves), immediately planned to disfigure their work. The author of the *Apocryphon of John* also describes a series of injuries that the creator Archons inflict upon the nature of Adam, to try to snuff out the light he had received. The idea that Adam was taught and saved by Wisdom Saturnilus may have found in the Book of Wisdom (10:1). But in this book Adam is instructed and saved *after his trespass*; Wisdom frees him from his fall, and there is no question of another fall. For Saturnilus on the other hand, it must be the case that Adam, already lacking because he was a creature of the angels, fell anew after receiving the spark, since it is only found in believers, in Christians.⁷

We have also made it clear⁸ that the distinction Saturnilus makes between those who have the spark of life and those who do not, ought not to be confused with another distinction he attributes to Irenaeus, that of

the good and the evil fashioned by the angels. The latter cannot give the spark of life, the good and the evil created by them can only be the good and the evil of the Old Testament. This doctrine is comparable to that which Tertullian attributes to the Valentinians (*Adv. Val.* 29). The latter, according to Tertullian, thought that good and bad souls were symbolized by Abel and Cain. But for them, Abel himself did not have goodness according to the Spirit, that which comes from freedom. For it was Seth who for them was the symbol of persons who have the Spirit, and in him this Spirit was not of nature but of grace. Abel no doubt simply had a sort of natural goodness, which is not yet true goodness. For God alone, and what comes from God, is good for the Valentinians (cf. frag. 2 of Valentinus).

But if it is true that for Saturnilus the spark was grace of salvation, how ought we to interpret the fact that he speaks of it as of something that will remain with the believer during the whole of the rest of his life? For according to Irenaeus, he says that at death it returns "to that which is of the same nature as itself," whereas the rest of man "dissolves into that from which this rest was made." Does a spark last for the whole of life? Is grace or salvation a nature or a substance? Grace might doubtless be likened to the presence of the Spirit in the soul; but is the Spirit itself something that, once descended into the soul, remains there until death? Is it not rather a momentary inspiration, which must be renewed as the need arises? Is it not the wind that blows where it will (John 3:8)? Is it possible that it becomes an element that is constitutive of being? It seems to me that, for Paul, the Spirit can enter individuals but that it is not constantly found in whoever has received it once. On the contrary, the idea that it remains constantly in the one who has received it might be suggested by the First Epistle of John. The Johannine author says, "No one born of God commits sin; for God's nature abides in him, and cannot sin because he is born of God" (1 John 3:9). Here again we find in Saturnilus an idea that might be of Johannine origin. The person who is "born of God," according to John, is the one who has undergone a second birth, the person who has received from on high faith with the Spirit, the one who believes in Christ. "To those who received him, he has given the power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name" (John 1:12). But did John really wish to state, in 1 John 3:9, that he who has received faith or the Spirit can never lose them? What then do his exhortations, his warnings, mean? And did Saturnilus himself want to say that? We have observed how many contradictions there are in Gnostic theories of predestination or of divine origin, and how difficult it is to avoid contradiction in this matter.⁹

One might also note that Basilides, who had the same master as Saturnilus, is accused by Clement of Alexandria of making faith an essence (*ousia*) a nature (*physis*) a substance (*hypostasis*) (*Strom.* v, 1, 3). Saturnilus might also have used words that suggested the substantiality of the spark of life, and of the faith that is inseparable from it; or, to use Johan-

nine language, the subsistence of the divine seed. But one ought probably to reserve one's judgment as to whether there was a definite and absolutely coherent doctrine in this matter in him or Basilides. Most especially, one probably ought to reserve judgment as to whether they concluded from this that morality was useless. It is certain that there were ethical conditions for salvation, for Saturnilus as for Basilides, and most especially for John.

Whatever the case, the spark of life, which should doubtless be called the Spirit, insofar as it is distinguished from the soul goes back to God after death. As for the other human elements, that is, the body and the natural soul, they return to their origin, which is to say that for them there is no resurrection. This ought not to surprise us. We have already seen that for Menander the body was probably of little value; and in the *Ascension of Isaiah*, which perhaps comes from the same school, the resurrection of the flesh seems to be denied (IV, 17). Moreover, in Saturnilus himself we find other teachings that agree with this devaluation of the body: a rigorous asceticism, and a Docetism that, according to the heresiologists, must have implied that the body of Christ was only an appearance.

4. Conclusion

Thus Saturnilus seems to have taken a number of decisive steps upon the way in which Christianity among certain Christians gradually changed into Gnosticism. In him we find the two levels of the supraterrrestrial world corresponding to the Old and New Testaments. We also find an anticosmic attitude accentuated in comparison with that of Paul and John, since the true God is no longer the creator of the world. We find the seven Archons. We find that there is a "spark of life" come from above in the one who has received the revelation, and we see that at death this spark, which seems to have existed in a person, goes to reunite itself with its source. In short, there are all the elements of the Gnostic myth here.

Despite these decisive steps, Saturnilus's doctrine is easily connected with Menander's. The "unknown Father," who is also "the supreme Power," corresponds to the "unknown Power" which Menander speaks of. If one believes Irenaeus, Menander already taught that the angels created the world. And even if one thinks that Irenaeus was perhaps mistaken in this, Menander's angels were at least the creators of the human body (if one takes Tertullian's word here), since according to Saturnilus, they create all the natural part of humanity. Saturnilus's docetism continues that which we believed it was possible to attribute to Menander. If for Menander "knowledge" and baptism give eternal life by allowing the convert to be resurrected in this life, for Saturnilus faith allows one to have the spark of life, and this produces a sort of resurrection, since it makes humanity stand upright (cf. the use of *diēgeire*). We have seen that Menander's doctrine is a mixture of Paulinism and Johannism. In this it is basically the same as

Saturnilus's. The idea that God wishes to "destroy the Archons" is drawn from Paul, 1 Cor. 2:6. The "luminous image," which the creators have not grasped, probably derives from John 1:5. The persistence of the spark in the believer recalls the permanence of the divine seed according to the first Johannine epistle. If Saturnilus goes further than Menander in criticizing the Old Testament, the reason, as we have supposed, is perhaps a growing tension between Christianity and Judaism.

The figure of *Ennoia* found in Menander is absent from Saturnilus. But Irenaeus's brief account, which contains practically all we know about Saturnilus, certainly does not describe his *entire* doctrine. He does not explain the manner or procedure by which God created the angels, the archangels, and the other powers. He may have created them by the Logos (a Johannine idea) or by wisdom (a more Pauline idea).¹⁰ Logos and Wisdom may be synonymous names for Christ, but Wisdom might also be the Spirit, that is, Simon's and Menander's *Ennoia*. It is true that perhaps Saturnilus's hostility toward the Old Testament made him avoid speculation on the subject of creative Wisdom. Perhaps his hostility to marriage made him avoid the depiction of the Spirit as a female figure who was associated with either God or Christ. But we know nothing precise about this part of his doctrine, which Irenaeus has not handed on to us.

Perhaps Saturnilus was also inspired by Alexandrian sources, given the fact that creation of the human body by the angels is found in Philo, and the metaphor of the spark in the Book of Wisdom.¹¹ Menander had perhaps already found the idea that the human body is the work of angels in Philo. But if Menander and Saturnilus borrow the myth from Philo, it is to expound an idea of the body that they believe they have found in Paul—and that perhaps is found there. If Saturnilus borrows the metaphor of the spark, it is perhaps because together with the idea of life this metaphor unites light and life which are united in John (1:4). Perhaps also because a spark being a very small thing, he wishes to expound the idea that the light brought into the soul and the world is at first only a minute grain of light, comparable to the mustard seed in the Gospel.

Pauline and Johannine pessimism on the subject of the world, and on the subject of human nature when it is reduced to its own resources, also increases in Saturnilus. The world is no longer directly created by God, or even by the Wisdom of God. Even at its very beginnings, it no longer reflects divine wisdom. And humanity, so long as it has not received the spark, can only creep upon the earth. Nevertheless Saturnilus's account attributes a certain value to the *human form*. The Archons formed humanity by copying the luminous image that appeared to them from on high. If they did not grasp the light, they did at least try to copy its form. Whether their attempt resulted in the form of the human body or whether it resulted in the *thought* that is in humanity (which is more probable), in any case, even before the spark there is something in human beings that partly comes from on high, not only from the Archons.

Chapter IX

Basilides

1. *Irenaeus's Basilides and Hippolytus's Basilides*

I have no intention here of studying the doctrine of Basilides as a whole or for itself. I will simply concentrate on what can best illuminate its origin.

First we must ask an essential question: Who is the true Basilides, the historical founder of the Basilidean School? Is it that of Irenaeus or that of Hippolytus? The doctrine Irenaeus describes is irreconcilable with the one Hippolytus describes in the *Elenchos* (VII, 13–27). Since the discovery of the *Elenchos*, the question arises as to which of the two accounts actually corresponds to what Basilides's teaching was.

Hilgenfeld held that the true Basilides, or at least the truest of the two, is that of Irenaeus (*Ketzergeschichte* [1884] 195–230). His proof, based on the sources, seems to be sound, and it seems to me that it has not been undermined by more recent studies in which the opposite view is held.¹ It is true that the fragments of Basilides quoted by Clement of Alexandria are often at variance with Irenaeus's statements. The latter makes Basilides a Docetist, to such an extent that he attributes to him the strange theory we have mentioned (Simon of Cyrene must have been crucified in Jesus' place²). Now Clement quotes texts from Basilides from which it appears that for him not only were the sufferings of the Savior real, but that like all other human beings he had a natural inclination to sin (*Strom.* IV, 83, 1). Irenaeus accuses Basilides of teaching that licentiousness is something indifferent; but the fragments of Basilides and his son or disciple Isidore, quoted by Clement, show that both of them were strict moralists (*Strom.* II, 113, 4–114, 1; III, 3, 3; IV, 81, 1–83, 1; IV, 153, 3). Irenaeus also accuses the Basilideans of being ready to deny their faith in time of persecution;³ but the fragments of Basilides on martyrdom in no way show that he would have wished to turn Christians away from witnessing to their faith; rather he encourages them when he says that unmerited suffering is the most honorable way of expiating transgressions that only the self knows of (*Strom.* IV, 81, 1–83, 2). There are therefore many differences between Clement's Basilides, supported by quotations, and the Basilides Irenaeus depicts. Irenaeus's portrait needs to have serious alterations made to it. Hilgenfeld acknowledges this, but he notes that if Clement's Basilides differs from Irenaeus's, it agrees still less with Hippolytus's.

Clement makes Basilides a dualist by stating that he no longer believes in the one God (*Strom.* v, 74, 3) and that he divinizes the devil (*Strom.* iv, 85, 1). It is true that these statements are probably imprecise and unjust. Hilgenfeld, who also thinks that Basilides is dualist, does not base his case on such statements; he explains them (*Ketzergeschichte*, 220–21) by the conflicting views of Basilides and Clement on martyrdom, which according to Clement is caused by the devil, and according to Basilides is willed by God. But even if one sets aside these accusations and concentrates on the fragments quoted by Clement, one sees that Basilides must have been very far removed from the evolutionary monism that Hippolytus attributes to him.

As for the Basilides who speaks in these fragments, in every soul there are passions that incline toward sin. These passions do not derive from the soul itself, they are like foreign bodies that attach themselves to the soul (*pro sartēmata*). In a sense there is a second soul in the soul itself, an “adventitious” or “parasitic” soul (*prospbyēs psychē*, *Strom.* II, 113, 3⁴). This shows that for Basilides there was a profound division in the human soul, analogous to the cosmic or metaphysical division that Irenaeus’s Basilides presupposes when he teaches that the world was not created by God but by the angels. It is not necessary to think that he was absolutely dualist. Irenaeus’s Basilides is not, for the angels are not a first principle, they derive from God by the mediation of divine emanations. But according to him there was a profound opposition, at least in the soul, and this opposition or contradiction is found neither in the soul nor in the world as they are presented by Hippolytus’s Basilides.

Clement’s Basilides is a moralist, who is especially preoccupied with sin. Hippolytus’s hardly speaks of sin (unless I am mistaken, the word *hamartia* only appears twice in Hippolytus’s account, and is applied to the ignorance, quite natural in the context in which it is mentioned, of the Great Archon in respect of “God who is not”). Basilides’s doctrine seems to imply that there is no sin but only natures developed to a greater or lesser extent, some of which have not yet realized all their aspirations. All, for Hippolytus’s Basilides, aspire upwards; there is no tendency to fall, and this is quite natural since everything comes from a single seed that directly issued from God. Foerster admits that what is transgression and deserves to be punished remains obscure in the system attributed to Basilides by Hippolytus.⁵

Clement’s Basilides, even if he did not actually “divinize the devil,” has a certain teaching concerning the devil (*Strom.* iv, 85, 1). Now, the devil does not appear in the system Hippolytus describes, indeed he would be inconceivable here, whereas he is not inconceivable in the system Irenaeus describes. Moreover, the creator angels Irenaeus mentions are powers that oppress humanity; whereas of the two Archons Hippolytus mentions, one is “of an unspeakable beauty, grandeur and power” and is “wiser than the wise” (VII, 23); and the other, even if he is inferior to the first, is not

the subject of any sort of criticism, and it does not appear that he oppresses humanity. Moreover, these two Archons both accept the truth about "the God who is not" as soon as it is revealed to them.

One might note in this respect that Hippolytus's Basilides teaches the existence of *two* principal Archons, whereas Clement's Basilides, like Irenaeus's, only knows of a single principal Archon (the Archon of *Strom.* II, 36, 1 is probably the "prince" of the creator angels Irenaeus mentions, I, 24, 4-5.)

We might add that in a fragment quoted this time not by Clement but by the author of the *Acts of Archelaus* (LXVII), Basilides appears to be tempted by Mazdeism. "Let us ask, he says, what the barbarians themselves sought and what opinions they arrived at. Some of them said that there are two origins for all things, two origins which they associated with good and evil; and they said that these two origins are themselves without beginning and unbegotten. . . ." Basilides does not say that he wholly shares their opinion; he simply says let us ask what others have thought. But there is certainly a hint of sympathy and attraction in these words. Now, to a certain extent this might agree with Irenaeus's Basilides, but it is absolutely contrary to the spirit of Hippolytus's Basilides.

I would wish to add to these remarks already made by Hilgenfeld that for Clement's Basilides as for Irenaeus's, one is saved by *faith* (Irenaeus, I, 24, 4; Clement, *Strom.* II, 10, 1); whereas, if I am not mistaken, Hippolytus's Basilides does not speak of faith but only of illumination and knowledge.

What especially needs to be considered is the likeness between the system Hippolytus attributes to Basilides and the other systems the *Elenchos* brings to our knowledge. There are so many common features in all these systems that one cannot escape the impression that all these doctrines are from the same time, and a time not much earlier than the *Elenchos* itself. The characteristic ideas of Gnosticism are weakened in the same way; the complexities, the duplications of beings are also found here; the distinction between three principles is found throughout; some definitions have passed from one to another; finally, the syncretism is developed in the same way, a syncretism that mixes the different Gnostic schools (for example, Basilides has Valentinian traits here) and that also mixes Gnosticism with pagan philosophies.

Despite everything that is usually said, Hippolytus was not wrong, after all, to relate Basilides and Aristotle. The theory of the *development* of all beings from a seed hidden in them is certainly in the manner of Aristotle. It is true that there is also an element of Platonism in the idea of "God who is not"; but there is Platonism in Aristotle himself. For Hippolytus's Basilides the God who is not is the origin of everything that is. Although everything that is tends to rise, although nothing can descend, the seed of the universe was willed and deposited by God himself, in such a way that in the beginning something descended, and what descended came from God. Now, in Aristotle too act is ultimately prior to possibility,

so that Platonism is preserved in the very foundation of his doctrine. Moreover, Hippolytus's Basilides teaches that in the process of salvation nothing that is above actually descends into the world. What is above simply attracts or illumines from afar, just as burning naphtha can light a fire from a distance. This may recall the Platonic Idea, which remains apart, existing in itself, even when it enlightens. But Aristotle's God is also unmoving and only moves the world by love.

An Aristotelian influence toward the end of the second century is not at all unlikely. It is very possible that the author of the system Hippolytus describes was either consciously inspired by Aristotle or by philosophers who tried to unite Platonism and Aristotelianism. (Ammonius Saccas, at the beginning of the third century, seems to have attempted this synthesis.⁶ At the end of the second century Pantaeus already seems to unite Platonism and Aristotelianism in his interpretation of Christian theology.)⁷ This is another difference to note between Hippolytus's Basilides and the one found in Clement and Irenaeus. Clement's and Irenaeus's Basilides is much more clearly Platonic and Pythagorean, and his doctrine is much less mixed up with Aristotelianism. Similarly with the Basilides of Agrippa Castor (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* IV, 7, 7).

In the *Apophysis Megale* Barbara Aland has discerned an attempt to integrate a philosophical work that is not Gnostic with a doctrine that wishes to be. She rightly considers this attempt to be the mark of a later Gnosticism.⁸ One can also see in the system attributed to Basilides by Hippolytus an attempt to integrate a philosophy into Gnosticism that is in no way Gnostic, one that in fact has some link with that of Aristotle. Again, this is probably a sign of a late doctrine. Moreover, this doctrine has features in common with that of the *Apophysis* and with other systems described in the *Elenchos*.

It is true that in Hippolytus's Basilides there are daring features that make one think that this doctrine is the work of an original and lively mind. The description of God by the expression "the God who is not" has something shocking about it. It might appear as the supreme endeavor of negative theology. In this doctrine, which as a whole is a doctrine of immanence, the expression "God who is not," applied to the true God, is like a point at which immanence is suddenly broken by extreme transcendence. The idea of the "great ignorance" that God will make fall upon the world at the end so that no being will seek to leave his nature is also an extraordinary idea. Instead of the destruction of the world, it allows one to think of the indefinite survival of a world henceforth ignorant but innocent. In this way God will give to all beings (at least, to all those who are below the hypercosmos, where the "God who is not" is found) happiness and immortality. This makes one think of the words attributed to Goethe: "Everything is eternal in its place."

We should like to know the name of the man who propounded such daring ideas, still more daring if one reflects on the Gnostic milieu into which he wished to introduce them. For the idea of a "great ignorance"

presented as a type of good, a type of salvation, is contrary to Gnosticism. And the idea of “God who is not” must hardly have been less shocking for many Gnostics. We would like to consider this man a master rather than a disciple. Perhaps this is the basis for renewed attempts to make him the true Basilides. I would like to call him “the great Basilidean.” But that he was the Basilides who lived in the time of Hadrian clearly seems to be something that must be excluded.

It must also be noted that if there are lively inventions in Hippolytus’s Basilides, there are also obscurities, probable contradictions, and seemingly useless complications. If everything is one, if everything was produced together and blended together at the beginning in the one seed issued from God, when was it then necessary to distinguish and separate the species through Jesus’ Passion? Since, for Hippolytus’s Basilides, Jesus came to “bring about the differentiation of the species hitherto mixed together” (VII, 27, 12). How could there be different species if everything comes from the one seed? Must it be thought that God himself is a mixture? And if he wished to deposit a seed of his mixture outside of himself, if he deposited this mixture without first disentangling it, why did he then wish to distinguish what he had left mixed together? Moreover, this differentiation of the species is the only point in which there is a striking agreement between Hippolytus’s Basilides and Clement’s Basilides. For, according to Clement, the Basilideans spoke of a *sophia phylokrinētikē*, the “wisdom that differentiates the species” (*Strom.* II, 36, 1); which is the same word Hippolytus uses when he says that, according to Basilides, Jesus’ Passion brings about a differentiation, *phylokrinēsis*. Here Hippolytus’s Basilides seems to be really linked with Clement’s. But first one must note that Clement does not attribute the idea of the wisdom that differentiates to Basilides himself, but to his School (*hoi amphì ton Basileidēn*), and the author of the system described by Hippolytus probably comes from this School. It must also be noted that this idea does not harmonize well with the system as a whole. It might even be thought from the way in which Hippolytus introduces the passage where he speaks of the *phylokrinēsis* (VII, 27, 7–13) *that he is using a different source than for the rest of the account*. He has already come to the end of the world in his account when suddenly he announces that he is going to go on speaking of something else: “Not wishing to omit any of the Basilideans doctrines, I am also going to set forth . . . ” One gets the impression that he is moving on to another doctrine or another work, for the preceding account appears to be complete.

There are other contradictions or obscurities in the doctrine of this account. Pseudo-Basilides wishes to avoid the idea of emanation. But what then are the three Filiations that are of “the same essence” as God? Also, what do the two Archons, and their respective sons, each of which is more intelligent and wiser than his father, mean? The lower of the two Archons seems to be the God of the Law, as well as being the Demiurge and administrator of everything below him, that is, of the Hebdomad and everything

that is lower than the Hebdomad (VII, 24, 4 and 25, 4). But immediately after, it is said that "this space," no doubt meaning the space in which we live, has neither governor nor Demiurge, and that it is God himself who is the cause of the appearance of each individual being in this space, having willed and premeditated it for a definite time (VII, 25, 5). This Archon is called ineffable (VII, 24, 3), but a little later it is stated that contrary to the Ogdoad, the Hebdomad is not ineffable (VII, 24, 4). As for the other one, the Great Archon, he seems to be the God of the Hebrews prior to Moses (he who was not called Yahweh), and also probably the God of the wisest pagans; at the same time he is also the Demiurge of the fixed stars (the Ogdoad). This is redolent of the distinction Apelles, Marcion's disciple, made between the Creator and the God of the Law, both of whom he held to be inferior to the true God, but to different degrees, the first being closer to the true God. From this one might conclude that from the generation that followed the great Gnostics, some Gnostics realized that a distinction must be made at least between the two types of religion in the Old Testament, and that if the God of the Law is closely linked with Judaism, the idea of the Creator surpasses Judaism. One might also conclude that they began again to feel the beauty of the starry sky. (Besides, Basilides and Valentinus already distinguished the Ogdoad from the rest of the world, and honored it as a sort of route between our world and that of the true God.)

The distinction between the two Archons can thereby be understood. But what difference was there between their respective sons? The son of the Great Archon is called Christ (VII, 26, 2), but he is a Christ who needs to be enlightened by the Gospel, rather than being himself the source of the Gospel. He is therefore still the Christ of the Old Testament, the Messiah of Judaism, like the son of the second Archon. And why are the Archons called demiurges, when it is God who not only deposited the seed of the whole universe but still decides the coming into existence of each individual being? Finally, why was it necessary to reveal the Gospel and to give the Archons, through their sons, the idea that there is something above them in order finally to make the "great ignorance" fall upon them and all beings, so that no one will any longer have any idea that something exists that is superior?

One gets the impression that these contradictions come from the fact that the author of this system wished to preserve certain ideas that he held from an earlier Gnosticism while adopting a philosophy, that of Aristotle, with which these ideas could scarcely agree.

2. *Basilides and Saturnilus*

To come back to Irenaeus's Basilides, bearing in mind that the figure outlined by Irenaeus should be corrected in certain points and that the most definite information is found in the fragments primarily preserved by

Clement of Alexandria. What strikes me first of all are the resemblances between Basilides's doctrine and Saturnilus's. The following resemblances might be noted:

(1) For Basilides as for Saturnilus, the world was created by angels, the first of whom is the God of the Old Testament. Were these angels seven in number for Basilides as for Saturnilus? Irenaeus does not say. But they were perhaps seventy or seventy-two in number, for Basilides describes them as having divided the earth among them, which recalls Jewish theories concerning the angels of the nations.⁹ Moreover, for Saturnilus also, the angels were divided among the nations by drawing them by lot. At least this is what Epiphanius (*Pan.* 23, 1) and Filaster (xxx1) say. Thus, in Basilides as in Saturnilus, the number of the creator angels may have been suggested by Jewish religious speculations rather than by more or less scientific speculations drawn from astronomy. Certainly Basilides was interested in astronomy. Irenaeus attributes to him the idea that there are 365 heavens between our world and the true God. But these 365 heavens were not directly linked with creation; only the angels of the lowest heaven were the creators of the world we see.

(2) For Saturnilus, the Father of Christ sent his Son to destroy the creator angels (or to abolish their reign). For Basilides the Father sent Jesus to destroy (or to abolish) the works of the makers of the world. The word used by the Latin translator of Irenaeus, *dissolvere* (it was probably *katalysai* in Greek), is the same in both cases. Abolishing the works of the creators is less severe than abolishing the creators themselves, and perhaps should be seen as a sign of less pronounced opposition to the Old Testament. But Basilides's opposition to the Old Testament remains strong. He depicts the "God of the Jews" as having wanted to submit all other peoples to the Jewish people and as thereby having provoked opposition movements and wars. He was an angel "more unruly than the rest" (Pseudo-Tertullian, 1, 5). Moreover, for Basilides as for Saturnilus, the prophecies had been dictated by the makers of the world. He does not add, like Saturnilus, that some were dictated by the devil, and this is also an attenuation; but what he says signifies no less of a desire to break with the *whole* of the Old Testament, the prophets as well as the Law.

(3) For Basilides as for Saturnilus only the soul can be saved; there is no resurrection of the body.

(4) For Basilides as for Saturnilus, one is saved by *faith*. It is true that Irenaeus's account implies that sometimes one is saved by faith and sometimes by knowledge. But this no doubt stems from the fact that Basilides makes no great distinction between knowledge and faith. We have seen that at the beginnings of Christianity and *Gnosticism*, faith and knowledge were almost the same thing.¹⁰ Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* II, 10, 11) confirms that for the Basilideans faith was the lot of the elect. Moreover, it seems that there was some resemblance between the faith that comes from the spark in Saturnilus, and that which comes from election in Basi-

lides: both seem to establish themselves in the soul and remain there in a stable manner, as if faith was a sort of substance.¹¹

(5) Irenaeus attributes the same Docetism to Basilides as he attributes to Saturnilus: Christ *seemed* to be a man, but really he was not and did not really suffer the Passion. We have seen that on this point Irenaeus's statement must be corrected by what Clement of Alexandria teaches us.¹² But since it is unlikely that Irenaeus invented the strange theory concerning Simon of Cyrene—a theory found, in part at least, in one of the Nag Hammadi works¹³—it must be thought that some of Basilides's words could have led to this interpretation. Whereas, as we have seen above,¹⁴ some sayings could be interpreted as Docetic, others did not mean to deny the Savior's humanity or his Passion, or to deny only *in a certain sense*. Sayings of this type can be found in Basilides as well as Saturnilus.¹⁵

(6) I have said that Saturnilus's myth is probably partly based on the Johannine Prologue ("the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it").¹⁶ Now, the myth Basilides attributes to the "barbarians," for whom he has some sympathy, also seems to be founded on this Johannine verse. For Saturnilus it was the angel-demiurges who did not overcome the luminous image; for Basilides it is the darkness that, pursuing the light, has not overcome it but has been able to grasp some sight or reflection of it. All of these resemblances show that it is probably true that Saturnilus and Basilides had the same master. Before teaching at Alexandria, Basilides was almost certainly acquainted with the Syrian school of Menander, and from his contact with this school he has drawn a certain number of ideas that are very close to those of Saturnilus.

Certainly there were also other elements in Basilides' thought, and he is not simply a disciple of the Simonian School at Antioch. His thought seems to be richer and more complex than that of Saturnilus or Menander. Above all, it is more *nourished by philosophy*. We have already seen that some Basilidean ideas presuppose a knowledge not only of a sort of vague Platonism but of expressions that Plato uses in the *Republic*.¹⁷ The name of *Nous* ("Intellect"), which Basilides gives the first emanation of God, that is, the highest or deepest essence of Christ, seems to indicate that he adopted Platonic language. And since in his list of divine emanations one finds the name *Phronēsis* ("Wise Thought") immediately after *Nous* or *Logos*, one has the impression that Basilides is inspired by Plato's *Philebus*, in which *Phronēsis* is often associated with *Nous* and almost seems to be synonymous with it. In *Phaedrus* also, *Phronēsis* plays a large role; it is described as the one value in view of which everything else ought to be given up (69a–b), which makes it almost the equivalent of the Good. Even the idea of a series of divine emanations seems to be inspired by the Platonic doctrine of the Ideas. The notion of "mixture," which is very important for the Basilideans (cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* II, 112, 1), is redolent of dialogues such as the *Phaedrus*, *Philebus*, and the *Timaeus*. Basilides also seems to give the world the qualifying term of *monogenēs*,

that is, “only begotten” (Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* v, 74, 3), which is astonishing on the part of a Christian and even more on the part of a Gnostic, but which simply means that there is but one sensible world; and the word *monogenēs*, used in this sense, is drawn from Plato (*Timaeus*, 31b).

Moreover, it is possible that in some cases Basilides was inspired by Aristotelianism.¹⁸ But he especially seems to have liked Pythagoreanism, almost as much as Platonism. This is seen in his adherence to the idea of metempsychosis,¹⁹ which might also be suggested by the Platonic myths; by his recommendation of “silence”;²⁰ by the theory of the “two souls” which Isidore held;²¹ and finally by the Basilideans’ taste for mathematical astronomy (Irenaeus likens the Basilideans to the *mathematici*).²²

But Greek philosophy is not the only source Basilides seems to have drawn on (besides Christian traditions, either orthodox or derived from the School of Menander). He seems to have had an inquiring mind and to have gathered together very different traditions. If he was inspired by the philosophers, he perhaps valued even more the myths of the “barbarians.” The fragment of his *Exegetica* cited in the *Acts of Archelaus* (LXVII), and perhaps also the fact that his son Isidore wrote a commentary on a certain prophet named Parchôr—a Persian prophet it seems, according to the *Acts of Archelaus*²³—indicate that he had a certain knowledge of Mazdeism. Moreover, we read in these same *Acts of Archelaus* (LXVII) that he preached *apud Persas*, “among the Persians,” and this information might be accurate, even though the work that provides it is, as a whole, a tissue of legends. Also, Agrippa Castor said that he venerated certain prophets named Barkabbas and Barkôph, and other prophets with barbarian names.²⁴ Barkôph might be the same person as Parchôr (but which of the two forms is right?); but the name Barkabbas seems to be Semitic.²⁵ We have already seen that Basilides seems to use Jewish speculation (when he speaks of the angels who divided the earth among themselves). He may also have found speculation on an obscure passage of Isaiah (28:10, 13) among Jewish scholars, at least if one can refer what Irenaeus says about the Basilideans to Basilides himself.²⁶ For throughout the end of his account, at least from *Utuntur autem et hi . . .* (I, 24, 5), Irenaeus relates the opinions of a group: “they use,” “they reveal,” “they say,” and so on. And we know from Clement of Alexandria that in ethics at least the Basilideans strongly diverged from their master’s doctrine.²⁷ Perhaps it was also in diverging from their master that, if one believes Irenaeus, the Basilideans used “magic, images, incantations.”

There is rich material for speculation in all this for our modern scholars. Considering the points of contact between Basilides and the East, Bousset judges that his doctrine is essentially derived from “Iranian dualism and eastern mythology” (*Hauptprobleme* [Göttingen, 1907] 92–96). However, even when Basilides demonstrates some sympathy for a myth that is definitely evocative of Iranian dualism, there is no reason to think

that he completely identifies it with his own doctrine. As Irenaeus presents him, Basilides is not dualist in the Iranian sense. For him the world was made by the angels; now, the angels are not a first principle, they have themselves issued, more or less remotely, from the true God. Moreover, the "barbarian" myth Basilides cites as an example he transforms in such a way that ultimately it is the Johannine light that plays the principal role in this myth. The actual Mazdean idea is very different. In Mazdeism it is Ahriman who penetrates the luminous world of Ohrmazd. In Basilides, on the other hand, it is a reflection of the light that descends into the world of darkness. It is this feeble reflection which the light must help and save by descending into and revealing itself to the world. The myth is Gnostic, not Mazdean. It is much closer to Saturnilus's myth than to that of pre-Christian Mazdeism.

As for Greek philosophy, Basilides uses it in order to understand Christianity, as will the Fathers of the Church. In his fragments we see that it is Christianity on which he wishes to throw light. If he wrote eighty books of exegesis on the Gospel, it is obviously because the Gospel interested him more than all philosophy, and more than some prophet or other with an odd name. It is Isidore who comments on the prophet Parkhôr, not Basilides himself, and this shows that immediately after Basilides syncretism developed further, as after Valentinus. Basilides might be interested in different traditions, but he is above all a Christian theologian.²⁸

A Christian theologian, but descended from the School of Menander and Saturnilus, a School independent of the organized Church, one of whose main preoccupations is to distinguish clearly Christianity from Judaism. A Christian theologian, but one who in fact diverges from the Christianity of Paul and John, insofar as he distinguishes the God of the Old Testament from the true God. When he thus diverges from those whom he regards as teaching the truth, Basilides apparently thinks he is faithful to their real intention. He believed himself well informed on the history of the very earliest Christianity; the traditions, he stated, were passed on to him by Glaucias, interpreter of Peter.²⁹ Paul was for him absolutely "the Apostle" (he says "the Apostle" as if there was only one³⁰), and he understands his theology of salvation by election and faith perhaps better than anyone in the Great Church at that time. He also holds to John's Gospel at a time when the Great Church does not yet seem to have recognized it. Menander had already formed ideas close to Gnosticism by primarily adhering to Paul and John, and Saturnilus, by going further in the same direction, had become properly Gnostic.

Basilides is a Christian theologian, but his Christianity is clearly a Gnostic Christianity. If one excludes Cerinthus, because of the particularly difficult problems that arise in relation to him, with Saturnilus, Basilides is one of the first Gnostics, properly speaking, we know of. But is he one of the first, or the first, or the second? It is unlikely that Saturnilus and Basilides invented at almost the same time the figure of the principal

Archon, who can be called the Demiurge, by both deciding, independently of each other, to debase the God of the Old Testament to the level of an inferior power. Should it be thought that it was their master, Menander, who taught them this idea? But we have seen that from what is most probable concerning Menander, and from what the Christians of the Church seem to know about dissidents to around 110, Menander does not seem to have separated the Demiurge from the true God. It therefore seems that it was either Saturnilus or Basilides who first introduced this separation. I am inclined to think that it is Saturnilus, and that he shared this idea with his co-disciple, who was perhaps younger than himself.³¹ I am inclined to think this because it is in Saturnilus that the strongest opposition to the religion of the Old Testament is found. Basilides is also opposed to it, but less strongly. In a number of ways he attenuates the positions of Saturnilus. He certainly attenuates them insofar as ethics is concerned, for, although his ethic seems to have been strict,³² it was not encratite, like Saturnilus's. This indicates a less pronounced anticosmic attitude.

Whatever the case in the question of anteriority, in many respects Basilides has ideas that are very close to those of Saturnilus and that are probably linked to the same source; either he develops the doctrine of their common master in the same way or he is inspired by Saturnilus himself. There are therefore no great difficulties in imagining what the principal sources of his thought may have been. In this respect, what I have said about the resemblances between his doctrine and that of Saturnilus and of the resemblances between Saturnilus's and Menander's, is sufficient.

With Basilides begins the development of Gnosticism toward philosophy. He opens the way for Valentinus, and through Valentinus, for later Gnosticism and Neoplatonism, two modes of thought that contributed to the formation of Augustine's theology.

Chapter X

Carpocrates

I will not say much more concerning Carpocrates than I have already said about him in my hypotheses, at the beginning of the second part of this work. Carpocrates seems to be linked with the current of thought represented by Saturnilus and Basilides, that is to say, to the current that originates in the dissident Christian School of Menander, itself derived from the schism of a Samaritan Christian group. For Carpocrates, as for Saturnilus and Basilides, the world was made by angels far inferior to the “unknown Father” (or the “unbegotten Father”).¹ Like them he thinks that among these creator angels there is one that is superior to the others, and like Basilides he calls it “the Archon” (that is, “the Ruler”).² This Ruler or Archon can only be the God of the Old Testament. Carpocrates’s antinomianism appears when he states that Jesus, raised according to Jewish customs, despised them and for this reason received the “capacities” (or “the powers,” *virtutes*), which enabled him to cast off the passions inherent in human beings (Irenaeus, I, 25, 1). The same antinomianism appears in a text of his son Epiphanius, in which one of the commandments of the old Law is described as “ridiculous” (Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* III, 9, 3). For Carpocrates, as for Saturnilus and Basilides, only the soul can be saved. For him as for them, one is saved by faith. However, he links charity with faith (Irenaeus, I, 25, 5). It is probable that he also said that one is saved by “knowledge,” since certain Carpocratians called themselves “Gnostics” (Irenaeus, I, 25, 6); and this shows that, like Basilides, he probably practically identified faith and knowledge.

As far as Docetism is concerned, he initially seems clearly to distinguish himself from the two others. For him Jesus was simply a man, and there was nothing divine in his birth. But Carpocrates thought that because he had a “steadfast and pure soul” and because he remembered better than the others what he had seen before being born, when this man “moved in the sphere of the unknown God,” he received a power (*virtus*)³ that enabled him to escape the makers of the world and to rise to this God (Irenaeus, I, 25, 1). Now this *virtus* might be analogous to Cerinthus’s Christ, who seems to be identical with the Spirit that descended upon Jesus at his baptism. This would indicate that despite everything there was some Docetism in Carpocrates, a Docetism of the same type as Cerinthus’s. Moreover, it is not impossible that a Docetism like Cerinthus’s was mixed with Saturnilus’s and Basilides’s Docetism (insofar as the latter may have been

Docetic). For I can hardly believe that for them Jesus was simply a ghost. In any case, Basilides certainly thought, and Saturnilus perhaps thought, that Jesus was in a sense a real man; but they perhaps distinguished this man from the divine Christ who descended into him.

Carpocrates is more closely linked to Basilides than Saturnilus. Like Basilides he draws Christianity toward philosophy and makes great use of Greek philosophers. He is much more Platonic and Pythagorean than even Basilides. Almost everything peculiar about his Christianity is easily explained by Plato. He seems to be a passionate supporter of the preexistence of the soul and metempsychosis. He regards the body as the "prison" of the soul. The word *periphora*, circular movement, which he uses to describe the movement of the unknown God (the movement Jesus took part in before his birth), is a word used by Plato in the *Phaedrus* (247c) and the *Republic* (616c). This myth of Carpocrates is obviously inspired by that of the *Phaedrus*. His idea that to be saved from the powers of the world one must remember what one saw before birth is redolent of Platonic reminiscence. His theory that there is no action that is good or evil in itself (Irenaeus, I, 25, 4–5) recalls what Plato says about justice in the *Republic*: that it does not concern exterior actions but the inner order of the soul, and is thus not linked to such and such a particular act (cf. for example *Rep.* 443c–444a). Finally, the idea, which was so shocking for Irenaeus and other heresiologists, that one must have tried everything throughout one's life to be definitively freed and dispensed from having to return to this world when dead (Irenaeus, I, 25, 4) is an idea seemingly explained by the final myth of the *Republic*. Here we see that when the souls of the dead have to choose a new life before being reincarnate, many of them make a mistake and choose badly because they have not had enough experiences in their prior life; having known only one way of life, they are unaware of the pitfalls of other fates (cf. *Rep.* 619b–620d). It is probably mistaken to conclude from this that the Carpocratians taught the living of a dissolute life. No one has ever claimed that in the myth of the *Republic* Plato taught immorality.

Finally it is in the *Republic* that Carpocrates's son, Epiphanius, who died at the age of seventeen and at this young age had already written a book "on justice," found his ideal of communism and especially his defense for a community of women (Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* III, 6, 1–9, 3). In the *Republic* Socrates recommends (at least if what is political in the *Republic* is to be taken literally⁴) that the guardians of the city have a community of goods, women, and children in common (*Rep.* 416d–417b, 423e–424a, 457d ff.). Clement of Alexandria says that Carpocrates raised his son in the study of Plato (*Strom.* III, 5, 3).

Carpocrates, being steeped in Platonism, is therefore much closer to Basilides than to Saturnilus. Moreover, he seems very different from Saturnilus in respect to ethics. For even if he did not teach an ethic as lawless as the heresiologists suppose, and if the speculations of a young man of

seventeen cannot be considered as certain witness to what his father thought or the actual practice of the Carpocratians, it appears that Carpocrates must not have taught the encratism of Saturnilus.

One might ask whether he was not more Platonic than Christian. For, audaciously interpreting Christianity in the light of Platonism, he had no fear of advancing certain propositions of his own in order to scandalize most Christians. Nevertheless, it seems that it was Christianity above all else that he wished to understand. His language is for the most part Christian, since Plato obviously does not speak of Jesus or the angels. Moreover, we have seen⁵ that Carpocrates sometimes seems to say that humanity brings about its salvation by itself, by the power of the human soul (a power that grace from above simply comes to reward and complete), and sometimes seems to say that some sort of grace from above, or some sort of election, is necessary from the beginning. Thus his religion cannot be reduced to Platonism.⁶ Certainly he tries to link them as closely as possible, and his disciples associate the image of Jesus with the images of Greek philosophers (Irenaeus, I, 25, 6). He might also have allowed divine honors to be paid to his dead son on the island from which his mother came,⁷ which would at least indicate a great tolerance for pagan religious rites. But when his School teaches that one is saved by faith (Irenaeus, I, 25, 5), it obviously has to do with Christian faith, since faith considered as that which saves is a Christian idea. We have seen⁸ that one of the most daring statements Irenaeus attributes to his disciples, that Christians might perform things as great as those which Jesus performed, or even greater things again, might be drawn from the Johannine Gospel (John. 14:12).

He was a Christian. But where did his Christianity come from? It is certainly a dissident Christianity, which is inspired by Paul and John, but, like Saturnilus's and Basilides's Christianity, refuses the God of the Old Testament. However, Irenaeus does not say that Carpocrates was a disciple of Menander. Could he have invented the figure of the Demiurge by himself? Did he arrive independently at the idea that the Christian ought to break with the Old Testament, and could he have expressed this conviction by means of the distinction between the God of the Christians and the God of the Jews, as did the Syrian School? It is not very likely, given the fact that at the same time the same conviction is expressed in the same way by Basilides, who taught in the same town as he. It is very probable that his thought proceeds from the same source as the disciples of Menander. Harnack thought that these three Gnostics—Saturnilus, Basilides, Carpocrates—form a group that is to be distinguished from Marcion on the one hand and from Valentinus on the other.⁹ This view seems correct, for they are united by a very strong anti-Judaism (or antinomianism), which is much stronger than that of Valentinus, and by a sort of mythology not found in Marcion. It is therefore permissible to assume that Carpocrates knew of the ideas expounded by the Simonian School at Antioch.

The doctrines of this School could have been at Alexandria, but only if Basilides brought them there. Did Carpocrates receive them from Basilides himself? This is not impossible; it is certainly Basilides he most resembles. But it is also possible that these doctrines were circulated in Egypt by other missionaries.

Chapter XI

Valentinus

1. *Valentinus and the Gnostics in Irenaeus I, 29–31*

We must now study a difficult question, of which it is important to get a proper idea, since the solution to the problem of Gnosticism depends in large part upon it. It is the question of the sources of Valentinianism, or, what amounts to much the same thing, the question of the historical links there may have been between Valentinianism and a work such as the *Apocryphon of John*.

It is usually thought that Valentinus was inspired by certain doctrines more or less analogous to those Irenaeus describes in chapters 29–31 of his first book of *Adversus haereses*. In fact, Irenaeus says (in chapter 11 of the same book) that Valentinus “adapted the principles of the so-called Gnostic heresy to the form of his own teaching” (I, 11, 1). What is this “so-called Gnostic” heresy? Is it the whole of the Gnostic movement, the general form of the heresy that Irenaeus opposes in his great work? This is not absolutely impossible. The Gnostic tradition existed before Valentinus, who seems to have been a little younger than Saturnilus and Basilides,¹ and he certainly adhered to it to a large extent. Moreover, Irenaeus often uses the word “Gnostic” in a general way, meaning all those whom we call by this name. If he adds here that the heresy by which Valentinus was inspired is “called” Gnostic, it is perhaps to make it understood that it is not really, as when he speaks of gnosis “falsely so-called.” For Irenaeus the true Gnostics are the Christians of the Church. Nevertheless, the “so-called Gnostic heresy” might also be a *particular* Gnostic doctrine for Irenaeus, to which the name Gnostic might be given more properly than to the others, and it is usually thought that by this Irenaeus understands the sort of doctrine he will describe further on, in chapters 29–31. The theories he describes in these three chapters have close links between them, of such a nature that one can regard them as forms of the same heresy.

What reasons are there for thinking that it is indeed these chapters which are referred to when Irenaeus speaks of the so-called Gnostic heresy? The first and principal reason is that in I, 30, 15 and I, 31, 3 Irenaeus seems to depict the doctrines he has just spoken of as being the source from which the Valentinians are derived. In addition, other reasons can be drawn from the use of the word “Gnostic” in Irenaeus and other heresiologists.

The use of "Gnostic" in Irenaeus has been studied by R. A. Lipsius in *Die Quellen der aeltesten Ketzergeschichte neu untersucht* (Leipzig, 1875, 191–219). Though more than a hundred years old, this study probably remains the best on this question. Examining all the passages in which Irenaeus speaks of the *gnōstikoi*, Lipsius showed that he often uses this word as a *collective* description, applying it to all the heresies he opposes. (In this Irenaeus uses the word as modern scholars do.) But Lipsius also shows that even when Irenaeus applies it to all his opponents, one can usually deduce from the context which sects he *particularly* has in mind. Sometimes it is the Valentinians, or the Valentinians and heretics of I, 29–31 both together. But in most cases he is thinking of the latter "either exclusively, or especially" (p. 219).

Irenaeus does not seem to divide the heretics of I, 29–31 into a number of sects, although he says that *some* of them teach one doctrine, and *others* a partly different doctrine. However, at first sight at least, he does not seem to give them an individual name, except insofar as he seems to apply the name of Gnostic more particularly to them than to the others. In chapters 29–31 he gives no name to those of 30–31. He seems to call those of 29 "Barbelognostics," or "Gnostics of Barbelo," for this is what one reads in the Latin text of Irenaeus (the only one that has come down to us for this part). But scholars have held that "Barbelo" might be a gloss introduced into the text, since here this name is not declined as it is elsewhere.² If Barbelo is a gloss, Irenaeus would simply have called the heretics of I, 29 "Gnostics," and the same name would probably apply for him to the heretics of 30–31, since he presents them as simply being the *others* among those he has already named, and since the only reason for not applying the name one reads at the beginning of 29 to them is that this name seems to contain that of Barbelo, whereas the figure of Barbelo does not appear in 30–31. To call the heretics of 29–31 Gnostics would agree with Irenaeus's usual practice, as Lipsius discerned it in other passages. Moreover, the later heresiologists, Epiphanius and Filaster, in fact call the heretics in Irenaeus, I, 29, Gnostics, making this name *that of a particular sect*. It is true that they give other names to those of 30–31, calling them, for example, Ophites and Cainites; but this is because it was thought that the different opinions mentioned by Irenaeus ought to be considered different sects, whereas they were only opinions expounded in different works derived from the same sect. In fact, all the doctrines described in Irenaeus I, 29–31 are closely linked, and it is permissible to group them under the term "Gnostic," as he probably wanted to do.

These "Gnostics" are those whom modern scholars call "Gnostics in the narrow sense," or "in a limited sense," or "a strict sense." Bousset thought that these Gnostics were the earliest of all and that they were at the source of Gnosticism (*Hauptprobleme der Gnosis* (Göttingen, 1907), 319–26). In any case, if we trust what Irenaeus says when he makes them

the fathers of Valentinianism, they were earlier than Valentinus and thus go back to at least the first half of the second century.

We can now know these Gnostics in the narrow sense more directly than through the evidence of Irenaeus. For we now have at our disposal a number of Coptic translations of a Gnostic work, the first part of which is the source Irenaeus uses in I, 29. This is the *Apocryphon of John*. A Coptic translation of it was discovered in the last few years of the nineteenth century. Its publication was delayed by various events, but it finally appeared in 1955.³ Meanwhile, three other Coptic translations of it were found at Nag Hammadi in 1945. They were published in 1962.⁴

The version Irenaeus knew was rather different from those we know through the Coptic translations. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that it is the same work, and that consequently at least the first part, which Irenaeus summarizes, is earlier than 185 or thereabouts. Furthermore, if Irenaeus was right in holding the doctrines he expounds in I, 29–31 as the sources of Valentinianism, the composition of the *Apocryphon* must be dated between around 120–140. Rudolph even wished to date it to around 100 (*Gnosis*, p. 377). I think this is because he wished to make it not only a source for Valentinus but a source for Saturnilus. But the idea that the *Apocryphon* could have inspired Saturnilus cannot even be based on Irenaeus's judgment. It is already quite remarkable that, if we trust Irenaeus, it should be dated earlier than Valentinus's teaching. To read it one would think it was rather later than Valentinianism, of which it seems to be a sort of distortion or decadent vulgarization.

One can understand why scholars for whom Gnosticism is of non-Christian origin wish to push the *Apocryphon* back to as early a time as possible. For although this work is apparently Christian, its doctrine is as far removed from ordinary Christianity as that attributed to Valentinus, and at first sight certain themes seem difficult to explain by Christianity. Many scholars also think that it is not Christian in origin but only "Christianized." Moreover, if one links this work with certain other works found at Nag Hammadi, in which traces of Christianity are so little in evidence that some commentators have judged them to be completely lacking, one sees that the *Apocryphon* seems to belong to the same school as these works. It therefore seems to be bound up with a tradition that might at least be said to be *less Christian* than Valentinianism. If it was a source of the latter, if it could even be a source for Saturnilus, there must have been a tendency to *accentuate* Christianity in Saturnilus or Valentinus, an effort to make what was hitherto less Christian *more Christian*. This would give some grounds to those who wish to hold that Gnosticism is originally non-Christian.

However, before accepting as fact the relation between Valentinianism and these Gnostics in a narrow sense, there are some points that must be made clear. Which author before Irenaeus knew of these Gnostics in a

narrow sense, who were earlier than Valentinus? What is known of them before the *Adversus haereses*? How did Irenaeus learn what he knows about their doctrines? What exactly does he say about their link with Valentinianism and on what basis does he found his opinion?

First of all, what was known about them before Irenaeus? No heresiologist before Irenaeus seems to know of them. Justin never speaks of "Gnostics," either in a narrow sense or a general sense. He does speak of Marcionites, Valentinians, Basilideans, and Saturnalians, as well as Simon and Menander, but he does not call them Gnostics. There is nothing to show that he knew the content of the doctrines Irenaeus describes in I, 29–31. Nor does Hegesippus seem to know of them, and speaks neither of Gnostics nor of Ophites nor of Cainites and the like. Still less do we find any characteristic feature of these doctrines in Ignatius of Antioch or in the New Testament.

The heresiologists who make the "Gnostics" into a particular sect, and who know their doctrine (attributing to them the doctrine described by Irenaeus in I, 29), are later than Irenaeus and are both inspired by him directly and through Hippolytus's *Syntagma*. This work, which must have been written during the first two decades of the third century, is now lost, but its broad outlines might be found by comparing, as Lipsius has done,⁵ the heresiologists who use it: Pseudo-Tertullian, Epiphanius, Filaster. In the *Syntagma* Hippolytus seems to have summarized and systematized Irenaeus's views, clearly bringing out what remained implicit or barely perceptible, collecting together ideas that were scattered in Irenaeus. It was probably Hippolytus who linked the Gnostics in the narrow sense with the Nicolaitans, basing this on Irenaeus, III, 11, 1, where Irenaeus makes the Nicolaitans both the first to have disseminated the errors of Cerinthus, well before his time, and also "a branch of Gnosis falsely so-called." This is to say that the Gnostics in the narrow sense are earlier than the Nicolaitans, and the Nicolaitans earlier than Cerinthus. It was probably also Hippolytus who constructed the (apparently chronological) order of heresies, as it is found, with some divergences, in Pseudo-Tertullian, Epiphanius, and Filaster. This order presents us with a whole series of heresies, bizarrely inserted between Basilides and Valentinus (who were, in fact, almost contemporaries), many of which (the Ebionites, the Nicolaitans, Cerinthus) are definitely earlier than Basilides, and of which others (the Ophites, Cainites, and Sethians of Pseudo-Tertullian, Epiphanius's "Gnostics," and Filaster's "Gnostics," and Judaites) are *perhaps* earlier than Valentinus, if one relies on what Irenaeus seems to state in I, 30, 15 and I, 31, 3, but who might also be later, given the fact that they can scarcely be placed between Basilides and Valentinus and do not seem to be known before the time of Irenaeus. Hippolytus constructed this order by relying on Irenaeus, I, 30, 15 and 31,3, in order to put in this place the Gnostics of Irenaeus, I, 29–30 (which he further linked with the Nicolaitans), and in order to place

there also Carpocrates, Cerinthus, and the Ebionites in the order (not always chronological) that Irenaeus had followed in his Catalogue.

This order is therefore attested apart from Irenaeus only by later heresiologists who rely upon him.

But did Irenaeus not derive what he says about the Gnostics in I, 29–31 from an earlier heresiologist whom we do not know of. F. Wisse supposed this.⁶ But this heresiologist could only have been a little earlier than Irenaeus. For he was definitely not the same as the one (or one of those) whose teaching Irenaeus uses in most of his Catalogue. It has been noted—F. Wisse himself notes—that there is a sort of break between I, 28 and I, 29. At the end of I, 28 Irenaeus stops enumerating all those who “in one way or another have diverged from the truth.” But at the beginning of 29 he begins again to describe new errors. Chapters 29–31 have therefore been *added* to an account that Irenaeus initially held as finished. The idea that Irenaeus is directly using original Gnostic works, which have fallen into his hands,⁷ in these chapters is much more likely than the supposition of a new heresiological source. It is even more likely that we now have the very work from which he drew chapter 29. Now these works may have been late. It was certainly very difficult for Irenaeus to know their date, just as it is very difficult for us to date the works found at Nag Hammadi.

F. Wisse alleges that Irenaeus does not mention the title of the *Apocryphon of John* or the name of the sect from which it derived. The earlier heresiologists must not have given him any information on this matter. But it is precisely because he is using original documents that Irenaeus does not know where they come from. No work from Nag Hammadi carries the name of the sect from which it comes. As for the title, Irenaeus only rarely gives the titles of works he says he has collected together himself (I, 32, 2).

Thus, the works he uses in 29–31 might be late. Irenaeus is not really sure whether these heresies are earlier than Valentinus. What might confirm that he is not sure is that the only proof he gives is the resemblance of the doctrines. If he appeals to resemblance, it is because he apparently has nothing else on which to rely. Now the resemblance is real, but it does not indicate in what direction the dependence works.

Are there nevertheless signs that reveal the existence of Gnostics in the narrow sense before Irenaeus's work? It might be judged that there are such signs by considering the fact that even before Irenaeus some Gnostics explicitly claimed to be “Gnostics,” *if one concludes that this claim means that for them this was the name of their sect*. We know from Irenaeus (I, 25, 6) that some of the Carpocratians called themselves “Gnostics” and that Marcellina, who broadcast Carpocrates' doctrine at Rome under Pope Anicetus (154–166), belonged to this branch of the Carpocratians. The “Gnostics” in Irenaeus, I, 29–31 are also at least a little earlier than Irenaeus's work. Also, Celsus, whose book against the Christians is a little earlier than *Adversus haereses*, knows of Christians who prided themselves

in being "Gnostics" (Origen, *Contra Celsum* v, 61). He seems to make these "Gnostics" a particular group of Christians, since, according to the fragments of his text found scattered throughout Origen's text, he may have mentioned these "Gnostics" in a list that may have included, among others, the Simonians, the Carpocratians, the Marcionites, and men among whom one can recognize the Valentinians and the Ebionites. Celsus does not say what these "Gnostics" taught, but Origen thinks that they introduced "strange inventions," which might be said of Irenaeus's Gnostics in I, 29–31.

A little later, or at least according to witnesses who are a little later, we again find people who claimed the name or capacity of "Gnostics": according to Clement of Alexandria, the disciples of Prodicus (*Strom.* III, 30, 1); according to Hippolytus's *Elenchos* (Book v), the Naassenes and other Ophites.

Only it is not at all certain that in claiming to be Gnostics these persons understood this name to be that of their sect. Did they think they were a sect? Since they were Christians, according to Celsus as well as the Fathers of the Church, they probably thought that their doctrine was the true Christianity. For them as for other orthodox Christians, to be Gnostic was no doubt simply to be Christian. Origen uses the name of Gnostics in the sense of "Christians" (*Contra Celsum* v, 61). Clement of Alexandria thinks of the Gnostic as the ideal Christian. Irenaeus himself thinks that the true Gnostic is the orthodox Christian, since he calls the heretics "Gnostics falsely so-called." There is nothing to prove that the heretical Gnostics understood the name they gave themselves otherwise, or that they wished to use it to refer either to participation in a religion different from Christianity or even to participation in a sect within Christianity.

It is sometimes said that it was the small sects who first declared themselves to be Gnostic. But of those who did declare themselves such, there is nothing to prove that they were small groups, or that they were the earliest of those whom we call Gnostic.

It must be noted that we find heretics expressly claiming that they are Gnostics at a relatively late date. Speaking of those who "declared themselves to be Gnostics," Celsus seems to be referring to people who were his contemporaries. Marcellina is found in Rome in the time of Anicetus, after 154. Prodicus is later than Valentinus, and Hippolytus's *Elenchos* was written in the third century. These Gnostics *all seem to belong to an age in which the distinction between faith and gnosis was already made among the Valentinians*, a distinction that does not seem to be earlier than Valentinus and that he may have introduced himself following disagreements with the Church of Rome. Valentinus places gnosis above simple faith, or at least above the sort of faith he attributes to the members of the Roman Church. One might therefore assume that the claim to the title of Gnostic as a title of honor *was a consequence of Valentinianism, not a characteristic of certain groups that preceded or influenced Valentinus.*

Valentinus's influence stretched beyond his own school. After the middle of the second century it seems to pervade most of the diverse traditions we call Gnostic. A Basilidean like Hippolytus's Basilides, a Marcionite like Apelles, reveal that they modify the doctrines of their respective masters in the direction of Valentinianism. The use of the term "Gnostic," a use that scarcely appears until after the middle of the second century, might be one of the marks of this expansion of Valentinianism. In fact it may *have first appeared among the Valentinians*. Ephiphanius states that the Valentinians called themselves Gnostics (*Pan.* 31, 1). Irenaeus also witnesses to this when he says that by exaggerating the doctrines of *other Valentinians*, some Valentinians wished to appear "more Gnostic than the Gnostics." What he says here also suggests that it is not a question of the name of a sect but of a quality to which claim was made and which could be had to greater or lesser extent. Marcellina's Carpocratians are attested only after the middle of the second century, at Rome, where Valentinus taught. The School of Prodicus might depend on Valentinianism even more closely, since Tertullian associates Prodicus with Valentinus (*Scorp.* 15; *Adv. Prax.* 3), as he associates the "Gnostics" with the Valentinians, *and with them alone*. As for the Ophites in the *Elenchos*, they have many features that suggest a relation with the Valentinians, as Frickel saw in respect to the Naassenes;⁸ and this relation might well be explained by a dependence in respect to Valentinianism (though as far as the Naassenes are concerned, Frickel tends to explain it differently⁹).

Lipsius thinks that the name of Gnostics was at first that which certain sects, such as the Ophites (whom he thinks are earlier than the Valentinians, according to Irenaeus) gave to themselves. Nevertheless he thinks that for Irenaeus this name was first of all a general one, which covered all the heretical groups he opposes and which, if he applies it particularly to the Ophites—to those whom Lipsius calls the Ophites, which is to say the heretics in Irenaeus, 1, 29–31—this is probably not because the Ophites claimed it for themselves but above all because Irenaeus *does not know what other name to call them* (*Die Quellen der aeltesten Ketzergeschichte*, 219–20). In fact the name of Ophites was only given to them later, or rather was only given later to some of them, and probably only by their opponents. Irenaeus probably only knows of them through their writings, which must not have allowed him to know if they appealed to a master (since he would have called them after this master). Given the lack of knowledge as to the origin of these writings, it is possible that not only Irenaeus but other Christians of the Great Church simply called the authors of this literature Gnostics, because they did not know how to refer to them except by the property they claimed to have (and which in fact was perhaps only an ideal that must be reached for them). When Irenaeus speaks of the "so-called Gnostic heresy," it might be that he is alluding not only to the name the heretics in 29–31 seem to give themselves but to the name by which they were called in the Church at Rome. Works like the

Apocryphon of John must have circulated at Rome, and the authorities of the Church, just like Irenaeus, must not have known which school they came from. Their authors could only be referred to by the inaccurate name of Gnostics. And just as it was not known to which group these authors were attached, it could not be known whether they were very early or quite late.

If this actually was the case, there is nothing to prove that the name of Gnostics ever referred to a particular sect among the heretics. It was more likely the name of a property aspired to, and the esteem that possession of this quality carried is something that scarcely appears before the middle of the second century. In fact the word "Gnostic" seems to have appeared only at around the same time as Valentinianism, and might be explained by the Valentinian distinction between gnosis and faith. As for the heresiologists, the custom of applying this name to particular groups, a custom that is already hinted at, but not clearly, in Irenaeus is only clearly established after him in heresiologists who, following Hippolytus, sought to explain and systematize his views.

Research on the use of *gnōstikoi* in Irenaeus and other heresiologists was taken up anew by N. Brox in an article published in 1966 ("*Gnōstikoi* als häresiologischer Terminus," *ZNTW* 57, 105–14). Like Lipsius, Brox states that Irenaeus often uses this word in a general sense, as do modern scholars. And like Lipsius, he sees that nevertheless Irenaeus applies it particularly, and sometimes even exclusively, to a certain sect, the one he describes in 1, 29–31. And finally, like Lipsius, he thinks that this restricted use must be the earliest among the heretics. The only difference that seems to me to be important between Brox's views and Lipsius's is that Brox thinks that Irenaeus *expands* the meaning of the word "Gnostic" in order to apply it to all his opponents, whereas Lipsius thinks that, on the contrary, Irenaeus *restricts* the meaning this word has for him when he applies it to a certain sect in particular. In fact, as we have seen, Lipsius explains the fact that Irenaeus links this name to a certain sect in particular by saying that he did not know how to refer to it otherwise. Brox sees clearly that if this was the case, the general meaning would be the primary and fundamental one for Irenaeus, and he does not think this is possible. However, it seems to me that in this matter it is Lipsius who is right. For Irenaeus the general meaning seems to be the primary one, especially since, according to him, the heretics improperly claim this name which only befits orthodox Christians. Irenaeus evidently places the word "Gnostic" alongside the *gnōsis* of the New Testament, which is almost the same thing as faith. For him as for his opponents Gnostic means Christian. When he calls all those whom he is attacking Gnostics, it is always for him a case of *false Gnostics*, even when he does not specify this by calling them "Gnostics falsely so-called." In the instances when he omits this detail, it must be understood that he is calling them Gnostics ironically, as we would do by placing the word in quotation marks. Brox sees that there is irony in this

method of referring to them, but he thinks that this is because “Gnostic” can mean “learned”; Irenaeus would be mocking their claim to knowledge. But this is not the case; it is rather because for him “Gnostic” means Christian. It is because this word means Christian that Irenaeus can use it, with an irony that implies an indignant rejection, to refer to all his adversaries; because they all claim, in his eyes falsely, to be Christians.

Neither Lipsius nor Brox has any other authority for the use of the word “Gnostic” among heretics before the time of Valentinus apart from Irenaeus; nor do they have any authority for the presence or witness to myths analogous to those of the heretics in Irenaeus, I, 29–31 in texts that are definitely earlier than Valentinus. Brox thinks that in all the heresiologists apart from Irenaeus, both before him and after him, the word “Gnostic” exclusively refers to particular sects. He acknowledges that the heresiologists refer to extremely diverse sects by this name, and states that it is impossible to unify its meaning by specifically applying it to a single sect or group of sects. But he thinks that it always refers to definite, limited groups, and never to the whole of gnosis. The general use seems to be a peculiarity of Irenaeus. Nevertheless, as well as passing over an example of the use of the general meaning in Hippolytus, cited by Lipsius, Brox fails to prove that heresiologists earlier than Irenaeus used the word “Gnostic” in the narrow sense. Among those he cites, only Justin is earlier than Irenaeus. But Justin does not speak of Gnostics in what we have of his works. Moreover, he does not seem to know of heretics analogous to those of Irenaeus, I, 29–31. That he did know them is merely a hypothesis of Hilgenfeld’s. (In Hilgenfeld this hypothesis was based on the conviction that in his last *Syntagma* Justin *could not have failed to present* a doctrine that would provide a link, a passage, between Simon Magus and Valentinus. But this argument is very weak; it is dangerous to wish to reconstitute a lost work, and moreover, if Valentinus’s doctrine cannot directly proceed from that of Simon Magus—insofar as the latter had a doctrine—it would also be difficult to make that of Irenaeus’s heretics in I, 29–31 proceed directly from it.)

It is therefore not accurate to say that the heresiologists earlier than Irenaeus used “Gnostics” in the restricted sense, and those who do this after him are dependent upon him, either directly or through Hippolytus.

At the Yale Conference Morton Smith presented a very interesting communication on the use of the word *gnōstikos* in antiquity (RG 2:796–807). But it seems to me that the examples he has collected do not authorize some of the conclusions he draws from them. First he states that among the Greeks *gnōstikos* is quite a rare word. It may have been invented by Plato who, in the *Statesman* (258e–267a), speaks of the “gnostic” art or science. After Plato, until the second century after Jesus Christ, Morton Smith finds it only in Platonic, Aristotelian, or Pythagorean philosophers. He finds it neither in the Septuagint nor in Jewish works in Greek nor in the New Testament. He concludes from this that among the Gnostics of

the second century the use of this word is probably borrowed from the Platonic-Pythagorean tradition (p. 800). For him this does not prove that their doctrines derived from the same tradition, but it nevertheless entails "a strong presumption" in favor of this origin (p. 801). From the fact that this notion was at first philosophical he also concludes that among those who claim to be Gnostics it must mean to be *capable of knowledge* rather than to *be possessors* of a specific knowledge. For myself, I can only subscribe to a small proportion of these conclusions. It might be the case that the Gnostics borrowed the form of the word *gnōstikos* from the Platonic philosophers. An argument that would support this conjecture is that perhaps the earliest of those who claimed the title of Gnostics (or aspired to it) are the Carpocratians and the Valentinians, two very Platonic schools. But if these men borrowed the form of the word, its content and use in them is fundamentally *new*. First of all, whatever Morton Smith thinks, the Gnostics did not primarily, and in any case did not solely, insist on the capacity for knowledge. *Above all else they thought they had received a revelation brought by a savior*, a revelation that human reason could not have found by itself. They therefore claimed a knowledge, not only a capacity to acquire knowledge. They may have thought that they understood better than others the knowledge that had been brought, but it was first of all necessary for the knowledge to be brought. Next, it must be noted that they apply the word "Gnostic" to *persons*, whereas among the philosophers it hardly ever applied to anything but things or concepts, and would be better translated by "cognitive" than "knowing." The philosophers spoke of a Gnostic art, a Gnostic science, of ways of Gnostic knowledge; but among the examples cited by Morton Smith (pp. 799–800), there is only one instance, and that a doubtful one, in which this word might be related to an individual. The king whom Plato speaks of in the *Statesman* might well possess "the Gnostic art," but he was not called Gnostic himself. As for "presuming" that Gnostic doctrines were drawn from Platonism, these doctrines are too singular not only in their details but in their structure, general form, and style to allow one to think that they derive wholly or even principally from Platonic traditions.

If I understand Morton Smith rightly, he tends to think that the Gnostics were Platonist heretics rather than Christian heretics ("schismatic Platonists," p. 805). But is it possible that they formed their doctrines, especially those which seem to have been the first, those of the first half of the second century, without the contribution of the theologies of Paul and John and without the polemics that arose between Christians and Jews? And in respect to the word *gnōstikos*, even if they did borrow it from the philosophers, is it possible that they did not link it with *gnōsis* in the New Testament? Morton Smith did not find *gnōstikos* in the New Testament, but he could have found *gnōsis*, with a quite different meaning from the one this word has among the Greeks, a meaning presenting the same difference from the classical meaning as that which exists between *gnōstikos*

among the philosophers and *gnōstikos* among the Gnostics. *Gnōsis* also exists in classical Greek, but here it meant ordinary knowledge, elaborated by human beings, and it was usually accompanied by a complement indicating the object known. The absolute use of *gnōsis* is, I believe, hardly ever found except in Jewish or Christian texts, where this word by itself can mean knowledge of the true religion or a thorough knowledge of this religion. It is not possible to define the meaning of *gnōstikos* among the Gnostics or among orthodox Christians without linking it with the word *gnōsis* taken in the Christian sense.

I have more objections to make to Morton Smith. For example, he thinks that there are no Christian features in *Zostrianus* (p. 806). But Schenke himself acknowledges that there is at least one passage in *Zostrianus* that implies the influence of Christianity (RG 2:608). Doubtless Schenke thinks that this passage derives from a secondary influence, but this is only a conjecture, and in any case it cannot be said that there is nothing Christian in this work. Also, when in a text Origen cites in scattered fragments Celsus seems to enumerate different Christian groups and says among other things that "some of them declared themselves Gnostics," Morton Smith thinks that these "Gnostics" cannot be one of the groups then mentioned, or the one that was mentioned earlier in which Origen recognized the Valentinians. For myself, I do not think it is impossible that these "Gnostics" could be Valentinians, for in Origen's text the phrase "some of them declared themselves Gnostics" comes immediately after the question of a group mentioned by Celsus that is certainly the Valentinians. Moreover, since the text of Celsus is only quoted in scattered fragments in Origen's text, we cannot know exactly how each fragment stood in relation to the others, as we would if there was a continuous text, quoted as a whole.¹⁰ There are also other points on which I cannot agree, or not entirely, with Morton Smith. This does not stop me from thinking that much of what he says is right; for example, when he shows that when the heresiologists say that some declared themselves Gnostics, it is not necessarily the name of a sect, and that the heretics may have used this word as Clement of Alexandria uses it; or when he shows how a victorious party can pass on a false impression of their enemies to the future, and the latter, being destroyed, can no longer reply; or again, when he shows that Irenaeus sometimes implies certain things without daring to state them clearly, for fear perhaps of the contradictions his enemies could oppose him with (pp. 803–4).

I think one can conclude from all this that the idea that the Gnostics in the narrow sense were earlier than Valentinus simply rests on Irenaeus's personal opinion.

Let us now examine the passages in which Irenaeus expresses this opinion. The two most important sentences are found in 1, 30, 15 and 1, 31, 3 of *Adversus haereses*. They are the most important because without them one would not dream of identifying the "so-called Gnostic heresy" of 1,

11, 1, which must have inspired Valentinus, with the doctrines described in I, 29–31.

These two sentences are both unclear, and might serve as an example for Morton Smith when he says that sometimes Irenaeus avoids being entirely clear. It is worth observing that the editors of *Adversus haereses* have sought to explain these sentences by paraphrasing or correcting them.

The first, in I, 30, 15, is a rather tortuous, though concise, sentence. *Tales quidem secundum eos sententiae sunt a quibus, velut Lernaea hydra multiplex capitibus, fera de Valentini schola generata est.* “Such are the opinions of those from whom was begotten, like the Lernean hydra with many heads, the wild beast [or: a wild beast] derived from the school of Valentinus.” As this text stands, there is nothing to make us think that the wild beast is the School of Valentinus. The wild beast simply seems to be *derived* from this School. Is it directly derived from it, so that it would be through the mediation of the School of Valentinus that the wild beast was begotten by the heretics whose doctrines Irenaeus describes? Or, on the contrary, was it directly begotten by the latter, and was it thus found, by their mediation, derived from the School of Valentinus? There is nothing in this text that allows us to choose between these two possibilities. If one chooses the second, the heretics of 29–30 would be not the fathers but the sons of the Valentinians, for it would be through them that the wild beast was connected with Valentinianism.

The second sentence is scarcely simpler or clearer. It is: *A talibus matribus et patribus et proavis [generatos esse] eos qui a Valentino sint, sicut ipsae sententiae et regulae ostendunt eos [esse], necessarium fuit manifeste arguere, et in medium afferre dogmata ipsorum, si qui forte ex iis, poenitentiam agentes et convertentes ad unum solum conditorem et Deum factorem universitatis salvari possint.* “It is necessary to argue openly that those who come from Valentinus have been begotten by such mothers and fathers and such ancestors, as their opinions and rules show, and to expose their dogmas before all, in case any of them, repenting and converting to the one sole God, the creator and maker of the universe, may be saved.” Those whom Irenaeus refers to here as the mothers, fathers, and ancestors of the Valentinians are, it seems, all the heretics he has spoken of since chapter 23, that is, from Simon Magus onward. Now, among these heretics there are some, for example, Tatian, who are later than Valentinus. This statement is therefore not clear, since one cannot say exactly who the mothers, fathers, and ancestors are. What is not true of Tatian might also not be true of the heretics in 29–31. The statement would simply mean that the Valentinians *are derived from the Gnostic tradition as a whole.*

It must also be noted that in both sentences Irenaeus speaks of the Valentinians and not of Valentinus himself. To presume that he is speaking of Valentinus the heretics in 29–31 would have to be identified with the “so-called Gnostic” heresy in 11, 1. But this identification, though probable, can be denied if need be. Why then does Irenaeus seem to hesitate to

make the doctrines described in 29–31 the sources of Valentinus himself? Is it to prepare the ground for a possible retreat, or to avoid the impression of attributing too great an antiquity to the heretics in 29–31? Could it not in any case be because he is not absolutely sure of what he is suggesting?

Also, one must note that although he states that the resemblance between the doctrines is proof of dependence, he does not explain, and does not even try to explain, why the dependence was not in the opposite direction to the one he implies. Is the opposite not possible?

Despite the lack of reasoned argument and the obscurity and ambiguity of the definitions, I think that Irenaeus really believed that the heresies in chapters 29–31 were the sources of Valentinianism and of Valentinus himself, or at least thought it very probable. But he may have been mistaken. He may have been, so much more easily since this mistake, if it is one, was favorable to the cause he was defending. In *Adversus haereses* his goal was primarily to combat Valentinianism, which was the most widespread heresy and which could easily seduce Christians. Having gotten to know works such as the *Apocryphon of John*, and having realized that there are a good number of points in common between the doctrines of these works and those of the Valentinians, he may have believed that he held the proof of the profoundly heretical inspiration of Valentinus. It would certainly have been distressing for him to give up this proof. In religion as in politics, an assumed or suspected dependence is often the proof of heresy, by suggesting a sort of mixture.

Whatever the case, through his great work and the systematic summary Hippolytus's *Syntagma* seems to have given of it, his opinion dominated a large part of classical heresiology and still dominates a large part of modern research. However, some early heresiologists did not share Irenaeus's opinion concerning the link between Valentinus and the heretics in chapters 29–31. Theodoret does not share the same opinion when he states that the Barbeliots, the Naassenes, the Straticotics, and the Phibionites (all sects that belong to the same family as Epiphanius's "Gnostics" and the Ophites) are derived from a seed sown by Valentinus (*Haer. fab. comp.* 1, 13). And although Epiphanius depends on Hippolytus's *Syntagma*, he does not entirely rely on the order the latter worked out. If he places the "Gnostics," who for him represent the heresy in Irenaeus, 1, 29, before Valentinus, he nevertheless places the Ophites (whom he obviously identifies with the heretics in Irenaeus 1, 30) and the Cainites in Irenaeus, 1, 31 (whom he expressly states derive from Valentinus among others)¹¹ after Valentinus. Similarly, he places the Sethians after Valentinus, and even the "Gnostics" whom he describes as being before Valentinus are, according to him, derived from a number of masters among whom he names Valentinus.¹²

Tertullian's evidence would be even more important if it was absolutely clear; for it is much older than that of Epiphanius and Theodoret. Tertullian wrote his *Adversus Valentinianos* around 209. He also seems to make

the "Gnostics" into a particular sect, since he names them alongside the Valentinians;¹³ and speaking of their "forests," he thereby seems to refer to a sect thick with myths, or a sect with numerous branches, abounding and multiplying, as is, in both senses, the sect described by Irenaeus in I, 29–31. He seems to consider it either an outcome of Valentinianism or at least contemporary, or partly contemporary, with its last stage. In reference to the Valentinians who increasingly complicate their doctrines: *Atque ita inolescentes doctrinae Valentinianorum in silvas jam exoleverunt Gnosticorum.*¹⁴ "And thus, thickening their foliage, the doctrines of the Valentinians have grown [losing themselves in, or: *becoming*] the forests of the Gnostics."¹⁵ If the doctrines of the Valentinians are lost in the forests of the Gnostics, this at least proves that these forests were full of life at the time of the later Valentinians, for they were able to join the forests that existed before them. But one must also take account of another possibility: Tertullian may have wished to say that the doctrines of the Valentinians have *become* the forests of the Gnostics. He would then be contradicting Irenaeus, as Lipsius has seen.¹⁶

Moreover, when he takes up what Irenaeus said about an earlier doctrine that inspired Valentinus, Tertullian does not call this doctrine "the so-called Gnostic heresy." He simply says that "having found the seed of an old opinion," *cujusdam veteris opinionis semen nactus*, Valentinus thus opened the way for his own teaching. He interprets *archas* as if it was *archaias*,¹⁷ thus making the same mistake, it seems, as the Latin translator of Irenaeus. But what is more important, he neglects the expression "the so-called Gnostic heresy," as if for him the old opinion was not that of the "Gnostics."

The result of all this is that, whatever Irenaeus says, the "Gnostics" he speaks of in I, 29–31 do not necessarily have to be considered earlier than Valentinus, and that the resemblance between their ideas and those of the Valentinians might on the contrary be explained by their dependence upon them. The only way of making the fairest possible decision in this matter is to examine the doctrines themselves—as Irenaeus invites us to do—and to try to see whether on the one hand Valentinianism cannot be explained independently of the doctrines set forth in Irenaeus I, 29–31, or whether on the other hand these doctrines can really be explained independently of Valentinianism. In the rest of this chapter I will try to show that Valentinianism can be explained without recourse to the heresies described in I, 29–31 of Irenaeus; and in the following chapter, I will try to show that the *Apocryphon of John*, that is, the heresy Irenaeus describes in I, 29, can only be explained as a development of certain themes that we find among the first Valentinians.

2. *Valentinus and Basilides*

As far as we know, a good deal of Valentinus's ideas seem to have had close links with those of Basilides.

First I will consider the ideas attested in the few fragments of Valentinus that have come down to us. For it is these which are most certainly the ideas of Valentinus himself. Those attributed to him by the heresiologists might only be those of his disciples.

1. For Valentinus as for Basilides (and Saturnilus and Carpocrates), *the world was not directly created by God*. Valentinus thinks in terms of creator angels, at least insofar as the creation of humanity is concerned (frag. 1).¹⁸ He also definitely spoke of a principal creator, who is not the true God and whom the Valentinians usually call the Demiurge. It is this creator who is compared to a painter in fragment 5. He is found *under* the eternal world, in imitation of which he fashions the imperfect image that is the visible world. One recognizes Platonism here, such as we have already found in Basilides and Carpocrates. Valentinus is called "Valentinus the Platonist" by Tertullian (*Platonicus Valentinus*, in *De Carne Christi* 20; *De Praescriptione* 30).

2. For Valentinus, the human soul is just as complex as it is for Basilides. Its true nature is to be simple and one, but if God does not intervene, it cannot free itself from the mixture that is within it. In fragment 2 Valentinus compares the passions of the soul to tactless guests lodged at an inn, who do not respect the place in which they find themselves because it does not belong to them. Clement of Alexandria, who quotes this fragment, quite rightly understands that this is a reference to Basilides's *pro-sartēmata* (*Strom.* II, 114, 3). This depiction of the soul as made up of elements foreign to each other that might be opposed must be both a Platonic and a Pauline idea in Valentinus, as in Basilides.

3. The passions being in essence foreign to the soul, and its true nature being that which it will be when it is saved, one can understand how Clement of Alexandria could accuse *both Basilides and Valentinus* of having said that believers or knowers are "saved by nature" (*Strom.* IV, 89, 4, and V, 3, 2-3). In fact for both of them the salvation of the ones who know or believe is according to their nature, being conformed to the true essence of the soul. Only it does not wholly lie with humanity to realize its own nature. According to fragment 2 of Valentinus, it is God who through Christ allows us to undo the mixture and to order the inner confusion. This fragment shows both that one is saved *by conforming oneself to one's true nature* and that one is not saved *naturally*. It shows that for Valentinus salvation depends upon grace, and may be a *predestination*. Upon grace, certainly, since he says that the heart cannot be purified without the intervention of God. Upon predestination perhaps, since he says that the heart is not purified insofar as it is not the object of a *pronoia*. This word can mean foresight, foreknowledge, predestination; but it can also mean providence or simply attentive care. It is when God "regards" (or "visits") the heart that it is the object of a *pronoia*. It is not stated that it was such before this, or that God has regarded it from the beginning. It

is possible, however, that Valentinus is using the word *pronoia* here in a number of ways, and that he is also thinking of the idea of predestination that he found in Paul.

Basilides also links salvation with a grace and perhaps also with a predestination. To a grace certainly, the faith that saves is the result of an *election*. It is by the word election (*eklogē*) that he refers to all believers. (This does not mean that believers are an “elite” as this word is sometimes translated in texts concerning Basilides, but that they are the object of a divine election, that is, that faith is a gift of God.) And Basilides also speaks of a *pronoia*, which he seems to have understood as a Providence, perhaps as a predestination (Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* iv, 82, 2; 83, 2; 88, 2–3).

4. Fragment 1 of Valentinus relates a myth of the creation of man, a myth not unlike those found in Saturnilus and Basilides. Adam is fashioned by the creator angels; but these angels are seized by fear when they hear him speak the words “too great for what they have fashioned.” These words, too great for a creature of the angels, Adam speaks “because of the seed invisibly placed within him which came from an essence on high.” This reminds us that in Saturnilus man created by the angels receives a spark of life from on high. The difference is that the fragment of Valentinus does not relate the beginning of the story: how the angels wanted to create a being in the likeness of the luminous image that they had not been able to grasp, and how the man fashioned by them could not at first hold himself upright. But although this beginning is lacking, one can see that the creator angels in Valentinus also had a model. For Adam was created “to receive the name of the Man.” Just as Saturnilus’s angels wanted to reproduce the image they had *seen*, Valentinus’s angels wanted to fashion a being bearing the divine name they had no doubt *heard*. These are myths of the same type, despite their differences. And one can even say that the end of Valentinus’s myth allows us to imagine what the end of Saturnilus’s myth must have been. As soon as the creator angels notice that there is something in their work that they had not put there, they “destroy” or “disfigure” their work. For Valentinus, therefore, there was a sort of fall of Adam, or rather a degradation that his creators made him suffer through jealousy. Now, something of this ought to be found in Saturnilus’s myth, if for him the divine spark was really given to the first man. For why did the spark disappear after Adam only to appear after the coming of Christ, since it is only found in those who believe in him?

We also find a story of the same type in Basilides, but it is also incomplete, even more incomplete than in Saturnilus and Valentinus. According to the fragment of Basilides quoted in the *Acts of Archelaus* (LXVII), the light was perceived by beings who are initially called *Tenebrae*, and are then depicted as “more evil” or “inferior” in comparison with the light, and are finally called “creatures”—which might be a corruption of the

word “creators.” (For the text reads: *creaturae valuerunt generare similitudinem*. . . . Now, it is the creators, not the created, who wished to produce a likeness of the light, and who, to a certain extent, succeeded in this.)¹⁹ These beings seize a reflection of the light that has fallen into their dark world by *kidnapping* it. (The word “kidnap” confirms the fact that it is indeed the creator Archons rather than their creators who are concerned, since the Archons are often described as brigands.) They succeeded in begetting the likeness of the reflection, and this likeness “is the creature whom we see.” (In this case it is truly a reference to the creature.) But Basilides’s myth ends even earlier than Saturnilus’s, or rather it is the fragment that ends. It ends without any mention of the spark of life. Nevertheless, one might suppose that Basilides’s account must have contained more, and that perhaps the creature, fashioned according to a simple reflection of the light, finally received something of the true light. From the fragment of Valentinus the beginning of the myth is lacking; from the summary of Saturnilus’s myth in Irenaeus the end is lacking; from the fragment of Basilides a longer part of the end is lacking. This ought not to surprise us, since it is a case either of fragments, selected according to the fancy of those who quote them, or of a brief summary, which probably only relates certain features. Enough of each myth remains, however, to allow us to realize that they are myths of the same type.

5. Fragment 3 of Valentinus shows that in one respect he was Docetic, since for him Jesus’ body was not completely analogous to that of other men. But it also demonstrates that in other respects he was not Docetic, for this fragment is itself proof that for him Jesus had a body. Similarly one might presume from what Irenaeus says that in one sense Basilides was probably Docetic; but as fragments quoted by Clement of Alexandria show, in other senses he was not.

6. Fragment 6 confirms that Valentinus found truth in the teachings of the pagans (we have already said that he was a Platonist). “Many things which are written in the books common to all [*dēmosiai*, the books aimed at the public] are also written in [the books of] the Church of God.” These things, common to Christian books and profane books, Valentinus calls “the words which come from the heart,” “the Law written upon the heart.” It is true that Clement of Alexandria thinks that by “the books common to all” Valentinus might mean the books of the Jews (*Strom.* VI, 53, 1). But although Valentinus thought there was much that was true in the books of the Jews—we will see this below—here it is rather a reference to Greek books, for the Jewish books could not be said to be common to all. In this he connects himself with the Gnostic masters of Egypt, Basilides and Carpocrates, in whom we have also found numerous Platonic features.

It therefore appears that Valentinus’s thought, as witnessed in the fragments, has features in common with the Gnostics we have previously spo-

ken of, with Saturnilus, Basilides, Carpocrates, and might to a large extent derive from them.

Let us now move on to what we find in Irenaeus, in I, 11, 1. This account, unlike the numerous chapters devoted to the Valentinians, concerns Valentinus himself.

1. For Valentinus the Father is "nameless" or "unnameable" (*anon-omastos* can mean both). For Basilides the Father is "unbegotten and nameless" (Irenaeus, I, 24, 6; Agrippa Castor in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* IV, 7, 7). Valentinus associates with the Father a divine figure whom he calls "Silence" as a sort of double.

2. For Valentinus as for Basilides there are a series of divine emanations that make up the superior world, the ideal, perfect world. Valentinus calls this world "the Pleroma," that is to say, the plenitude, totality, perfection. The use of the word "Pleroma" seems to be a reference to Paul, who says that in Christ "all the fulness" of God (Col. 1:19) or "all the fulness of deity" (Col. 2:9) was pleased to dwell; and to John who speaks of the "fulness" of Christ (1:16). The divine emanations that populate the world Valentinus calls the "aeons," a word that actually means centuries or eternities. According to Tertullian (*Adv. Val.* 4), Valentinus does not make them personal beings, figures distinct from God; rather, for him they were thoughts, or modes, or activities of God. It was Valentinus's disciples who must have made them distinct, personal figures. This is, in fact, possible. Yet the Valentinian aeons, to judge by their names, seem rather to have been modes of God the Son than of God the Father, for Nous, Logos, Man (in reference to Eph. 4:13) seem to be names for Christ. And in Basilides, too, the five emanations of God are probably the names of Christ.

This idea of a series of divine emanations is all the closer to Basilides in that he is probably the first in which it is found. Bousset has noted (*Hauptprobleme*, 329) that it is in Basilides that we find a developed theory of emanation for the first time, a theory that establishes a certain continuity between the inaccessible God and the material world. Such a theory is not, he says, a general feature of Gnosticism; it appears only in a few systems.

3. In this series of divine emanations Valentinus, like Basilides, places Nous before the Logos;²⁰ either because he is also borrowing Platonic language or because he thinks that thought necessarily precedes speech or because he interprets the Johannine Prologue as Cerinthus did.²¹ (Cf. Ptolemy's interpretation of the Johannine Prologue in Irenaeus, I, 8, 5.) Did Basilides interpret the Prologue in the same way? According to Irenaeus I, 24, 4, from him the Nous was the *Primogenitus*, which evokes Paul's *Prōtotokos* more than John's *Monogenēs*. But after all, the First-Born is also the *Monogenēs*; it is always Christ. Whatever the case, Basilides and Val-

entinus both thought in terms of a first form or first name of Christ, before his appearance as the Logos, and this form or name they identified with the Platonic Nous.

4. For Valentinus the aeons are put forth in inseparable pairs, the "syzygies." Each masculine aeon is associated with a feminine aeon. God himself can be defined by the association of two concepts, "Abyss and Silence," or "Inexpressible and Silence." (Silence is a feminine noun in Greek.) The first four syzygies, according to Irenaeus, 1, 11, 1, are: Inexpressible and Silence, Father (= Nous) and Truth, Logos and Life, Man and Church. This speculation about the syzygies does not seem to be found in Basilides. But one might note that in his list of divine entities, he places three masculine entities first, Father, Nous, and Logos, and then three feminine ones, *Phronēsis* (Reflection, Reason, or Good Sense), *Sophia* (Wisdom), and *Dynamis* (Power).

5. For Basilides, the last two divine emanations are *Sophia* and *Dynamis*, or *Dynamis* and *Sophia* (for the order is reversed the second time Irenaeus names them in 1, 24, 3). According to his doctrine, these two emanations are responsible for the creation of the world. They give birth to the angels who construct a heaven, and the latter in their turn give birth to other angels who construct a second, less exalted heaven, and thus, at the end of 365 generations of angels and heavens, the angels of the lowest heaven create the earthly world. Now, for Valentinus Sophia is the last of the aeons, and it is she who, becoming imperfect ("deficient") by having fallen from the Plenitude for having tried to understand directly the greatness of God, gives birth to the Demiurge, and through him, to the sensible world. Basilides's Sophia does not seem to commit a fault and does not fall. Moreover, it seems that Power and Wisdom are two names for Christ, in reference to 1 Cor. 1:24. But because Basilides's Sophia, along with Dynamis, is found at the extreme edge of the divine world, and most of all because they are both responsible for the appearance of the inferior world, Basilides's Sophia already possesses something of Valentinus's Sophia.

6. According to Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* iv, 162, 1), Basilides placed Justice and Peace in the Ogdoad. Hilgenfeld (*Ketzergeschichte*, 219) thinks that this Justice and Peace ought to be added to the list of divine emanations in Basilides. But this is not very likely, for, in the passage in which Clement says that according to Basilides Justice and her daughter Peace are together in the Ogdoad, there is no reference to the list of divine emanations; it is a question of the concept of justice in general. The Ogdoad Basilides speaks of is probably only the eighth heaven, the heaven of the fixed stars, the space the Valentinians called "the second Ogdoad" (Irenaeus, 1, 3, 4). Basilides places Justice and Peace here because the eighth heaven is the one in which immutable order reigns. (One must also remem-

ber that the Greeks said that since the reign of Saturn Justice has ascended back to heaven.) Valentinus also spoke of a "first Ogdoad" (Irenaeus, 1, 11, 1), which was made up of the first four syzygies together. This implies that there must have been a second for him, which must have been, as for his disciples, the heaven of the fixed stars, the eighth heaven. Now, for him, as for Basilides, this second Ogdoad was the most noble part of the visible world. The Valentinians placed fallen Sophia here and even almost identified it with her (Irenaeus, 1, 3, 4). Even when fallen, Sophia is placed far above the Demiurge and the world he has created. The heaven of the fixed stars is therefore, in some way, a sort of intermediary state between our world and the eternal world for them.

Thus, much of what we find in Valentinus we already find in Basilides, or at least we find its beginnings. It is therefore natural to assume that there is some link between the thoughts of the one and those of the other. This assumption is even more natural in that, according to Epiphanius, Basilides and Valentinus taught in the same regions of Egypt (cf. Hilgenfeld, *Ketzergeschichte*, 284–85, nn. 480–81). In what direction did the influence work? Basilides and Valentinus are almost contemporaries, but Valentinus seems to have been younger than Basilides.²² Moreover it was in his youth that he studied in Egypt and began to teach there; for from about 138 he was in Rome, where he remained for about twenty years. Basilides, on the other hand, must have already been a mature man when he arrived in Egypt. He had perhaps already taught elsewhere (among the Persians according to the *Acts of Archelaus* LV). He had probably also passed through the School of Menander at Antioch (cf. Hilgenfeld, *Ketzergeschichte*, 228). It is therefore reasonable to suppose that if some influence was exercised by one upon the other, it is probably Basilides who influenced Valentinus.

Thus, we can assume that much of what makes up the doctrine of Valentinus is probably explicable by the sort of Christianity he knew in Egypt which was linked, through Basilides, with the dissident Christian School of Menander, established at Antioch.

3. *The Valentinian Turning Point*

But there are not only ideas analogous to those of Saturnilus, Basilides, or Carpocrates in Valentinus. There are not only ideas proper to him, as might be expected, but also an important modification of the fundamental tendency of Gnosticism, a veritable change of direction, a turning point.

This turning point consists first of all in *a certain rehabilitation of Judaism*. Certainly the God of the Old Testament remains distinct from the true God; that is to say, Valentinus remains a Gnostic. But he no longer thinks that the Old Testament knew nothing of the true God. He thinks that Sophia, a divine emanation, who despite her transgression retains

something of the Holy Spirit, spoke through the prophets. The Demiurge may be called God and Father by the Valentinians, because for them he is an image (albeit imperfect) of the true God. They may have thought of him as not knowing the true God; but when in fragment 5 Valentinus compares him to a painter who creates the sensible world by imitating the eternal world, one must allow that, at least on occasions, Valentinus thought that the Creator was not completely ignorant of the world of the Plenitude. This superior world served him as a model, if the resultant copy is but a deficient one.²³ Here Platonism comes to the aid of the rehabilitation of Judaism and the world.

Must one think that Valentinus's thought was suddenly invaded by a Jewish-Christian influence, or by a Gnosticism that had proceeded directly from Judaism? This is not necessary, and would render incomprehensible the fact that Valentinus nevertheless distinguishes the Demiurge from the true God. The modification he brings about is sufficiently explained by the consciousness of the excessive character of Saturnilus's condemnation of Judaism and the world. Excessive in comparison with historical truth. For it is not true that Judaism knew nothing of the good Father whom the Christians speak of. Nor is it true that paganism knew nothing about him. Even though the true God can be known only through Christ for Valentinus, those who lived before Christ were not, he thinks, totally ignorant. Let us remember what he says about what is common to Christian and non-Christian books. Character excessive, above all, in comparison with the New Testament. For neither Paul nor John, and even less the Synoptic Gospels, separates the true God on the one hand from the God of the Old Testament, the Creator, on the other. Some certainly wished to distinguish an exoteric and an esoteric teaching, but it became more and more difficult, the more the canon of the New Testament was established, to maintain the position taken by Saturnilus. Marcion endeavored to maintain it, at the same time as Valentinus deviated from it; but Marcion at least saw the need to provide proofs, and to base himself on the texts, whereas Saturnilus apparently felt no such need. Moreover, Marcion dared to do away with certain parts of the New Testament.

Second, and based on this first modification, the Gnostic expression "unknown God," "unknown Father" seems to take on a partly new meaning in Valentinus and the Valentinians. For the Gnostics whom we have considered so far, to know the unknown Father was above all to know the God whom *neither the Jews nor the pagans had known*. For Valentinus and the Valentinians it means above all that God is *unknown in his very essence*, in other words, he is unknowable. It is still a matter of knowing God in order to be saved; but to know God is to know that he is *other and different from everything that is knowable*. Valentinus not only expresses this idea in calling God "Abyss and Silence" but also because he teaches the eternal existence of the entities emanated from God, whom he calls the "Limits" (*Horoi*). For Valentinus there were two Limits (Irenaeus,

1, 11, 1). One separates God from the aeons (just as the Good is "above essence" for Plato). The other separates the eternal world from this world (just as the Ideas are above the sensible for Plato). Because of these limits, men and women in this world can know God only through Christ, and the aeons themselves cannot know him directly, for only the Monogenés (the highest figure of Christ) among them knows him in this way.²⁴ A mediator is necessary, even for eternal beings; Sophia's mistake was to believe she could grasp God directly. The Valentinians seem to make this idea the fundamental lesson of Christianity when they state that Limit is the same thing as the cross. We know God when we submit to a fundamental limitation, a fundamental separation, which forbids us to reach him directly and which manifests itself in the necessity of the cross.

Third, it seems that from Valentinus onward emphasis is placed on *knowledge of the self*. The person who knows God through Christ is also the one who knows himself, who knows "where he is from and where he is going." Here the interpretation of Gnosis suggested by Puech and other scholars comes into its own. But one must be aware that for Valentinus and his disciples this knowledge of the self is only possible through knowledge of God and this, in turn, is only possible through the revelation of Christ. It is ultimately only through Christ that humanity is revealed to itself. "Look upon him and see the features of your face" (*Odes of Solomon* 13). It is not the "Gnostic" religion that is revealed through the initial search humanity makes in reference to itself; on the contrary, it is through the Savior and what he reveals, through the "Gnostic" religion, that Gnostics are led to seek and to know their true nature. It is in looking beyond, above ourselves, toward an image that has been shown to us or that we have encountered, and in which we have recognized everything we most deeply aspire to, that we can learn what we are in the deepest part of ourselves.

(It is therefore not enough to rummage among our feelings or sensations or impulses, or even to scrutinize the image of ourselves that our past actions presents us with. That is to say, *psychological* analysis of ourselves is not enough. At least it is inadequate unless we also look toward the human ideal that has revealed to us what we value the most.)

When believers or the ones who know realize that their true nature is on the side of Christ, on the side of God, they may be strongly encouraged to believe that it is possible for them to obey God and Christ, since this is in accordance with their nature. But this is not to say that such obedience is easy for them. According to the Valentinians, the true being of believers or the ones who know is not directly within, it is not directly at their disposal. It is also on the other side of the curtain. Just as those who are in the world are separated from God and can only know him through Christ, so they are separated from their true being, and they can only be reunited with it through Christ. They can only reunite themselves with their

true being by a transformation that is a *rebirth*, for which they again have need of God and Christ.

An understanding of the Valentinian turning point might especially illuminate the history of Gnosticism. For it might enable us to understand why we find so many Old Testament elements, and so many myths in which stories and figures of the Old Testament are used, in Gnostic writings, especially in those which appear to be late. This abundance of Old Testament images, at first sight paradoxical in works whose most general characteristic is the desire to pass beyond the Old Testament, might be largely explained as a result of the Valentinian turning point. Valentinus himself, much less critical than Saturnilus, Basilides, and Carpocrates in respect to Judaism, seems to have willingly used Jewish symbolism, as well as pagan symbolism, in order to express Christian ideas.

When the *Odes of Solomon*, the beautiful Christian and Gnostic poems imitating the psalms of the Old Testament, were discovered, some scholars almost immediately thought of linking them with Valentinianism, and I think that this intuition was right. In truth, the question of the origin of the *Odes* is very far from being resolved by a unanimous agreement, indeed it is one of the subjects on which scholars' opinions remain quite distant from each other. From the time of its discovery (in a Syriac manuscript published in 1909), interpretations have diverged. Some, like Harnack, thought that these poems might in fact be a Jewish work, interpolated by Christians.²⁵ Others, like Wellhausen²⁶ and Zahn,²⁷ very quickly realized that this work was Christian, and this opinion has been shared from then on by almost all scholars. Just as quickly the hypothesis was put forward that it was a Gnostic work. It was Gunkel who first suggested it,²⁸ and this hypothesis has been widely approved of. However, many of those who hold that the *Odes* are Gnostic, above all Gunkel himself, have tempered their affirmation by adding that it is a case of a particular sort of Gnosticism, tinged with Jewish Christianity and closer to the positions of the Great Church than Gnosticism normally is. Bultmann thinks that it must be a very early Gnosticism, in which actual Gnostic inspiration was still marginal and modified by the influence of the Old Testament.²⁹ However, most scholars think that the *Odes* are not earlier than the second century.³⁰ And some deny that they are Gnostic and judge them to be Jewish-Christian. This is what J. H. Charlesworth has maintained.³¹

These differences of opinion and hesitations perhaps come from the fact that in general not enough importance has been given to the title of the *Odes*. Whatever S. Schulz says,³² this work is definitely pseudepigraphical. The title, *Odes of Solomon*, is attested by ancient authors and by the fact that in the manuscript in which they were found they are joined to the *Psalms of Solomon*, whose enumeration continues theirs. It is true that

Solomon is not mentioned except in the title, and that at first sight nothing seems to refer particularly to this king. The person who speaks in the poems, the one who says "I," is obviously a Christian poet, for whom the salvation of humanity has already come, and who expresses his joy, his thanks, his love and faith. But he expresses all this by presenting himself as a prophet of the Old Testament, a prophet who is also an inspired singer, speaking in the language of the biblical psalms. Now, Solomon was indeed a singer, since the psalms were attributed to him, and as the author of the prophetic psalms, he could have spoken (obscurely) of future salvation as a grace already present. The *Odes* are certainly not pseudepigraphical if by that one understands a sort of counterfeit; it is a *literary fiction*. This work belongs to the same literary genre as the Book of Wisdom, where the person who speaks is already supposed to be Solomon; or as the *Psalms of Solomon* which accompanies the *Odes* in the Syriac manuscript. That the author chose Solomon as a mouthpiece is in no way surprising. Solomon was reputed to be wise and knowledgeable; as well as being a prophet and singer, he could be regarded as one who "knows." Moreover, he was a king, an "anointed one," that is, a messiah or a christ; and the singer of the *Odes* sometimes speaks in the name of Christ himself. And furthermore, the pseudepigraphical literature that was attributed to Solomon had particular links with Christianity. The Book of Wisdom is in some respects very close to Christianity, and the last two *Psalms of Solomon* concern the messiah.

The fiction is not without importance. For it might partly explain the ideas in the *Odes* that seem to be determined by Judaism or Jewish Christianity rather than by Gnosticism. Above all, it might partly explain the fact that in Ode 16 God is thought of as the creator of heaven and earth, as he is in the Old Testament. It would also explain the absence of certain ideas that someone before Christ could not have had. For example, it would explain the fact that Christ is never called Jesus. Solomon could speak of Christ because it is an Old Testament term that has a meaning within Judaism; but even as a prophet, he could hardly know the name Jesus as the name of the Messiah. The prophecy would have been too precise. The prophet does not predict so clearly, in part he remains a man of his time.

A second reason for hesitating over the character of the *Odes* is that the Valentinian turning point has not been taken account of, or not sufficiently. A certain Jewish or Jewish-Christian coloring, together with a Gnostic inspiration, is not necessarily a sign of an *early* stage of Gnosticism. It might result from the particular character that Gnosticism takes in Valentinus and the Valentinians. It is the Valentinians who reestablish the harmony between the Old and New Testaments when they say that Sophia, the Wisdom derived from the true God, has spoken much through the mouth of the prophets; when they teach that, in creating the world, the Demiurge was inspired without knowing it by the Spirit or the Logos,

of whom he was simply the instrument; when they say that the world was created to allow the perfecting of the seeds of the Spirit that have come from the eternal world. For them the true God is in a sense the creator of the world. One might certainly ask if they would have said, like the singer in the *Odes*, that God created the heaven, the sea, and the earth (Ode 16). They rather say that God created “the whole,” by which they primarily, or perhaps only, understand “the plenitude,” the eternal beings, what truly is. But it is not impossible that, in speaking through the Solomon of the Book of Wisdom and the *Psalms*, they adopted his language on the subject of God, as on other subjects. Perhaps they also wished to oppose the extreme statements of other Gnostics concerning the Demiurge and the world. After all, for them the Demiurge was an *image* of the true God, and the world an *image* of the eternal model. One must also remember what Irenaeus says about the Valentinians: “They say the same things as us, while thinking differently” (I, *praefatio*, 2).

Finally, other passages in the *Odes* betray a very different opinion on the subject of the world. Christ, or the Christian, is said to make the world a prisoner (10:4); that the world will perish (5:14; 22:11–12); that it has no true existence (34:5); that the thought of God is opposed to the world (20:3).

That the author is a Gnostic is proved by the numerous parallels that have been pointed out between the ideas and expressions of the *Odes* and the ideas and expressions used by the Gnostics. We do not want to undertake to list them here; many others have done that. We simply refer to the work of Gunkel,³³ to Bultmann,³⁴ to F.-M. Braun,³⁵ S. Schulz,³⁶ and K. Rudolph.³⁷ So many parallels cannot be without some significance.

It is above all with Valentinianism that links have been found. In 1910 Preuschen said that there are many reasons for thinking that the *Odes* are the “psalms” Valentinus is said to have written.³⁸ W. Stölten also linked them with Valentinianism.³⁹ But it is especially since the discovery of the *Gospel of Truth* that one might be tempted to see the author of the *Odes* in Valentinus. In fact, the first editors of the *Gospel of Truth* thought not only that it might be Valentinian but that it might be a work of Valentinus himself. Now, a short while after, H.-M. Schenke refused to accept this identification; he denied that this work was by Valentinus or even Valentinian; but he observed on the basis of striking parallels that the type of thought closest to it is found in the *Odes of Solomon*. He concluded from this that the author of the *Gospel of Truth* and the author of the *Odes* must have belonged to the same circle. And he added: “If the editors of the so-called *Gospel of Truth* do not wish to give up attributing it with a Valentinian origin, they ought to adopt Preuschen’s theory: the *Odes of Solomon* are the work of Valentinus.”⁴⁰

It seems to me that the negative aspects of Schenke’s theory can scarcely be accepted. The *Gospel of Truth* really does seem to be Valentinian. But this does not mean that Schenke is mistaken in what he says about

the links between this work and the *Odes of Solomon*. And he is not the only one to have noticed them. R. M. Grant⁴¹ and F.-M. Braun⁴² have also done so.

For my part, I think there is much to be said in favor of Preuschen's intuition. For it is not only ideas and expressions that are found in both the *Odes of Solomon* and the *Gospel of Truth*, the character of the author seems to be the same in both works: his enthusiasm, confidence, warmth, lyricism, tenderness. And the same character appears in certain fragments of Valentinus. I am aware that it is not certain that the *Gospel of Truth* is the work of Valentinus himself. But there are reasons for thinking that it may be, and in this case there would be reasons for thinking that the *Odes* are also by Valentinus.

I wish to add that the discovery of Ode 11 in Greek⁴³ seems to me to confirm the assumption that has been made from the beginning, that the Syriac text was translated from the Greek. The arguments that some scholars have put forward in favor of a Syriac or Hebrew original seem to me to be in general not very convincing, and some of them seem to me to involve inaccurate statements. But I cannot engage here in such a specialized discussion.

I wish also to add that in the article in which he tries to prove that the *Odes* are not Gnostic, Charlesworth bases his case on a definition of Gnosticism that I do not think is a good one. For the Gnostics knowledge of the self is simply a *consequence* of gnosis, it is not its definition. Certainly, he who has gnosis knows himself, but only because he has first of all known God through Christ. By knowing God through Christ, he has *recognized* himself, or rather he has recognized *his origin* and *his goal*. Gnosis is not primarily knowledge of the self, but knowledge of God.⁴⁴ This is even the case for the Valentinians. The fact that a work does not place any emphasis, or not much, on knowledge of the self is not proof that it is not Gnostic, or even that it is not Valentinian.

The Gnostic works in which James the Just, the Lord's brother, the head of the Jewish Christians in the time of Paul, is depicted as a venerable person, a worthy guardian of Christ's heritage, a martyr-saint, should also, I think, be linked with Valentinianism. This hypothesis is not only mine. The *Apocryphon of James*, preserved in the Jung Codex, was thought to be a Valentinian work by some of its editors.⁴⁵ The *First Apocalypse of James*, also found at Nag Hammadi, was thought to be Valentinian by Böhlig in his edition of it.⁴⁶ Böhlig observes that it is difficult to link the *Second Apocalypse of James* with a definite Gnostic school,⁴⁷ but he also says that one might ask whether there is not a Jewish-Christian tradition that the Valentinians perhaps used⁴⁸ as the basis of this work. It seems to me that in the second *Apocalypse* as in the first, there are some passages that evoke Valentinian ideas or language. The Pleroma (46, 8; cf. 63, 9) and the aeons (53, 7-8) are mentioned. The Demiurge's endeavor, or his work (his creation) is a "nothing," a naught, and the inheritance he prom-

ises is “small” (53, 7–8). (It is with the same smallness that Heracleon characterizes the kingdom of the Demiurge, in his commentary on John’s Gospel.)⁴⁹ God, or the Christ on high, is called “he who is silent” (59, 18–19). It seems that God reveals himself to “small children” (55, 2–3; cf. *Gospel of Truth* 19, 28–29). Christ says that he is himself a Father (57, 2; cf. Irenaeus, 1, 11, 1). He also says that the elect “will reign and be kings” (56, 4–5; cf. frag. 4 of Valentinus). One may add that it is quite likely that the *Second Apocalypse of James* derived from the same milieu as the first. More especially since Theuda, who is mentioned in the second, might not be unrelated to the person called Addai in the first (despite the probable misapprehension that makes Theudas James’s father⁵⁰).

Saying 12, in the *Gospel of Thomas*, in which Jesus advises his disciples to go to James the Just, might derive from a Jewish-Christian source rather than a Gnostic one. But the fact that the Gnostic redactor, who has chosen to reassemble these sayings, preserves these words shows that he was not an enemy of the Jewish Christians, or at least of James the Just. This redactor might well have been a Valentinian. Puech, in his work on the *Gospel of Thomas*,⁵¹ points out numerous Valentinian parallels to these “sayings of Jesus.”

It therefore seems that links are found between the reference to James in certain Gnostic works and Valentinianism. If this is the case, the reference to James is not proof that *at the beginning* Gnosticism had Jewish-Christian roots. It might be the result of a *reconciliation* with Jewish Christianity, which is the work of Valentinus and the Valentinians.

Valentinus does not therefore simply continue the line drawn by Saturnilus and Basilides, even if in large part his thought is explicable on the basis of theirs. He wanted to bend this line. Celsus thought of the Valentinians as “a third group” in relation to the two groups he had already distinguished: that of the Christians whose God is the same as the Jews’ (the Christians of the Great Church and the Jewish Christians) and that of the Christians whose God is different from that of the Jews (the Gnostics).⁵² The Valentinians could in effect appear as an intermediary group.

Valentinus’s Platonism may have contributed to the reconciliation he brings about between Gnosticism on the one hand and the Jewish Christianity of the Great Church on the other. We have seen that like Basilides and Carpocrates, and even more than them, Valentinus is a Platonist. But whereas Basilides and Carpocrates use almost exclusively Platonic themes that allow them to oppose the soul to the body, or to dissociate the mainspring of the passions from the mainspring at the center of the soul, or themes that, by showing that there are no acts that are good or evil in themselves, allow them to criticize the old Law, Valentinus, while preserving these aspects of Platonism, also uses, indeed primarily uses, Platonic themes that allow one to connect the visible world with the ideal world. And when he refers to the world, he remembers that even if Plato distinguishes the ideal world and the sensible world, he does not oppose them;

that for him the sensible participates in the intelligible, and that the temporal world was made by the Demiurge in imitation of the eternal world. He also makes the relationship between this world below and the world above, between the image and the archetype, a relatively close one.⁵³ According to Valentinus, the same relationship unites the Demiurge and the true God (cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* iv, 90, 2; *Tripartite Treatise* 100, 21–24).

On the other hand, Plato dissolves the sensible to some extent by showing that *it does not truly exist*, that its existence is not *of being*. Valentinus follows the same path when he speaks of the world as an *illusion* (*Treatise on the Resurrection*). Plato also seems to dissolve evil when he reduces transgression to ignorance, to error, to a lack of knowledge.⁵⁴ In the same way the Valentinians speak of a deficiency rather than of evil, and for Heracleon the devil has no will, he has only desires; which is to say that there is no evil will and no absolute evil.⁵⁵ Thus, instead of two opposing realities, there is only the good that is weakened insofar as it moves away from original Goodness. One is coming close to Neoplatonic monism. Everything that *is* is ultimately linked with the world of the “Plenitude,” as is seen in the Valentinian psalm quoted by Hippolytus (*Ref.* vi, 37, 7–8), and as it is said in the *Odes of Solomon* (34): “For everything is above, nothing is below, but appears so only to those who do not have knowledge.”

Thus, Valentinus’s Platonism and Hellenism, far from leading him to radicalize the position of the Gnostics in relation to Judaism, to the Jewish Christianity of the Great Church, led him to modify what was excessive in this position. Platonism brings him close to the Great Church, as Neoplatonism will later do—even more completely—for Saint Augustine.

It must be added that Valentinus could have drawn his inspiration not only from Plato but from the Platonist Jew Philo. Closer to Valentinus’s God than the unknowable One of the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides* and the unknowable Good of the *Philebus* is the unknowable God of Philo, the solitary God apart.⁵⁶ And just as, perhaps more than, Valentinus, Philo feels the need to connect the sensible world to this God apart, he also supposes entities below this God, entities derived from him and forming a sort of mediation between God and the world. The names he gives to these entities, Wisdom and Logos, we also find among the Valentinian aeons. It is possible, even probable, that Valentinus knew Philo’s speculations.⁵⁷ Valentinianism seems to be one of the intermediary points in the line that joins Philo to Neoplatonism.

4. *The Myth of Sophia and the Pauline Epistles*

But if Valentinus only had the theology of the School of Antioch, brought to Egypt by Basilides, as the starting point for his doctrine, and if he simply modified its orientation by attenuating its anti-Judaism and anticosmic

attitude, if he did not also depend on a Gnosticism like the one described by Irenaeus in I, 29–31, where did he get the myth of Sophia from? We have seen that a figure of Sophia is found in Basilides, who already foreshadows in some way Valentinus's Sophia (because she is also the limit of the divine world, and is also linked with Creation). But Basilides's Sophia does not fall; as far as we know, the myth of Sophia is not found in Basilides. Where then did Valentinus find this myth?

The question would not be resolved if instead of saying it was invented by Valentinus, one said it was invented by the Gnostics in Irenaeus, I, 29–31. For one can ask the same question again in relation to them. But furthermore, I believe that it is possible to understand to a certain extent how this myth was formed from Christian texts, by studying the *Gospel of Truth*.

Just as in Plotinus each hypostasis only turns toward the preceding one to contemplate it with love, because the preceding one is its source, so in the *Gospel of Truth* the divine emanations turn toward their source to look for it. "The All has gone in search of that from which it came" (17, 5–6). But this search, which is caused by love, also implies ignorance. This ignorance produced anxiety and terror (17, 10–11). And anxiety became like a thick mist that hid reality (17, 11–14). It is in this way that the error appeared, that it became strong, that it "worked out its substance," a substance that seems to exist but is only a vain appearance (17, 14–16). Error constructed an illusory world by copying, as far as she could, the beauty of true being (17, 18–21).

Is this not the story of Sophia? Basically there is no difference between Sophia's transgression, as it is described by the heresiologists, and the transgression of the All in the *Gospel of Truth*. The All is probably all the aeons. It was therefore all the aeons who committed a transgression in their search for God. It is certain that the All committed some transgression, since he must "reascend to the Father" (21, 10–11 and 20–21), and since the Logos has "confirmed," "purified" him, "made him return to the Father" (24, 3–7). Moreover, it is not certain that there is any difference between this and the Valentinianism described by Irenaeus. In the system described by Irenaeus, at the beginning of the first book one sees that the Pleroma needs to be "strengthened," and the aeons need to be "restored" or "put back in order" after the fall of Sophia (I, 2, 5). This seems to imply that to a certain extent the whole of the Pleroma participated in the fall. Also, the "passion" that seized Sophia began among the aeons who "surround Nous" (Irenaeus, I, 2, 2). It is also useful to consider the *Tripartite Treatise*. Here we see that the third person of the Trinity is called the Church. This transcendent Church is before the aeons, but also dwells in them, for she is the "nature" of the spiritual substances (58, 29–36). The aeons therefore belong to the nature of the Spirit, and doubtless many of them also belong to the nature of Wisdom, since, as we have seen, the latter is sometimes closely linked or even identified with the Spirit con-

ceived of as feminine (*Ennoia*).⁵⁸ In the same treatise (75, 27–35) one also reads that the aeon that committed a transgression is “one of those to whom wisdom was given,” and that “this is why he took a nature of wisdom.” Thus the aeon that falls from the Pleroma is indeed Sophia, but this Sophia is not the only Sophia in the Pleroma, there are others, and it may be the case that many aeons are of the nature of Wisdom. Moreover, all the aeons, like all human beings and angels, need redemption (124, 25–31).

It is true that the Spirit as a whole cannot be regarded as culpable. But this leads us to ask another question. Is the All that is referred to in the *Gospel of Truth* really the All of the Pleroma? It is impossible for the first aeons, those of the first two syzygies, to have committed a transgression, and especially the error of having sought God in the wrong way. In fact, the first syzygy, Abyss and Silence, is God himself, and the second is the Nous, which is indeed the only aeon that can know God directly. It is also difficult to regard the aeons of the two following syzygies as sinners or susceptible to sin, for the Logos, like Nous, is a figure of Christ, and the Man is both a figure of Christ and a figure of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁹ It is Christ and the Holy Spirit who “put back in order” the aeons after Sophia’s fall (Irenaeus I, 2, 5); and it is the Logos who in the *Gospel of Truth* (24, 3–7) leads the All to return to the Father. The sinful aeons, or those capable of sin, can only be those that are derived from the third and fourth syzygies, that is, the ten aeons derived from the Word and Life, or the twelve derived from the Man and the Church. And it is to the last group that Sophia belongs.

Thus the All is not exactly the All. It is even possible, strictly speaking, that it is simply a case of one aeon—and this would obviously be Sophia. For the *Tripartite Treatise* calls the aeons “totalities” or “wholes”; and just as the *Tripartite Treatise* says “logos” (= aeon) for Sophia, so the *Gospel of Truth* might say “the whole” (= aeon) in speaking of her.

This hypothesis will probably be judged unlikely, and in fact it is. For in what follows we see that the All seems to be identified with “the aeons” (in the plural). (Compare 24, 14–18 with 17, 5–6; and also 20, 1–2 with 38, 35–36.) There it is certainly a question of the aeons, but not a single aeon. But is it not possible that the All, which is the collection of the aeons, is something like the aeons Paul speaks of, which are the ages of the world, the “aeons”? In the *Gospel of Truth* the word “aeons” does not always seem to be used in the technical sense. When one reads this work, one gets the impression that the revelation it speaks of is a revelation made to *human beings who are in the world*, not to pure spirits who have always lived in the eternal world. Above all they are persons who need to be “led back to the Father,” they are those who have been able “to escape outside” (22, 27–30). Certainly it is expressly stated that the Gospel taught *the aeons* to know the Father (23, 12–18). But it is to persons that the Gospel taught knowledge of the true God. In 23, 1 we read that the Gospel

was revealed to the aeons “at the end.” And it is at the end of the ages (at the end of the ages *of the world*), that, according to the early Christians, salvation was brought to men and women by Christ.

For what reason do the aeons not know God? The reason is that God has withdrawn himself, hidden himself. It is that he has withheld knowledge of himself and did not want to communicate it to the aeons from the beginning (18, 36—19, 7). The origin of this idea might be what Paul says about the mystery revealed by the death of Christ: this mystery was hidden from the aeons, that is, from the former ages. It is “the mystery which was kept secret for long ages” (Rom. 16:25); “the mystery hidden for ages [or rather: hidden from the ages] in God” (Eph. 3:9); “the mystery hidden for ages and generations [or rather: hidden from the ages and generations]” (Col. 1:26).⁶⁰ The ignorance of the aeons in the *Gospel of Truth* might simply be a way of describing in Pauline language the ignorance of the world before the coming of Christ.

W. R. Schoedel has also noted that when the “All” who sought God in ignorance and anxiety is mentioned in the *Gospel of Truth*, it is a reference to human beings rather than the aeons. “It should be obvious that almost everything which is said in this respect directly concerns the state of the Gnostics *in this world*. . . .⁶¹ There is no clear line of demarcation between the anxiety of the Pleroma and the forgetfulness which is the state of the lower world. . . . It is the perfect (the Gnostics) who are enlightened and delivered from forgetfulness. And all this has come about thanks to Jesus Christ who was persecuted by mistake. . . . It is beyond doubt that here there is something which is linked with *this world*, since there is a clear reference to the crucifixion, and, a bit further on, to the teaching activity of the historical Jesus. His revelation brings knowledge *to men*. . . .”⁶² And further on: “The line between the aeons (above) and the fallen aeons still seems to be very fluid.”⁶³ “That everything which is said about the aeons concerns the Gnostics is clearly seen in what follows: ‘If these things happened to each of us, etc.’ (*Gospel of Truth* 25, 19–20). . . . Again we observe the fluidity of the line between the world above and the world here below.”⁶⁴

Schoedel suggests that the teaching of the *Gospel of Truth* might be that of a certain “school” among the Valentinians, a school that Irenaeus tried to refute in Book II. But he also suggests that this teaching may go back to a *primitive form of Valentinianism*.⁶⁵ This last suggestion is the one that seems to me to be the most likely. It agrees with that of Van Unnik, who thinks that the *Gospel of Truth* may have been written by Valentinus before he broke with, or distanced himself from, the Church.⁶⁶

It seems to me that in the *Gospel of Truth* (which I think could be by Valentinus) the word “aeon” is not yet always the technical word that it will generally be for the Valentinians. It still has something of its ordinary meaning: it can refer to the periods of the world, the “ages,” the “aeons,” that is, to men and women who live in these ages. In any case, the author

of this work seems to apply to the aeons above what Paul says about the aeons of the world, that is, the ages of the world. He applies it to the aeons above *while continuing to apply it to the aeons of the world*, as if he wanted to say that the same thing has come about on earth as in the transcendent world. *Perhaps, therefore, it was Paul's expressions concerning the ignorance of the aeons of the world that inspired this author in his parallel myth of the ignorance of the transcendent aeons.*

Now, this myth of the ignorance of the transcendent aeons may have preceded, prepared for, and suggested the myth of Sophia. As we have said,⁶⁷ the transgression of the "All" in the *Gospel of Truth* is the same transgression as Sophia's, or prefigures it. The "All" did not know the Father and sought to know him. Ignorance in respect to the Father first of all produced anxiety and terror (a possible allusion to a religion in which God is above all the object of fear). The anxiety is "thick" like a fog, so that no one can see. This is why error became powerful. She vainly shaped her material, since she did not know the truth (an allusion to the creation of the world by an ignorant power). She endeavored to fashion by force a work that might in beauty be a substitute for the truth. In the same way, seeking to know God by a blind and absurd approach, Sophia fell into anguish and finally conceived in her mind a false God, thought of as the creator of the world.

But how did the ignorance of the aeons become the ignorance of Sophia in Valentinus? Here again, Valentinus's source is probably found in a Pauline text. In the First Epistle to the Corinthians Paul already speaks of the ignorance into which the world has been plunged and in which it is still plunged. But here ignorance for Paul is particularly ignorance of a certain "wisdom" (*sophia*), which he sometimes calls the "wisdom of the world," and sometimes the wisdom "of this age," and sometimes "human wisdom," which he opposes to the mysterious wisdom of God, hidden in secret. "Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. None of the rulers of this age understood this" (2:6-8). When Paul says that the wisdom he teaches is not "of this age," he seems to allow for the existence of a *wisdom of this age*. And it is probably the same wisdom that he elsewhere calls the "wisdom of the world" (1:20; 3:19) or "human wisdom" (2:5; 2:13). There is therefore a wisdom for Paul that differs from that of God, either because it differs from it originally or because it has separated itself from him. We have seen⁶⁸ that in this epistle Paul first of all speaks of an "eloquent wisdom" (1:17), and that he probably understands by this the wisdom the Corinthians admired in the eloquent man who visited them after Paul. But, against this wisdom, he soon argues that God has made foolish the wisdom of the world (1:20 ff.). It was natural to bring together, to concentrate all the ignorance of the "ages," that is, of the Pauline aeons, in this inferior

wisdom. Sophia is the wisdom "of this age," that is to say of the present age, which for Paul is the last age, for the Valentinians she will be the last aeon.

According to Irenaeus, the "passion" that seized Sophia first of all manifested itself in the aeons that "surround the Intellect and Truth." It is from here that this passion fell (or "poured" ⁶⁹ itself, was concentrated) into Sophia (I, 2, 2), which is to say that Sophia's "passion" was first of all that of a number of other aeons, and perhaps even of all the aeons on a level inferior to the level of Intellect and Truth. It should perhaps be understood that just as there was an earlier "Wisdom" who misunderstood the way of seeking God, so there was a Logos, a supposed divine word that was not the true word of God; and an earlier appearance of life that was not true life; and an earlier man and an earlier Church that were not the Man or the Church as these beings exist in themselves; that all these Ideas were in fact only human representations, and that these representations needed to be renewed, rectified, transformed by Christ and the Holy Spirit.

It was not the aeons themselves, the true eternal beings, who were troubled by a passion analogous to Sophia's; it was the thoughts of persons of earlier ages, their thoughts on the subject of these eternal beings; or if you will, it was the earlier ages themselves who went astray, when they sought, tentatively, to depict these beings.

Whatever the case, Wisdom at least, which sought to understand the greatness of God directly, without a mediator, is obviously the wisdom of earlier ages, and particularly that of the Old Testament, for Valentinus. In her is concentrated the ignorance of the ages. Valentinus does not scorn this earlier wisdom. In her attempt to know God she was moved by a real love of God. Her passionate desire to reach him, when she threw herself toward him, was not without beauty. Nevertheless, impulse came from ignorance and a rash audacity. It broke upon the mysterious "limit" that is of the same nature as the cross.

But if Sophia is the wisdom of the Old Testament, or even if she is also, as I have suggested,⁷⁰ human wisdom in general, how is it possible that in the Valentinian myth she appears as prior to the world? She has to be prior to the world since she began the process that, through the Demiurge, leads to the creation of the world. Is humanity not *in the world*, and can its wisdom be prior to this? We have already encountered this problem.⁷¹ We have seen that the true God and the Savior had a part in the origin of the sensible world; that neither the Demiurge nor even Sophia wholly accounts for what is in the world; that Sophia is simply the cause of what is illusory in the picture we have of it; and we have just seen that this world must have already existed when the aeons, who are also "the ages of the world," and who are consequently also "human wisdom," went in search of God.

Certain Pauline texts might therefore have been the basis for the myth of Sophia. A theory about the ignorance of the "aeons" seems to have been

an intermediary stage, preceding the formation of the myth properly speaking. It is this first form of the myth that we find in the *Gospel of Truth*.

This myth was then developed by the Valentinians. Some of them thought they could distinguish two figures in Sophia. One is actually the aeon, wisdom, which belongs to the eternal essences. According to them, this Wisdom never fell from the Pleroma, or she was almost immediately reintegrated into it, having been purified by the Limit and separated from her culpable or unwise "intention." What has fallen outside the Pleroma, what is imperfect, is in fact this intention, the intention to know God directly and to understand naturally what constitutes his greatness. Separated from the aeon of Wisdom, the daring intention became an imperfect Wisdom, the fallen or inferior Sophia, the second Sophia. This second Sophia is often called Achamoth, from the Hebrew name for wisdom, which brings out its link with the Old Testament.

According to a certain version of the myth, Sophia's transgression was not to want to know God by an unlawful and blind path but to want to *beget* like God. Seeing that the Father begot by himself, alone, without a spouse, she wanted to imitate him and to beget without the assistance of her spouse. This form of the myth is the one found, for example, in Hippolytus (*Ref.* VI, 30, 6–7). There are two differences here in comparison with what one normally finds in Irenaeus. On the one hand, the Father is thought of as being beyond the Law of the syzygy; he is not a dyad as in Irenaeus I, 11, 1; he begets alone, without a spouse. On the other hand, the motive attributed to Sophia's act does not seem to be the same as in Irenaeus I, 2, 2. It is possible that this version is secondary, and that originally the myth of Sophia, as it must have been found in Valentinus, was the one Irenaeus describes in I, 11, 1 and I, 2, 2.⁷² But it might also be that there was very little difference between the two forms, and that Hippolytus's version is really only another expression of what is generally found in Irenaeus. On the one hand, I think it is permissible to assume that basically Valentinus thought of God as a unity; that when he depicts him by a pair of concepts (Abyss and Silence, or Inexpressible and Grace), this is simply a way of saying that God is inseparable from his incomprehensible mystery and his goodness. (It is probably the same with the other syzygies: the feminine complement of each aeon simply indicates what its essence is.) On the other hand, as far as the motive that inspired Sophia's action is concerned, it seems to me that the two motives mentioned by the Valentinians (to have wanted to understand God directly and to have wanted to beget like God), are two motives that might constitute only one, the second perhaps being simply an interpretation of the first. We find both of these motives mentioned in the *Tripartite Treatise* (75, 17–19 and 76, 8–11). They are therefore not necessarily alternatives, representing two different forms of Valentinianism. The second motive might be approximately interpreted thus: by wanting to conceive the perfect, the infinite, Sophia wanted in some way to beget it. For the aeons beget what they conceive by

thought alone, but the object they conceive will only be real being if they have thought in mutual agreement with, and with the help of, the other aeons (*Tripartite Treatise* 64, 8–27). Sophia therefore in some way wished to beget God. In fact, the *Tripartite Treatise* states that she wished to produce “something perfect” or “something that would be perfect” (76, 8–9). In the *Origin of the World* (98, 14–16) one reads, “She wished a work to come into being that is like the Light that first existed.”⁷³ In the *Apocryphon of John* Sophia wishes to beget an “image” or a “likeness.” An image of what? One of the texts says, “his image” (CG III, 14, 11–13), but the other three simply say “the image” or “an image” (BG 36, 20–37, 1; CG II, 9, 28–29; IV, 15, 3–4). The fact that she finally gives birth to an imperfect image of God shows that what she wanted was to produce a perfect image of him. Thus what she wanted was certainly to beget, but not to beget in general, to beget no matter what, to do as God does; it was to beget an image, a representation of God. This really comes down to saying that she wanted to know God, to *understand* him, to *contain* him in her own thought. As she could neither contain nor beget the infinite, she simply begot an imperfect image, a similitude, which is the Demiurge, produced from her own *imagination* (*Tripartite Treatise* 77, 15–17). “Her thought could not be unproductive, and her work appeared” (*Apocryphon of John*, BG 37, 12–13 and parallels). What she begets is not a general object or a false world, it is a false God, and this demonstrates well what she had in mind. She had in mind to beget a true representation of God, that is to say, to know him.

As for the idea that she acted without the agreement of her spouse, this is simply another way of saying that her action was a transgression, for the name of this spouse, “Thelétos,” seems to mean “willed (by God).”

Thus the version that Hippolytus reports was probably originally only an interpretation of the version Irenaeus relates in I, 2, 2.

I therefore think that the Valentinian myth of Sophia was initially nothing but a myth relating how the aeons, that is, the early ages of the world, ignored the mystery of God, and, seeking nevertheless to depict the divinity, produced only an imperfect image of it. This myth, which is essentially a criticism of all the religions before Christ, may be linked with certain Pauline texts.

5. Some Other Remarks

I am not claiming to explain Valentinianism in all its details. I believe that one will find that the most important features of this doctrine, among those we have not yet spoken of, can be easily explained by Christianity. For example, the order of the succession of the first four syzygies, in the “First Ogdoad,” is perhaps nothing other than the order of the Christian Trinity. The Abyss or the Inexpressible is God the Father. The Nous and the Logos are two figures of the Son. (There are two figures of the Son because of the

distinction, perhaps already made by Cerinthus, between the *Monogenēs* and the Logos.) The Man is nothing other than the “perfect Man” of the Epistle to the Ephesians, who is Christ as the Church, that is, insofar as he is the Spirit. The feminine figures who accompany the masculine aeons are hardly anything else than the concepts that characterize the essence of each of them. Grace conveys that God is goodness; Silence, that he is incomprehensible and inexpressible. Truth conveys that the Nous is the contemplative Intellect. Life, which is movement, conveys that the Logos is the discursive Intellect. (One might also say that the Nous, being the only aeon who knows God directly and completely, is the *Truth* about God; and that the Logos, in giving knowledge to man, is the Savior who gives *Life*.) Finally, the transcendent Church conveys what one must understand by the “perfect Man.”

If the fourth feminine aeon, the Church, is borrowed from the Epistle to the Ephesians, the first three, Grace, Truth, Life, are borrowed from the Johannine Gospel. As for the idea of syzygies, it may have been inspired by the Johannine idea that “God is love” (1 John 4:8). Like the Johannine God, all perfect spiritual beings for Valentinus are essentially love, harmony, unity, which presupposes that they have an essential link with another being, like the Father with the Son. Clement of Alexandria quotes this saying of Valentinus’s: “Everything that proceeds from the syzygy is pleroma [perfection, reality], everything that proceeds from unity is image [that is to say is *only* image]” (*Strom.* iv, 90, 2). This saying might be illuminated to some extent by what we read in the *Gospel of Truth* (24, 25–28): “For the place where there is envy and strife is a deficiency; but the place where there is Unity is a perfection.” There is unity in all perfect beings, a unity that is not solitude, a turning inward upon oneself, an absolute separation, but harmony, assent. The Father himself, though in one sense he is absolutely apart (as the existence of the Limit testifies) is not in another sense, for if he were absolutely apart he would not be the Father. All the syzygies are renewals of the union of the Father with his own Thought, who is the first Son. This Thought is both a feminine figure, like the feminine Spirit of the Simonians, and a masculine figure, like the Nous who is the first Christ of the Valentinians. There is a close link between Nous and *Ennoia*, as we shall see below.⁷⁴ Just as in our world there must be two beings, one masculine the other feminine, to give birth to a new being, so in the spiritual world there must be harmony and unity between two beings, one of which reproduces in some way the nature of the Father, and the other, the nature of the Son-*Ennoia*, to beget thoughts that are true and therefore perfect and real beings. “Everything that proceeds from the syzygy is pleroma, everything that proceeds from unity is image [unreal fruit of the imagination].” There is a reminiscence of certain texts of the Old Testament concerning the Husband and Wife in this symbolism, and also a particular link with the Pauline Epistle to the Ephesians.

Chapter XII

The "Apocryphon of John"¹

We have tried to understand how the Valentinian myth of Sophia may have been formed. But if the *Apocryphon of John* was earlier than Valentinianism and could have influenced it, my explanation would ultimately prove useless and false. For Valentinus could have come to know this myth by a much easier and shorter route. He could simply have found it in the *Apocryphon*, or in a doctrine of which the *Apocryphon* was not the only expression.² In fact one finds in this work a myth of Sophia very similar to that of the Valentinians, indeed, one that is so close to it that it seems impossible for there not to be some interdependence between these two versions of the same myth. Either Valentinus worked out his doctrine by deriving inspiration from what he found in the *Apocryphon* (or a tradition of the same type) or the author of the *Apocryphon* was inspired by Valentinianism, at least in certain parts of his work.

Most scholars now incline toward the first hypothesis. Furthermore, most think that the *Apocryphon* expresses a form of Gnosticism that was originally pagan and that has only been superficially Christianized. In fact one does find certain themes and myths in it that seem difficult to explain as Christian, and that are also found in a group of writings of which some do not appear (at first sight) to refer to Christianity. There are therefore two questions to examine in relation to the *Apocryphon of John*. On the one hand: Is this work basically non-Christian, despite all the references to Christ one finds in it? On the other hand: Is it the expression of a thought that does not depend upon Valentinianism but is, on the contrary, its source?

If we knew the date of the *Apocryphon of John*, the reply to at least one of these questions would be easy. If it was earlier than Valentinus's teaching, it would in any case be certain that it did not depend upon it. But all that we know is that at least one section of this work existed at the time Irenaeus wrote his *Adversus Haereses*, that is to say, around 185. In fact the doctrine Irenaeus summarizes in 1, 29 we find presented in the same order and clearly recognizable in the first section of the *Apocryphon*. This section at least is therefore earlier than around 185. But it could have been written between 160 and 180, for example, and would consequently not be earlier than the appearance of Valentinianism. If the *Apocryphon* is usually thought to go back to the first half of the second century, it is because Irenaeus implies that the heresies in 1, 29–31 are the source from which the Valentinians proceed. Yet we have seen³ that what he says on

the subject is not clear, as if there were some element of hesitation in this respect. We have also seen that what he invokes as an argument for what he implies is nothing but the resemblance of the doctrines, which might indicate that he had no other proof; and this proof is not a proof insofar as the direction of the dependence is concerned. We have seen that he most likely wrote chapters 29–31 by relying solely upon original Gnostic works, whose date he could scarcely know. Finally, we have seen that his opinion is not unanimously shared, even by the early heresiologists, some of whom contradict him or only partly follow him. We concluded from all this that the best way of knowing what is the case is to examine the doctrines in question, Valentinianism on the one hand, and the doctrine of the *Apocryphon of John* on the other hand, the basis of Irenaeus, I, 29, and to see whether one of them necessarily presupposes the other.

We considered Valentinianism first of all. It seemed that the Valentinian themes, such as are found in the fragments of Valentinus and in Irenaeus's account in I, 11, 1, have much in common with the themes we had already encountered in Saturnilus and Basilides; that Valentinus therefore primarily seems to be linked with the teaching of the school of Antioch, brought to Egypt by Basilides; and that if he modified this doctrine, it was above all in attenuating the excesses of anti-Judaism and an anticosmic attitude, already somewhat attenuated in Basilides, and that this turning point might be explained by a greater concern to be in agreement with the New Testament, as well as by a desire to encourage the reconciliation of diverse Christian groups. We have seen that even the myth of Sophia, which is not found in Saturnilus and of which there is only a prefiguring in Basilides, might be explained as arising from some of Paul's statements, especially when one compares it with the myth of the *Gospel of Truth* which seems to be the first version of it. In sum we found nothing among Valentinus's principal ideas that seemed inexplicable and that would force us to assume the influence of the *Apocryphon of John* or the other doctrines described in Irenaeus, I, 29–31.

It remains for us to examine the *Apocryphon of John*. There can be no question of examining the contents of this work completely here, but we can study certain themes. We will begin with the one commonly judged to be impossible to explain by Christianity or by a Christian Gnosticism, the theme of the "four illuminators."

1. *The Theme of the "Four Illuminators"**

The theme of the four illuminators is the most characteristic and one of the most enigmatic of the works that Schenke grouped together as ex-

* This part reproduces, with a few modifications, an article published in *REA* 27 (1981): 3–23.

pressing the particular Gnostic doctrine of the Sethians.⁴ This theme is often referred to as that of the "four luminaries." For my part, I prefer to translate *phōstēr*, in this case, by "illuminator," because the word "luminary" suggests objects more readily than persons, whereas *phōstēr*, in certain Gnostic works, definitely refers to a person. But if the four *phōstēres* we are going to speak about can in one sense be heavenly places or even stars, they are also and above all personal beings, a type of angel. In the *Apocryphon of John* the first illuminator, Armozel, is first described as being an angel (BG 33, 8–9 and parallels). He can also be identified with the Savior (Irenaeus, I, 29, 2). In the *Hypostasis of the Archons* the fourth illuminator, Eleleth, is an angel who descends from heaven to reply to the call of Norea and to teach. The very names of these illuminators, or at least the first two, Armozel and Oriel, seem to indicate that they are angels. It is true that these four persons are also, in one sense, "aeons." (Sometimes it is said of one or other of them that he is *in* or *upon* an aeon, sometimes they seem to be aeons themselves.) But the word "aeon" can refer to personal beings as well as times, epochs, or spaces, places, or worlds.

It seems to me that the theme of the four illuminators has remained until now very mysterious. I do not know whether scholars have succeeded in making it clear, but I believe that until recently they have in no way arrived at this point. Bousset briefly pointed out that it might be linked with an Iranian idea found in the *Bundahishn*, according to which four stars, fixed in the tent of heaven, dominated the regions of the world; he also recalled what the *Book of Enoch* (chapter 82) says about four stars that would lead the army of heaven.⁵ But this was scarcely anything but an invitation to look in the direction of Iran and Judaism, for in themselves these links only implied a general, vague analogy. They were far from explaining all the speculation on the four illuminators. It is not certain that one must presume that the illuminators are primarily stars for there to be an analogy. S. Giversen⁶ and J. Doresse⁷ have put forward hypotheses on the subject of the names of these illuminators. But most of their hypotheses remain very uncertain; and even those which might appear to have the strongest grounds from a philological point of view nevertheless remain doubtful in that they scarcely illuminate the speculation itself and the link it might have with the Sethians' doctrine. The explanation that H.-M. Schenke attempted a little later concerns the theory itself and might, to a certain extent, link it with Sethian doctrine.⁸ But even supposing that Schenke's theory is right in every point, it explains only a part of this speculation and leaves the rest unexplained. Moreover, it does not seem to me to be convincing. As we shall see, on certain points it does not fit very well with the texts, and the idea it attributes to the Sethians seems, at least in part, alien and arbitrary.

In a communication at the Yale Conference,⁹ C. Colpe developed Bousset's suggestion, insofar as the latter points to the possibility of an Iranian

origin for this theme. But his communication was primarily based on Schenke's hypothesis, in which the illuminators are depicted as the ages of the world. Now, this hypothesis seems to me a debatable one, as I will observe below. Also, the Iranian doctrines concerning the ages of the world, the doctrines Colpe describes, have hardly any link with the "Sethian" myths, and in particular with the theme of the four illuminators as a whole. Colpe acknowledges that they are not Gnostic. In order to link them with "Sethian" Gnosticism, he is obliged to assume a number of successive phases in the tradition: an Iranian phase, a pre-Gnostic Jewish phase, a Jewish Gnostic phase, and finally a "Christianized" phase that would be the phase of the *Apocryphon of John*. This complicated reconstruction shows how far one must seek to find the meaning and origin of this theme, and the likelihood of going astray in the description of such a long process. Furthermore, it would not explain the speculation as a whole. It would explain only a single element of it, that is, why there are four figures depicting (perhaps) the four ages of the world. It would not explain either their names or the diverse functions attributed to them. And for the transmission of even this element of it to seem possible would be to presuppose other—and how tenuous—hypotheses!

It might seem presumptuous to try to understand anew this obscure speculation. I will, however, state what seems to me to be the case, for I believe I have noticed certain connections that have not been noted in what I have read so far and that seem to me to enable us to make almost all the elements of this speculation clear. Moreover, I believe that if one was willing to consider these connections, one might be led to reinterpret not only the speculation on the four illuminators but "Sethianism" in general and its links with Valentinianism.

In fact, although it seems that very little is known about the speculation concerning the four illuminators, it is nevertheless thought that one can affirm that it has nothing to do with Christianity and that it is impossible to explain on the basis of a Christian Gnosticism such as that of the Valentinians. There is hardly anyone who does not regard it as the most definitely pagan (and in any case, non-Christian) part of the *Apocryphon of John*, and the most certain proof that this work cannot be a development of Valentinianism, but on the contrary is witness to an earlier doctrine from which Valentinianism derived. The connections I believe I have noticed would perhaps lead to the revision of this opinion or to a more careful statement of it.

What do we learn about the four illuminators from these texts? First, they teach us their names, four mysterious names: Armozel, Oriel, Daveithai, Eleleth. They also tell us what their origin and functions are. According to text, parallel to a part of the *Apocryphon of John* that Irenaeus knew, they were "sent out" by Christ to "surround" a divine being called the "Autogenes," that is "Begotten of himself" (Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 1, 29,

2). According to the Coptic translations of the *Apocryphon of John*, the Autogenes is simply another name for Christ. It is true that in the text Irenaeus knew Autogenes was not exactly the same figure as Christ; he was the son of the Logos, who had himself been sent out by God at Christ's request. But perhaps this does not make a great difference. The subtlety of the Gnostic theologians distinguished a number of figures in Christ, according to the different names or qualifications given to him, and these diverse figures could be depicted as begetting each other. In any case, the Coptic translations constantly identify the Autogenes with Christ and confirm that the four illuminators were sent out to escort him, to serve as "parastatai" (cf. *parastasis* in CG III, 11, 19) that is to say as guards,¹⁰ for him. Thus we have four luminous beings who seem to emanate from Christ and whose primary function is to surround him or to assist him as guards. Before proceeding further, would it not be apposite to ask if their names have something to do with their origin and their primary function? Schenke would probably judge such research absurd, given the fact that he regards this speculation as pagan and probably even pre-Christian. But how can one state that it is pagan or pre-Christian if one does not wholly understand it? It seems to me that these names might evoke certain characteristics of Christ, while personifying them and depicting them as angels.

According to Irenaeus (I, 29, 2), the first illuminator, Armozel, is the Savior. Now the name Armozel might indeed have some link with Valentinian speculation concerning Jesus' origin, whom the Valentinians usually call "the Savior". According to the Valentinian doctrine that Irenaeus describes in his first chapters (which is probably that of Ptolemy), after the reintegration of Sophia into the Pleroma and after the intervention of "Limit," of Christ and the Holy Spirit, the aeons each brought the most beautiful and the most "flowery" thing they had; they collected all of this together, "plaiting" it (*plexantas*) harmoniously (*harmoniōs*, from the verb *harmozō*), and thus appeared the "perfect fruit" of the Pleroma, that is, Jesus (Irenaeus I, 2, 6). In the person of Jesus, therefore, was collected together and *harmonized* the divine Pleroma, the Whole. It is this idea which seems to be able to express the name Armozel (or: Harmozel). The "root" *harmozō* could have been joined to the final *el* to make a name evoking an angel.

In fact, this speculation on the four illuminators seems to be an imitation of Jewish speculation concerning the four principal angels or archangels who surround God on four sides.¹¹ In chapter 9 of the *Book of Enoch* four angels are mentioned who appear to be the principal ones; they are Michael, Uriel, Raphael, Gabriel. In chapter 40 of this same *Enoch*, in the *Book of Similitudes*, one finds the four principal angels again, this time called Michael, Raphael, Gabriel, Phanuel, and here they are related to the four sides of God in such a way that they surround him in four directions. The same angels are named again in *Enoch* 71, where the

“four corners” of the house of God are mentioned. Thus the four illuminators, according to Irenaeus, “surround” Autogenes (*emissa ad circumstantiam Autogeni*). In chapter 40 of *Enoch* these angels are called “faces.”

This Jewish speculation, and perhaps Jewish-Christian—for we do not know for certain whether the *Book of Similitudes* is independent of all Christian influence—seems to be inspired by Ezekiel’s vision in which God appears surrounded by four “living creatures” or “cherubim” (Ezek. 1:5–21 and 10:1–22). In any case, it is on these texts from Ezekiel that the famous passage from the Apocalypse (4:6–7) is based, concerning the four “living creatures” who surround the throne of God (the lion, the bull, the man, and the eagle), the “living creatures” who, from Irenaeus onward, were thought of as symbols for the four Evangelists. Also, the author of the *Apocryphon* is perhaps directly inspired by Ezekiel or the Apocalypse. In the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (95, 27), the “chariot of the cherubim, with four faces” is mentioned. But the form of the names given to the illuminators rather evokes *Enoch’s* archangels. Moreover, in Ezekiel’s vision and in the Apocalypse the living creatures partly possess the appearance of animals, which is not the case with *Enoch’s* archangels or the illuminators in the *Apocryphon*. We know, from Manichean works, that the *Book of Enoch* was known by certain Gnostics.

I therefore think that by imitating this Jewish or Jewish-Christian speculation, which we find most especially in *Enoch* 40 and 71, the author of the *Apocryphon* must have wanted to liken certain aspects of Christ to the four angels who were like “faces” or who surrounded him like guards. The first of these “faces,” or angels who surround him, may have been an aspect of Jesus insofar as he was regarded by the Valentinians as the fruit of the harmony of the Pleroma.

One might note that in *Zostrianus* (29, 1–6), Armozel is defined as (according to J. H. Sieber’s translation¹²) “a division of God . . . and a joining¹³ of soul.” On the other hand, the angel Hormos, whose name means *bond* and who seems in the *Gospel of the Egyptians* to prepare for the birth of Jesus (compare 60, 2–8 with 63, 9–16), might be a double of Armozel.¹⁴ In the *Gospel of the Egyptians* (63, 9–16) Seth incarnate in Jesus effects the *reconciliation* of the world with the world. It is true that in these texts concerning the illuminators, Seth is usually linked with Oriel, whereas it is Adamas, his father, a figure of Christ rather than Jesus (where Christ and Jesus are distinguished from each other) who is linked with Armozel. But in the *Three Steles of Seth* (120, 30–31), it is Adamas who has “united the all through the all.” Thus the idea of reunion, of reconciliation, is associated with Adamas as well as Seth, with Christ as well as Jesus. Moreover, Irenaeus states that the “perfect fruit” of the aeons, Jesus, may also have been called Christ and Logos by the Valentinians (I, 2, 6).

The second illuminator, according to Irenaeus, is called Raguel. This is one of the names of the archangels in the *Book of Enoch*, but in a passage in which the archangels are seven in number and not four (chapter

20). According to this passage, Raguel is the angel who punishes the world of the luminaries (here the luminaries are nothing but the stars, or the angels appointed to the stars). The luminaries he punishes are the seven planets. These planets are culpable of "not having come in their times" (chapter 18), that is to say, of not being conformed to the general order of heaven, which simply corresponds to their name of wandering stars. But the Gnostics, who interpreted the "Seven" as a symbol of the old Law, were able to see in Raguel a figure of Christ insofar as he abolishes the old order. Perhaps someone also reflected on the meaning of the word "Raguel," which can mean, I believe, "shepherd."

But this might also be a mistake on Irenaeus's part, or that of his translator or copyists. For in the translations of the *Apocryphon* and the other Gnostic works in which this myth is found, the second illuminator is constantly called not Raguel but Oroïael or Oroïel or Oraïael or Oriël. This name recalls that of Uriel, one of the archangels in *Enoch*. For Giversen and Doresse, Oriël is probably Uriel. Nevertheless, one ought to ask oneself why the author of this theory would have retained the name Uriel when he changes the other names. Moreover, in chapter 20 of *Enoch*, Uriel is depicted as an angel "of the world and of tartarus," or "of the world and terror." Furthermore, he appears as an astronomer angel, who knows all the names of the stars and the times of their risings and settings. It is not clear what relation these characteristics could have with what is told us about Oriël. And this angel does not appear in chapters 40 and 71 of *Enoch*, the chapters most closely linked with speculation on the four illuminators. Here he is replaced by Phanuel. I therefore think that the name Oroïael or Oriël may also have been drawn from Valentinian speculation on the constitution of the being of the Savior. It might be related to *hōraios* or *hōrios*, adjectives derived from *hōra* (hour or season). These words properly mean "what is in season," but in the neuter plural (*hōraia*, *hōria*) they can mean fruits of the season. Most especially, they can be epithets for everything beautiful, gracious, charming, of everything "in its prime." We might recall that in the Valentinian speculation described by Irenaeus (I, 2, 6), the aeons brought together the most *beautiful* and *flowery* things they possessed in order to make up the being of Jesus.

Thus, Oriël too might be a symbol of the Valentinian Jesus. The fact that the rough breathing, the letter *h* in the words *hōraios* and *hōrios*, has disappeared in Oriël is not a decisive objection against this hypothesis. For often in these made-up names the rough breathing is not preserved. We have examples of this in the equivalents Harmozel-Armozel, Hormos-Ormos, among others. As for the final *el*, here again it serves to make this figure into an angel.

One might ask why, if this name comes from *hōraios* or *hōrios*, is it Oroïael rather than Oraïoel or Oriël, names that would be more closely based on *hōraios* or *hōrios*. But perhaps Oroïael was easier to pronounce than Oraïoel, which may have given rise to a metathesis; or perhaps some-

one wanted to imitate the end of names such as Michael or Raphael while avoiding a repetition of the vowel *a*. The forms Oriel and Oriael are found elsewhere, though less often than Oroïael. Also note that certain composites formed from *hōra* begin with *hōro*.

It is quite possible that certain Gnostics subsequently confused the angel Oriel with Uriel. In any case this confusion seems to have happened in magical texts. According to J. Doresse,¹⁵ when one finds the names of the four illuminators mixed with those of the archangels of Judaism in these texts, one never finds the names Uriel and Oriel in the same list, which tends to show that they were thought of as the same figure. But it is probably a case of secondary assimilation. The links between Oriel and Christ, in origin and function, and his link with the Valentinian text which already provides the key for Armozel, makes it probable that it is another example of the same speculation here. It is true that in this text the Savior is not only the “flower” and the “fruit” but also the “star” of the Pleroma (Irenaeus, I, 2, 6), which might justify the interpretation of Oroïael (in the form “Oriel”) as meaning, according to the Hebrew root, “light of God.” But whether it is a question of a star, a flower, or a fruit, it is probably a metaphor concerning Jesus that is found in the Valentinian teaching described by Irenaeus in I, 2, 6.

The third illuminator is called Daveithe or Daveithai. This name seems clearer than the others: it appears to be the name David. For Irenaeus it is David; in the *Gospel of the Egyptians* it is Davithe. The name David may have been modified to make it more mysterious and to make it into that of an angel. Why David? Giversen acknowledges that he cannot explain this use of the name David. But this is perhaps because for Giversen Daveithai can only be a star, without any link, originally, with Christ. If one allows for a possible link with Christ, the use of the name David is more easily explained. David was a king, an “Anointed,” that is to say, a christ properly speaking. (Christ means messiah, and messiah means anointed.) In the Old Testament the name David is often used to mean the messiah (cf. Jer. 30:9; Hos. 3:5). There was speculation about David among the Naassenes; they pointed out that David was anointed with oil from a horn and not from an earthen flask like that from which Saul was anointed.¹⁶ It might also be the case that one ought to understand by Daveithe “son of David,” or “descendent of David,” which would also be a title of Christ. Finally, one perhaps ought to remember that the meaning of the name David might be “beloved.” In the *Ascension of Isaiah* Christ is referred to by the expression “the Beloved.” Valentinus also refers to him by the name of “Beloved” in fragment 6. In the *Gospel of Truth* (30, 31; 40, 24) he is called “the beloved Son.” Finally, in the *Tripartite Treatise* (87, 8) “Beloved” is one of the names given to the Savior, and one should note that *this is precisely in the passage that corresponds to Irenaeus, I, 2, 6, that is, to the passage in which Irenaeus outlines the Valentinian speculation that already seems to be the origin of Armozel and Oriel.*

Doresse quotes the magical texts in which the name Daveithe (or Davithe or Davithea) is found.¹⁷ It is remarkable that Daveithe seems to be so often identified with Christ in these texts. Thus a text quoted by Kropp (vol. 2, 104)¹⁸ depicts Daveithe "stretched upon the couch of the tree of life." Is this tree of life not the cross? Another text (Kropp, vol. 2, 152) invokes Daveithe with the words "You are the one in whose hands are the keys of divinity. If you close, one can no longer open, and if you open, one can no longer close." Now, the second of these phrases ("if you close . . ."), drawn from a prophecy of Isaiah (22:22), concerns Christ in the Apocalypse (3:7).¹⁹ In the same text (Kropp, vol. 2, 152) it is said that Daveithe is "he who is placed upon the golden cup of the Church of the first-born." Is this Church of the first-born not the one mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews (12:23)? Doresse admits that there are Christian elements; but he believes that these elements are foreign to "the primitive idea which the Sethians could have had of the luminary Daveithe." Only what is this primitive idea? Apart from the links between Daveithe and David and Christ, these texts do not teach us very much. Doresse explains no more than Giversen why the name David was given to the third illuminator. It is perhaps only in admitting, on the contrary, that this David has a *primitive* link with Christ—and why should one refuse to admit this, since according to the *Apocryphon of John*, which seems to be one of the earliest, perhaps the earliest, of the "Sethian" works known to us, the illuminators were sent out by Christ to surround him—it is perhaps only in admitting that the link with Christ is primitive that one can explain why one of the illuminators bears a name derived from David, especially if one takes into account the fact that in the Valentinian speculation from which the names Armozel and Oriel derive, Christ is called "Beloved," which might be the meaning given to the name David.

As for the fourth illuminator, it is not easy at first sight to see where his name comes from and what it might mean. It seems to be of Semitic origin and to contain the name El, that is to say, God, twice. But must one understand "God of gods"? Or "God of powers" (El can mean power)? Or should one relate this name to *El 'elyôn* the "Most-High God"? I will put forward another hypothesis, but I will do it with reservations, for it is rather complicated and I do not think it has the same degree of possibility as those which I have put forward on the subject of the three other illuminators. In the passage of the *Tripartite Treatise* that corresponds to Irenaeus 1, 2, 6, among the names given to the Savior derived from the harmony of the aeons we find the name Paraclete (87, 8–9), and this name is understood as meaning "he who is called to help."²⁰ Now, in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* Eleleth in fact appears following a call for help. It is not that the name Eleleth could come from "Paraclete." But it might be an allusion to the call cried out by Christ upon the cross, "Eli, Eli," or "El El." The author of the *Apocryphon of John* may have thought that Jesus' call was addressed to the transcendent Savior, the heavenly Christ, and

more precisely to Christ-Paraclete, to “he who is called to help.” Just as this aspect was attributed to the Savior in the Valentinian speculation that inspired the author of the *Apocryphon*—at least if we have correctly understood the names of the first three illuminators—this author may have made this aspect into a fourth angel, as he had already transformed three other aspects into angels. He may have given this angel the name by which Jesus seems to have called upon the heavenly Savior, by adding a Hebraic ending to these two syllables to make them into the name of an angel.

Whatever the origin of the name, there are many signs showing that Eleleth has a particular link with Wisdom. (This would also agree with the idea that he might represent the Paraclete, who is normally identified with the Spirit.) In Irenaeus (I, 29, 2) the virtue corresponding to Eleleth is *phronēsis*, wise reflection, reason. It is the same in the case of the Coptic translations (BG 33, 7 and parallels). It is also the same in the *Gospel of the Egyptians* (52, 13–14). Furthermore, in the Coptic translations Sophia is among the divine powers who are linked with Eleleth (BG 34, 7 and parallels). In the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (93, 8–10) Eleleth says, “I am Eleleth, Wisdom, the Great Angel, who stands in the presence of the Holy Spirit.” In the *Gospel of the Egyptians* (56, 22–57, 1), Eleleth sets up a certain Sophia, the “hylic Sophia,” to reign over Chaos and Hades. In a rather obscure passage of the *Trimorphic Protennoia* (39, 13–32) Eleleth seems to be the source of the appearance of the Demiurge. In *Zostrianus* (29, 10) Eleleth is “an impulse and a preparation for the truth.” This would correspond quite well with the idea of Sophia as the source of the spirit breathed into Adam and inspiring the Old Testament prophets. Finally, we shall see further on that Eleleth seems to be the psychics’ “place of rest”; now, the psychics’ place of rest is the Ogdoad, where Sophia dwells. Could Eleleth be an aspect of Sophia rather than an aspect of Christ? But we ought to remember that Christ can also be called Wisdom. Paul calls Christ “Wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:24). For Origen the title Wisdom was one of the most important of Christ’s titles, perhaps the first of all. And for the Gnostics Christ is often associated with Sophia, whose son or husband or brother he might be. In the *Epistle of Eugnostos* (82, 1–5) and in the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* (106, 19–22), Sophia is the feminine name of the Savior. Moreover, we ought to remember that, according to the *Tripartite Treatise* (85, 25–86, 31), the Savior is sent forth by the aeons to bring help to Sophia. And this is particularly true of Eleleth, if Eleleth is an aspect of the Savior in which he is “he who is called to help.” It is therefore not surprising that, while being an aspect of the Savior, Eleleth is related to Sophia. And it seems—I will demonstrate this below²¹—that in one sense the Savior is Sophia’s true self, her perfect self, which separates itself from her after her fall, but which will be reunited with her when she is completely enlightened and saved.

This then is what I suggest on the subject of the names of the four illuminators. We should now consider the other functions attributed to

them. The function of surrounding and accompanying the Autogenes is not, in fact, the only one the so-called "Sethian" works attribute to them. For the author of the *Apocryphon of John* these illuminators are not only angels; they are also aeons, or they are placed *in* or *upon* the aeons. In any case, one might say that each of them corresponds to an aeon, that is, to a reality that might either be one of the figures of divine perfection or a place in the eternal world or an age of the temporal world. And here is what is told us about each of these four aeons. In the first (Armozel) was placed the perfect Man, a divine Adam, who could also have been called Adamas. In the second (Oriël) was placed the son of the perfect Man, the son of Adamas, who is called Seth like the son of the earthly Adam, but who is a transcendent Seth as Adam is a transcendent Adam. In the third (Daveithe) was placed "the descendants of Seth," descendants made up of "the souls of the saints." Finally, in the fourth (Eleleth) was placed the souls who knew their perfection (their pleroma), but who were slow to be converted.²² What does this new series that Adamas, the divine Seth, the saints of the line of Seth, and the souls who were converted less quickly than those of the saints form, mean? And why is such and such an element of this series related to such and such an element in the series of illuminators? The illuminators, who appeared first of all as angels or "faces" surrounding the Autogenes, now appear as types of supraterrrestrial habitations in which two divine persons and two groups of human souls reside respectively. How is this transformation possible and what does it mean?

For Schenke it means that the four illuminators essentially represent paradises, "places of heavenly rest," which were attributed to Adam, to Seth, to the saints who would be the descendants of Seth, and to other saints who also descended from Seth, but who would have lived later than the first, respectively. The author of this speculation would be a "Sethian," that is, a man for whom Seth was the Savior and who considered himself to be a descendant of Seth, and promised salvation in virtue of this filiation. The author would think that God created for these ancestors (Adam, Seth, the first descendants of Seth, and those who came after) heavenly paradises where their souls were welcomed and where the souls of Sethians present and future will be welcomed. Those who were placed in the aeon of Daveithe Schenke calls the "early Sethians," and those who were placed in the aeon of Eleleth he calls the "historical Sethians." Where should the chronological boundary be placed between them both? It should be placed, if I understand Schenke correctly, at the time of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. In fact, according to some works that are considered Sethian, the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah were the just and belonged to the holy line of Seth. The Demiurge tried to annihilate them, but they were saved by envoys from the world above, who transported them to their heavenly dwelling. The "early Sethians" must then have ceased to belong to our world. The "historical Sethians" were those Sethians who have lived since in all the rest of time.

There were therefore four periods of the world, four divisions of the "great year" of the world: the period of Adam, that of Seth, that of the first descendants of Seth, and that of his later descendants. And according to Schenke, the four illuminators were the four planets that must have dominated each of these four periods respectively, and that simultaneously served as paradise for the souls of the two great ancestors and for the two groups of the just who were their descendants.

This explanation is ingenious, but it does not seem to me to be sufficiently well founded. It implies numerous assumptions that are difficult to accept. It seems strange that Adam alone occupies a whole period, a whole season of the "year of the world," and likewise with Seth. (Without taking into account that the Adam and Seth in question do not seem to be identical to the earthly Adam and Seth; rather, they are eternal beings.) Moreover, it is scarcely probable that the souls placed in the third and fourth aeons correspond to the early Sethians and the later Sethians. First of all it is not said, at least in the *Apocryphon of John*, that the souls placed in the fourth aeon are the descendants of Seth or that they are the souls of the saints. This is said only of the souls placed in the third aeon. Also, in saying that the souls of the fourth aeon were converted less quickly than those of the descendants of Seth, it seems that the author does not simply want to say that they were converted later chronologically, without implying that their conduct had something to do with this delay. He seems to want to say that they made less haste than the souls of the saints. The distinction he makes between the two types of soul very much resembles that which the Valentinians make between the spirituals and the psychics. For Heracleon, for example, the promptness with which the Samaritan believes in the words of the Savior is the sign that she is a spiritual (frag. 17). Similarly, the author of the *Tripartite Treatise* says that from the moment Christ appeared the spirituals "dash toward him" and receive knowledge "with eagerness" (118, 32–36), whereas the psychics are slower and delayed receiving it (118, 37–38). The spirituals cleave straightway to the revelatory word, whereas the psychics hesitate and are slower.

If the author of the *Apocryphon* simply wants to say that the souls of the fourth aeon are those of persons who lived later than those whose souls are in the third aeon, he would say that they appeared later, but not that they were converted more slowly. It is a question of less perfect souls. Now, it would be strange if the souls of the last period were less perfect than those of the preceding period, when, for the Gnostics, it is usually at the end of time that perfect knowledge and the Church of the spirituals appears.

It is perfectly true that the author of the *Apocryphon* has a certain theory of the history of the world. He probably thinks, like other Gnostics, that the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah were the just and that they were transported to a heavenly dwelling. In any case, he thinks that there were three interventions of the Savior in history, the first two of which

were invisible and only the third visible (CG II, 30, 11—31, 25; IV, 46, 23—49, 6).²³ The third is that in which the Savior is *incarnate* (CG II, 31, 3—4; IV, 48, 3—5), that is to say, that in which Jesus appeared. The two invisible interventions are scarcely explained in the *Apocryphon*, but if one relies on the *Gospel of the Egyptians* (63, 4—6), they took place at the moment of the Flood and at the moment of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (two moments when the world above saved groups of humans whom the Demiurge wished to destroy). This idea gives rise to four periods in the history of the world. One runs from creation to the Flood, the second from the Flood to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the third from this destruction to the visible coming of the Savior, and the fourth after this coming. But these four periods do not correspond to the series: Adam, Seth, descendants of Seth, and a group of souls who were converted more slowly. Adam did not live until the time of the Flood, or Seth from the Flood to the destruction of Sodom. The first period includes both Adam, Seth, and the first "Sethians." Moreover, the two groups of souls placed in the last two aeons cannot belong to the third and the fourth periods respectively. They had both hardly appeared until after the coming of the incarnate Savior, who taught them where perfection is to be found. These two groups exist not successively but simultaneously. They are the categories the Valentinians call the pneumatics and the psychics. The four aeons are therefore not here periods in the history of the world. Even though the word "aeons" can refer to the periods of the world, even in the Valentinians, it can also refer to spaces, to "places," or concepts, qualities, essences, or finally to spiritual, personal beings, belonging to the eternal realm. This is the case here. The first two aeons are both spiritual beings (angels) and concepts (qualities of the Savior) with which Adamas and Seth are related.²⁴ The last two are spiritual beings (angels), concepts (qualities of the Savior), and spaces in the superior world, one supraterrrestrial, the other celestial—for one is probably in the Pleroma and the other is probably the Ogdoad—one destined to receive the most perfect souls, the other, souls less perfect but nevertheless converted to Christ.

If we have reason to suppose that these last two groups are the spirituals and the psychics, this part of the speculation on the illuminators is, like the names of the angels surrounding Christ, related to Valentinianism.

Someone will say: It is not surprising that the *Apocryphon of John* should be related to Valentinianism since, according to Irenaeus, it is one of its sources. But if one examines the resemblances in detail, one sees that the dependence must rather have been in the opposite direction. This is particularly clear in respect to the name Armozel and the distinction between the spirituals and the psychics. The name Armozel, which the author wanted to be mysterious and obscure, can nevertheless be understood if it is drawn from Valentinian speculation on the constitution of the essence of Jesus. But this speculation could not be drawn from the name Armozel, which is not explained in any way in the *Apocryphon*. How, from the fact

that the Autogenes is accompanied by four angels, one of whom bears the almost incomprehensible name of Armozel, could one derive the idea that Jesus is the common fruit of all the Pleroma, the work in which the latter was united and reconciled? The Valentinians could have much more easily drawn this idea from the Pauline Epistle to the Colossians: "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things" (Col. 1:19–20; cf. 2:9).

Similarly, the brief mention of souls who "were converted more slowly" is natural on the part of a man who knows Valentinianism and is addressing those who know it. There is no need to say more for the psychics to be recognized. Furthermore, it is not possible to draw Valentinian speculation on the distinction of the spirituals and the psychics—this rich speculation, so full of precise details, and which is so easily explained by the relations between Valentinians and the Church—it is not possible to draw it from the brief and barely explained allusion we find in the *Apocryphon*.

I therefore think that the theory of the four illuminators, as it is present in the *Apocryphon of John*, implies Valentinianism, and that far from being proof that the *Apocryphon* is of pagan origin and simply "Christianized," this theory is rather one of the proofs that it was linked from the beginning with a Christian Gnosticism.

I do not say that this interpretation can resolve all the problems, but it resolves many of them. Schenke asks the question, "Why did Seth become a hero of *gnosis* for a whole group of men? Why were essentially pagan Gnostics interested in the person of Seth?" He says that he does not see the reason, but that this interest might be explained by a certain Samaritan tradition according to which Seth was the preferred son of Adam and was an ancestor of Moses. However, it is obvious that even if this tradition really existed at a time earlier than the *Apocryphon of John* and if it could have interested those whom one assumes to be pagan, it would be inadequate to explain the Gnostic figure of the divine Seth, the Savior. Moreover, what Schenke says about this Samaritan tradition shows how much the traces that are thought to be discernable before the second century of our era are vague and uncertain.²⁵ It seems to me that the reply to his question about the interest shown in Seth would be much easier if it were not taken for granted that these Gnostics were essentially pagans. The explanation would be very simple if it were drawn from Christianity. Adamas, or the divine Adam, is defined as being the true Man; it follows from this that the son of Adamas, the divine Seth, is the "Son of Man" (cf. CG II, 24, 33–25, 1; IV, 38, 26–28). The divine Seth is therefore a new figure for Christ, or more exactly, of Jesus, since Jesus is distinguished from Christ. (For in this case it is rather Adamas who is Christ). In the *Gospel of the Egyptians* (65, 12–17) Seth and Jesus are together in Oriel, whereas Autogenes (Christ) and Adamas are together in Armozel. This is not, as Schenke thinks, because Adamas and Christ are in competition, nor

because Seth and Jesus are in competition. It is rather because, for the author of this work, Adamas and Christ are the same being, and so also are Seth and Jesus. In the *Gospel of the Egyptians* Seth is expressly said to be incarnate in Jesus, he "clothes" Jesus (63, 7-13, and 64, 1-3). This means that the Son of Man, who was preexistent in the invisible world, descended and clothed a visible form. Granted, Schenke interprets this as meaning that Jesus is one of Seth's avatars. But it is possible, even probable, that the opposite is the case. It is Seth who was transformed into a symbol representing Jesus, and this because he is the son of Adam and because, since Adam is "man," a divine Adam was imagined who would be the Man whose Son Jesus said he was in the Gospels. Some Gnostics seem to have concluded from the name Son of man which Jesus gave himself that God the Father must be called Man.²⁶ But the first Valentinians, while also seeking to explain the name Son of man, did not give the name of Man to God the Father, they gave it to one of the aeons of the Pleroma. This was to give the name of Man to Christ, for in a way all the masculine aeons of the Pleroma are names of Christ. It is this divine Man, identical to Christ, whom a Gnostic author, keen on symbols drawn from the Old Testament, wished to describe as a transcendent Adam, whom he often calls Adamas in order to distinguish him from the earthly Adam. Jesus, the Son of this Man, thereby became Seth, but a divine Seth who is not the same as the Seth known in history.²⁷ This speculation on Seth-Jesus does not seem to be found among the first Valentinians,²⁸ but it may have arisen within Valentinianism, for some Valentinians explained the name Son of man, which Jesus gave himself, by saying that Jesus was the son of the aeon called "Man" (Irenaeus, I, 12, 4).

It is therefore Jesus, or Christ, who represents the divine Seth, of whom the "Sethians" were the descendants. This succession is in no way biological; it is the Church of the spirituals founded upon Jesus. One might call it a race, but it is not a race. It is true that the descendants of Seth are predestined to understand immediately the revelation of the One Sent, but this does not belong to their earthly ancestry; they are "sown" in the world by beings above, as the spirituals whom the Valentinians speak of are "sown" from above.

However, I have not yet adequately explained—or tried to explain—how these angels who are the illuminators, and who seemed to be first of all aspects of Christ, could then become dwelling places, spaces in which different persons reside; or why Adamas and Seth reside in the first two of these dwelling places respectively, whereas the last two are attributed to the souls of two groups of human beings respectively, whom we might call the spirituals and the psychics.

Insofar as the transformation of the four angels into four dwelling places is concerned, one must remember with what ease a character, a qualification, or an epithet can become a substantial reality in these semi-poetic works, and be assimilated either to a mythical person or to a time,

a place, a space, or a world. "Aeon" can refer to all these types of reality and allows one to pass from one to the other. It is also possible that here again the author of this speculation was inspired by the *Book of Enoch*. In this book the angels can be figures surrounding God, or faces, but they are also and more often stars. In *Enoch* 82 the four stars who reign over the four seasons and the last four days of the year are mentioned. What are these stars? For my part, I cannot see what they can correspond to in classical astronomy. The number four in no way points to their being planets, as Schenke thinks. And what planets would these be? They might rather be the stars that rise at a specific hour at the beginning of each season. But how could these stars also reign over the last four days of the year? It is possible that for the author of this part of the *Book of Enoch* these four stars are nothing other than the four angels who reign over the seasons, and that they do not correspond to the visible stars that can be named.²⁹ He calls them stars because he is accustomed to identifying the concept of angel with the concept of star. Only the number four links the seasons with the last four days of the year. Whatever the case, it might be that in imitation of this mythology, the Gnostic author likened the four angels, who are faces in chapter 40, with the four angels who are stars in chapter 82. Only, if he had stars in mind, it was apparently merely stars conceived of as heavenly or transcendent dwellings, not stars that reigned over successive periods of the world. For it seems that the two beings he places in the first two aeons are two eternal beings, and that those he puts in the last two are two categories of human beings that exist simultaneously.

Moreover, if Eleleth can in one sense be identified with the Ogdoad—which is not a star but the whole heaven of the fixed stars—the dwelling place of Adamas, of the divine Seth, and of the spirituals is probably found in the Pleroma, that is, above the visible sky. The series of four dwelling places does not exactly correspond to the stars or to a succession in time but rather to a hierarchical series, based on a more or less greater proximity to the source of divinity.

Now, why are Adam and Seth placed in the first two aeons respectively, and why are the categories analogous to the spirituals and the psychics placed in the two others? One gets the impression that this depiction transforms the series of illuminators into a series that is no longer homogeneous: the first two each correspond to a single divine person, whereas the two others are really spaces, large dwelling places, receiving groups formed of human souls. Where could such a depiction come from? It seems to me that to understand it this depiction must be linked with the fourth Valentinian syzygy. One must recall that Adamas is defined as the true Man, the perfect Man. Would he not be related to the Valentinian aeon called "Man"? This aeon is the only masculine aeon of the first Valentinian Ogdoad that is not mentioned in the *Apocryphon*, before the appearance of the four illuminators. Should he not also be mentioned? Now, this Valen-

tinian aeon forms a syzygy with the aeon "Church." It seems that the author of the *Apocryphon* wanted to describe this syzygy, but by transforming it into a series of four terms in order to relate it to the four illuminators he had just spoken of. In order to do this he must have divided the aeon "Man" into two figures, Man and the Son of Man, and must even have divided the aeon "Church" into two Churches, that of the spirituals and that of the psychics.³⁰ The appearance of the Man-God and that of the Churches are thus found to be linked with the appearance of the Savior sent out by the aeons, and to the characteristics of his being.

The aspect by which the Savior is the harmony of the whole Pleroma is therefore found to be especially related to Christ, under the name of Adamas. The aspect according to which he is its flower or fruit or star is found to be especially linked to Jesus, under the name of Seth. The spirituals are found to be placed in Daveithe; for if the name perhaps evokes the title of the Beloved, it also evokes the kingship of Christ and the Kingdom promised to the saints. Finally, it is natural that the psychics dwell in Eleleth, whose links with Sophia we have already seen.

This construction does not stand without somewhat modifying the Valentinian doctrine expounded in Irenaeus, I, 2, 6. For here *all* the characteristics personified by the four angels were attached to Jesus. It is true that according to this doctrine Jesus can also be called Christ (Irenaeus, *ibid.*). The author of the *Apocryphon* relates the four angels above all to Christ, since he relates them to the Autogenes. Eleleth, in particular, must be an aspect of Christ rather than of Jesus, if he represents the being whom Jesus calls to his aid. (Unless the earthly Jesus calls on a heavenly, transcendent Jesus). It is not inconceivable that a Valentinian, considering the different aspects of Christ, could associate them with the Man, the Son of Man, and the Christian Churches respectively. For it is always Christ who is in question. Even the Churches are Christ in one sense, for they are *in* Christ. Nevertheless, there seems to be a sort of shift between the first function of the illuminators (to surround Autogenes, to represent his aspects) and their second function, by which these aspects become like dwelling places receiving Man, the Son of Man, and the two Churches derived from Jesus Christ respectively. This shift allows us to see the artificial character of the link that the author makes between the image of the four illuminators and the Valentinian syzygy he seems to describe next, the syzygy "Man-Church." But to make links, even artificial ones, was what the Gnostic delighted in doing.

In *Melchizedek* (6, 2-3) Jesus Christ is called "Commander-in-chief of the illuminators."³¹ These four illuminators are quite simply angels, called "doryphores" (bodyguards) or "satellites" (same meaning), who in Valentinianism are sent out at the same time as the Savior to accompany him (Irenaeus, I, 2, 6, at the end of the paragraph). The bodyguards are the soldiers who surround the person they must protect on all sides. This might suggest the idea of four angels surrounding Christ on four sides. In the

Tripartite Treatise also (87, 20–33) these angels are likened to an *army* accompanying a king. This same treatise likens them to “a multiform figure” (87, 27). (Attridge and Mueller translate it: “a multifaceted form.”³²) This might make us think of the four archangels in *Enoch* 40, who are like four “faces” around God.

Some Valentinians make these angels sent out at the same time as the Savior into the heavenly doubles of the souls of the spirituals, their true “selves” separate from themselves to which they will be reunited thanks to Christ.³³ This is another type of speculation. But the author of the *Apocryphon* is perhaps more faithful to the description Irenaeus gives in 1, 2, 6, when he depicts them as appointed as a sort of guard (*parastasis*) surrounding Christ on all sides. It is perhaps he who imagined that they were four and created a picture in imitation of those who depicted God surrounded by four “living creatures” or four cherubim or four angels, in order to conform to this comparison with the bodyguards. One must also note that in Irenaeus 1, 2, 6 these angels are similar (*homogenes*) to the Savior. It is therefore natural for their names to represent qualities or aspects of the Savior.

Why did the author of the *Apocryphon of John* call them illuminators? Perhaps because he wished to unite and imitate as a whole the speculation in *Enoch* 40 (on the angels placed “on the four sides of the Lord of spirits”) and that in *Enoch* 82 (on the stars that would command the seasons). But it must be noted that the Valentinians themselves give the angels who accompany the Savior the name *phōta*, that is, “lights.” We find this in Irenaeus 1, 4, 5. It is perhaps to these angels also that the *Tripartite Treatise* refers when it speaks of the “marvelous illuminatory powers” that it associates with the angels and the aeons (124, 30–31). Thus, this might also derive from the Valentinians. Why the names of “light” or “illuminatory powers”? In Irenaeus 1, 4, 5 we see that these angels are called thus after Sophia, who having prayed to the “Light” that had abandoned her, that is, to Christ who had separated himself from her, was saved. She asked for Light and it is the Light which came (cf. *Extracts from Theodotus* 34, 1; 35, 1; 40; 41, 2–4). Christ sends the Savior-Paraclete to her, who is really no other than himself, as Irenaeus believes, but who is Christ appearing as Savior and Paraclete. (Cf. *Extracts from Theodotus* 44, 1: “When Sophia perceived him, like the Light that had abandoned her, she recognized him. . . .”). The Savior-Light illuminates Sophia (cf., for example, *Tripartite Treatise* 90, 14). But he is also enlightened by the angels who are “of the same age as her” (*hēlikiōteis, coetanei*). For the Savior took them with him when he descended toward Sophia. He took them with him “for the setting right again of the seed” (*Extracts from Theodotus* 35, 2), in other words, so that they might help to form the seeds of the Spirit that were sown in souls. In the *Tripartite Treatise* these angels are said “to have taken body and soul,” that is, were incarnate like the Savior (115, 30–31), and it seems that some of them became apostles, *evangelists*, doctors of souls

(116, 10–20). The Valentinians could also say that the spirituals were given birth to by Sophia thanks to the vision she had of these angels and according to their likeness (Irenaeus, I, 4, 5, end of paragraph). In truth, Valentinian speculation about the links between the spirituals and their angels is multifarious and perhaps sometimes contradictory. Sometimes the angels must form the spiritual seeds; sometimes they resurrect them by being baptized for them, for these seeds were as the dead (*Extracts from Theodotus* 22, 1–2); sometimes they seem to make them to be born by a vision they have raised up in the eyes of the exiled Spirit. Always they play a role in the salvation of the Gnostics, which is a salvation by revelation, knowledge, and illumination.³⁴

It is possible, even probable, that difficulties will be found to stand against my hypothesis. But can its possible critics put forward another hypothesis that explains so many things at once, by parallels or coincidences, that one finds in texts and that mutually confirm each other? Until now scholars have always based their work on the conviction that this theme is of pagan origin and does not seem to lead to anything very much. The Valentinian themes are perhaps the only things that allow one to bring together all the elements of this complicated speculation. They can explain: the mysterious names of the illuminators; their primary function and the number four (by the fact that their primary function is to surround the Autogenes, that is, Christ, as bodyguards); their second function, which seems to be to bind together the appearance of these angels and the Savior himself with the appearance of the last syzygy of the basic Ogdoad, the syzygy "Man-Church." They might explain the brief allusion to the souls that "were converted more slowly." Finally, they explain why Seth could have been transformed into a divine being and a Savior.

I therefore think that far from being essentially pagan, this speculation on the four illuminators essentially derives from a Christian Gnosis, Valentinianism. The Valentinianism of Irenaeus I, 2, 6 is needed to explain the name Armazel and to explain, better than has been done, the name Oriel. Moreover, the Valentinianism of the *Tripartite Treatise* also allows us to explain with some likelihood the two other names; and Valentinianism is also needed to explain the distinction between the two groups of souls to whom two distinct dwelling places are attributed in the world above. The fourth Valentinian syzygy is also needed to explain clearly the second function of the illuminators. We have seen that some features of this speculation, as we find them in the *Apocryphon*, might be explained by Valentinianism, but that on the other hand they could not have given rise to the corresponding Valentinian speculations.

The doctrine of the *Apocryphon* certainly modifies Valentinianism. But it modifies it in the same direction in which later Gnostic doctrines were modified: in developing the symbolism of Old Testament figures; in inventing names that have a Hebraic or Aramaic appearance (but whose root is sometimes Greek, only the end being transformed into Hebrew names);

in imitating certain Jewish or Jewish-Christian speculations; in multiplying the mysterious figures that inhabit the divine world. In sum, it is a Valentinianism that is beginning to degenerate. The degeneration will be much more advanced in the *Gospel of the Egyptians*.

It may seem too difficult to accept that Valentinianism was corrupted so early. But between the time Valentinus began to teach—quite probably in Egypt before his arrival in Rome, and therefore before 138 or thereabouts—and the time the *Apocryphon of John* was written—it seems likely between about 160 and 180, let us place it around 170—more than thirty years had passed. Now, a doctrine can degenerate even more quickly. A few years are enough. A single writer who undertakes to vulgarize it and recount it in his own way is enough. One sees in Irenaeus (in particular in chapters 11 and 12 of the first book) that freedom of interpretation and diversity of teaching were very great in Valentinianism. And can Marcus not be said to have profoundly corrupted Valentinianism with his extravagant speculation on the letters of the alphabet? Now, he is also earlier than Irenaeus and is certainly a Valentinian. It is quite probable that the Valentinians Irenaeus knew used the *Apocryphon of John* as a work that, to a large extent, taught their own ideas. It was perhaps in this way that Irenaeus knew of it, if he knew it directly, and it is perhaps one of the reasons—the other being the resemblance of the doctrines—that made him think this work was related to Valentinianism and was one of its sources.

2. *The Myth of Sophia in the Apocryphon of John*

We will dwell less on the other themes the *Apocryphon* develops, since they are much more clearly Christian and Valentinian. The myth of Sophia here is almost completely identical with the Valentinian myth.

What differences does one find? Reading Irenaeus's account, it seems that the motive behind the act that led to Sophia's fall is different here from what it is in Valentinus and the Valentinians. Among the aeons only Sophia did not have a spouse, and it was to find one that she advanced and directed her gaze or search (*prospiciebat*) toward inferior regions. But none of the Coptic translations confirms this interpretation of Sophia's adventure. In these translations Sophia has a spouse, a *syzygos*; but she wants to beget an "image" independently of her spouse, an idea we also find among the Valentinians, as we have seen. Did Irenaeus misunderstand what he read or, if he was following another heresiologist, had this other person misunderstood? In the translations of the shorter version, there is a passage that shows that the Greek text may have given rise to misunderstanding. It is stated here that Sophia "no longer found her spouse" (BG 37, 6–7; CG III, 14, 23). This probably means that she was no longer in accord or agreement with him. In any case, the motive for her act is no different in the four Coptic translations from what it is in certain Valentinian expositions.

As for the idea that Sophia looked toward the inferior regions, it is found, for example, in a late work that is more or less Valentinian, the *Pistis Sophia*;³⁵ and Plotinus holds that it was taught by the Gnostics he knew, who might have been Valentinians (*Em.* II, 9, 4). Perhaps it also derived from a misunderstanding, a misunderstanding that would explain certain Valentinian texts. In fact, in the *Tripartite Treatise* (77, 19–20) one reads that the logos, that is, Sophia—for in this treatise Sophia is never called Sophia, she is simply referred to as being a logos, that is, an aeon—in wishing to know God directly “did not endure the vision of the light, but looked into the deep [*bathos*] and hesitated.” This might mean that not being able to stand the light, Sophia turned away from it and directed her gaze toward the inferior darkness. At least one could understand it thus. But it would be surprising if, in a Valentinian text that speaks of an attempt to know God, *bathos* could mean anything but divine depth. This text would therefore rather mean that Sophia, seized by vertigo before the divine depth, hesitated, in such a way that, as it is stated next (77, 20–21), her soul found itself divided. It was perhaps precisely from this division that the inferior regions were born, for they do not, according to the Valentinians, seem to have existed from the beginning. Whatever the case, the idea that Sophia looked downward, an idea Irenaeus attributes to his “Barbelognostics” on the basis of what he knew from the *Apocryphon of John*, might simply be an interpretation of certain Valentinian texts. Moreover, it scarcely appears in the Coptic translations.

(If it was certain that the author of the *Apocryphon*, along with other Gnostics, was mistaken in interpreting a text like the one we find in the *Tripartite Treatise* thus [77, 19–20], this would be another sign that the *Apocryphon* is later than the first Valentinian works.)

As in Valentinianism, Sophia is treated indulgently in the *Apocryphon*. Irenaeus’s account speaks of her “simplicity,” of her “goodness” (I, 29 4); some Coptic translations speak of her “innocence” (BG 51, 4–5), or of her “lack of malice” (CG III, 23, 22). Nevertheless, the Sophia of the *Apocryphon* remains separated from the Pleroma, like Valentinus’s Sophia and that of the *Tripartite Treatise*; whereas according to Ptolemy Sophia was reintegrated into the Pleroma and only her “intention” remained separated from it.

According to the Coptic translations, she dwells in the ninth heaven (the Ennead), and at first sight this seems to be a difference in comparison with Valentinianism, which places her in the Ogdoad. But in the version Irenaeus knew, she dwells in the Ogdoad, as in the Valentinians. This version is probably the earliest. The substitution of Ennead for Ogdoad might be a result of the exaggeration that is characteristic of later works.

The Demiurge is treated more severely in the *Apocryphon* than he is among Valentinians like Ptolemy or Heracleon. One might be tempted to draw from this the conclusion that this work is prior to the Valentinian turning point. But one must bear in mind that Valentinus did not transform

the whole of Gnosticism. At the same time as him and even after him, other Gnostics were very severe in respect to the Demiurge. Valentinus himself and the eastern Valentinians seem to have spoken of the Demiurge with less moderation than the Valentinians in Italy. Moreover, the author of the *Apocryphon* seems to be inspired not only by Valentinianism but by earlier Gnostics such as Saturnilus and Basilides. This desire to create a synthesis results, in certain respects, in a backward step, and yet it is generally the mark of a later age. One must also bear in mind that an indulgent attitude toward Sophia contradicts and to some extent compensates for severity with respect to the Demiurge. It shows that, taking everything into account, the author has a relatively moderate attitude toward the world and Judaism.

The Demiurge in the *Apocryphon* has certain specifically Valentinian features. For example, he is “weak” or “ill” (CG II, 11, 15; IV, 17, 24); similarly, according to the *Tripartite Treatise* (80, 37—81, 3) all the beings derived from Sophia are ill, in particular the Demiurge, and those who are only “similitudes” of true beings. On the other hand, he creates the powers, the Archons, by imitating the eternal aeons (BG 39, 6—10 and parallels). This is redolent of Valentinus’s Platonism. However, the Demiurge does not know the eternal world directly; how then can he imitate it? The author of the longer version of the *Apocryphon* has foreseen this objection. He replies that the breath of Sophia, which the Demiurge received, created an image of “good order” in him (CG II, 13, 1—5; IV, 15—18). This corresponds approximately to what the Valentinians said according to Irenaeus (I, 5, 1): that it was Sophia who through the Demiurge and without his knowledge copied the eternal models, and even that it was the Savior who through Sophia brought to birth the images of the aeons in the sensible world. (Clement of Alexandria may have been right after all in saying that the painter, in fragment 5 of Valentinus, was Sophia. He was primarily the Demiurge, but was also Sophia.)

The Demiurge and his powers created humanity by copying an image that appeared to them from above. They knew, thanks to a voice that had previously made itself heard, that a being called “Man” (or Adam) existed. Doubtless they assumed that this being was the one whose image had appeared to them, and that he was God. For they say: “Let us make a man in the image and likeness of God” (short version); or “Let us create a man in the image of God and in our likeness” (long version). And then: “Let us call him Adam so that his name might be a light for us” (BG 49, 6—9 and parallels). This agrees with the first fragment of Valentinus: “Adam, fashioned in order to be called by the name Man.”³⁶

Adam thus fashioned is above all a “psychic” being. The elements of which he is formed are called “souls,” although they correspond to parts of the human *body*. It is therefore a sort of “psychic body” (this expression is in fact used in CG II, 19, 12 and 30, and IV, 29, 22). Now, this psychic Adam cannot move. It is true that in the short version of the *Apocryphon*,

after having said that for a long time Adam remained immobile, the author says that the powers could not stand him up (BG 50, 16–18; CG III, 23, 16–17); but this is not said in the long version, and further on, in the short as well as the long version, we read that after receiving the spirit Adam "stirred himself," which seems to suggest that before he was inert. He therefore remained inert until the moment when, thanks to advice sent from above, the Demiurge had the idea—an evil idea, from his point of view—to breathe the Spirit he had received from his Mother into him. This agrees with the Valentinians' account (Irenaeus, I, 5, 6), but here again it differs from Saturnilus's account, according to which humanity received the divine spark directly from above.

Adam immediately became superior to those who had created him, and they, astonished and jealous, soon did all that they could to disfigure their work. Again we recognize the first fragment of Valentinus here: "Soon they obscured [or disfigured] their work." In the *Apocryphon* enclosing Adam in a material body is one of the ways the Archons try to quash the Spirit in him.

There is therefore hardly any difference between the myth of Sophia, as the *Apocryphon* relates it, and the Valentinian myth. It is true that in the *Apocryphon* we find long lists of powers and demons derived from the Demiurge and an account of all the elements these powers created in Adam's body and soul. But these long enumerations, which include a host of invented names, very much resembles what we find in later works, and in the *Apocryphon* itself they are perhaps additions to an earlier version. We do not know if they were found in the version Irenaeus knew, for Irenaeus's summary stops soon after the appearance of the Demiurge.

There is, however, a quite notable element that the *Apocryphon* seems to add to the Valentinian myth. This is the strange account according to which the First Archon, the Demiurge, was the father of Cain and Abel. In this account only Seth is the son of Adam. One might ask where the author drew this speculation from. It is indeed probable that he wants to give particular importance to Seth, whom he wants to make a figure of the Son of man. But he could have given the same importance to Abel, as the Mandaeans did, for whom Hibil (Abel) and Shitil (Seth) are both figures of the Savior. He must be referring to certain texts. He could, in fact, be referring both to a Johannine verse and to two verses from Genesis. The Johannine author says, "Cain, being of the evil one, murdered his brother" (1 John 3:12). One might deduce from this that Cain was the son of the devil (whom the author would here identify with the Demiurge). On the other hand, in reference to the birth of Seth, Genesis says that Adam "became the father of a son in his own likeness" (5:3). This expression was not used in relation to the first two sons. One might conclude from this that the first two did not resemble him and did not have the divine likeness that Adam possessed. This might suggest that they were not really his sons, especially if one adds to this Saturnilus's idea that the angel-demiurges

created two sorts of human beings at the beginning, the good and the evil. Finally, one might interpret Gen. 4:25 as suggesting a difference of race between Seth and his brothers. Eve says here, "God has appointed for me another child instead of Abel." *Sperma heteron* might mean "another seed" and therefore "another race," "a different race." *Heteron* does not necessarily mean *allogrion* (cf. Philo, *De posteritate* 172), but it can be understood thus, and one might conclude that Seth's origin was not the same as his brothers."

I do not know whether this speculation was already found among certain Valentinians. But the Valentinians already made the three sons of Adam into *symbols*, or *types* of the three sorts of human beings (the materials, the psychics, and the spirituals), Seth alone representing the spirituals (Irenaeus, I, 7, 5; *Extracts from Theodotus* 54; Tertullian, *Adv. Val.* 29).³⁷ However, they considered all three to be truly sons of Adam (since, according to Tertullian, they say that the three natures that were initially united in Adam were later divided among his three sons). One might therefore suppose that the myth recounted in the *Apocryphon* is a motif that the author wished to add to Valentinianism in order to explain the difference in origin between the three natures. But this is not to say that he drew it from some non-Christian tradition. Of the four sources we have seen that might have inspired him, one is a text from the New Testament, two others from Genesis, which was read by Christians, and the fourth is a theory of Saturnilus's, who was a Gnostic Christian.

3. *The Pleroma, the Divine Beings*

In the description of the divine world, there are more differences between the doctrine of the *Apocryphon* and Valentinianism than in the myth of Sophia. Of these differences some seem unimportant, but others seem at first sight to imply that there is something really new in the *Apocryphon*.

Among the least important differences one might include the fact that the mode of the procession of the aeons is not the same as in Valentinianism. Instead of each pair of aeons being begotten by the preceding pair, the feminine aeons are directly born of the Father at the request of the Mother, and then the masculine aeons are born directly of the Father at the request of Christ, who is himself born of the Father and of the Mother. This mode of procession may have been preferred as demonstrating the link between all the feminine aeons and the Spirit, and of all the masculine aeons with Christ. But this link also appears in another way in Valentinianism. It is nevertheless very important that these two series of aeons bear names that are not always the same as the Valentinian aeons. In any case, they are divine names such as Thought (*Ennoia*), Christ, Nous, Will (of God), Logos, perfect Man, Autogenes, or ideas of divine perfection such as Prescience, Incorruptibility, Eternal Life, Truth, Perfect Knowledge. As in Valentinianism, the masculine and feminine aeons are grouped in syzy-

gies, at least in the version Irenaeus knew. The latter mentions Logos and Thought, Christ and Incorruptibility, Will and Eternal Life, Nous and Prescience, Autogenes and Truth, Man and Perfect Gnosis. In the Coptic translations the syzygies do not appear often. However, one does find traces of them: for example, as in Irenaeus, Eternal Life is associated with Will, and Nous with Prescience (BG 31, 19–20 and parallels); and further on Christ is associated with Incorruptibility (BG 32, 19–21 and parallels). It is therefore possible that on this point Irenaeus's account gives us the original version, since the translations partly confirm it.

The differences in relation to Valentinianism do not detract from the numerous likenesses. For example, in the Coptic translations the description of the Pleroma begins with a long exposition of negative theology on the impossibility of knowing God. (One ought not to picture him to oneself as a God, *or as an existent*, for he is more than this; one ought not to call him either perfect, or blessed, or divine, for he is more than this; he is neither infinite or finite, neither incorporeal nor corporeal, and so on; he alone can know himself.) One of the expressions for this impossibility of understanding him is that God "rests in silence" (BG 26, 7–8 and parallels). This recalls the Valentinian Abyss and Silence. Another expression is that no one knows him "unless it is he who dwelt in him" (BG 26, 11–13 and parallels). This recalls the Johannine expression "he who is in the bosom of the Father," and we have seen that for the Valentinians this expression refers to the Monogenes, the Nous, who according to them is the only one to know God directly. Again, as in Valentinianism, the aeons are "confirmed" by Christ and the Holy Spirit (BG 34, 16–18; CG II, 8, 27–28). Finally, if the syzygies are different from the Valentinian syzygies, at least the notion of syzygy seems proper to Valentinianism.

What does seem new in comparison with Valentinianism are the names given to some of these entities, in particular the name of Barbelo, given to the supreme Mother, and the name of Autogenes, given to Christ.

As far as Barbelo is concerned, I have shown in the first part of this work³⁸ that this name may well have meant "Son of the Lord" or "Son of the spouse," as the roots it seems to be composed of at first sight suggest. Barbelo is the Mother, but she is both a masculine and feminine being, and the *Apocryphon* sometimes refers to her by a masculine name. Here she is called "the First Man" (BG 27, 19–28, 3 and 29, 10–13; CG II, 5, 6–9, and 6, 3–5; III, 7, 23–8, 4). She is *Ennoia* (Thought or Spirit), but although feminine, *Ennoia* can be called Son of Man or Second Man in a doctrine related to that of the *Apocryphon* (Irenaeus, I, 30, 1). When she is called Son of Man this means Son of God, the Father being called "First Man" in this doctrine (Irenaeus, I, 30, 1). In the work entitled *The Thunder*, the Mother says: "It is my spouse who begot me" (13, 29–30). The last phrase might give the best explanation of the name Barbelo: which would be "Son of his spouse." If this is indeed the meaning of the name, it would imply no doctrinal novelty in comparison with Valentinianism.

For in Valentinianism the highest Mother is derived from the divine Abyss and is also associated with him as a spouse.

One might ask whether the idea implied in the name Barbelo is not found already in some way in the *Tripartite Treatise*. One gets the impression that the first emanation of God in this treatise, the one who is called "the Son," might well be *Ennoia*, Thought, that is, the Spirit, rather than Christ. It is also Christ, for these two divine beings, the Mother and the Monogenes (the first figure of Christ) seem to form only one being here. It is clearly pointed out that it is in knowing his own "Thought" that the Father begets his first emanation, the one called Son, Monogenes, and First-Born (56, 1—57, 23). If one related 56, 23—25 ("he has a Son . . . who is silent concerning him") with 56, 35—57, 8 ("he who begot himself, who has a Thought . . . who is . . . the perception of himself, which is . . . the Silence and the Wisdom and the Grace"), one sees that the features that characterize the Mother are attributed to the Son: Thought, Grace, Silence (cf. Irenaeus, I, 1, 1). The Trinity we find in the *Tripartite Treatise*, the Trinity Father-Son-Church, has perhaps been too hastily identified with the normal Christian Trinity, Father, Son (= Christ), and Holy Spirit. In fact, the first Son in this treatise has the features of the Mother, that is of the Holy Spirit, and the Church could be the "perfect Man" of the Epistle to the Ephesians, who is both Christ and the Church (the latter being in some sort the second Holy Spirit). The first Son seems to be both *Ennoia* and the *Nous* of the Valentinians, that is, the first Spirit and the highest figure of Christ. There is also a close link between the silent Mother and the *Nous* in Valentinianism: both are the only ones to know the Father directly and perfectly, but they do not reveal him, it is the *Logos* who reveals him, or the divine Man associated with the Church, or the Limit and the Cross. These reveal him while to a certain extent hiding him. In short, there is some difficulty in clearly defining who are the second and third persons of the Trinity in the *Tripartite Treatise*, and in what order Christ and the Holy Spirit are placed. It is possible that the name Barbelo fits well with a second person who would be both the Son and the Thought of God.

Moreover, the Gnostic Trinity usually appears in the order Father, Mother (= Holy Spirit), and Son, not, as in the normal Christian Trinity, in the order Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The name Barbelo might therefore be explained on the basis of Valentinianism. She is the first Son, as in the *Shepherd* of Hermas.³⁹ But how could Christ have been called "the Autogenes," that is "Begotten of himself," when as Son he is par excellence Begotten of God? In Irenaeus's account Autogenes seems to be distinguished from Christ; he is derived from *Ennoia* and from the *Logos*. But it can be seen that he is Christ from the fact that he is the "image" of God and that "all things are subjected to him" (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15; Matt. 11:27; 28:18; John 3:35, 17:2). He is also the father of Adamas, another figure of Christ, which shows that here the diverse figures of Christ are depicted as begetting each other.

In any case, in the Coptic versions the Autogenes and Christ are often identified (cf. BG 30, 4-17; 31, 17-18;⁴⁰ 32, 9; 32, 19-33, 4; 34, 7-18; 35, 8; CG II, 7-20 and 30-33; 8, 20-26; 9, 1-2; III, 9, 15-10, 2; 10, 22-23; 11, 6-7 and 15-18; 12, 16-21; 13, 6; IV, 10, 28-29; 11, 6-12; 12, 2-6). It is therefore beyond doubt that the name Autogenes is a name of Christ. Where could this appellation given to the one who is Son par excellence have come from?

At first sight, one might think that it came from paganism. J. Whitaker⁴¹ has shown that expressions meaning "begotten by himself" appear among the praises the Greeks addressed to certain divinities, especially to divinities representing time or the world. Time continually begets itself, and so does the world. The cosmic God of the Stoics, the God they could call Zeus but who, for them, was identical with the world or fate, was more than any other God begotten of himself. Moreover, Whittaker shows that after being used to celebrate the cosmic God, these qualifications were applied by some pagan authors to the transcendent God, superior to the world. Plotinus, for example, will say that the first principle exists by itself, by its free will, because in him being and will coincide.

Whittaker also shows—and this is particularly interesting—that from a certain time expressions meaning "begotten of himself" were no longer applied by pagan philosophers to the first principle or the highest God, but to a *second* principle or *second* God, or more generally, to *derivative* principles. Porphyry says that the Nous, the second principle of the Neoplatonists, is *autogennētos* and *autopatōr* (father of himself), although he proceeds from the supreme principle. Iamblichus says that it is not the first God but the second who is *autopatōr*, although he came from the first. Proclus will also say, not of the first principle but of certain derived principles, that they are *authypostata*, "existents by themselves."⁴² These philosophers explain these statements, which appear to us as contradictory as calling Christ "Autogenes," by the fact that the first principle does not move, and being perfectly immobile cannot beget. The derived principles therefore produce themselves from him, *they come from him by themselves*, for he does not act. In sum, this means that one must speak of a *procession* of derived principles, and not of *filiation*.

But this reason seems to be rather abstract and rarified, and one might ask whether it is worth making a distinction between coming out from a principle by oneself and being begotten by this principle. Is the difference so great between speaking of procession from a principle or of filiation? One might even ask whether some other reason did not move these philosophers to resort to this subtle argument. Whatever the case, there is an analogy here with the title Autogenes given to Christ by the author of the *Apocryphon* and other Gnostics. All the more as these Gnostics, like the philosophers, intend that the second principle proceeds from the first. For them "begotten by oneself" does not strictly mean "unbegotten." The Peratai, for example, distinguished between a first principle, which is "unbe-

gotten," a second, which is "begotten of itself," and a third, which is "begotten" (Hippolytus, *Ref.* v, 12, 3). The Autogenes, who nevertheless proceeds from God, is comparable to the second principle called autogenes by Porphyry and Iamblichus.

One is tempted to say that the Gnostics took this from classical philosophy. This does not mean that they were non-Christian, any more than they are when they are inspired by Plato, or the Fathers of the Church when they are also inspired by Plato, or Saint Thomas Aquinas when he is inspired by Aristotle.

But one must pay attention to dates and times. The earliest philosophers of whom one can say with certainty that they attributed self-generation to the *second principle*, to precisely the one they ought to have thought of as begotten, and whom they in fact do think of as derived, are Porphyry (third century) and Iamblichus (third-fourth century). Perhaps it was already found in Numenius (second half of second century), but this is not certain; Whittaker hesitates on this question.⁴³ Similarly, he thinks it only probable that there is a reference to the second principle rather than the first in a fragment of the *Chaldean Oracles* (time of Marcus Aurelius) where it is stated that the nous of the Father is *autogenethlos*.⁴⁴ It is true that it is possible that the priority of the Gnostics in this matter is merely apparent, that it is simply due to the disappearance of many of the works of the philosophers. But we do not have proof that this idea appeared among the philosophers before appearing among the Gnostics.⁴⁵

The priority of the Gnostics seems even clearer in that the author of the *Apocryphon* is not the first Gnostic in whom it is found. In the Valentinian doctrine described by Irenaeus at the beginning of his work, and which is probably that of Ptolemy, we find that among the ten aeons derived from the Logos and Life there is one called *Autophuēs* (Irenaeus, I, 1, 2). The meaning of this word is the same as that of Autogenes. It is true that this name is given to an aeon of secondary importance, not to Christ; but it might appear even more surprising that it is given to a secondary aeon. Moreover, all the masculine aeons, even the secondary ones, are more or less figures of Christ. For example, one of the other aeons that comes from Logos and Life is called Monogenes (Irenaeus, I, 1, 2), which, as we know, is applied to Christ in John's Gospel. The name of *Autophuēs*, which Ptolemy gives to one of his aeons, allows us to suppose that the idea of the self-generation of Christ was already found in one of the first disciples of Valentinus. Similarly, in the *Tripartite Treatise*, which may be by Heracleon, one finds self-generation applied more than once to derived principles.

It is perhaps in this treatise that we can best grasp, despite the obscurity of this work, the meaning that the title Autogenes, applied to Christ, may have had in Christian Gnosis. First of all, we find that this title is applied here to God the Father. But it is not given to him from the beginning. At the beginning, in a long exposition of negative theology, the fun-

damental description of the Father is that of "unbegotten." It is only from the moment he thinks of himself, and thus makes a Son appear, who is his own Thought, that the Father is said not exactly "to be begotten of himself" but "to be begetting himself" (56, 1—57, 8).⁴⁶ This means, I think, that what he begets is still himself, that it is *another self*. This does not mean that he begot himself as the *first* but that he begets as the *second*, insofar as he has a Son and this Son is like him and consubstantial with him. He is Father of himself insofar as he is Father of a second principle, and this is not at all because being immutable he cannot beget, as in the Neoplatonists; on the contrary, it is when he begets a Son that it is said he begets himself, apparently because what he begets is still himself, because it is *the same God as him*. This use of the idea of self-generation seems to me to be conformed to Christianity after all, conformed to the idea of a single God in three persons. The second person is the same God as the first. Doubtless when Gnostic Christians say that God begets himself, they are using an expression the pagans had previously used to celebrate certain divinities such as Time or the World. But it seems that the Gnostics use it for other reasons and with another meaning. One might say that time begets itself, but this does not mean that it begets another principle, a principle both itself and other than itself; it simply means that time continues to be what it was, that it continually prolongs itself. For the author of the *Tripartite Treatise* it means that the first principle has a Son, who though being the same as the Father is *another figure* than the Father.

If God in begetting the Son begot himself, it follows that the Son might be said "to be begotten of himself." It is true that this expression is not used in relation to the Son in the first few pages of the *Tripartite Treatise*. But it might be logically deduced from what is said of the Father and the way in which he makes his Thought appear. The Son is begotten by a being who is himself, since this being *begets himself* in begetting him.

Next, this Son himself has sons. Because he conceives himself, he begets an innumerable multitude of sons similar to him who together make up the Church, the third person of the Trinity. She also exists from the beginning. The Son therefore begets himself in his turn in the person of the Church, although this is not expressly said of him as it was of the Father before. At least it is indicated that his link with his sons is the same as that of the Father with him (58, 34—59, 1). The Church is prior to the aeons but she also exists in them, for she is the substance of spiritual beings (58, 30—35). The aeons might beget by thought what they conceive, but the begotten is only a real being if he was thought in agreement with and with the mutual help of the aeons (64, 8—27; 70, 20—29).⁴⁷ The Father did not reveal himself to the aeons at first, because if he revealed himself to them in his greatness, they would have perished (64, 28—37). He *withdrew* into himself (64, 37—65, 1). (One finds the idea of the *withdrawal of God* here that will later be rediscovered by Kabbalistic Jews.)⁴⁸ He therefore acted in such a way that something "unfurled" (a sort of curtain, 65, 4—6), and

what was thus stretched out (which is probably the Limit⁴⁹) is what gave “stability and a dwelling place to the universe” (65, 6–9).⁵⁰

This being (the curtain that separates the Father from the aeons) is also that which allows the aeons to have a true knowledge of the Father, for this knowledge cannot be direct. In fact it seems to be identified with the Son, who alone can make known what the Father is. This Son is the unity of the All; this is why the aeons of which the All is made up “were attracted to a mingling, a harmony, and unity with one another,” thanks to the unity from which they derived (68, 26–28). “They offered glory worthy of the Father from the pleromatic congregation, which is a single image” (68, 29–32). Here (68, 33–69, 40) we already see the formation of a figure of the Savior produced from the accord and harmony of all the aeons (cf. below, 86, 11–87, 23). The aeons can only beget perfect beings, that is to say, real beings, in agreement. “They beget in the act of assisting one another” (70, 22–23). (This doctrine of the necessity of agreement corresponds to the doctrine of the syzygy in Ptolemy.) The Spirit, who is the will of the Father (72, 1–2), also inspires in the aeons the desire to help each other. All this seems to be intended to prepare for the account of Sophia’s folly, who did not observe the Law of agreement (or of the syzygy) and did not wait for the mediation of the Son to want to know the Father.

In order to explain how this folly was possible, the author of the treatise says more than once that the aeons are free, that they possess free will (69, 24–27; 74, 18–23).⁵¹ Finally, he says, whether of the Father or the Son—for I cannot see clearly to which he refers—that “he renews himself along with the one who came upon him, by his brother” (75, 5–7). Thus “he begets him like himself so to speak” (according to the French translation of the *Tripartite Treatise*, vol. 1, 115), or “he begets himself so to speak” (according to the English translation of H. W. Attridge and D. Mueller⁵²). There is much that is obscure in this passage. I think I understand only that God or his Son renews himself, and consequently begets himself, so to speak, in the aeons that come toward him by observing certain conditions.

Now we come to the fall of Sophia and the appearance of Christ, born of Sophia. We have seen that for Valentinus Christ (or an aspect of Christ) was born of Sophia, who had fallen outside the Pleroma, and that, soon separating himself from his mother, he rose and rejoined the Pleroma (Irenaeus, 1, 11, 1; *Extracts from Theodotus* 23, 2; 32, 3). It is therefore of Christ that the *Tripartite Treatise* says (77, 37–78, 27) that after the fall of “logos,” that is, of Sophia, he hastened to rejoin what was his by abandoning what came from “deficiency.” (In fact, according to Irenaeus, Sophia had conceived him in remembering the Pleroma, he therefore belonged to the plenitude.) Now, this Christ seems to be called “he who was produced from himself” (77, 37–78, 4), at least according to the French translation (*Tripartite Treatise*, vol. 1, 119–21). “He who was produced from himself, as the aeon of single unity, rushed toward what is his and to

his parent of the Pleroma." But Attridge and Mueller's English translation (*NHL* 68) reads: "The one whom he brought forth from himself as a unitary aeon rushed up to that which is his and to his kin." Here *he* refers to the "logos," and this means "he whom Sophia gave birth to," not "he who was produced from himself." However, further on, in 78, 8–13, begetting by oneself is again mentioned, and again the French translation seems to suggest that it is Christ who begets himself. "For, when he was produced from him (= from the logos), that is he who was produced from himself, being absolutely perfect, became weak, like a female nature robbed of its virility" (vol. 1, 121). It seems to me that the translators have understood: "When he (Christ) produced from him (from the logos, that is, Sophia), that is he who was produced from himself, being absolutely perfect, he (the logos, Sophia) became weak like a female nature." But is there not some contradiction in saying both that Christ was produced from Sophia and that he was produced from himself? Here again Attridge and Mueller's translation is a little different. "When he who produced himself as perfect actually did bring himself forth, he became weak like a female nature which has abandoned its virility" (*NHL*, 69). The meaning might be the same as in the French translation, on condition that the first *he* refers to Christ, and the second to the logos (Sophia). But it is strange that if this pronoun does refer to Christ the first time and to the logos the second time, this was not mentioned in the sentence itself. One might rather understand approximately this: "When the logos (Sophia), who produced himself as a perfect being, actually issued himself beyond himself, he remained weak." It would always be Sophia who, on the one hand, actually issued herself beyond herself, and on the other hand, became weak, a female nature robbed of its virility.

One must in fact note that Sophia is also described, in 77, 11–17, as producing herself, at least if one considers a certain part of her nature, the perfect part that was still in her. The logos, that is, Sophia, is described on the one hand as producing itself as a perfect being, and on the other as producing, shadows, semblances, imaginary beings, following her foolhardy attempt. "For on the one hand the logos begot itself, being perfect insofar as he was alone, unique, in the glory of the Father. . . . On the other hand, what he wanted to grasp . . . , he begot it in shadows, semblances and similitudes" (vol. 1, 119). (Attridge and Mueller: "The logos begot himself as a perfect unity for the glory of the Father . . . , but those whom he wished to take hold as an establishment, he begot in shadows, models and likenesses.") Sophia was in fact *divided* when she tried to grasp the divine depth (77, 21). Following this division, she became imperfect, and instead of real beings, able to take a place in the Pleroma, she gave birth to imaginary beings. But while begetting herself she begets that which, remaining perfect in her, detaches itself from her and ascends to the Pleroma. She produces it from herself insofar as she is still an aeon of unity and can produce true beings, and at the same time she produces herself,

for this being is her true self.⁵³ It is this part of herself which separates itself and rejoins the Pleroma. *To say that Sophia has fallen outside the Pleroma, which is to say outside of perfection, and to say that what was perfect in her detached itself from her and abandoned her is to say the same thing.* It is herself who, in issuing this part of herself, separated it from what she had become. Here we understand the meaning of the myth (of Christ abandoning his mother) that at first sight seemed so shocking. And we can also understand that if Christ is said to be produced from himself, this is not only because he separated himself from his mother and regained the place that was his; it is also because he was begotten by a being who is himself, a being of whom he is the true essence. He was begotten by himself because Sophia, who is himself, like the Son, in the Trinity, is begotten by himself because he is begotten by the Father who is the same God as he.

These speculations, though oversubtle and rather refined, seem to me to have more meaning than the Neoplatonists' explanations of the reasons why the second principle, though derived from the first, should be said to be "begotten by himself." And if one of these theories has influenced the other, it seems to me that it is not impossible that it was that of the Gnostics. It is remarkable that the two earliest texts in which Whittaker thinks he finds—perhaps—the self-generation of the second principle should be a fragment of Numenius (frag. 16, *Des Places*) and a fragment of the *Chaldean Oracles* (frag. 39, *Des Places*), that is to say, texts coming from authors who are suspected of being influenced by Gnosticism. If it is true that this idea is found here, it may then have passed from Numenius to Porphyry and from the *Oracles* to Iamblichus.

That the "begotten of himself" should be the second divine person can only be understood ultimately in Christianity. The first person in Christianity is begotten by nothing, it is simply unbegotten. Whereas the second is begotten by the Father, by God, but by a God who is the same essence as this person and who is therefore in one sense identical to him. The second divine being is therefore begotten, but begotten by himself.

Granted, more work must be done before one can state that the self-generation of the *second principle* appeared among Christians earlier than in pagan philosophy—although this is now Whittaker's opinion—and to hold as an established fact that it did indeed have the meaning we assume it had among Christians. But for the present, it does not seem to me that this paradoxical idea, which we find in the *Apocryphon of John*, necessarily derives from pagan philosophy or theology.

4. Conclusion

I therefore think that the *Apocryphon of John* is Christian, not just Christianized; moreover, I think that it is linked with Valentianism, not as its source but, on the contrary, as for the most part proceeding from it. In

reference to the "four illuminators," I have shown that most of the elements of this myth can be explained by Valentinianism, whereas the corresponding Valentinian teaching could hardly have been suggested by them. We have also seen that the myth of Sophia in the *Apocryphon* scarcely differs from the Valentinian myth, and that certain names of divine beings, which seem to be new in relation to Valentinianism, might be explained by Valentinian theology. As far as Ialdabaoth is concerned, whom we have not mentioned in the present chapter, it is also easy to explain the use of this name, given the interpretation that seemed the most probable to me.⁵⁴

It is true that the *Apocryphon* has a particular character. The author enriches, or rather overloads, the great Valentinian myth with new myths and new symbols. He likes to find correspondences between themes in the Old Testament and Christianity. Not that he is more favorable toward the Old Testament than the Valentinians; on the contrary, he is more severe toward the Demiurge. But as far as images, or a mine for images, are concerned, he appreciates the Old Testament, as well as works like the *Book of Enoch*, and he imitates them by using invented names, which are more or less Jewish or Judaized. By his love of mystery, obscurity, indirect revelations, and stories to recount, he transforms theology into a myth whose meaning must be sought more completely than the Valentinians. It is also possible that he is sometimes inspired by Christian Gnostics other than Valentinus, by Saturnilus for example, and is seeking to make a synthesis of a number of schools. But it is by Valentinus and his first disciples that he is inspired the most.⁵⁵

Chapter XIII

On the So-Called Non-Christian Works Found at Nag Hammadi

The works found at Nag Hammadi—many of which are far from clear—have not yet been sufficiently studied to enable us to speak in anything but a provisional manner. The remarks I am going to make have no other end than to try to alert scholars who affirm with assurance that some of these works are absolutely non-Christian.

Such an affirmation can only be a hypothesis and not a statement of fact. First of all because Christianity must be defined, and who can do that? (The Pope himself defines above all *what is not orthodox* in Christianity; he does not, I think, say what it is. The *credo* recited in certain Christian Churches is not exactly the same as that which is recited in certain others.) Also because the simple absence of the name of Jesus Christ in a work is not certain proof that the author was not a Christian, or at least that he did not use Christian ideas (if it is a case of an author who lived after the appearance of Christianity in a country in which it had widely penetrated). In the alleged non-Christian works one finds the names of divine figures such as the Logos, Adamas, the Autogenes, the Savior, the Son, and so on. Now, we cannot affirm that these names do not refer to Christ. We know that they refer to Christ in other works whose doctrine is exactly parallel to that of these “non-Christian” works. It is certainly possible to assume that where Christ is named his name has been added; but it is also possible to assume that where this name does not appear it has been taken out, or avoided—reasons for it can be found. We see in some works, for example in the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, that there is a tendency to substitute the name Logos for that of Christ; Christ is nevertheless not absent from this work, he even holds an essential place in it, the Logos being represented as his son. Finally, we see from a study of the myths, and especially the *names* given to mythical entities, that certain relationships are possible, even probable, between some of these works. Now, all those which are held to be non-Christian seem to depend on the *Apocryphon of John*, or an “Ophitism” closely related to the doctrine of the *Apocryphon*. We have seen that the latter refers to Christ and seems to imply a knowledge of Valentinianism; this already makes it probable that the doctrine of those works, which seem to depend on it, are of

Christian provenance, even if the name of Christ and that of Jesus do not appear in them.

The *Apocryphon of John* seems to have given rise to a whole body of literature. A good number of the works found at Nag Hammadi are works whose authors use or develop themes in the *Apocryphon*, as if this work had founded a sect.

In a general way it seems that almost all the works from Nag Hammadi derive more or less directly from Valentinianism. Some derive from it directly; some by the mediation of the *Apocryphon of John*; and finally, some others by the mediation of an "Ophitism" that seems to be the doctrine Irenaeus describes in *Adversus haereses* I, 30 and which is closely related to the "Sethianism" in Irenaeus, I, 29, that is to say, to the *Apocryphon of John*.

A careful study of the themes and names will allow us, I think, perhaps already allows us, at least to establish the *possibility* of these relations. Moreover, in most cases the so-called non-Christian writings *themselves* contain hints of Christian provenance, and not just by their possible or probable background.

I. "SETHIAN" WORKS CONSIDERED TO BE NON-CHRISTIAN OR SIMPLY "CHRISTIANIZED"

We will first of all consider the group of works Schenke calls Sethian, ones he thinks are derived from an originally non-Christian tradition. These works, besides the *Apocryphon of John*, are: the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, *Zostrianos*, the *Three Steles of Seth*, *Allogenes*, *Marsanes*, *Melchizedek*, the *Trimorphic Protennoia*, the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, *Norea*, and the *Apocalypse of Adam*.

In order not to add to the length of this study, I will leave to one side those works which clearly refer to Christianity, with the exception of two of them. I will not speak of *Melchizedek* or of the *Trimorphic Protennoia*; but I will speak a little about the *Gospel of the Egyptians* and the *Hypostasis of the Archons* because the first of these two works allows us to grasp something of the tradition between the *Apocryphon of John* and a work such as *Zostrianos*, and because the second allows us to see a particular sort of "Sethianism," which could rather be an "Ophitism" (so unjustified are probably all these appellations, due to heresiologists). The *Hypostasis of the Archons* in fact reveals a doctrine that *may* not derive directly from the *Apocryphon* but which seems to have the same link with it as the heresy in Irenaeus, I, 30 with that of Irenaeus, I, 29, that is to say, a very close link.

1. *The Gospel of the Egyptians*

The *Gospel of the Egyptians* is not among the works generally thought of as non-Christian (though it is still said to be simply "Christianized"). If we

speak of it here, it is because, among the so-called Sethian works, it is the one that seems to depend most directly on the *Apocryphon of John* and because also having obvious links with other "Sethian" works, for example, with *Zostrianos*, it might be regarded as an intermediary link between the *Apocryphon of John* and these works. It allows us to understand that *Zostrianos*, where incontestable signs of Christianity are extremely rare, nevertheless depends on a Valentinian, Christian Gnosticism.

The *Gospel of the Egyptians* is without doubt a Christian work. Here Christ is called by his name Christ and by a number of other names: the Son, the Logos, the Autogenes, Adamas, the Child. Here Jesus is referred to under his own name and under the figure of the "great Seth," son of Adamas (= son of Man); perhaps also under the curious name of Esephech. This Esephech is referred to as being "the Child of the Child." Christ being the Child, and Jesus having with Christ the same relation as Seth with Adamas, Jesus might be called the Child of the Child.¹

The *Gospel of the Egyptians* seems to depend directly on the *Apocryphon of John*. Only it is more complicated in its description of the transcendent world and much less developed so far as the myth of Sophia is concerned. The divine or angelic persons the *Apocryphon* speaks of are found again in this *Gospel*, but the author adds others. He multiplies the sublime, mysterious entities, for whom he often invents bizarre names that are evocative of magic. The signs of the decadence of Valentinianism are much more marked here than in the *Apocryphon*. The author seems to be primarily preoccupied with celebrating "the richness of Light," in populating the luminous world with innumerable glorious figures and in describing the "ineffable joy" that reigns among these beings. Here one does not feel the tragic side of the Valentinian myth. *The fall of Sophia is not recounted*. There are simply a few allusions to a "deficiency" that remains unexplained. The appearance of the Demiurge seems to be due to a voluntary decision of the world above. Eleleth desires a day, "after five thousand years," when there will be someone to reign over chaos and the inferior world (whose existence is not explained). Then a "hylic Sophia" appears, that is, a material Wisdom, who probably does not fall since she seems to be of material origin, belonging to the world below; and then another intervention from above makes the Demiurge appear. The passage in which he manifests his arrogance, in declaring himself to be the only God, is the only part of the work that might darken the picture. But almost immediately after, Seth, with the help of the angels, the illuminators, and other figures belonging to the Light, sets the history of salvation going. This divine Seth, son of Adamas, finally incarnates himself in Jesus, Son of Man.

The birth of the hylic Sophia and the Demiurge "after five thousand years" perhaps refers to the appearance of Judaism in human history.

In their edition of the *Gospel of the Egyptians*² Böhlig and Wisse observe that in some contexts parallel to those of the *Apocryphon of John* the name of Christ is replaced by Logos. They conclude from this that in this *Gospel*

Christ is simply a “secondary,” marginal figure. They imply that the author of the *Apocryphon* may well have introduced the name Christ where an earlier tradition, a tradition that may not have been Christian, mentions the Logos (a concept that is not necessarily Christian). Thus the *Gospel of the Egyptians* would preserve a tradition prior to the *Apocryphon* and less “Christianized,” perhaps even completely non-Christian in origin. It seems to me that the tendency to replace Christ by Logos does not suffice as a basis for this supposition. The *Gospel of the Egyptians* seems to be obviously later than the *Apocryphon*. It has been estimated that it could have been written around the end of the second century or the beginning of the third.³ In all the cases where it is parallel to the *Apocryphon* it is simpler to assume that it depends upon it rather than an earlier tradition. The very differences one finds in comparison with the *Apocryphon* seem by their character to be the result of a subsequent evolution rather than a return to an earlier tradition. And, finally, one must take note that here Christ plays a role that is just as important as in the *Apocryphon*, even if he is named less often by the name of Christ and more often by other names. For it is said that the figures that might be thought to take his place derive from him. The “great living Logos, the Autogenes” is the son of the “great Christ” (CG IV, 60, 1–8). And the rest of this text (8–22) though mutilated certainly seems to mean that it is the “great Christ,” the son of “silence,” who created by a Word, and therefore by the Logos. Thus, the Logos is the son and instrument of Christ. Adamas, on the other hand, is only a figure or another name for Christ. He is the one “through whom and for whom everything was made,” and “without whom nothing would have been made” (CG IV, 61, 8–11, and III, 49, 10–12). These are quotations drawn from Paul and John. Does the author, who knows Paul and John, not know that it is of Christ that it is said that everything was made through him and for him (1 Cor. 8:6, and Col. 1:16)? that it is of Christ that John speaks when he says of the Logos that nothing was made without him (John 1:3)? It is indeed difficult to think that an author who knew John is less Christian than another because in speaking of Christ he often prefers to call him the Logos. There is little to suggest that this Logos is simply that of the Stoics.⁴

I therefore think that the *Gospel of the Egyptians* is a work of Christian Gnosticism and that there is nothing that allows one to say that it is connected with a less Christian Gnosticism than the *Apocryphon of John*. It is to all appearances on the latter that it depends. When the author of the *Gospel of the Egyptians* distinguishes a number of figures in Christ and speaks of him sometimes under one name and sometimes under another, he is simply doing what Irenaeus criticized the Valentinians for doing.

2. *Zostrianos*

The Christian origin of the ideas contained in *Zostrianos* are much less obvious at first sight. They might even be invisible to those who are not acquainted with this sort of speculation. For the name of Christ or Jesus

is not found in *Zostrianos*. This allows our scholars to say that this work is in no way Christian.

However, one must take note first of all that there is probably a direct link between the *Gospel of the Egyptians* and *Zostrianos*. There is such a connection between the two works that it would be very difficult for one of the two authors not to have known the work of the other. Almost all the new entities and almost all the new names that the *Gospel of the Egyptians* adds to those known to the *Apocryphon of John* are found in *Zostrianos*. In it one finds, for example: Esephech, Doxomedon, Youel-Yoel, Mirothoe-Mirothea, Hormos-Ormos, Yesseus Mazareus Yessedekus; Micheus, Michar, Mnesinous; Seldao, Elainos-Elenos; Gamaliel, Gabriel, Samblo, Abrasax; Olsen-Olses; Isaouel-Isauel; Theopemptos; Adramas, Strempsouchos; Plesithea, and so on. Moreover, some of these entities are found only in the *Gospel of the Egyptians* and *Zostrianos*; we do not find them in any other "Sethian" work we know of. I think one can probably conclude from this that one of these two works directly depends upon the other.

It is the *Gospel of the Egyptians* that depends upon *Zostrianos*, or the reverse? It is certainly difficult to decide for certain. But I think that if one is not persuaded beforehand that a work that is less Christian in Gnosticism is necessarily prior to one that is more so, one realizes that there are reasons for thinking that it is *Zostrianos* that is later than the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, upon which it depends.

In fact, although the figures populating the divine world are so numerous in the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, the portrait of this world in *Zostrianos* is even more populated and more complex. The process of multiplication of the entities and names seems to be even further advanced. The author of *Zostrianos* seems to add yet more to the entities and names that the author of the *Gospel of the Egyptians* seems to have invented, for *Zostrianos* is acquainted with almost all the entities mentioned in the *Gospel to the Egyptians*, whereas the latter is not acquainted with all those *Zostrianos* mentions. The structure of the work is also more complicated. The author gathers together accounts of successive revelations, successive baptisms. It is true that there is perhaps more philosophical or theological thought in *Zostrianos* than in the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, and in this sense the work seems less decadent. But its thought approximates Neoplatonism and might be a development belonging to the third century, whereas the *Gospel of the Egyptians* might either belong to the third or end of the second century. *Zostrianos* was in the hands of the Gnostics who followed Plotinus's lectures. This does not prove that it was written by one of them, or even that it was then a very recent work; but these are possibilities. Its syncretism is more developed than the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, since the author wants to associate the authority of the prophet of Iran with his doctrine, a doctrine already imbued with Platonism. And we must not

forget that it was in the third century that Mani wanted to reunite Zoroastrianism and Christianity, and Plotinus himself participated in a military expedition against the Persians in order to become better acquainted with the doctrines of the East.⁵

If the author of the *Gospel of the Egyptians* knew *Zostrianos*, why did he not mention it, he who likes so many mysterious names, a certain number of which are found in *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes*, a work that also seems close to Neoplatonism and that was also in the hands of those who listened to Plotinus? This seems to indicate that such works were not yet known by the "Sethians" at the time of the *Gospel of the Egyptians*. The author of this *Gospel* certainly seems to be a man who collects all the bizarre names he can find.

But if the author of *Zostrianos* was acquainted with the *Gospel of the Egyptians* and if he draws on a large part of his teachings, why does he never pronounce the names Jesus or Christ? He could not have been ignorant of these names, if he found them in this work. Why did he not borrow them as he borrows all the others? Moreover, at the time in which he seems to have written and in a "Sethian" milieu, he could not have not known them. He must therefore have deliberately avoided them. He avoided them while preserving figures that are nothing other than representations of Christ or Jesus. Above all, he preserves Autogenes ("begotten of himself"), who is for him the third person of the Trinity, the Son. (The two other persons for him are "He who is hidden," that is the Father, and "the First to Appear," who is the Mother.)⁶ The author also preserves the other designations of Christ: Son, Logos (cf., for example, 17, 11; 30, 23), Adamas, Seth, the Child, and the Child of the Child. And I do not need to mention the four illuminators, who we have seen are probably names or characteristics of Christ; or certain apparently mysterious names, for example, *Yesseus Mazareus Yessedekus*, which the author found in the *Gospel of the Egyptians* and in which it is scarcely possible not to recognize the name, carefully distorted, of Jesus of Nazareth (47, 5-6; 57, 5-6).⁷ Finally, Schenke himself acknowledges that in the passage 48, 26-28 ("He was there again, he who suffers although he is unable to suffer"⁸) there is a reference to Jesus Christ.⁹ Why then does the author avoid naming him when he knows him and preserves everything that stands for him in the works from which he draws his inspiration? It is not difficult to guess the reason, or at least possible reasons. Not only is *Zostrianos* that is, Zoroaster, earlier than Christ—and it is fitting for a prophet not to be too precise—but he is the founder of a religion that is not Christianity. The author of *Zostrianos* has no intention of depicting Zoroaster as unfaithful to his own religion. On the contrary, he depicts him as consulting the God of his fathers every day, and as affirming that his ancestors, who "sought," have "found" (3, 15-19). He wants Zoroaster to be a faithful Mazdean, and not a professed Christian. This does not stop him from teaching

through him a doctrine that he presents as true and that agrees perfectly with Christianity as seen by a "Sethian." His idea is that Christianity was foreshadowed by the pagans.

What strikes us from the beginning in this treatise is that it is Valentinian. Anyone who is acquainted with Valentinianism cannot fail to recognize it. For example, one finds "Silence" which is the "First Thought" (24, 11-14; 52, 20-22; 124, 1-2). One finds the "gentleness" of God, who sent the Savior (131, 14-15). The Father seems to be called *Propator* ("Forefather" in the English translation, 20, 8;¹⁰ cf. Irenaeus, I, 1, 1). "Femininity" is connected with evil, and "masculinity" with good (1, 13-14; 2, 13-14; 131, 5-8; cf. also the title "male" or "three times male" given to the divine beings). Sophia brought obscurity to birth (9, 16-17). She "looked downward" (9, 15-16; 27, 12);¹¹ but she was given a "place of rest" because of her repentance (10, 8-9). The dwelling places of the Archons are "copies of the aeons" (5, 18-19; 11, 3-9), which reminds us that in the *Apocryphon of John* (BG 39, 8-10 and parallels) the Demiurge created the dwelling places of the twelve Archons according to the model of the eternal aeons, and that in the *Tripartite Treatise* (78, 28-34) the beings derived from the "arrogant thought" are likenesses of the "pleromas," which is to say, likenesses of perfect aeons. In *Zostrianos* the Demiurge is called the "Cosmocrator" (1, 18-19), or the "Archon" of the angels of the thirteen aeons (4, 29). There are thirteen aeons, or rather thirteen copies of aeons, apparently because the dwelling place of the Cosmocrator is added to those of the twelve Archons created by him—twelve Archons, seven of whom reign in the visible heavens and five in the inferior world. The Cosmocrator created the visible world according to a reflection he saw of the eternal world (10, 1-5); thus, as in Valentinus, the world is an image of the eternal, however imperfect this image is. The beings above are those who truly exist (43, 22; 61, 15-18; 124, 14). The beings below do not really exist (45, 26-27; 117, 11-15). God is the being who truly exists preexcellence (66, 10-14; 79, 24-25; 80, 6; 81, 15-18; 82, 14-15; 125, 11-12). He is unknown and unknowable (20, 12; 65, 15-16; 119, 12-16). The name most used of him in *Zostrianos* is "the Hidden." He is "the Good" (117, 15-17). He is also "the One" (81, 20; 85, 15-17; 87, 16-18; 115, 13-14), and as in Plato the Good is also the One. The All exists in him (22, 2-3; 64, 19-20; 65, 23; 115, 8-9). The distinction of the materials, the psychics, and the spirituals seems to be the subject of pages 26-28 and 42-44, insofar as it is possible to understand these pages in their present state. In any case, the "psychic chaos" must be surmounted, and so must "corporeal obscurity" (1, 10-13).

All this conjures up Valentinianism. Should one think that this is because Valentinianism itself derived from speculations analogous to those of *Zostrianos*? But, though more complicated than earlier Gnosticism, Valentinianism is much simpler than the doctrine of *Zostrianos*. There is not such an accumulation of levels, baptisms, successive revelations, mythical

figures, and invented names. Further, the meaning of each speculation is clearer in Valentinianism, because each is generally developed and supported by scriptural references. Whereas here the Valentinian speculations are simply called to mind, briefly recalled, as it is natural to remember ideas one has known for a long time. But if they are simply mentioned, one does not understand the meaning of them. The doctrine of *Zostrianos* cannot be understood by itself. Must one allow that it represents a tradition that is earlier than Valentinus, which was preserved intact from the beginning of the second century, without any mixture with Christianity? But how can this be judged likely, in a school like the "Sethian" school, where there were Christian works (the *Apocryphon of John* for example) from a time at least earlier than Irenaeus? The mixture with Christianity was inevitable. I therefore think that it is not possible that the absence of the name Jesus Christ was not voluntary. It is explained quite simply by the fact that the work was supposed to be by Zoroaster. For the Gnostics of this school Jesus Christ is present in recognizable figures and names.

Moreover, Porphyry seems to say that the men who presented *Zostrianos* to Plotinus and his disciples were Christians. The sentence with which he begins the seventeenth chapter of his *Life of Plotinus* is not perfectly clear, but the meaning of it is very probably: "He had around him on the one hand numerous Christians, on the other, other (Christians) but heretical, inspired by ancient philosophy." Bréhier understood it approximately thus when he translated: "many Christians, among others . . . sectarians who were on the side of ancient philosophy."¹² By "ancient philosophy" Porphyry obviously understands Platonism.

One must also remember that the disciples of Prodicus, who claimed to possess the secret books of Zoroaster, were, according to Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 1, 69, 6), Christians, just as their master Prodicus was a Christian heretic, according to Tertullian.

We have quoted the passage of *Zostrianos* that Schenke himself thinks is Christian (while attributing it to a secondary influence). It is probable that other traces of Christianity might also be found in this work. For example, in 28, 20–22, according to J. H. Sieber's translation, it seems that we find the three theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity.¹³ The conjunction of "to seek" and "to find" used without an object (3, 19; 44, 2–3), recalls "seek and you will find" (Matt. 7:7; Luke 11:9). We read numerous times of a baptism given to Zostrianos "in the name of the Begotten of himself" (6, 7–8; 7, 1–3; 9, 11; 15, 6; 53, 15–17). What but Christian baptism could have suggested the idea of a baptism given *in the name* of someone? The name Cosmocrator, given to the Demiurge (1, 18), calls Paul to mind (Eph. 6:12), and it is perhaps also this which gives rise to the repeated warning "the time in this place is short" (4, 19; 131, 19–20; cf. 1 Cor. 7:29).

But what is perhaps most convincing is the identity of doctrine among those "Sethians" who refer to Christianity (of the *Apocryphon of John*, of

the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, of the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, of *Melchizedek*, of the *Trimorphic Protennoia*) and those who, apparently, do not refer to it. Is it possible that among those who do refer to it this reference has been *added*, and that this was done without difficulty, in such a way that their doctrine essentially reunites without any trouble a Christian Gnosticism such as that of the Valentinians? It is assumed that in the works that are both "Sethian" and Christian, the name of Christ has been added; but the assumption that in the others it has been taken out or avoided is just as valid. And this assumption is much more probable when works like *Zostrianos* are in question, where the person who is speaking is not in principle a Christian. In *Zostrianos* there is obviously a disguise, as Porphyry realized in relation to a Gnostic work attributed to Zoroaster and which, moreover, is perhaps none other than *Zostrianos* (cf. *Life of Plotinus* 16).

If *Zostrianos* was really intended by its author to be a non-Christian work, we would have here an example of a progressive distancing of Gnosticism from Christianity, or more precisely, from any reference to Christianity, a distancing of which there are other examples. But this would not be a mark of the non-Christian origin of the ideas expressed in *Zostrianos*. These ideas clearly depend on those ideas which works of Christian Gnosticism such as the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Gospel of the Egyptians* expound and cannot be understood without them.

3. *The Three Steles of Seth*

Part of what I have tried to demonstrate in relation to *Zostrianos* might also apply to works like the *Three Steles of Seth* and *Allogenes*. These are also works whose supposed author is earlier than Christ. The *Three Steles* are supposed to have been written by Seth. *Allogenes* ("He who is of another race," that is, he who comes from elsewhere, a foreigner) might be a name given to Seth (cf. Epiphanius, *Pan.* XL, 7).

These two works have more in common with each other than they have with *Zostrianos*. They seem to depend upon the *Apocryphon of John*, but not on the *Gospel of the Egyptians*. In the *Three Steles* one finds very few bizarre names without any clear meaning, and those one does find do not come from the *Gospel of the Egyptians*. A number are found only in the *Three Steles*, a number are also found in *Allogenes*, but nowhere else; finally, a number are also found in *Zostrianos* as well as in *Allogenes* but they are not those which *Zostrianos* has in common with the *Gospel of the Egyptians*. In *Allogenes* the mysterious names are more numerous than in the *Three Steles*. But, like those which are common to *Zostrianos* and the *Three Steles*, those which are common to *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes* are not the ones *Zostrianos* and the *Gospel of the Egyptians* have in common. One therefore gets the impression that the author of *Zostrianos* has made up his population of entities by bringing together those he found in the

Gospel of the Egyptians and in *Allogenes* in such a way that *Allogenes* might be a little earlier than *Zostrianos*. Only a little, because there are nevertheless many resemblances between *Zostrianos* and the group formed by *Allogenes* and the *Three Steles*.

The *Three Steles of Seth* are three hymns or three prayers of blessing and praise addressed to the three persons of the Trinity respectively. It is the Christian Trinity in its Gnostic form (Father, Mother, and Son), that is to say, a Trinity in which the Spirit (the Mother) is named before the Son. These three persons are celebrated here in ascending order: first of all the Son, then the Mother, then the Father.

The legend according to which the three steles were erected by the descendants of Seth is a Jewish legend. According to Josephus, these men invented astrology, and knowing that two catastrophes threatened the world, one by fire and the other by water, they inscribed upon them what they wished to pass on to their descendants.¹⁴ The author of the *Three Steles* is inspired by this legend; only here the steles are the work of Seth himself and are three in number. J. M. Robinson observes that, according to Neoplatonic theology, it is the triad in the nature of God that led to the idea of three steles and not two.¹⁵ But what triad does he mean to refer to? Is it that of the three great hypostases of Plotinus, the One, Intellect, and the Soul? This triad does not correspond to the Trinity in the *Three Steles of Seth*. The Son, Adamas, is not the Soul, he is Nous and Light, he is the Savior and is called God. The Mother is not simply Nous, even though she is very close to also being Nous, as among the Valentinians; she is Barbelo, the "virgin male," both masculine and feminine. Is this a reference to the triad Being-Life-Intellect, which we often find mentioned in Plotinus? This triad in fact appears in the *Three Steles* and also in *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes*. In *Zostrianos* (14 and especially 15) the triad Existence, Knowledge, Life corresponds term for term with the Trinity of the "Hidden," the "First appeared" (or rather the "First appeared" in the feminine), and the "Begotten of himself," that is, the three figures who in the *Apocryphon of John* are the invisible Father, the Mother, and Christ. In *Allogenes* an entity who was called "the spiritual Invisible Triple-Power," who seems to be God the Father, is said to be both "Vitality," "Mentality" (Intellect), and "That-which-is." "For That-which-is constantly possesses his Vitality and his Mentality, and Vitality possesses Being and Mentality, and Mentality possesses Life and That-which-is" (49, 21–35). The three concepts are therefore inseparable (49, 36–38: "the three are one, even though they are each three as individuals"). However, when *Allogenes* is carried to heaven (58, 26–61), he seems first of all to pass through "knowledge," which must correspond to Mentality, since he then goes up as far as Vitality, and finally attains "Existence." The latter appears to be "the unknown One," or is at least like him (59, 20–29). In this ascent, Life immediately precedes Existence and therefore seems to correspond to the Mother, not to the Son as in *Zostrianos*. But in this case

knowledge should correspond to the Son; now, at this stage the questions arise concerning the aeons of *Barbelo*, and the illuminators of *Barbelo*. In the *Three Steles*, finally, the correspondence between the triad Existence-Life-Intellect and the Gnostic Trinity is not at all clear. The three concepts that make up the triad seem on the one hand to be attributes of the Father and within his essence ("For you are the existence of them all. You are the life of them all. You are the mind of them all," 125, 28–32), and on the other hand attributes of the Mother ("Thou hast empowered the eternal in being; thou hast empowered divinity in the living; thou hast empowered knowledge in goodness," 122, 19–23; "Of thee is life . . . from thee is mind. . . [Thou art] a world of truthfulness, [Thou art] a triple power," 123, 19–23). This might be understandable if the three concepts are inseparable. But they are not mentioned in reference to the Son, and their correspondence, term for term with the Trinity whom one invokes, is not apparent here. Whatever the case, I doubt whether the triad Being-Life-Intellect or Being-Intellect-Life led to the conception of the Gnostic Trinity as one finds it in the *Three Steles*, for this same Trinity is found in many other works where there is no mention of the triad Being-Life-Intellect.

The authors of *Zostrianos*, *Allogenes*, and the *Three Steles* may have found this triad in Greek philosophy, but it is rather unlikely that they found it in Neoplatonism, for *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes* are probably prior to the teaching of Plotinus. Or should one think that the Gnostics who followed Plotinus's lectures, having heard a few of them, quickly wrote *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes* in order to present these works to him? It is more likely that they presented him with works they already possessed, before becoming his hearers. One might even say that since Plotinus knew of *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes*, it was perhaps he who borrowed the triad Being-Life-Thought from them. For we do not really know where he got it from. But what is most probable is that he found it, as the Gnostics themselves did, either in the Platonic tradition inspired by what Plato says about being in the *Sophist* (248e), or rather in authors who used this expression as an obvious and commonplace enumeration of three types of being. In *Les Sources de Plotin* vol. 5, 107–57), Pierre Hadot observed that the triad does not seem to be borrowed by Plotinus directly from Plato, for if Plato attributes life and reflection (or intellect) to being, he also attributes soul to it, which Plotinus, who places the triad in the intelligible, does not do. Hadot supposes that the philosophical manuals prior to Plotinus could have made up this triad on the basis of the three parts of philosophy: physics, logic, and ethics, which concern *beings*, the laws of *knowledge*, and the rules of *life*, respectively. The existence of this triad in manuals earlier than Plotinus is, it is true, hypothetical, but it is natural to think that more than one classical author before Plotinus must have mentioned this series, either because it corresponds to the three parts of philosophy, as Hadot thinks, or simply because it corresponds to the three kingdoms

of nature: beings simply existing (mineral), living beings, and thinking beings. This distinction stands at the beginning of all philosophy of nature. It is true that the existent is the lowest degree here, whereas, in *Allogenes* and *Zostrianos*, it is the highest degree. If the Gnostics took this series from a philosophy of nature, they used it in another way, and perhaps Plotinus too, since he uses it in relation to the intelligibles. Whatever the case, this series must either come from philosophical manuals or from a generally accepted idea, which in no way stopped its being used in Christian works, as well as in Neoplatonism.

As we have said, the three divine persons to whom the prayers are addressed in the *Three Steles* are celebrated in ascending order. First of all the Son. He is not called Christ, but is represented by Adamas, who we have seen in the *Apocryphon of John* symbolizes Christ, being a divine Man. Given that Seth, son of Man and figure of Jesus, is the supposed author of these prayers, Adamas is called Father. But his is a Father issued from the Father (120, 26–27), a Father who is also Son of God (119, 7). The Valentinians often gave to their most high Christ, the Nous, the name Father (Irenaeus, 1, 1, 1 and 11, 1). Adamas, as the first Valentinian Christ, is the Nous (119, 1). He is “begotten from himself,” and is at the same time “unbegotten” like the Father, or “begotten in a nongeneration.” He manifested the beings who truly *are*. All power everywhere belongs to him (cf. Matt. 28:18: “All authority has been given to me”). He is *other*, different, a stranger (to the world)—like the Johannine Christ, who is not of the world. He has unified the All with the All, like the Valentinian Savior in whom the All is harmonized. In fact, he is the Savior, having saved those whom he elected. But he wants saved all those who are worthy to be saved (121, 13–14).

The second stele celebrates the Mother by calling her Barbelo. The latter is a “virginal and male” aeon. She is the “First Appeared” or the “First Manifested.” She is “the shadow of the Father,” that is, his immediate reflection, his projected shadow. The word “shadow” here is not pejorative, since immediately after it is said that she is “light issued from the Light.” She is not only the first entity issued from the Preexistent, but that which from the beginning *saw* it. She saw that he is a “non-essence.” (Thus, for Plato, the Good is above essence; and this links this work with what Hippolytus’s Basilides teaches.) Barbelo is therefore Wisdom, Knowledge, and Truth. She is quite close to being Nous, as we have seen the supreme Mother of the Valentinians is. On the other hand, she is not called Pnuma (Spirit). It is the Father who will be called “the one living Spirit” in the third stele. In the *Three Steles*, as in *Allogenes*, *Zostrianos*, the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, and already the *Apocryphon of John* (BG 22, 20–21; CG II, 2, 29), God is above all “the invisible Spirit.” This is not a non-Christian idea; after all, John the Evangelist says that God is Spirit (4:24). In the *Trimorphic Protennoia*, a “Sethian” work, but one in which Chris-

tianity is not veiled, we see that the *Protennoia*, the “First Thought,” is present in all the levels of the divine, including the Father. This is perhaps why the Mother is called “Triple-Power” in the *Three Steles*.

The third stele concerns the Preexistent. He is the First Eternal, the Unbegotten. He is an Existence (*hyparxis*), but one that precedes the existences, a First Essence, but one that precedes the essences, and by preceding them, might be called “non-essence” (124, 26–29). He is the inconceivable being whom one cannot name. This is perhaps why we find in a rather short passage (126, 6–13) a series of strange names or obscure adjectives applied to the ineffable God, as if to prove that one cannot speak clearly of him. He is impossible to know, and yet to know him is salvation (125, 13–14; cf. John 17, 3). At the end, the (future?) believers join Seth to praise God, and then they keep silent. They ascend as far as it is ordained for them to ascend, then they redescend through the realm of the Mother and that of her Son. “The way up is the way down” (127, 20–21).

It seems to me that all these ideas can easily be linked with Christian Valentinianism, and the absence of the name of Christ or Jesus is easily explained in a work attributed to Seth.

I might add that the invocation *Ichthus*, which was placed at the end of the text that precedes the *Three Steles* in the *Nag Hammadi Library*, might well constitute the beginning of the *Three Steles*, as P. Bellet seems to think.¹⁶ This would confirm that the work is Christian, for I do not believe that these three initials, which meant “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior” for Christians, can be anything but a mark of Christianity.

As for the mention of Dositheus at the beginning of the work, I refer the reader back to what I said about Dositheus in my *Hypotheses*.¹⁷

4. *Allogenes*

Allogenes presents many analogies with the *Three Steles of Seth*. One does not find either the name Seth or the name Adamas here, but “the Allogenes,” which is to say, “the Stranger,” who speaks in this work, is probably Seth (cf. Epiphanius, *Pan.* 40, 7). Like the one who speaks in the *Three Steles*, he is an earthly Seth, who is nevertheless in one sense the son of Adamas, the divine Adam, and is consequently a divine incarnation. He receives revelations brought by beings from above, and he is himself transported above for a heavenly journey. Disincarnate, he sees “the divine Autogenes and the Savior” in the course of his journey, then the aeon of Barbelo, then “the First Principle of He who is without origin, the Invisible Triple Spiritual Power.” Apart from the fact that Adamas and Seth are not named—although they are probably represented, Adamas by the Auto-genes and Seth by the Allogenes—one finds the same ideas here as in the *Three Steles*. But *Allogenes* puts more emphasis on negative theology, on the silence of the hidden God, on the necessity of understanding that he is “the Unknown.” The exposition of negative theology has much in common

with that of the *Apocryphon of John* and is probably directly inspired by it. One cannot say of God either that he is a God or that he is perfect or that he is blessedness, for he is still more than that. He is neither limited nor unlimited, neither corporeal nor incorporeal, he is something *other*, which one cannot know. He certainly possesses perfection, blessedness, and silence, but at the same time these characteristics in him are not the same thing as perfection, blessedness, and silence (63, 33–37). He is “the existence which is not” (62, 23; 65, 33). He is “better than the Totalities in his privation” (62, 20–21). He is reached only by “the ignorance that sees him” (64, 13–14). He is the one of whom one can say that “if one knows him, one does not know him” (59, 30–32; 61, 17–19). This is why the beings on high exhort Allogenes no longer to seek what is incomprehensible and to become “ignorant of God” (60, 8–12; 61, 25–28; 67, 20–35). This recalls the “great ignorance” of Hippolytus’s Basilides. Christ is not named in this work, nor is the cross. It is silence that teaches about God. (But silence is nothing other than the meaning of the cross.)

What Porphyry says about *Zostrianos* he also says about *Allogenes*. And, as we have seen, this seems to mean that this book was in the hands of Christian heretics.

5. *The Apocalypse of Adam*

With the *Apocalypse of Adam* we return to a work that, like *Zostrianos*, seems to depend both upon the *Apocryphon of John* and upon the *Gospel of the Egyptians*.

In the first edition of this text,¹⁸ Böhlig thought he could say that it seemed to derive from a pre-Christian gnosis.¹⁹ This view having been contested, he later explained that by “pre-Christian” he did not mean earlier than Christ, but earlier than the Christian Gnosticism of the second century.²⁰ Whichever way it is understood, this idea hardly seems to be right.

The *Apocalypse of Adam* is a revelation that Adam is supposed to have made to his son Seth. This revelation concerns the future history of his descendants. Adam foretells the Flood and a destruction by fire that is apparently that of Sodom and Gomorrah. By these scourges, the creator God, who is also the God of the powers, will try to wipe out those in whom there exists something higher than himself. But each time those whom he wanted to wipe out are preserved thanks to an intervention from above. Adam finally foretells the coming of the Savior, whom he calls “the Illuminator of Knowledge.” This Illuminator will redeem persons from the dominion of death. The Holy Spirit will come upon him. He will perform signs and miracles, in such a way that he will humble the powers and their ruler. Then the God of the powers will be troubled and will raise up a great anger against him. The “Glory” will retreat, the powers will not see it. They will not see the Illuminator (just as for Paul the Archons did not know the “Lord of glory”), and they will punish the flesh of humanity (77,

1–18). One must, I think, be very determined not to recognize the marks of Christianity to fail to understand that this “Illuminator” can be none other than Jesus Christ.²¹

That he is not named is easily explained. As in *Zostrianos*, the *Three Steles*, and *Allogenes*, the supposed author is earlier than Christ. The work is a prophecy, and a prophecy ought not to be clear.

Moreover, is he not named? It seems to me that he is in a veiled way, but so that the name is recognizable. The work ends with: “Yesseus Mazareus Yessedekus, living water.” The author must have taken these three mysterious names from the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, where they are also associated with “living water.” But here, even more than in the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, they are considered important, since the author makes this invocation the conclusion of his work. Will it be thought that he did not recognize the deformation (surely deliberate) of Jesus of Nazareth²² in the first two names? Of whom is it said that he is living water or the source of living water? Is it not of Christ in the Johannine Gospel? Sometimes Christ says that he gives living water (John 4:10–14) and that rivers of it flow from his breast (John 7: 37–38), sometimes what he says implies that he is himself living water, given the analogy implied in John 6:35 between the bread of life, which satisfies forever, and the drink that forever quenches thirst.

Christianity appears not only in the passage concerning the Illuminator and in the final invocation. In 83, 1–4, for example, one reads that the elect of the Illuminator will shine, “in such a way that they will enlighten the whole age.” In the Epistle to the Philippians (2:15) Paul says to the Christians at Philippi: “You shine like lights [*phōstēres*] in the world.” In 83, 4–6 one sees that the elect are “those who receive his name upon the water.” What does this refer to if not to Christian baptism? It cannot refer to pre-Christian Jewish baptism, for here one did not receive a *name* upon water. It is true that a little further on the author implies that the true baptism is “knowledge.” Nevertheless, it was Christian baptism that provided him with the primary image of what procures salvation.

In 65, 9–21 we read that after the creation of Adam and Eve the Creator succeeded in taking away from them the knowledge of the true God which they had at first received. “After those days, the eternal knowledge of the God of truth withdrew from me and your mother Eve. Since that time we learned about dead things,²³ like men. Then we recognized the God who had created us . . . and we served him in fear and slavery.” These lines imply that there are two religions, one that is knowledge of the true God, the other that is fearful obedience to the Creator and his Law. This Law teaches “dead works.” Now this is a Pauline idea, and the expression “dead works” is found in the Epistle to the Hebrews (6:1; 9:14). The author of this epistle thinks that the works are “dead” because they are incapable of procuring salvation. As in Paul, salvation is attained by faith (or knowledge), and not by the works of the Law. How could one explain the expression “dead works” in a context that refers to the Creator and

his Law without this idea? This passage implies a Pauline conception and knowledge of a Christian text.

In the long and curious digression in which Adam predicts that thirteen kingdoms will each recount a different legend concerning the way in which the Illuminator came into the world (77, 27–82, 19), each of the thirteen legends ends with “He received glory and power there, and thus he came to the water.” Böhlig finds confirmation here for his hypothesis that the predicted Savior would be a descendant of Zoroaster.²⁴ For, according to an Iranian legend, the future saviors must be born of the seed of Zoroaster deposited in a lake. But is this legend earlier than the latest date at which one can place the *Apocalypse of Adam*? There is an idea that is closer to a “Sethian” milieu and that has more chance of being earlier than this *Apocalypse*, and this is the conception of the Gnostic Christ, who descends into the world and manifests himself in Jesus when he is baptized in the Jordan. According to Irenaeus, it goes back to Cerinthus, that is, to about the date of the Gospel of John.

Finally, I think that if one makes a careful comparison of the ideas the *Apocalypse of Adam* presents and those the *Apocryphon of John* presents, one will find that the former are drawn from the latter, and not the latter from the former. For example, what is said of Adam and Eve in the *Apocalypse of Adam*: first of all that they walked in a glory that *she* had seen in the aeon from which they came (64, 8–12), which cannot be understood if one does not know the account in the *Apocryphon of John*, in which Eve sometimes almost seems to be confused with “the *Epinoia* of light” which instructs Adam about the world above (cf. CG II, 20, 20–24; 22, 34–23, 11; 24, 9–11). For why had Eve alone seen the glory from which they were both derived? Similarly with Adam’s words to Seth: “I myself have called you by the name of that man who is the seed of the great generation” (65, 6–8), these words presuppose the speculation concerning Seth from above, who is the son of Adamas and not the son of Adam. But the *Apocalypse of Adam* only alludes to this speculation; for the speculation itself and the grounds on which it is based one must look to the *Apocryphon of John*. Thus we find that the *Apocalypse of Adam* presupposes accounts and speculations that are found in the *Apocryphon*, but we do not see that inversely the corresponding speculations of the *Apocryphon* can be drawn from the brief and paltry allusions one finds in the *Apocalypse of Adam*. It is also clear that this *Apocalypse* presupposes borrowings from the *Gospel of the Egyptians* rather than that this Gospel presupposes them in the *Apocalypse*. For example, Abrasax, Sablo, and Gamaliel appear in the *Apocalypse of Adam* without any explanation, as characters one ought to know already. In the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, on the other hand, the author describes how the four servants of the illuminators—they are four here: Gamaliel, Gabriel, Samlo, and Abrasax—appeared in the spiritual world. This appearance is a complement to that of the four illuminators; it is introduced by the same expressions and is completed, like

that of the illuminators, by the appearance of four feminine figures. It all hangs together and forms a unity. One gets the impression that the author of the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, who likes to multiply the entities in the spiritual world, himself imagined these eight new figures, but not that he went in search of three of them in the *Apocalypse of Adam*.

If the author of the *Apocalypse of Adam* takes the themes from the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Gospel of the Egyptians* which he has in common with them, it is therefore the case that he is acquainted with a Christian Gnosticism and is inspired by it.

For this work to be of non-Christian origin one would have to assume that it is in fact the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Gospel of the Egyptians* that depend not directly on the *Apocalypse of Adam* (for they could not have drawn certain speculations from the brief allusions one finds in the *Apocalypse*) but upon a tradition on which the *Apocalypse* also depended. But this is to assume the existence of a literature of which we know nothing. To hold that this *Apocalypse*, like *Zostrianos*, depends upon the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Gospel of the Egyptians* is the simplest assumption. And it is also the most probable, for it seems that the *Apocalypse of Adam* is a relatively late work.²⁵ In it syncretism is more advanced than in the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Gospel of the Egyptians*. Adam speaks of Noah in it as "he whom the generations will call Deucalion" (70, 18–19). Foreseeing the ideas that different peoples will have on the subject of the Illuminator, he says that according to some he will be the son of one of the nine Muses (81, 1–14). It might even be that this work is very late, for the passage in which Adam accuses the guardians of "holy baptism" of having "defiled the water of Life," and of having "drawn it within the will of the powers" and of persecuting certain men whose thought is worth more than theirs (84, 18–28) is a passage that seems to presuppose a time in which certain Christians were already in the process of persecuting certain others.

I conclude from this that the *Apocalypse of Adam* is not only a pre-Christian work, which is now generally acknowledged,²⁶ but that it is also not a work of non-Christian provenance.²⁷ Not only does the author seem to be connected with "Sethianism," which we have seen is probably the meaning and origin of the *Apocryphon of John*; not only does he seem to be directly inspired by the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, works of Christian Gnosticism; but we also find elements in his work that can only come from Christianity, in particular the portrait of the Illuminator. If he avoids the name Christ, it is probably to obey the conventions implied in the genre of prophecy.

6. *Marsanes*

It is difficult to speak of *Marsanes*. The state in which this work has come down to us hardly permits statements that are sufficiently well founded.

First of all, we only have fragments of it. Moreover, even in the fragments themselves the text is so mutilated that it is with difficulty that one finds certain phrases scattered through it that are not, at least in part, simply hypothetical reconstructions. The presence of certain names, such as Barbelo and Gamaliel, allows us to say that it is a "Sethian" work, and that it may depend upon the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, either directly or through the mediation of works like *Zostrianos* or *Melchizedek*. Furthermore, it belongs to a group of works that seem to have links either with middle-Platonism or with Neoplatonism (*Zostrianos*, the *Three Steles*, *Allogenes*). It is *Allogenes* that seems to be closest to it. In it one finds expressions of negative theology such as "the Spirit that does not have being" (4, 17–18), "the One unbegotten who does not have being and who is Spirit" (6, 3–5). This One "has three powers" (4, 15–16; 6, 19, and so on); he is therefore both One and trinity. But "the invisible One who has three powers and the Spirit who does not have being" (4, 14–18) are not yet the highest degree of the divinity; the highest degree is "the silent and unknown One" (4, 19–23). Also, a part of what remains of this work contains speculations on what the letters of the alphabet mean for religious knowledge; speculations that recall those of the Valentinian Marcus. What we have demonstrated in relation to the *Apocryphon of John*, that is, that it seems to depend upon Valentinianism, might also apply to *Marsanes*, not only because *Marsanes* seems to depend upon the *Apocryphon of John*, like the *Gospel of the Egyptians* and all the other "Sethian" works we have dealt with up to now, but also because there is a unique resemblance with another doctrine derived from Valentinianism, that of Marcus.

In what we have of *Marsanes*, Christ is not named. We cannot be sure that he was not named at all in the complete work, since we have only very corrupt fragments of it. If he was not, then can one say that, as in *Zostrianos*, the *Three Steles*, *Allogenes*, and the *Apocalypse of Adam*, it is because its supposed author is earlier than Christ? We do not know who *Marsanes* might have been; but at least we know that he was considered to be a prophet.²⁸ This is enough for the author to have thought that he must conform to the laws of prophecy.

7. The *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *Norea*

With *Norea* and the *Hypostasis of the Archons* we have to deal with a speculation that seems rather different from that which one finds in the "Sethian" works previously examined. It is not certain that these two works depend upon the *Apocryphon of John*, as the previous ones seemed to. Schenke classes them among the "Sethian" works, but they present a number of differences in comparison with all the others. First of all, one does not find the name of Barbelo in either the *Hypostasis of the Archons* or in *Norea* or in the *Origin of the World* (which is not considered Sethian by Schenke but which seems to depend upon the *Hypostasis of the Archons*). This group of

works is not “barbelognostic,” whereas Irenaeus’s “Barbelognostics” seem to be the equivalent of Schenke’s “Sethians.” Moreover, Seth himself does not appear either in *Norea* or in the *Origin of the World*, and if he does appear a little in the *Hypostasis* (91, 31–33), he does not seem to play the important role that he holds in the *Apocryphon of John* and the works that seem to derive from it. In the *Hypostasis* Seth is not a divine figure; he does not even seem to be the only son of Adam who is truly his son. Perhaps only Cain is son of the Archons (91, 12), and again this is not certain.²⁹ Furthermore, it is not expressly stated that Seth is the father of the line of the spirituals. Rather it is Norea, his sister, “the Virgin whom the powers did not defile” (92, 2–3), who seems to be the mother of the predestined generation (cf. 96, 19). One certainly finds the theme of the four illuminators and other “Sethian” themes in the *Hypostasis* and *Norea*. But here the speculation seems to be parallel to that of the *Apocryphon* rather than being exactly parallel to it. The themes here correspond to certain themes that Irenaeus describes in I, 30, rather than to those of Irenaeus, I, 29. In I, 30 Irenaeus confidently draws the themes he is describing from a number of distinct sources, and whereas some of them are different from those one finds in the *Hypostasis*, others, on the contrary, agree very well with it. As in the *Hypostasis*, Barbelo is not found in I, 30, and Norea appears here beside the earthly Seth (30, 9). The inferior Sophia, “spreading herself out,” gives birth to the heavenly Limit which separates the invisible world from the visible world (30, 3), just as in the *Hypostasis* Sophia gives birth to “curtain” (94, 8–9). Finally, as in the *Hypostasis*, the serpent is sometimes evil, sometimes good and the bearer of salvation.

In Irenaeus, I, 30, 5 the serpent characterizes the diabolical Nous, and in 30, 8 he begets seven demons who break out into the world; but in 30, 7 he is the instrument of salvation when he teaches the first humans to disobey the Demiurge and to recognize good and evil; and in 30, 15 it is Sophia, the Mother, who changes into a serpent in order to instruct the human beings. And in the *Hypostasis* also, Eve on high, the Eve of light (who might in some way be Sophia), assumes a serpent when she wishes to instruct the humans (89, 31–32); but when she withdraws from him, he is no more than an earthly animal (90, 11–12), and will remain cursed “until the All-powerful man was to come” (91, 1–3). This last point probably means that the All-powerful man will lift the curse of the serpent, because he will himself be comparable to the bronze Serpent that Moses lifted up in the desert and that saved those who looked upon it (cf. John 3:14). *This comparison of Christ with the bronze Serpent, which one finds in the Johannine Gospel, is probably the main source of the speculations that led to certain Gnostics being called “Ophites” by the heresiologists, as the comparison of Seth with the “Son of man” led to other Gnostics being called “Sethians.”*

The speculation with which *Norea* and the *Hypostasis of the Archons* is linked does not seem to be exactly that of the *Apocryphon of John*. But it remains close to it. One might even think that there are hardly any differences between them, apart from the fact that in one the name of

Barbelo is not found, and that in one it is Norea and in the other Seth who play the principal roles. Now, these differences are hardly significant, they do not concern ideas. If Barbelo is not named in Irenaeus, I, 30, her name ("Son of the Lord," or "Son of the Spouse") fits very well the feminine figure who, in I, 30, 1, while being Ennoia, is called "son [not daughter] of the one who sent him," and who in I, 30, 7, is perhaps referred to by the name "Son of God." That Norea is placed first rather than her brother Seth is perhaps also not very important. Moreover, the part of the *Apocryphon* that Irenaeus does not summarize in I, 29 contains speculations that figure in I, 30, which shows that the doctrines described in these two chapters are sometimes found together, not only in the same school but in the same work. And this is also what the presence of the theme of the illuminators in *Norea* and the *Hypostasis* demonstrates. There are therefore a good number of common features in these two branches of the "Gnostics in the narrow sense."

However, despite everything, there is a notable difference in ideas. While being primarily inspired by Valentinus, the *Apocryphon* preserves the conceptions of Gnostics earlier than Valentinus, those of Saturnilus and Basilides, to a greater extent than the *Hypostasis*. The Demiurge is treated more harshly here than he is in Ptolemy and Heracleon. The *Hypostasis*, on the other hand, concurs with the Valentinian turning point and even seems to accentuate it by introducing, alongside the God of the Old Testament, called Ialdabaoth as in the *Apocryphon*, a second God of the Old Testament, son of Ialdabaoth, but more acceptable than him, called Sabaoth. The latter is depicted as having censured his father Ialdabaoth, and to have proclaimed himself the one God. Sabaoth subjected himself to Pistis-Sophia, Faith-Wisdom, and thanks to her succeeded in replacing his father in the seventh heaven (95, 13–26). He also did not know the Pleroma, but he knew something of the eighth heaven, the intermediary space, the heaven of Sophia (95, 31–34). He is perhaps the God of the Old Testament as the Valentinians most inclined to conciliation with Jewish Christianity or the Great Church wished to preserve him, not as God but as director and symbol of the forces of the world. And if the *Hypostasis* is an Egyptian document—as one might assume since it was found in Egypt and because of its links with the *Origin of the World*—this would show that this tendency existed not only in Western Valentinianism, since certain Egyptian Gnostics would have approved of and even accentuated it. The Gnostics of the *Hypostasis* seem to think that the Old Testament is admissible on condition that its God does not claim to be the One above all. They also seem to believe that the "Powers" over which Sabaoth reigns, the Powers of the world, can provide a way for truths from above, since the one who rules them knows a Wisdom superior to himself.

This does not mean that the Powers are good for the author of the *Hypostasis*. They are the ones who instigated the Flood, and who tried to seduce Norea. But, for this author, the force that reigns over these Powers

could have received certain inspirations from Wisdom, who, though imperfect, prepared for the coming of the Savior.

Thus the author of the *Apocryphon* seems to a certain extent to resist the orientation given by Valentinus to his School, an orientation that tended to lessen the distance between Gnostic Christianity and Jewish-Christian Christianity; whereas the author of the *Hypostasis* finds a new way of supporting this orientation, by distinguishing Sabaoth and Ialdabaoth, and by thus admitting that at least part of what is said of the God of the Old Testament concerns a force who is simply the director of the Powers, and who by not claiming to be the one God, the true God, could acknowledge Christianity and be acknowledged by it.

Among the features common to the *Hypostasis* and the *Apocryphon* there is the theme of the four illuminators, and we have seen that this theme can be explained only by Valentinianism. But there are also other marks of Valentinianism in the *Hypostasis*, and this is not surprising since this work is as a whole more faithful to the orientation of Valentinus than the *Apocryphon*. Here one finds, for example, the Limit (94, 9–10); the Right and the Left (95, 31–96, 2); the visible world made according to the model of the superior world (96, 12–13); the “seed,” that is to say, the elect (96, 27; 97, 9); and so forth. Though in one way more Valentinian than the *Apocryphon*, it is not less Christian than it. Some scholars have assumed that the quotation from Saint Paul, found at the beginning of the work, might be a later addition to the work itself. But this is not the only quotation that reveals a Christian author. There is, for example, the expression “the Spirit of truth” (96, 24 and 35), which seems to be drawn from the Johannine Gospel.³⁰ This Spirit of truth, when the Father sends it to the elect, will teach them everything (97, 1–2). (Cf. John 16:13: “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth”; and John 14:26: “The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things.”) There is also the idea that salvation will come when the “true Man” shows himself in “a modeled form” that is, in a body (96, 33–34). This obviously corresponds to the Incarnation of Christ in Jesus.³¹ In the vain efforts of the Archons to lay hold of the divine image that appeared to them, and then to lay hold of the spiritual Eve (whom the *Apocryphon* called the Epinoia of light),³² one might recognize the Johannine statement on the subject of the light: “And the darkness has not overcome it.” When it is said that the psychic beings cannot grasp the spirituals (87, 17–18), one recognizes not only the Valentinian distinction between the psychics and the spirituals but also Paul’s words: “The natural man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:14). And the text of the *Hypostasis* continues by opposing “what is above” to “what is below,” in the same way as John. One also finds in this text the “children of the light” (97, 13–14; cf. John 12, 36), and “the Son who presides over the Entirety” (97, 18–19); cf. Matt. 11:27; 28:18; Luke 10:22; John 3:35; 13:3; 17:2).

It is natural for Christ not to be named either by his name Christ or by his name Jesus in the revelation given by Eleleth to Norea. The latter, like her brother Seth, belongs to a time much earlier than Christ. A revelation made to Norea could only be transmitted by Norea herself; it is therefore a prophecy. However, Christ could have been named in 91, 2, where his coming is predicted but only as the coming of the "perfect Man." This prediction is not found in the words of Norea, or in a revelation made to Norea, but in an account concerning the origin of the world in which, it seems, it is the author who is speaking. For this part of the work is an interpretation of Genesis and in some way meant to replace it. It places itself in the Old Testament and uses a language that could be that of the Old Testament.

The very short text we refer to by the name of *Norea* also appears to me to be a Christian work dependent upon speculations derived from Valentinianism. It is Christian and more or less Valentinian, if only from its link with the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and from everything common to "Ophitism" and "Sethianism," the theme of the illuminators, for example. Moreover, even though it is short, one finds marks of Valentinianism in it, for example, the Pleroma and the "deficiency." As in the *Hypostasis*, Christ does not appear under the name of Christ or Jesus but is referred to by names such as Nous, Logos, the divine Autogenes, Adamas. There is no reason why these names should not have the same meaning here as in the other "Sethian" and "Ophite" works in general. At the beginning of *Norea*, the Trinity is invoked a number of times (in its Gnostic form: Father, Mother, and Son), and the Son is called Nous (the first two times) and Logos (the third time.) The expression "before the world came into existence" (28, 16–17) might come from the Johannine Gospel (17:5, 24).

II. OTHER WORKS FROM NAG HAMMADI THAT MAY HAVE BEEN REGARDED AS NON-CHRISTIAN

It is not only among the works Schenke considered Sethian that one can find works that can be held to be absolutely non-Christian. Among the works that have been found at Nag Hammadi there are three others, the first two of which are sometimes and the third almost always regarded as presenting no trace of Christianity: the *Paraphrase of Shem*, *The Thunder* and the *Epistle of Eugnostos*.

1. *The Paraphrase of Shem*

The *Paraphrase of Shem* is not regarded by Schenke as a properly Sethian work, for certain characteristics of Sethianism, as he defines it, are not found here. Moreover, if Christ is not named here, neither is Seth. Instead of Seth, the person who receives the revelation and transmits it, the one who is supposed to be the author of the work, is called Sēm. He appears

to be the son of Noah called Shem. However, it is also difficult for him to be Shem. For not only is the name of the son of Noah never written Sēm,³³ but we also read in this work, that Sēm is “the first existent upon the earth” (1, 20–21). This quality of first existent does not fit Seth at all, who was, after all, the fifth (after Adam, Eve, Cain, and Abel), but it would fit Shem even less. Moreover, the revealer says to Sēm: “Since you are from an unmixed power . . . ” (1, 18–19). This might be said to Seth, who, according to the *Apocryphon of John*, is the only son of Eve who did not have Ialdabaoth for his father and whose parents were both created beings in imitation of the divine image. It is also said to Sēm: “Since your root fell into forgetfulness . . . ” (1, 28–29). Now, more than once in the *Apocryphon of John* Adam and Eve fall into forgetfulness and ignorance, and in the *Apocalypse of Adam* (64, 24–28) Adam himself says to Seth, “And the glory in our heart(s) left us, me and your mother Eve, along with the first knowledge that was breathed within us.” Thus Sēm very much resembles the Seth of the “Sethians”; he resembles the son of Noah rather less, who is not the only son “from an unmixed power,” and whose parents do not seem to have “fallen into forgetfulness.” Moreover, a work known to Hippolytus under the name “Paraphrase of Seth” very much resembles, to judge from what Hippolytus says about it, the one found at Nag Hammadi under the name “Paraphrase of Sēm.”

But if it really has to do with Seth, why the name Sēm? This is not the only problem raised by this strange work.

In an article he published in 1975 on the subject of this *Paraphrase*, K. M. Fischer emphasized the obscurity that envelops this text, the enigmas it presents at every step, and he seems to suggest that this obscurity is intentional. He says that the concrete names are almost obliterated here.³⁴ Not only do the persons have names that differ from any known name, but even the objects, the elements of the world, whose birth the author seems to describe, are veiled by metaphors. Fischer nevertheless thinks that he can penetrate some of these masks. He thinks that Derdekeas, the Revealer who instructs Sēm, is the heavenly Christ, and that Soldas, another figure mentioned in the work, is Jesus.³⁵ On the second point, I think he is mistaken, for what is said of Soldas (30, 32–34 and 39, 30–40, 1) is better understood, it seems to me, of the Demiurge than of Jesus, and the very name Soldas is perhaps linked with “Esaldaios,” the Demiurge of the Naassenes (Hippolytus, *Ref.* v, 7, 30).³⁶ On the first point he is probably right. For what is said about the future baptism of Derdekeas and the person who will baptize him (30, 21–31, 11–22; 32, 5–15) certainly seems to concern Christ and John the Baptist. Kurt Rudolph also sees Jesus and John the Baptist in the characters in question.³⁷ So also does the Berlin Circle of Studies.³⁸ And so does J.-M. Sevrin.³⁹ If the Revealer is Christ, it is difficult for this work not to belong to a Christian Gnosticism. Fischer observes that some features in it are unthinkable apart from a Christian

influence.⁴⁰ B. Aland similarly says that there is no difficulty in thinking of this work as derived from a Christian milieu.⁴¹

I have shown that "Sethianism," as Schenke conceives it, that is, the doctrine expounded in the *Apocryphon of John* and in the other works Schenke thinks of as "Sethian," is probably drawn from Christian Gnosticism and primarily from Valentinianism. Now, if the characteristics of this Sethianism are not all found in the *Paraphrase of Shem*—for example, the theme of the four illuminators is missing—some of the most important ones are found in it. The "race of Sēm" is spoken of here as Schenke's Sethians speak of the race of Seth, and we have seen that what is said of Sēm equally applies to Seth. The history of the world in the *Paraphrase* is parallel to that which the "Sethians" recount. There are interventions by the Savior before his visible appearance: he intervenes at the time of the Flood and the destruction of Sodom.

On the other hand, the *Paraphrase of Shem* has much more obvious links with Hippolytus's Sethians, who are also Christian heretics. It is true that Martin Krause has shown that the content does not entirely correspond to the Sethian doctrine described by Hippolytus (*Ref. v*, 19–22).⁴² There are features in the *Paraphrase of Shem* that are not found in Hippolytus's Sethianism, and inversely, there are features in this Sethianism that are not found in the Coptic *Paraphrase*. But these differences might, I think, be explained, even in the case of the two paraphrases being if not the same work at least works that are closely related. That all the details of the Coptic *Paraphrase* are not found in Hippolytus's summary is normal, given the fact that this summary is very short and the *Paraphrase* is very long. That the doctrine Hippolytus expounds is not all found in the *Paraphrase of Shem* can also be explained. For Hippolytus says that there are an infinite number of Sethian works (*Ref. v*, 21, 1), and, although he also says that the *Paraphrase of Shem* allows one to know all the secrets of the Sethians (*Ref. v*, 22), he does not necessarily draw everything he says about Sethianism from it. J. Frickel's⁴³ hypotheses concerning Hippolytus's methods of work, though interesting and probably partly right, do not allow us to state with absolute certainty that Hippolytus never uses a number of sources when he is describing a doctrine. Striking differences, and one must not forget the resemblances, can therefore be explained. B. Aland writes that if the work we now have differs certainly from the one Hippolytus knew, it is nevertheless certain that there was some relation between them "not only in doctrine and principles, but also in images and metaphors."⁴⁴ F. Wisse also speaks of "striking agreements."⁴⁵ D. A. Bertrand writes that the nature of the resemblances forces one to admit that the two works "are in some way related." "What carries conviction," he says, "is not the number of links, it is the appositeness with which each of them is in its place. It is not a matter of banal analogies, but coherent groups of precise parallels."⁴⁶

I therefore think we have the right to assume either that the two paraphrases are two successive stages of the same work or that it is a question of two different works but that both proceed from an earlier Sethian *work*, from which the same title could have been partly borrowed. (For the word "Paraphrase" seems to have been rarely used in titles, and since it figures in two titles, it is to be thought that it derives from the source.) If the two paraphrases are two successive stages of the same work, which is the earlier stage? For F. Wisse and D. A. Bertrand, it is the *Paraphrase of Shem* that is either the earlier or the work most faithful to the earlier doctrine. In other words, the earlier doctrine was the one in which Christian features were less apparent, or which did not have any Christian features at all. In fact, F. Wisse and D. A. Bertrand think that the *Paraphrase of Shem* is in no respect a Christian work. Wisse frequently states that the work is "non-Christian,"⁴⁷ and even says that it might be a sign of *pre-Christian* speculation, to a certain extent illuminating the Christology of the New Testament.⁴⁸ Bertrand says that the *Paraphrase of Shem* is, "it seems, exempt from any contact with Christianity."⁴⁹ The *Paraphrase of Seth* that Hippolytus speaks of would represent an earlier stage, or a doctrine that had been *Christianized*.

But this is not at all how it seems to me. We have just seen that the *Paraphrase of Shem* itself implies a Christian speculation, since Derdekeas, the Revealer, seems to represent Christ. We have seen that scholars, some of whom are not in favor of the theory of a Christian origin of Gnosticism, also recognize Christ in Derdekeas.⁵⁰ Moreover, given the traits that seem to demonstrate that the names have been obscured, transformed, or completely obliterated, there is a possibility that this work ought to be regarded as presenting a modified form of the doctrine it has in common with the *Paraphrase of Seth*. Already the fact that "Sēm" has characteristics that best fit Seth, the fact that he appears to be a Seth whose name has simply been changed, indicates that it is the *Paraphrase of Shem* that results from a transformation that tends to veil the origin of the doctrine. Furthermore, the work seems to be late. One finds points of contact with Manicheism in it. Particularly remarkable is the fact that one finds the image of the *Bōlos*, the mass or ball in which the Darkness will be imprisoned at the end of the world (45, 18), as in the Manicheans. As with them, God is called "Light" or "Greatness." Derdekeas is "the Son of Light" (4, 1-3), or "the Son of Greatness" (7, 1-2). It is true that the author seems to allow for three principles (1, 26-28: "There was Light and Darkness, and there was the Spirit between them"). But the Spirit is not really a principle distinct from the Light. It originally belongs to the Light, since it is a matter of purifying it and of making it reascend to its source. It is called the "Spirit of the Light" (6, 13-14). Basically, there are only two principles, and one senses throughout the work a sort of horror of mixture, which recalls Manicheism. K. M. Fischer and B. Aland also think the work is late.⁵¹ Similarly J.-M. Sevrin⁵² and M. Tardieu.⁵³

Through the likenesses with Manicheism one still discerns traces of Valentinianism, which, we have seen, seem to the source of "Sethian" speculation. In this *Paraphrase* one finds the Valentinian "Silence" (for example, 7, 15–16; 13, 2–10; 17, 5–6); the "deficiency" (38, 14); the necessity of "formation" (7, 9–10; 14, 23–24; 19, 20); the "middle" (6, 13; 13, 4; 14, 19, etc.); the "left" and the "right" (39, 12–14). The "Thought" that repents of her transgression and prays to receive the help of the world above (16, 26–35) seems to be Sophia. The place of rest of those who repent (35, 25–28) is probably the Ogdoad. The elect are those who have been "named" (14, 6–7), that is to say, whose name has been pronounced, as in the *Gospel of Truth*. (These are only examples taken at random; there can be no question here of studying all the links with Valentinianism.)

It seems to me that the *Paraphrase of Shem* proceeds from Valentinianism through "Sethianism," and from Christianity through Valentinianism. K. Rudolph says that Derdekeas probably means "the Child."⁵⁴ If this is the case, this is another reason for thinking that Derdekeas is Christ. The Child is in fact one of Christ's names in some Sethian and Manichean works. Derdekeas is also the Logos, the Word (32, 32–33, 1), whose call is necessary for the Spirit and the Intellect, who have been mixed with Darkness, to be saved.

Someone will say that the reason why the original doctrine was thus hidden under a thick obscurity remains to be explained. I must therefore again recall that in a revelation supposed to be a prophecy, the author may have wanted to conform to the genre of prophecy. The revelation is made to Sēm, who alone could hand it on, and who speaks in the last few pages. Whether Sēm was Seth or Shem, he was in any case earlier than Christ. But it might be asked, Was it not enough to hide Christ under the name of Seth, as in other Sethian works? Was it also necessary to hide Seth under the name of Sēm? And could certain expressions found in Hippolytus's Sethians that would have clearly indicated the Christian provenance of the work not have been preserved, without naming Christ (for example, "the form of a slave" or "the Word descended into the breast of a virgin")? But, to start with, we are not certain that these features were found in the *Paraphrase of Seth*, and not in an earlier work that could have perhaps been the common source of the two paraphrases. In Hippolytus they might derive from another Sethian work. Moreover, it seems that, in certain respects at least, the author of the *Paraphrase of Shem* wanted to correct the *Paraphrase of Seth*⁵⁵ or its source; in particular when it polemicizes against baptism, which does not seem to agree with the doctrine Hippolytus describes. Some "Sethians," in comparison with their predecessors, may have wanted to accentuate opposition to the Christianity of the Church or to Baptist Jewish Christianity. Or perhaps the author of this reshaped, corrected *Paraphrase* wanted to criticize the "Sethians," that is, the Gnostic groups who used the person of Seth to symbolize Christ. This would be why he replaced Seth with Shem.⁵⁶ Whatever the case, the author of the

Paraphrase of Shem seems to have deliberately obscured the source of his ideas and his myth.

2. *The Thunder*

The work entitled *The Thunder*⁵⁷ does not, according to D. M. Parrott, present any feature that is clearly Jewish, Christian, or Gnostic.⁵⁸ It is true that the author of this work wanted it to be mysterious, secret, and impenetrable to the uninitiated, surprising, *étonnant* in the proper sense of the word (as the title seems to intend). However, I think that those who knew Gnosticism could recognize without much trouble those features that are Gnostic and Christian, the Jewish features also, but modified by a Gnostic and most especially Valentinian Christianity.

A feminine entity speaks in this work. She says that she *is* ("I am . . . , I am"), but she defines herself by a series of paradoxes, a series of opposed, contradictory statements. For example, at the beginning, after saying that she has been *sent* and that one must listen to her words:

I am the first and the last.
 I am the honored one and the scorned one.
 I am the whore and the holy one.
 I am the wife and the virgin.
 I am the mother and the daughter.
 I am the members of my mother.
 I am the barren one.
 and many are her sons.
 I am she whose wedding is great
 and I have not taken a husband. . . .
 I am the bride and the bridegroom,
 and it is my husband who begot me.
 I am the mother of my father
 and the sister of my husband,
 and he is my offspring.

(13, 16–32)

And further on:

Why, you who hate me, do you love me,
 and you hate those who love me?
 You who deny me, confess me,
 and you who confess me, deny me . . .
 You who know me, be ignorant of me,
 and those who have not known me, let them know me.
 For I am knowledge and ignorance.
 I am shame and boldness . . .
 I am strength and I am fear.
 I am war and peace . . .

(14, 15–32)

Or again:

I am an alien and a citizen.
 I am the substance and the one who has no substance. . . .
 Those who are close to me have been ignorant of me,
 and those who are far away from me are the ones who have known me.
 On the day when I am close to you, you are far away,
 and on the day when I am far away from you, I am close to you.

(18, 25—19, 4)

I am the one below,
 and they come up to me.
 I am the judgment and the acquittal.
 I, I am sinless,
 and the root of sin derives from me. . . .
 I am the knowledge of my name.
 I am the one who cries out,
 and I listen.

(19, 12–35)

One feels that, though contradictory, these words are not without meaning. They are not lacking in beauty. But who is speaking thus?

According to Quispel, it is Wisdom.⁵⁹ And in fact she says (16, 3–5), “For I am the Wisdom [*sophia*] of the Greeks, / and the Knowledge [*gnosis*] of the Barbarians.”⁶⁰

She is therefore Wisdom, it seems. But one might also say that she is the Spirit.⁶¹ The latter, as we have seen, is most often a feminine figure among the Gnostics.⁶² She is the first Wisdom, the highest Mother, the one who does not fall. The Wisdom who is mentioned in *The Thunder* is both the Mother supreme and irreproachable, that is to say, the Holy Spirit, and the fallen Sophia. From this fact come many of the paradoxes. One might also say that this person is Nous, Intellect, as the title of the work seems to indicate (“The Thunder, Perfect Mind”). She says herself that she is Nous, in a verse that is admittedly only partially preserved (18, 9: “I am Nous”). She is also Logos, Word, as well as Silence. (14, 19–13: I am the Silence . . . I am the Voice . . . I am the Word”). She seems to be the Savior or the Revealer, for she says that she was *sent*, that she has *come* (13, 2–3), that she is knowledge of *her own revelation* (18, 11), or the knowledge of *her own name* (19, 32–33) that she is the *call* (19, 33–34). It might seem that this person is the divinity as a whole, God the Father included, when she says, “For I am the one who alone exists, and I have no one who will judge me” (21, 18–20). As in the *Trimorphic Proténnoia* the feminine Spirit seems to be at once the Father, the Mother, and the Son.⁶³

But for Quispel this Wisdom is the Wisdom of the Old Testament and Philo, of pre-Christian Judaism. He thinks that this work is not only not

Christian but pre-Christian and might date from the first century before Jesus Christ. "There is nothing to suggest," he writes, "that Wisdom has fallen from the spiritual world for the author."⁶⁴ It seems to me that, on the contrary, many of this Wisdom's statements suggest that she is together the Spirit from above and fallen Sophia. If she was only the Wisdom of the Old Testament or that of Philo, could she say: "I am sinless, and the root of sin derives from me"? She makes one think of the Valentinian Sophia, at least for some of the characteristics she attributes to herself. As H. G. Bethge observes, on behalf of the Berlin Circle of Studies, the work cannot be understood unless there is a myth of the fall and salvation of Sophia behind these contradictory statements.⁶⁵

In order to take account of the contradictory aspects given to Wisdom, Quispel appeals to the myths of Ishtar and Isis, which he thinks must have influenced Jewish thought. He points out that Ishtar could have said: "I am the whore and the holy one." And if one believes Epiphanius, even Isis could have said it. (Epiphanius knew of a tradition in which Isis was a prostitute at Tyre.)⁶⁶ Isis could also have said: "I am the sister of my husband." Something of this work might therefore be explained in this way. But there are many other things that cannot be. Many of Wisdom's statements here imply very subtle, sophisticated speculations that are, I think, scarcely found except among the Valentinians. Neither Isis nor Ishtar can explain sayings such as "I am the wife and the virgin," "I am the mother and the daughter," "I am the members of my mother," "I am the bride and the bridegroom," "it is my husband who begot me," "I am the mother of my father," and "my husband is my offspring." These astonishing declarations cannot, I think, be explained apart from the idea of the *consubstantiality* of the divine persons, an idea that the Valentinians were perhaps the first Christians to formulate expressly. "I am the wife and the virgin" is explained by the fact that the supreme Mother, the Barbelo of the "Sethians" is the "virginal Spirit," and is also associated with God as a wife. "I am the mother and the daughter" is explained by the essential identity of the Holy Spirit with fallen Sophia (all the feminine aeons of the Pleroma being of the nature of the Spirit). Or perhaps the mother is the Holy Spirit and the daughter is either Truth or Life or the Church, that is, one of the great feminine aeons of the Pleroma, who are forms of the Spirit and are also derived from it. "I am the members of my mother" intends to state that the Spirit is also the Church, as we have seen.⁶⁷ On the one hand the members of the Church are consubstantial with the Spirit, they are the Spirit; on the other hand this Spirit, who is in the world, is nevertheless in one sense distinct from the supreme Spirit who is its mother. "I am the bride and the bridegroom" is explicable because God is also spirit (John 4:24). "I am the mother of my father" is explained by the same reason; or because by giving birth to the Son, who is God and consubstantial with the Father, the Mother becomes the Mother of God. The same ideas might explain "my husband is my offspring." Unless it is a reference to the fallen

Sophia; for among the Valentinians, Christ sometimes appears as the first husband and the future husband of the inferior Sophia, and on the other hand he separates himself from her, like a child from his mother, at the moment she becomes imperfect.⁶⁸

It would also be easy to explain most of the other paradoxes by bearing in mind that the diverse forms of the Spirit are confused in the entity who states them. This polymorphous spirit might easily receive contradictory attributes, and might even have attributes that are opposed in each of their forms. The Church might be loved and hated; it might be called a whore and it might also be called a holy one (13, 18). Christ might be both war and peace (14, 31–32), judgment and acquittal (19, 14–15). The Christian is both an alien and a citizen (18, 25–26). The spirit is as poor as Job on his dunghill, and he reigns in the kingdoms (15, 5–9). The truth might be inconceivable Silence, and the idea that survives and whose remembrance is frequent (14, 9–11). God is both substance and the one who has no substance (18, 27–28), and so on.

If the *form* of this work, this sequence of declarations beginning with “I am,” is comparable to the aretologies of Isis and was perhaps influenced by them (even though this form is also found in many other texts, in particular in the Johannine Gospel), the *basis*, the *ideas*, cannot be explained as a whole either by the myth of Ishtar or that of Isis.⁶⁹ Nor can they be explained by pre-Christian Jewish works concerning Wisdom. On the other hand, the explanation can be found quite easily by comparing *The Thunder* with the *Trimorphic Protennoia*, a “Sethian” work that is overtly Christian. The *Trimorphic Protennoia* seems to depend upon the *Apocryphon of John*, either directly or in any case through the *Gospel of the Egyptians*. It seems to be a relatively late work, not only because it depends upon the *Gospel of the Egyptians* but also because it has links with the *Origin of the World*, which, according to H.-G. Bethge, might date from the end of the third century.⁷⁰ Moreover, *The Thunder* also had direct links with the *Origin of the World*. In the latter is found a quotation that seems to come from a version of *The Thunder*, a little different from the one I know of.⁷¹ *The Thunder* therefore belongs to a group of Gnostic works all of which are overtly Christian and of which the ones closest to *The Thunder* (the *Trimorphic Protennoia* and the *Origin of the World*) seem late. We are far from the first century before Jesus Christ that Quispel speaks of.

Through the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (on which the *Origin of the World* seems to depend) the works related to *The Thunder* proceed from Valentinianism, following what we have seen.⁷² An examination of the text confirms this. As well as finding the implicit idea of the fall of Sophia, one finds in it more than one feature of Valentinianism. I will mention only the “Silence” (“I am the silence that is incomprehensible,” 14, 9–10); the “deficiency” (“do not cast me out among those who are disgraced,” 15, 13–14); and above all the “bridal

chamber” (“until they become sober and go up to their resting place,” 21, 27–28). (*Koimētērion*, the “room of the bed,” is synonymous with *koitōn*, which R. McL. Wilson⁷³ and W. W. Isenberg⁷⁴ translate by “bridal chamber” in the *Gospel of Philip* 84, 21 and 85, 21 and 33.)

One might also, if one reads carefully, find features in *The Thunder* that seem to witness to a direct knowledge of the New Testament, or a noncanonical Gospel but one that was certainly Christian. In fact one finds (in 20, 18–22) a quotation of the *Gospel of Thomas*, which is probably a Valentinian reworking of a Jewish-Christian Gospel, whose Christian origin is unquestionable. The allusion to Isaiah 54:1 (in 13, 22–23: “I am the barren one, and many are her sons”) might be a more direct allusion to Paul (Gal. 4:27: “Rejoice, O barren one . . . for the children of the desolate one are many more”). “I am the unlearned, and they learn from me” (16, 27–29) might be an allusion to Paul’s distinction between the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God in 1 Corinthians. The “lust in appearance” (19, 18–19), opposed to temperance, might be a Johannine expression, “the desire of the eyes” (1 John 2:16). “Give heed then, you hearers . . . and you spirits who have arisen from the dead” (21, 14–18) recalls John 5:25 (“The hour is coming . . . when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God”). “I will speak his name” (= the name of the one who created me) in 21, 11 might be an echo of John 17:26 (“I made known to them thy name”; cf. 17:6). Other links with Christian Scriptures can no doubt be made. R. Unger writes, “I cannot bring myself to agree with the proto-Gnostic, pre-Christian thesis of Quispel, for I believe I have been able to establish the presence [in *The Thunder*] of biblical quotations [drawn from the New Testament], and I am convinced that other examples might be added to these.”⁷⁵

3. *Eugnostos*

We finally come to *Eugnostos* (which one may also call the *Epistle of Eugnostos*), the hobbyhorse of Krause and of all those who want to deny Gnosticism a Christian origin. They not only think that this work is not Christian, but that, by its relation to another Gnostic work, the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ*, it provides proof that the Christian appearance that so many Gnostic works present is nothing but a disguise, an artificial character in which the Gnostics decked out an originally non-Christian doctrine in order to spread their ideas in Christian circles.

The alleged proof comes from the fact that a large part of the text of *Eugnostos* is found in the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ*, and from the fact that whereas *Eugnostos* does not mention the name of Jesus Christ and claims to be a letter addressed by “Eugnostos the blessed to his own,” the parts of the text that are common to *Eugnostos* and the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* are present in the latter as words addressed by Jesus Christ to his disciples. One might conclude from this, and it has been very quickly concluded, that

the author of the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* borrowed these teachings from *Eugnostos* and put them in the mouth of Christ in order to Christianize them.

From the 1950s, a little after the discovery of Nag Hammadi, Quispel, Doresse, and Puech have put forward the opinion that the author of the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* borrowed from *Eugnostos* all the doctrinal expositions common to the two works.⁷⁶ This amounts to saying that this author plagiarized almost the whole of *Eugnostos* to make it into a Christian text, or to Christianize it further, if some Christian element was already found in it. At this time, Quispel did not regard *Eugnostos* as absolutely non-Christian; he said that it presented "very weak traces of Christian influence." Puech said that it was "without markedly Christian features" ("ohne ausgeprägte christliche Züge"), which might mean that by looking one might find a few traces of Christianity.

But a little later Martin Krause took up a more radical position.⁷⁷ For him *Eugnostos* is not at all Christian. Its source was a work that simply treated cosmogony. A certain Eugnostos, who apparently belonged to some Gnostic sect—Gnostic but not Christian—must have transformed this work into a letter. This letter must have existed in a number of successive forms. In its first form, says Krause, it would not have contained any soteriology. However, it would have dealt with Man, the Son of Man, and the Son of the Son of Man; and after the mention of the Son of the Son of Man, Krause adds in brackets: "= Sôter." (I must admit, I do not understand what he means by this; for if the Savior was mentioned, at least implicitly, is there not a soteriology?) Then someone must have reworked this letter, adding the description of the tasks the Savior will accomplish and has already accomplished. Finally, the Savior must have been identified with Christ and the doctrine must have been put in his mouth, by imagining a dialogue between Christ and his disciples to make a context for the account. Thus the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* must have finally appeared. Granted, we know nothing but the beginning of this process, or rather the second stage (the *Epistle of Eugnostos*) and the last stage (the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ*).

The Christianization of the work, in its last stage, must have been motivated by the Gnostics' desire to win Christians to their religion. Until this time, the epistle had in various forms been a Gnostic work, containing Jewish elements but no Christian element.

However, some scholars have assumed a chronological order between the two works—*Wisdom of Jesus Christ* and *Eugnostos*—that is the opposite of that assumed by Doresse, Quispel, Puech, and Krause. Till, the editor of the Berlin Gnostic papyrus (in which, among other Gnostic works, is found one of the Coptic translations of the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ*), judged that on the contrary *Eugnostos* was drawn from the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ*.⁷⁸ But he died before giving the reasons for his opinion. On the other hand, Schenke has criticized Doresse's arguments and has

held that it is more natural to compose a text like *Eugnostos* beginning with the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* than to compose the latter beginning with *Eugnostos*. Moreover, he judged that “strongly rooted Christian motifs” are found in *Eugnostos*, but he did not develop, and therefore did not explain, this judgment.⁷⁹

Then Krause intervened in the debate by setting up a whole dossier of arguments opposed to these views and showing, according to him, the priority of *Eugnostos* in relation to the *Wisdom*.⁸⁰ These arguments, which have seemed convincing to most scholars, are drawn from a comparison between the parts of the two works that they have in common and the parts that are proper to each of them. According to him, the parts proper to *Eugnostos* agree with the rest of the work, whereas the parts proper to the *Wisdom* are in disagreement with the parts in common. If this were right, it would show that the author of the *Wisdom* did not draw what he has in common with *Eugnostos* from his own resources, and that he probably drew it from the latter or a work very similar to the latter.

I am myself not sure that Krause’s proof is always sound, and it seems to me that it needs to be reviewed with care. For example, he says that in the *Wisdom* the disciples’ questions (which form part of the source peculiar to the work) do not correspond to Christ’s reply (which belongs to the common source), and he quotes BG 117, 12 ff. as an example, in which Mary (Mary Magdalene) asks where the disciples have come from and where they will go. (I do not know what purpose this example serves, given that in this case neither the question nor the answer belongs to the common source. But it is perhaps to demonstrate the incoherence of the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* in general.) According to Krause, Christ does not mention the disciples in his reply and does not respond to the question at all.⁸¹ However, in D. M. Parrott’s⁸² translation I read Christ’s reply: first of all he recalls the fall of Sophia and how the “drops” of light or spirit fell into the world. This responds to the first part of the question; for it is obvious that the souls of the disciples are among the drops of the spirit that await being awakened by the Savior.⁸³ He then says that he has indeed come so that the drops might rejoin the Spirit, and this is in fact the disciples’ question: “I have come . . . so that *you* might . . . rise to the one who exists from the beginning” (BG 122, 12–15; CG III, 117, 3–6). This is indeed to tell them where they will go, and responds to the second part of the question.

Krause also cites the first question the disciples ask, at the beginning of the work, and says that Christ’s reply does not correspond to it. Here is what we read in this passage. Christ appears to his disciples and asks them what they are looking for. One of them replies that they are inquiring about the substance (*hypostasis*) of the universe, and the “economy” (*oikonomia*, that is, the plan that rules the progress of the world). This is a *philosophical* question. Christ also replies by quoting the ideas of the philosophers. First he says that people have sought God and not found him,

but that the wisest among them have speculated on the government of the world and its movement; that on this subject philosophers have held three different opinions—he quotes them—but that none of the three derives from truth. He himself will instruct the disciples concerning truth. He briefly refutes the three opinions he has mentioned, and says that knowledge will be given to those who are worthy of it. Krause remarks that he has not instructed the disciples on the substance of the All and the progress of the world. It is true that he has not given them this sort of instruction, but since he promises to make the truth known to them, one must either understand that he will instruct them later about what they are looking for or that the truth he will make known to them is something other than a reply to this sort of question. In any case, it is not possible to say that his reply does not correspond to the question, for he began by citing the possible opinions in relation to what the disciples sought.

As for the link between the other ten questions and their replies, it would again be easy to show that in each case the reply corresponds to the question. Sometimes Christ begins with a traditional saying, such as “he who has ears to hear let him hear”; but if one looks beyond this saying, one sees that he replies to the question.

I do not wish to say that there is a perfect coherence in the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* and that its doctrine is exempt from all contradiction. It is often confused and difficult to understand as it appears in the Coptic translations. But reading it without preconceptions, one does not get an impression of discontinuity greater than when reading *Eugnostos*, and perhaps even the contrary. *Eugnostos* is made up of parts that are sometimes hardly interlinked, or are linked by awkward transitions such as, “But that might suffice for now” (CG III, 74, 7–8), “But that is enough now, otherwise we will be carried away to eternity. Another subject of knowledge is this . . .” (CG III, 76, 10–12). One gets the impression that these mediocre transitions are there to replace the disciples’ questions, which in the *Wisdom* explain the change of subject and render it more natural.

Krause also judges that there are certain passages proper to the *Wisdom* that unduly separate the passages that ought to follow and that do follow them in *Eugnostos*. They would therefore be secondary additions. He gives BG 83, 14–19 as an example. But is it certain that this passage is not necessary? The text common to both works states that God has not been known by any power or creature since the foundation of the world, except by himself. The *Wisdom* adds: “and by the one to whom he wished to reveal himself through me [= by Christ] . . .” (There is a recollection here of the saying in Matt. 11:27 and Luke 10:22: “No one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”) One might judge that this “addition” was not necessary, but one might also judge that it was. For the unknown God is nevertheless known in some sense, since he is spoken of. He must therefore have been revealed to someone; in any case, he is actually revealed by *Eugnostos*. The *Wisdom*

of *Jesus Christ* may have taken this text from the Gospels and *Eugnostos* could have abridged it. In any case, this "addition" does not render the text incoherent.

Krause then points out a contradiction he thinks he finds in the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ*. Christ says to his disciples that *Ennoia* will teach them how faith in invisible things has been found through visible things that belong to the Father (BG 90, 7–12). This would contradict what he says elsewhere: that it is himself who has come to instruct them about everything. But if *Ennoia* is something like the Spirit, these statements are not necessarily contradictory. The Savior teaches everything, but the Spirit will allow his teaching to be understood, and in this way he will also teach. The Johannine Christ tells his disciples that the Spirit will teach them all truth, and nevertheless he says that he himself has come into the world so that whoever believes in him should not remain in darkness; that if one remains in his word one will know the truth; that he is himself the truth.

Finally Krause shows that there are contradictions in the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* concerning the use of the name Savior, or on the place, the level, at which the Savior is found in the transcendent world. But he acknowledges that there are also contradictions on this point in the two Coptic translations of *Eugnostos*. And, above all, a perfect logic in this sort of speculation is something that hardly exists in Gnosticism. The Savior, being God and man together, or at least being consubstantial with the Father and also distinct from him and appearing as a man, might be found at all levels. And he would reproach the Valentinians with the fact that at one moment they distinguish the Savior (or Jesus) and Christ, and at another they confuse them. These distinctions are mythical, or are theological subtleties. It is always a case of the same being, in such a way that it is difficult not sometimes to neglect such and such a distinction. That more than once in the *Wisdom* the Savior and Christ are identified—it is the disciples who identify them, and the disciples are not theologians; that the Son of Man is sometimes called Savior, whereas elsewhere the Savior is presented as being the Son of the Son of Man; that God himself, the highest God, is called Savior; all of this is only natural. It in no way proves that the *Wisdom* is later than *Eugnostos* and is clumsily inspired by it. One might well suppose, as Schenke does, that the author of *Eugnostos* was inspired by the *Wisdom* while seeking to systematize what in the *Wisdom* was less systematic and appeared to him to be disordered.

I therefore think that Krause's arguments are not always as sound as has been thought, and I wonder whether they have been carefully examined. In any case, it seems to me that they ought to be reexamined.

But let us admit that some of them are valid. Does it follow that *Eugnostos* is not at all Christian, as he thinks? This is another question. It might be that *Eugnostos* is earlier than the *Wisdom* and that its doctrine is nevertheless Christian.

And who is *Eugnostos*? There is a question that Krause does not examine in his article. It is that of the possible link between this *Eugnostos*,

as the author of the epistle, and the Eugnostos who presents himself in the colophon of the *Gospel of the Egyptians* as having written this Gospel. The colophon, in Codex III, immediately precedes the *Epistle of Eugnostos*, and this might already make one think that there is some link between the two men. It is even more likely in that the name Eugnostos seems to have been very rare in antiquity. Until now it has never been discovered⁸⁴ except in the title of this epistle and the colophon of this Gospel, two works that follow each other in Codex III. Now, the Eugnostos who wrote the colophon was *manifestly a Christian*.⁸⁵

Here is what we read in the colophon: "The Gospel of the Egyptians. The God-written, holy, secret book. Grace, understanding, perception, prudence [be] with him who has written it, Eugnostes the beloved in the Spirit—in the flesh my name is Gongessos—and [with] my fellow lights in incorruptibility, Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior, Ichthus, God-written [is] the holy book of the great, invisible Spirit. Amen."

This colophon is usually interpreted as meaning that Eugnostos is the "spiritual" name of the one who is writing. His name "in the flesh" is Gongessos. P. Bellet sees in Gongessos the Latin name Concessus.⁸⁶ He is probably right on this point.

But P. Bellet, who thinks that the *Gospel of the Egyptians* contains nothing or almost nothing Christian, assumes that the author of the colophon and the author of the epistle are not the same person. Although for him the *Gospel of the Egyptians* and its colophon are only "superficially Christian," he nevertheless thinks that there is a great difference between this superficial Christianity and the "completely or almost completely pagan" character of the epistle.⁸⁷ Moreover, the character of the epistle does not, for him, agree with the term "blessed" applied to Eugnostos in the title. This appellation "rather presupposed a Christian ideology."⁸⁸ This leads P. Bellet to interpret *Eugnostos p-makarios* in quite a different way than has hitherto been done. He supposes that the author of the epistle was in reality called Makarios (Macarius), a name that means "blessed," but that was also used as a proper name. Eugnostos would therefore not be the name of the author but a qualification, a title. This word, which must mean "he who knows well," or "the well-knowing," might be a title with which the head of a Gnostic community was honored.

This hypothesis does not seem to me to be very likely. It does not seem to agree with the order of the words or with the place of the article in the expression *Eugnostos p-makarios* and *Eugnostos p-agapētikos*. It would no doubt imply error on the part of the Coptic translator.⁸⁹ For Bellet it is based on the conviction that the epistle is not Christian, which he nevertheless dare not absolutely affirm (since he speaks of the "completely or almost completely"⁹⁰ pagan" character of this text). If the letter were even a little Christian, this supposition would not rest on much of anything.

Certainly there are also other obscurities in this matter. It is strange for a man to call himself "the blessed." One might say that of another, not of oneself. Furthermore, it is almost as strange that the author of the

colophon calls himself "Eugnostos the charitable" or the "well-beloved" (according to the meaning that ought to be given to the word *agapētikos*). One might therefore ask whether it is really himself that Concessus is calling this, or if it is not rather a supernatural reality by which he believes himself to be inspired when he writes his revelations. Does he not say, twice, that the *Gospel of the Egyptians* was "God-written"? Is it not said, in the work itself, that it was written by "the great Seth"? We have seen that the Great Seth is probably a figure of Christ or of Jesus. Who knows whether Christ, who is not named in this epistle, is not the true author of this epistle, in Concessus' eyes, addressed "to those who are his"?

It might seem difficult to interpret thus the words "him who has written it, Eugnostos the beloved in the Spirit—in the flesh my name is Gongessos," as well as what follows: "and *my* fellow lights. . . ." If it is a reference to another, would Concessus not have said "and *his* fellow lights"? However, these "fellow lights" recall the illuminators who normally surround Christ; all the more because the four feminine figures who correspond to them (Grace, Intelligence, etc.) are mentioned in the colophon. After all, perhaps Christ, that is, Concessus' inspirer, took up the works after the parenthesis in which Concessus spoke of himself, and he might well say "*my* fellow lights." (If it was a reference to Christ, one must obviously translate: "Grace, Intelligence, etc. *are* [and not may be] with the one who wrote it"; which would create no difficulty since the verb has been added by the modern translator.) But again I do not know whether this hypothesis would agree with the Coptic text. Whatever the case, the identity of the one who wrote the epistle and the one who wrote the colophon seems extremely probable. Whether this man attributes his work each time to a heavenly person or gives to himself "in the Spirit" the name Eugnostos, with the flattering qualifications, it is the same man who is the author of the epistle and the author or copyist of the *Gospel of the Egyptians*.

Quispel, who, contrary to his first impression, now also says that the epistle "does not contain any trace of Christian influence,"⁹¹ nevertheless thinks that it is by the same Eugnostos as the *Gospel of the Egyptians*.⁹² According to him, this man must have evolved, changed his doctrine, between the time of the epistle and the time of the colophon; he passed from a sort of pagan theosophy to Christian Gnosticism.

But did he really change? One must carefully compare the two works, the *Gospel of the Egyptians* and the *Epistle*, to find out to what extent he changed. And first of all it would be useful to ask whether he is the author of the *Gospel of the Egyptians* or if he is only its copyist. For it seems to me that there is a certain analogy between the doctrine of this "gospel" and that of the "epistle," such that one might be tempted—at first sight—to think that Eugnostos is the author of the two works. First of all, these works both have a link with Valentinianism. The *Gospel of the Egyptians* is linked with Valentinianism through the *Apocryphon of John*. For his

part the author of *Eugnostos* is obviously a Valentinian. If he does not relate the myth of Sophia, his allusion to the "deficiency of femininity" can only be explained by this myth. The *Propatōr*, Silence, "deficiency," "formation," and the Ogdoad are all Valentinian concepts. The account of the unknowable God resembles that found in Valentinian works such as the *Tripartite Treatise*, or in works dependent upon Valentinianism such as the *Apocryphon of John*. God contained the All within himself (CG III, 73, 3–7), just as, in the *Gospel of Truth*, he is Father of the universe. Certain names, like that of Pistis-Sophia, and certain characteristic expressions link *Eugnostos* with the "Ophite" branch of those derived from Valentinianism, that of Irenaeus, I, 30, as we shall see below. A characteristic passage (CG III, 81, 3–10) that seems to mean that the innumerable angels who make up the Church of the saints (the Church above) beget other angels similar to themselves by their kisses, recalls a passage from the *Tripartite Treatise* (58, 18–27), which states that the children of the Son, the innumerable spirits that make up the Church prior to the aeons, are born "like kisses, because of the multitude of those who kiss one another with a good insatiable thought."

There is therefore a link with Valentinianism in the two works that are related to the name of Eugnostos. But a more important similarity is that they both appear to modify Valentinianism in the same way, that is, in the direction of an unproblematic optimism, and even a sort of triumphalism. The goal of the author of *Eugnostos* seems to be both to demonstrate what an immense number of powers inhabit the transcendent world and to make of this world, and even of reality as a whole, a picture breathing forth glory, joy, and serenity. In conclusion to his epistle he says, "All natures, from the Immortal of the Unbegotten to the revelation of chaos, are in a light without shadow, an indescribable joy and an ineffable jubilation, unceasingly rejoicing at their unalterable glory and their incommensurable peace" (CG III, 85, 15–23). The hierarchy of these powers, which are described as begetting one another, seem to lead gently, without any break or danger, from the highest to the lowest. *Sophia's fall is not related*. The existence of the deficiency is briefly mentioned in a few words, which are in no way prepared for or explained in what follows. After speaking of 360 heavens that are all "perfect and good," the text suddenly adds, "And in this way the deficiency of the feminine was revealed" (CG III, 85, 7–9). After which the text passes on just as abruptly to something else.

In the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* the same allusion to the deficiency of femininity (BG 107, 10–12) also does not seem to be very well prepared for, at least in the context immediately preceding it. But a little before this, Sophia's fall and the fact that her children are in the deficiency until the coming of the Savior is mentioned (BG 105, 5–9; CG III, 107, 23–108, 1). This passage has no parallel in *Eugnostos*. The phrase about the deficiency of the femininity is therefore less unexpected. And if it is not devel-

oped in the text immediately following, this is because a question posed by a disciple interrupts Christ's intention. But it will be developed later, when Christ comes back to the fall of Sophia at the end of the work, which again is without parallel in *Eugnostos*. In this respect, *pace* Krause, there is less coherence in *Eugnostos* than in the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ*.⁹³

There is therefore a doctrine in *Eugnostos* that, if it is inspired by Valentinianism, as seems to be the case, also veils a whole side of Valentinianism, the side of darkness and suffering, apart from a brief allusion that seems to contradict all the rest. Now, we found the same optimism in the *Gospel of the Egyptians*. In reference to this Gospel, we said above⁹⁴ that: "The author seems to be primarily preoccupied with celebrating 'the richness of Light,' in populating the luminous world with innumerable glorious figures and in describing the 'ineffable joy' that reigns among these beings. Here one does not feel the tragic side of the Valentinian myth. *The fall of Sophia is not recounted*. There are simply a few allusions to a 'deficiency' that remains unexplained. The appearance of the Demiurge seems to be due to a voluntary decision of the world above." It is true that the passage concerning the Demiurge and his angels darkens the picture for a moment. But almost immediately joy reappears in the enthusiastic description of the numerous entities who save.

This similarity of orientation, which unites the *Gospel of the Egyptians* and the *Epistle of Eugnostos*, might allow one, strictly speaking, to entertain the possibility that the two works are by the same author. After having written his "Gospel" he may have wanted to write an "epistle." However, if there is a similarity of direction, there are also great differences between the two works, differences of style and doctrine. In *Eugnostos* we do not find the bizarre names with which the author of the *Gospel of the Egyptians* dresses up his heavenly beings. Nor do we find his excesses of enthusiasm that sometimes lead to speech being replaced by successions of meaningless vowels. Moreover, the structure of the world above does not seem to be the same in *Eugnostos* as in the *Gospel of the Egyptians*. Furthermore, *Eugnostos* is not a "Sethian" work, insofar as the person of the heavenly Seth does not appear in it, nor does Barbelo or the four illuminators. He is rather connected with the "Ophite" branch of the "Gnostics in the strict sense," that of Irenaeus, I, 30, that to which, to a large extent, the *Hypostasis of the Archons* belongs. This *Hypostasis* might be called "Sethian" insofar as one finds the illuminators in it, for example; but in many respects we have seen that it stands apart from the line that proceeds from the *Apocryphon of John*. The signs that *Eugnostos* belongs to the "Ophite" line are, for example: the name Pistis-Sophia (cf. the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, the *Origin of the World*, Hippolytus's Naassenes, etc.—in the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, the corresponding expression is "the immovable race" or "incorruptible"); the words "he who knows the God of truth . . . is an immortal among mortals" (cf. the *Hypostasis of the Archons* 96, 26–27; the *Origin of the World* 125, 11–

12). It is true that this branch of the epigones of Valentinianism is very close to the "Sethian" branch, and that one sometimes finds the language of one mixed with that of the other. However, there is a certain difference here, which indicates a different source, a different work used as a source. If the author of *Eugnostos* were the same as that of the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, it would have to be the case that, in the redaction of *Eugnostos*, he did not follow the *Apocryphon of John*, which he follows in the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, but another work, from which he might even have borrowed most of his text—and in this case this work could be the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ*. (He would have ignored certain passages that did not agree with his opinions; and also ignored the dialogue form, since he wanted to write an epistle.)

However, the difference in style remains. This difference makes it unlikely that the *Gospel of the Egyptians* and *Eugnostos* are by the same author. One perhaps finds something of the style of the *Gospel of the Egyptians* in the passage proper to the *Eugnostos*, in which the author invents names for the entities emanated from the Savior and Pistis-Sophia. But even here, in the invention of these names, he shows little imagination, and the names he invents are not of the same type as those which the author of the *Gospel of the Egyptians* makes up.

Eugnostos-Concessus is therefore probably only the copyist of the *Gospel of the Egyptians*. But if he wanted to copy this *Gospel*, it was perhaps because he approved of its theological orientation. The tendency toward optimism expressed here would have seemed to him fitting to encourage his companions. After copying it he may have been tempted to complete it by an epistle of his own, animated by the same spirit. He may have written this epistle himself, if one allows that *Eugnostos* is prior to the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ*; or, continuing to be above all a copyist, he may have almost entirely made his epistle up of passages borrowed from the *Wisdom*. In the latter hypothesis, he would have ignored everything in the *Wisdom* that did not correspond to his own views or his project.

Whatever the case with these hypotheses, I think that the similarity of direction that unites *Eugnostos* and the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, together with the identity of name and the similarity of expressions such as "Eugnostos the blessed," "Eugnostos the beloved" or "the charitable" (depending on which way one chooses to translate *agapētikos*), makes it even more probable that the author of the epistle (or the heavenly inspirer the author appeals to) is the same *Eugnostos* who wrote (or inspired) the colophon of the *Gospel of the Egyptians*. Now, the author of the colophon, whether he is called *Eugnostos* "in the Spirit" or *Eugnostos* is the name he gives to his inspirer, is in any case Christian. To think, as Quispel does, that the author was Christian when he wrote the colophon of the *Gospel of the Egyptians* but that he was not when he wrote the epistle, is a supposition that is hardly likely. First of all, there is nothing to prove that the epistle was earlier than the copy of the Gospel. It is quite natural that the fact of

having copied a Gospel gave Concessus the idea of adding an epistle to it, whereas the fact of having written a pagan epistle would not have much to do with the decision to recopy a Christian Gospel. It would indeed be strange if he had placed this Gospel before the pagan epistle, as a preface, if it was he who brought the two works contained in Codex III together, as Quispel thinks. And since, according to this hypothesis, he must certainly have united them after having become a Christian, why would he have placed this pagan epistle among these Christian works, when he should have repudiated everything he wrote before his conversion? Finally, and most especially, there are signs that show that this man was not ignorant of Christianity when he composed the epistle. The fact that one finds in this so-called pagan work expressions such as Son of Man, the kingdom of the Son of Man, the Savior, the Church, faith, love, would be very strange if the author had not been Christian, or had not been influenced by Christianity. Krause urges that these ideas are not attested to solely in the New Testament.⁹⁵ But are they found *together* in a text that is completely independent of Christianity? Moreover, R. McL. Wilson has quoted a certain number of expressions that could derive from the New Testament in *Eugnostos*.⁹⁶ For example, the expression “from the foundation of the world”; the title “God of gods, King of kings” (cf. Rev. 17:14 and 19:16); “The Church of the saints” (cf. “the Churches of the saints,” 1 Cor. 14:33); the “ministering” angels (cf. Heb. 1:14). One might be tempted to make some additions to this list. For example: “*Ennoiá* will teach him how faith in invisible things was found in what is visible” (CG III, 74, 17–19), an idea that recalls Paul, Rom. 1:20. “A joy that has never been heard or perceived in any of the aeons or in any of the worlds” (CG III, 81, 16–21) recalls 1 Cor. 2:9. The “gods” and “lords” (CG III, 87, 9–18) recall 1 Cor. 8:5. The end of the epistle, “I have told you these things in such a way that you can carry [or bear] them, until he who has no need to be instructed is revealed in you,” might correspond to John 16:12: “I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now,” and also Gal. 4:19: “until Christ is formed in you.” Finally, let us remember that, according to P. Bellet, the title “Eugnostos the blessed” seems to suppose a Christian ideology.

The fact that Christ is not explicitly named in the epistle, and that he must be sought in names such as Autogenes and Image (CG III, 75, 3–9), or Man, Son of Man, Savior, might indicate (but does not necessarily indicate) that Eugnostos-Concessus wanted to avoid obvious signs of Christianity. (Not necessarily, because the other names might have seemed adequate to him.) If he wanted to avoid them, was it because he wanted to appear more a philosopher than a theologian in this work? Is it because for him “Eugnostos” is not himself but is “the great Seth,” a Seth who, according to the end of the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, he depicts as the human Seth, prior to Christ himself? Was it because for him Eugnostos is Christ himself? Did he want to pass for a non-Christian, he who, however,

did not hide his Christianity in the colophon that immediately precedes the epistle? Did he in fact want to distance himself from Christianity? In any case, if he wanted to, this would be a case of de-Christianization within Christian Gnosticism. For the priority of Valentinian speculations seems to be a necessary condition to explain the ideas one finds in *Eugnostos*. Moreover, the multiplication of entities and the heavenly levels indicates a relatively late work, and this is also what the analogies between *Eugnostos* and works such as the *Hypostasis of the Archons* or the *Gospel of the Egyptians* indicate.

I therefore think that whatever the correspondence between the *Epistle of Eugnostos* and the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* is—I have provisionally allowed for *Eugnostos*' anteriority, but without being completely convinced—*Eugnostos* can be understood only in connection with Valentinianism and as therefore dependent upon a Christian Gnosticism.⁹⁷

Conclusion

To conclude, the Nag Hammadi discovery was too hastily interpreted as “proving” the non-Christian origin of Gnosticism. On the contrary, by making known works that illuminate the passage from Valentinianism to later doctrines, for example, in making known to us the most important *Tripartite Treatise*, as well as the new translations of the *Apocryphon of John*, and even in making known a work such as the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, which seems to be the chain linking more than one later work with the *Apocryphon of John*, it allows us to understand how works that are apparently not very Christian, in any case very different from Christianity as we know it, are nevertheless linked with Christian Gnosticism.

Chapter XIV

Brief Remarks on the So-Called Pagan Gnozes, "Gnostic" Jewish Christianity, Mandeism, and "Jewish Gnosticism" as Pre-Christian

So as not to add numerous pages to a study that is already too long, I will not say very much on the so-called pagan gnozes and on "Gnostic" Jewish Christianity, or about Mandeism and "Jewish Gnosticism" that was pre-Christian.

I. THE SO-CALLED PAGAN GNOSES

1. *The "Sermon of the Naassenes"*

As far as the famous "Sermon of the Naassenes," reconstructed by Reitzenstein from the Naassenes' doctrine as described by Hippolytus (*Ref. v, 6–11*),¹ is concerned, the problems that such an attempt at restoration raise have not yet found a definitive solution after twenty-four years. Does one have the right to leave out all the Christian passages, as Reitzenstein does, by considering them secondary additions? I cannot enter into the details of this discussion here; I will restrict myself to citing what others have said about it.

While agreeing with most of Reitzenstein's views, Bousset said that he was wrong to want to reconstruct the very text of the "Sermon."² He judged this to be too hazardous, given the various changes that, according to Reitzenstein, the early text had undergone. Reitzenstein in fact supposes: (1) that a pagan commentary of the hymn of Attis cited by Hippolytus (*Ref. v, 9, 8–9*) existed; that this commentary would be the "Sermon of the Naassenes"; (2) next, that this copy was reworked and interpolated by a Christian; (3) that an "adversary" who no longer understood the early work then made extracts from the reworking; (4) that these extracts then came down to Hippolytus, who in turn summarized them.³ When one thinks of all these changes, how can one hope to reconstruct the early text?

In the collection *Die Gnosis*, Foerster translates Hippolytus's text without taking account of the omissions made by Reitzenstein, and rightly says that one finds the same doctrine in the texts that precede and follow the "Sermon" as in the "Sermon" itself.⁴

L. Schottroff writes: "One must certainly not hold [cf. H. Schlier, *Der Mensch*, 61, n. 2] that the Christian elements of the Sermon of the Naasenes were only introduced later, as Reitzenstein holds . . . , for the methods and content of the interpretation of the Christian material are in no way in tension (= in disagreement) with the rest of the text."⁵

At the end of an article devoted to this problem, Simonetti writes: "To conclude, I think that the elements brought out above suffice to demonstrate the deficiencies of method and the arbitrariness of the process followed by Reitzenstein in order to eliminate the Christian elements of the Sermon of the Naasenes. Some of these elements might be eliminated from the texture of the work without doing any harm, but not all of them. And this suffices to demonstrate the inconsistency of the thesis, following which the Sermon of the Naasenes would be an example of Gnosis independent of hints of or contributions from Christianity."⁶

2. *The Chaldean Oracles*

As far as these *Oracles* are concerned, I will simply recall Michel Tardieu's position, who thinks that they depend upon Valentinianism and are earlier rather than later than Numenius.⁷ (They could therefore have influenced Numenius rather than Numenius the *Oracles*. In any case, as I said in the introduction of the present work,⁸ Numenius seems to have been influenced by second-century Gnosticism, a Gnosticism I believe I have shown to be essentially Christian.)

3. *Hermetic Gnosticism*

Among the so-called pagan gnosés, the most important is certainly Hermeticism, or more precisely, that part of Hermeticism which might be considered Gnostic. As we know, there are wide differences in doctrine between the diverse texts that make up the *Hermetica*; most of them cannot be said to be Gnostic. But some of them, in particular Treatises I and XIII of the *Corpus Hermeticum* (that is to say, the *Poimandres* and the treatise called *On Regeneration*), contain myths and speculations that have an undeniable resemblance to the myths and speculations of the Christian Gnostics. Since these texts also appear to be pagan, given that the teachings they contain are either attributed to Nous (personified Intellect), called *Poimandres*, or to Hermes Trismegistus, and that they present no clear sign of Christianity, it is natural that it was above all by considerations of Hermeticism that, at the beginning of the century, Reitzenstein made credible the thesis of the non-Christian origin of Gnosticism.

The Nag Hammadi discovery provides us with proof that links actually did exist between certain currents of Gnosticism and certain currents of Hermeticism. We already knew from heresiologists that Gnostics, for example, Hippolytus's Peratai (*Ref.* v, 14, 8), cited the name of Hermes

Trismegistus in their astrological speculations, among other names of legendary wise men. But since Hermes appeared in his astrological role here, one might think that the Peratai knew only of the Hermetic works treating the occult sciences, works that seem to have existed at an earlier date than the works of Hermetic philosophy and religion. But now, Codex VI from Nag Hammadi, which contains three works belonging to philosophical and religious Hermeticism following a number of Gnostic works, seems to demonstrate that the Gnostics knew this Hermeticism and were interested in it to the extent of placing Hermetic texts among their own.

But reciprocally, Hermetic Gnosticism does not seem to have ignored the Gnostic currents of Christianity. In the first part of this work⁹ we saw that there were numerous features in the *Poimandres* that recall Christian Gnosticism and that can hardly be understood without it. I will not begin to demonstrate it again here. As far as the XIIIth treatise of the *Corpus Hermeticum* is concerned, one also finds in it elements that seem to derive either from ordinary Christianity or from Valentinian Christianity. Among those which recall ordinary Christianity, one might first of all cite the allusion to a teaching given beforehand by the master upon a mountain. The disciple says to the master: "You have only spoken in riddles . . . but when I made myself your suppliant, descending the mountain . . . you promised. . . ." Certainly there are ancient sages of whom it is recounted that they withdrew to a mountain (Zoroaster, for example) or that they received revelations upon a mountain (Moses, for example). But did they also *teach* upon a mountain? It seems to me that the example that comes most easily to mind is that of Christ delivering the Sermon on the Mount.

One might also cite, as possible Christian traits, expressions like "the inner man" (7; cf. 2 Cor. 4:16); "for the bringing together of the members of the Word [in yourself]" (8; cf. Eph. 4:12: "for building up the body of Christ"; Gal. 4:19: "until Christ is formed in you"); "this tent [= this body]" (12; cf. 2 Cor. 5:1, 4). The oft-repeated expression "life and light" (9; 12; 18) recalls the Johannine Prologue. The name *Poimandres* (19), which links this treatise with the one bearing this title, and which the author of CH XIII understands as meaning "the Shepherd of men" (cf. n. 83 in Festugière¹⁰), recalls the Johannine description of Christ as a shepherd (John 10:11–16).

As properly Valentinian features, one might mention "my deficiencies" (1), the "seed" (1–2); the "silence" (2; cf. n. 13 in Festugière¹¹); the Ogdoad (15). The speculation of the decad and the dodecad (7–9) in which the decad represents the virtues, and the dodecad, sins or vices, recalls that of the Valentinian Marcus (Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 1, 16, 1), in which the dodecad represents "passion" because of its link with Sophia, and where it is the cause of all "defection." Similarly, in certain doctrines that seem to be derived from Valentinianism, for example, that of the Gnostic Justin (a form of "Ophitism") and that of the *Pistis Sophia*, the "Twelve" hold a place that is usually held by the "seven" in Gnosticism. Furthermore, the

Son of God is "made up of all the 'powers'" (2), which recalls the formation of Jesus' being in the Valentinians (Irenaeus, I, 2, 6). For in CH XIII the "powers" are the equivalent of the Valentinian aeons. One also sees that Hermes, the Logos, is begotten "in the Nous" (3), apparently because he was "regenerated," that is, begotten again from above. This idea recalls the Johannine idea of regeneration, an idea in no way opposed either in John or the Valentinians to the idea that the regenerate beings belong to God from the beginning.¹²

The treatise that has been called *The Ogdoad and the Ennead*, found at Nag Hammadi, offers certain resemblances with CH XIII. In it one also finds features that might be Valentinian, and others that might derive from ordinary Christianity. For example, expressions that might be Valentinian are "deficiency" (54, 17; 57, 7); "silence" (mentioned very often); *Bathos* (57, 32: "unutterable depths"); the Pleroma and the All (57, 9; 58, 4 and 32; 60, 19); the Ogdoad (53, 25; 55, 16; 56, 26; etc.); the Hebdomad (56, 27; 63, 19); and perhaps also the "principle of the principle" (60, 20), perhaps equivalent to the Valentinians' "pre-principle."¹³ The series "Unbegotten, Begotten of oneself, Begotten" (63, 21–23; cf. 57, 15–18), which is not normally found in Hermetic literature,¹⁴ we find among Christian Gnostics, for example, among the Peratai (Hippolytus, *Ref.* v, 12, 3) and the *Gospel of the Egyptians* (CG III, 54, 13–18). Now, the "Sethians," to whom the author of this Gospel belongs, and the "Ophites," to whom the Peratai belonged, seem to depend upon the Valentinians. This series is also found in a Neoplatonist like Iamblichus, but it is found much earlier on among the Gnostics, given the fact that the self-generation of the second principle already appears, as we have seen, among Valentinus's first disciples.¹⁵

Phrases that might be linked with ordinary Christianity are those such as "You have found what you sought" (60, 10); "he scatters rain on each one" (59, 8–9) (the rain in question is perhaps the Spirit, but this does not stop this phrase from possibly being a recollection of the Gospel). *Agapē* (60, 24) is also a word that primarily recalls Christianity. The injunction to place a stone bearing the sacred name in the sanctuary, choosing for this the moment when Hermes will be in the constellation of the Virgin (62, 16–17), might be explained not by astrological considerations (although Hermes is the planet as well as the Logos or Nous here) but by the fact that the Christian Logos was born of a virgin.

Finally, one must note that unlike the other Hermetic works, or at least less clearly than them, this treatise seems to imply the existence of a *community*. It is said that Hermes has begotten numerous sons (52, 26–30). The father advises his "child" (the disciple) to associate with his other sons, his "brothers," and to pray with them (53, 6–9 and 27–30; 54, 20–22). The "sacrifices of words" (57, 18–20), that is, of prayers, seem to have a cultic value here, a value they perhaps already had in the *Poimandres* (31) and in CH XIII (21).¹⁶ Moreover, the father and son, that is, the master

and disciple, having prayed together, exchange a kiss (57, 26–27). “This kiss directly recalls for us a sacramental act in use among the Valentini-ans,” writes J.-P. Mahé.¹⁷ It also recalls for us a custom of the early Christians (cf. Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Pet. 5:14).

In CH XIII and in *The Ogdoad and the Ennead* the true God is also the creator of the world (CH XIII, 17; *Ogd. and Enn.* 56, 8). The figure of a Demiurge who is not the first God, a figure that appears (albeit feebly) in the *Poimandres*, seems to be almost wholly obliterated. Nevertheless, in CH XIII if God is the Creator, he is above all the God of knowledge, of inner illumination and the regeneration necessary for salvation. And in *The Ogdoad and the Ennead* one reads, “I am Nous, and I see another Nous who sets the soul in motion” (58, 4–6). Is this other Nous not the Nous-Demiurge of the *Poimandres*? In fact, in 63, 19–21 the “Demiurgic Spirit” is associated with the “seven ouziarchs,” that is, with the Hebdomad, not with the Ogdoad or the Ennead. Here there is some trace of the distinction between the Demiurge and the highest God. Whatever the case, the author of CH XIII and, even more, the author of *The Ogdoad and the Ennead* seem to allow for a great continuity, not an opposition or a rupture, between the Hebdomad on the one hand and the Ogdoad and the Ennead on the other. In the second of these works it is stated that on rising the disciple ought to call to mind all the degrees (52, 12–13: “on condition that you remember each degree”; cf. 63, 9). Obeying the Law of the Hebdomad is a necessary way of ascending higher: “We have already attained the Hebdomad, for we are pious, governing ourselves according to the Law” (56, 27–30). Finally, in 63, 16–24, the Revealer imposes an oath on all those who want to read this book: he wants them to call to witness the elements of the world and the demiurgic power, as well as the unbegotten God. If there is Valentinianism here, it is a Valentinianism that goes much further than the Valentinian turning point.

In the *Poimandres* the characteristic division in Gnosticism between God and the world is much attenuated. It is even more so in CH XIII and more so again in *The Ogdoad and the Ennead*. Either because their date is probably later or because Hermeticism is mixed with Gnosticism in them, these two works are only very feebly Gnostic. They evoke a Gnosticism that is coming to an end and tending toward Neoplatonism.

The resemblances I have pointed out, between Christian Gnosticism and the doctrines of the three treatises I have mentioned, nevertheless remain. We might point to others between this same Christian Gnosticism and some other Hermetic works, for example CH IV. How can these resemblances be explained? Was Christian Gnosticism influenced by a certain Hermeticism? It is difficult to hold that the feeble degree of Gnosticism that appears in the works of Gnosticizing Hermeticism could have given rise to the hard and strong Gnosticism of Saturnilus and Marcion, and even that of Basilides and Carpocrates. Moreover, there is little to suggest

that the *Poimandres*, which seems to be the earliest of these works, is earlier than the middle of the second century.¹⁸ There is therefore a possibility that the dependence works rather in the other direction. It seems to me that one might explain this by one of the two following suppositions.

1. Given the very large quantity of Hermetic works that Stobaeus knew of, the Hermetic writers must have been very numerous. Some of them may have been influenced by Valentinianism, as the pagan philosopher Numenius probably was, and as were, according to M. Tardieu, the authors of the *Chaldean Oracles*. The earliest of these Valentinianizing Hermeticists was probably the author of the *Poimandres*. Authors like those of CH XIII and of *The Ogdoad and the Ennead* could have derived inspiration from this initial example. Hermeticists of this persuasion may have set up a community, in imitation of the Gnostic communities. The supposition Reitzenstein made of the existence of a *Poimandresgemeinde* ought not to be rejected. But this community would have been inspired, in its ritual as well as its doctrine, by Gnostic-Christian communities, and not the latter by the former.

2. Some non-Gnostic Hermetic works may have been used by Christian Gnostics, who would have modified them in order to link them with their own doctrine. We have seen that there are important differences between the first chapters of the *Poimandres* and what follows.¹⁹ The first chapters may contain the remains of a non-Gnostic Hermetic work, which a Valentinian could have reworked, and completed by more obviously Valentinian chapters. Then, on the model of the *Poimandres*, other Valentinians, or Gnostics derived from Valentinianism, may have written works like CH XIII and *The Ogdoad and the Ennead* wholly by themselves, imitating the Hermetic style. The Gnostics may have wished to attribute their ideas to Hermes Trismegistus, as they wished to attribute them to Seth, Melchizedek, or Zoroaster. They may not only have imitated the scholarly style of the Hermeticists but also to a certain extent their doctrines, which were even closer to Platonism than those of Valentinus, just as, on occasions, they know how to make Zoroaster speak as a true Zoroastrian (cf. *Zostrianos* 134, 3–4).

In this second hypothesis, the community the author of *The Ogdoad and the Ennead* seems to refer to would be none other than a Christian community, probably a Valentinian community or one derived from Valentinianism.

Whichever of these two possibilities seems the most probable, it seems to me that if those Hermetic works that might be thought of as Gnostic²⁰ are not derived from Valentinianism—and it is not impossible that they might be—they are probably influenced by it. They are either linked with the evolution of a certain sort of Valentinianism toward Neoplatonism or with a middle-Platonism influenced by Gnosticism, like that which seems

to be found in Numenius and the *Chaldean Oracles*, and which toward the end of the second century prepared for the Neoplatonism of the third.

II. "GNOSTIC" JEWISH CHRISTIANITY

Bousset spoke of "Jewish-Christian gnosis,"²¹ and in his description of certain Gnostic themes (for example, "dualism" and the myth of the divine Man), he mixed Jewish-Christian myths with Gnostic ones, as if these two sorts of myth were of the same genre. When from around 1950 it was acknowledged that Jewish elements were more important than Iranian elements in Gnostic myths, and especially when the Nag Hammadi discovery showed that some Gnostic works celebrated James the Just, the head of the Jewish Christians in the time of Paul, scholars were inclined to think that the opposition previously made by historians between Jewish Christianity and Gnosticism was a false opposition; that the Gnostics in no way felt themselves to be opposed to Jewish Christians, and that the latter were also themselves Gnostics, perhaps even the source of Gnosticism. It seems to me, however, that the earlier idea was closer to the truth. Jewish Christianity, in its beginnings at least, does not seem to have been Gnostic. Rather it represented an interpretation of Christianity very different from that of the Gnostics.

1. The Gnostics, especially at the beginning, interpreted Christianity as differing profoundly from Judaism and as revealing a God who is not that of the Old Testament. Jewish Christians, on the other hand, interpreted Christianity as a religion that essentially remains the same as Judaism. For them Jesus simply brought certain modifications of the Law of Moses in order to make it purer and more perfect. They generally kept most of the regulations of the Jewish Law, including circumcision and the Sabbath. One of the most important changes Jesus introduced, in their eyes, was to have replaced sacrifices offered to God by baptisms. In their Gospel Jesus said, "I have come to abolish sacrifices" (Epiphanius, *Pan.* xxx, 16). Thus, the Jewish Christians could to a great extent be assimilated into pre-Christian Jewish baptist sects such as the one at Qumran. It is now generally acknowledged that the Qumran sect was not Gnostic.

2. For the Gnostics the world was not created directly by God, and there is a great distance or a great separation between God and the world. Moreover, matter and the body are profoundly different from the spirit, and the body will not be resurrected. For Jewish Christians, on the other hand, the world was directly created by God. When they taught that the dead will be raised (Epiphanius, *Pan.* xix, 7), they probably understood by this that the body would be raised at the same time as the soul. The pseudo-Clementine works teach that God himself has a body.²² Certain elements of the world, water in particular, were perhaps objects of vener-

ation for the Jewish Christians. Epiphanius says that for the Sampseans water was "like a divinity" (*Pan.* 53, 1).

3. For the Gnostics Jesus is God, or the incarnation of a divine being whom they usually call "Christ." For the Jewish Christians Jesus is "the true prophet," but he is initially only a man (Epiphanius, *Pan.* xxx, 2; 14;16). And even later, when a being called Christ incarnates himself in him (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30, 3; 14; 16; 18), he in no way becomes the incarnation of a divine being. For this Christ does not seem to be originally of the divine essence, even if he is called the Son of God. Even if he is the first of the created beings, he is still a created being, a sort of angel or archangel (30, 16). It seems that he became Son of God by a sort of "progression" or by "a lifting up received from above" (30, 18). First he manifested himself in Adam (who for the Jewish Christians was without sin), and then he appeared again in a number of characters in the Old Testament: Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses. Finally he appeared in "the true prophet," Jesus, the prophet promised by Moses.

4. For the Gnostics humanity is saved by the grace of revelation, and by an election or predestination that might even be described as an original belonging to the world above. The effect of grace or predestination is faith in Jesus Christ, a faith that might also be called "knowledge."²³ For the Jewish Christians, one is saved by "works" (acts), that is, by obedience to the Law revealed by the true prophet. Moses already knew this Law, but he had modified it, especially in the authorization of sacrifices, in order to adapt it to the mentality of the people who surrounded him.

5. Christ's crucifixion seems to play no role in salvation for the Jewish Christian, or even sometimes in its doctrine. Cullmann observes that the *Preachings of Peter* (the earliest of those texts that make up the pseudo-Clementine works) pass over it in complete silence.²⁴ On the other hand, it seems to me that it plays an essential role in the revelation that brings about salvation for the Gnostic. Even when the Gnostic seems to say that it was only an "appearance," we have seen that often he wants to say not that it did not take place but that it was something other than what it appeared to be, because it was also the victory of Christ over the "powers."²⁵ It was the victory of Christ because it taught that the "powers" are of an inferior nature and that the thought of God is not revealed through them; that the true God is high above the world and that a man condemned by the powers of nature and society is not necessarily condemned by God. It is by this "knowledge" that one escapes the religion of the powers of the world and is saved.

6. But there is a certain dualism in Jewish-Christian doctrines. But it is a dualism *within the world* rather than being the Gnostic distinction between the world we perceive and a different, transcendent, foreign world. Jewish-Christian dualism is primarily expressed by the distinction

between the masculine principle and the feminine principle, the first representing the good, the second, evil. These two principles reign not only in humanity but in the world in general, one alternately stronger than the other. They are both derived from God and *willed by him*. The "true prophet" and the devil are like the right and left hand of God. Right and left in fact also serve as symbols of good and evil. This dualism of principles that are in one way complementary, like masculine and feminine, or relative to one another, like right and left, is not without analogy with that of Qumran, and we have seen that this is not Gnostic dualism.²⁶

(Nor is this dualism without some analogy with Persian dualism, and Bousset tried to explain it by Zervanism,²⁷ just as later on attempts were made to explain the dualism of Qumran by Mazdean ideas that had been adapted to Judaism. But we saw above²⁸ that although the dualism of Qumran is in fact analogous with that of the Mazdeans, it is not necessarily explained by it. It is the same with Jewish-Christian dualism in relation to Zervanism. The links Bousset made between Persian doctrines and certain Jewish-Christian ideas seem, in most cases, to be of no use in explaining the latter. It is true that the pseudo-Clementine works are not ignorant of Zoroaster, whom they identify with Nimrod; but this is no reason for the Hebdomad they speak of to mean that the Jewish Christians joined the six *Amesha Spentas* of Mazdeism to God. Nor does the fact that Mazdeism—which they oppose as pagan—was a religion of fire suffice to explain the opposition the Jewish Christians made between fire and water—the fire being evil, the water good. Judaism, where the Hebdomad was good because it symbolized creation, and baptist rites, where water replaced the fire of sacrifices, suffice to explain these traits.)

7. There is a certain anticosmic attitude among the Jewish Christians, and in this, at least, one cannot deny that they are close to the Gnostics. Although good and evil principles for them coexist in the world, and sometimes one, sometimes the other manifests itself with particular force, they think that as a whole the power of the evil principle bears upon the present world, whereas the good principle alone will dominate the future world. In the future world the devil himself will become good. Here we rediscover the temporal dualism of Jewish apocalyptic; the eschatology of the Jewish Christians is the future eschatology of apocalyptic. But precisely because their dualism is essentially temporal, the reasons for their anticosmic attitude are not exactly the same as those of the Gnostics. We have seen that to a large extent Gnostic eschatology is a present, realized eschatology, even if the Gnostics often also preserve a future eschatology. To a large extent, Gnosticism replaces the distinction of *times* by the distinction of *levels*. Thus, even here, there is a difference, which might have practical consequences for the attitude to be adopted in respect to the world.

8. In their morality the Jewish Christians thought themselves bound by strict rules, by the partly modified Law which the true prophet had

revealed to them. These rules may have been austere—often they were vegetarian—but they were in no way encratite. They kept to the rule of marriage and obedience to the biblical precept “to increase and multiply.” Among the Gnostics, on the other hand, more than one sect was encratite. However, they may have thought that they were not bound by defined rules, salvation depending above all else on “knowledge,” which for them, before Valentinus and very often after him, was almost the equivalent of faith.²⁹ Good acts proceeded from the inner transformation produced by “knowledge.”

9. The Jewish Christians had a particular Gospel, primarily derived from Matthew. They rejected Paul’s epistles, who was for them “a Greek,” that is, a pagan. Nor were they Johannists. Not only did they not use John’s Gospel, but there are many differences between their ideas and those of the Fourth Evangelist. Whatever Cullmann says, John attaches fundamental importance to the cross. Through it Christ throws down the Prince of the world; it is the cross that must be looked upon in order to be saved, just as the bronze serpent was looked at. If John’s Christ is a revealer, we have seen that Paul’s also is.³⁰ And on all the points in which Jewish Christianity is opposed to Paulinism, John is on the side of Paul.

It is clear from this that Gnosticism and Jewish Christianity are two profoundly different interpretations of Christianity and, on certain points, are almost contradictory. Jewish Christians, as we know them from the heresiologists and their own works (for example, the *Preachings of Peter* and the pseudo-Clementines), are not Gnostics. It is true that in his book on the pseudo-Clementine works³¹ Cullmann wanted to give the name Gnosticism to the *Preachings of Peter*. But Quispel, who is hardly suspect of wanting to oppose Judaism and Gnosticism, acknowledges that the Elkesaites “were not in the least Gnostic.”³² Now, according to Quispel, the Jewish Christians of the pseudo-Clementines are “certainly related if not identical with the Elkesaites.”³³ Bousset also states that the book of Elkesai, of which Hippolytus quotes extracts (*Ref.* ix, 13–17), is as closely related as possible to the world of ideas of the Clementines.³⁴ Moreover, he judges the system of the Clementines to be identical to that of the Ebionites as Epiphanius describes them (*Pan.* 30).³⁵ The result of this is that for him the Elkesaites, the Ebionites, and the Jewish Christians of the Clementines all profess much the same doctrine.

Epiphanius in fact says that four sects used the teachings of Elkesai: the Ebionites, the Nazarenes, the Osseniens, and the Nasoreans³⁶ (*Pan.* 19, 5). Moreover, he says that the Osseans (who are the same as the Osseniens), the Ebionites, the Nazarenes, and the Sampseans use the book of Elkesai (*Pan.* 53, 1). Now, the Ebionites are Jewish Christians par excellence, being the descendants of the Christian community at Jerusalem, which in Paul’s time was called “the poor” (*ebionim*). And the Nazarenes Epiphanius mentions are probably the same as the Ebionites, as the doc-

trine he attributes to them demonstrates and the fact that both of them, after leaving Jerusalem (a little before the siege of the city), took refuge in Pella, from where they spread into neighboring regions (*Pan.* 29, 7 and 30, 2).

It is true that the first Jewish Christians, of the community of Jerusalem, probably did not profess all the ideas that were later those of the Ebionites Epiphanius describes. However, what we know of this community, through the New Testament, demonstrates that from the first century Jewish Christians inclined toward these ideas. They held observation of the Law to be obligatory, at least for Christians who came from Judaism. They did not believe one could be saved simply by grace and faith, setting themselves against Paul on this point also (cf. Epistle of James). They seem to have been inclined to think that at first Jesus was only a man, but that in recompense for his holiness, God resurrected him and lifted him up to himself. (Peter's speeches, in the Acts of the Apostles, suggest a lifting up of Jesus and a sort of adoption by God rather than a divine origin. Cf. Acts 2:33–36; 3:13, 26; 5:31.). The other doctrines Epiphanius attributes to the Jewish Christians, or that they express themselves in the pseudo-Clementines, most probably appeared only after the community at Jerusalem had left and taken refuge on the other side of the Jordan. There it must soon have become acquainted with the revelations of Elkesai, and must also have found itself in contact with Jewish baptist sects derived from the Essenes or related to them. On the one hand Epiphanius says that Elkesai joined the Ebionites (*Pan.* 19, 5; 30, 3); on the other, that the same Elkesai, in the reign of Trajan, joined the Osseniens or Osseans (*Pan.* 19, 1–2). Now, the Osseniens are probably the same as the Esseniens, even though Epiphanius seems to distinguish them by making the Osseniens a Jewish sect, and the Esseniens a Samaritan sect. He counts the Osseniens among the "seven Jewish sects" (*Pan.* XIX, 5), where they obviously hold the place of the Esseniens, who are not named in this list.³⁷ In any case, these Ossians are for him a Jewish baptist sect earlier than Elkesai, and therefore very close to the Esseniens. Elkesai was perhaps the first Christian to preach a *renewable* baptism, while recommending baths as a remedy for all sorts of ills (Hippolytus, *Ref.* IX, 13–17). He therefore brought together Christian ideas with Essenian practices and may have served as a unifying link between Jewish Christians and Jewish Baptists. In any case, a link between the former and the latter seems to have taken place after the beginning of the second century or thereabouts. This link could only confirm the Jewish Christians' attachment to the Jewish Law (with the exception of sacrifices), as well as to a rigorous monotheism which for them probably excluded the original divinity of the Savior.³⁸

The Jewish Christians might be linked with the Gnostics because they both had a tendency toward esotericism. But esotericism does not suffice to define Gnosticism, as Jonas demonstrated in his reply to Quispel, which is also a reply to Scholem.³⁹ On the other hand, both have been accused of

ideas linked with astrology and magic. But even supposing that these ideas always have some grounds—they do not always—astrology and magic were so widespread in the ancient world that a common attitude toward them hardly points to a particular link between the two currents of thought. Nor is it a sufficient argument to assimilate the Jewish Christians to the Gnostics to observe that both speculated on Genesis and the beginnings of the world. Speculations of this type are common to all sorts of Christians. The Jewish-Christian theory about the falsifications that they held were introduced into the Old Testament shows that the problems confronting the Gnostics in relation to the Old Testament also faced the Jewish Christians, but that they were resolved differently. Instead of criticizing the Old Testament and its God, the Jewish Christians preferred to hold that everything unworthy of God or of those protected by God in this work, is apocryphal or interpolated.

Jewish-Christian speculation on the successive appearances of the “true prophet,” who before appearing in the person of Jesus had already manifested himself in Adam—whom they held to be without sin—in Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, are speculations that may be compared to those of the Gnostics when they assimilate the Savior to Seth or Melchizedek. But one must not ignore the differences. In the Gnostic myths the assimilation of Christ to a person in the Old Testament seems to have been suggested by an expression or text in the New Testament. (The assimilation of Seth seems to be due to the name “Son of man” that Jesus gives himself; the assimilation of Melchizedek was inspired by the Epistle to the Hebrews.) Whereas the incarnations of the “true prophet” in the Jewish-Christian myth have very little to do with the New Testament; they rather tend to exalt the great figures of Judaism and to underline the continuity between the Old Testament and the New.

The Jewish-Christian speculation in which each incarnation of the “true prophet” corresponds to an opposite figure, symbolizing error and evil, is hardly found among the Gnostics. The Valentinian syzygies are quite different from the syzygies of the Clementine works.

However, from a certain time there perhaps was a mixing and reciprocal imitation of Jewish-Christian doctrines and those of the Gnostics. The adversaries ended up resembling each other; they imitate each other either intentionally or unintentionally. It is the Gnostics who first seem to have drawn nearer to the Jewish Christians. We have seen that Valentini- anism represents a sort of turning point in Gnosticism, and that Valentinus is much less critical in respect to the Old Testament than were men like Saturnilus, Basilides, Carpocrates, and Marcion. Jewish Christianity was probably among the Christian currents that Valentinus would have wanted to draw nearer to, to reconcile. The Valentinians, and the schools that depended upon them, perhaps borrowed the opposition between masculine and feminine from the Jewish Christians, insofar as they identified them with good and evil, or rather the perfect and the imperfect. (They only

identified them with the latter to a limited extent, for they continued to honor the feminine principle in the person of the supreme Mother. And if Sophia is the origin of the “deficiency” for them, this is not only because they are copying the Jewish Christians; it is because for them Sophia symbolizes the creative Wisdom of the Old Testament, and they judged her imperfect precisely because they were Gnostics and not Jewish Christians.) Perhaps the Valentinians also borrowed from Jewish Christianity the metaphor of left and right to mean good and evil. (Perhaps, because they could also have found it in the New Testament, cf. Matt. 25:31–46.) In any case, it seems probable that the Valentinians used a Jewish-Christian Gospel, by reworking it, to make up the *Gospel of Thomas* found at Nag Hammadi. In this Gospel James the Just, the head of the first-century Jewish Christians, is depicted as a great and venerable figure, as being in some way Jesus’ successor in order to guide the community of the apostles (34, 28–30). This same James also appears in other, probably Valentinian, works, found at Nag Hammadi: the *Apocryphal Epistle of James* and the two *Apocalypses of James*. In these James also seems to be considered with sympathy and respect.

It has sometimes been concluded from this, probably too hastily, that the old idea that Jewish Christianity and Gnosticism are viewpoints opposed to one another is a false one. Too hastily, for it must be borne in mind that the mixture of Jewish Christianity and Gnosticism, if there is a mixture, is not there at the beginning of Gnosticism but only (it seems) after Valentinus, and that on the contrary the first Gnostics are very much opposed to the union of Christianity with Judaism, and are very harsh toward the Old Testament. The possible meaning of a work like the *Apocryphal Epistle of James* must also be examined closely. It is a very strange work, which might in reality be directed against Jewish Christianity. The harshness of some of Christ’s words to James and Peter; the fact that he tells them they have not understood (7, 3–6), or not known (12, 37; 14, 1–2); the fact that he foretells that others will come after them and will understand him without having either seen or heard him (3, 19–24; 12, 35–13, 1); the fact that James writes this letter in secret, advising his correspondent not to divulge its contents; the fact that he fears scandalizing the other disciples (16, 5–6) and scattering them in different places without confiding anything to them, except that Christ has risen into the heavens after having revealed that certain men will come and that the disciples ought to love them (15, 38–16, 1)⁴⁰—this revelation strongly displeased the disciples; the fact that James prays for a place among “the beloved who will appear” (16, 10–11); that he also prays that the “beginning” (of the time of the beloved?) will happen thanks to the recipient of his letter, or at least beginning with him (16, 12–13); the fact that he adds, “Thus I shall be capable of salvation, since they will be enlightened through me, by my faith, and through another [faith] that is better than mine, for I would that mine be the lesser” (16, 15–19); all this might indicate that

James confides to his correspondent in secret that in Christ's eyes it is not himself, James, nor Peter, nor the other disciples who have understood Christ best. Others will come who will be more right than they; others, without having seen Christ, will understand him better than they. These others might be pagan Christians, and Paul who converted them. They may also be the Gnostics. It is indeed a pity that one cannot decipher the name of the addressee. Some have conjectured "Cerinthus," for one can read the last few letters: . . . thos (the end of *Kērinthos*). Granted, this is only a possibility. But if, as we believe, Cerinthus was a Gnostic rather than a Jewish Christian, or passed as such (if he was only a legendary figure), this would mean that, according to the *Apocryphal Epistle of James*, Gnosticism and not Jewish Christianity corresponded to James's true thought, after he had received the revelations of Christ. The true James would thus have become, without the knowledge of his companions, a supporter of Paulinism or of future Gnosticism, which Christ was supposed to have foretold to him.

Whatever the case, this letter does not proceed from a feeling of admiration toward the community of the first disciples, or toward the Jewish Christians who succeeded this community. It is true that in certain passages it seems to defend ideas that are regarded as Jewish Christian rather than Gnostic, for it appears to defend free will and the role of the will in salvation or the loss of the soul (5, 3-6; 9, 18-23; 11, 1-4 and 11-17; 12, 6-8). But, as we have seen,⁴¹ it is not at all certain that the Valentinians accorded free will only to the "psychics," or that they disdained "works." The Gnostic author of the *Apocryphal Epistle of James* wants to conform as much as possible to what the canonical Epistle of James teaches. He does not think it is contradictory to the Pauline theory of salvation. He shows Christ teaching salvation by faith and knowledge as well as by works (8, 11-14), and even more by faith and knowledge than by works or obedience to a Law (2, 30-33; 6, 3-7; 8, 26-27; 12, 38-13, 1; 14, 8-10 and 15-17; cf. also 1, 26-28). Christ descends from heaven, which scarcely accords with what seems to have been the first communities' depiction of him. Moreover, certain traits that Christ criticizes in James and Peter, for example, a certain repugnance in speaking of the cross, might in fact be traits of Jewish Christianity (cf. the *Preachings of Peter*).

In sum, the opposition between Gnosticism and Jewish Christianity remains in the *Apocryphal Epistle of James*, and it is conscious, since here James is carefully distinguished from the other apostles. As for the *Apocalypses of James*, which are not the "revelations" of James but rather of Christ speaking to James, they show Christ teaching him a doctrine that is in reality nothing other than a sort of Valentinianism. In them the Demiurge is distinct from the true God, and Valentinian motifs are numerous. In them James is treated with respect, but it is a James converted to Gnosticism or in the process of conversion, thanks to Christ's teachings. A real concession toward Jewish Christianity or the influence of it cannot be

found in these works. In them the Valentinians seem to adopt James, but James alone and not Jewish Christianity. For them the martyrdom of James was a lesson confirming the opposition of the "powers" to Christ and to the true God. It might be that they use Jewish-Christian traditions insofar as the story of James's death is concerned. But if this is the case, they use them in favor of Gnosticism and not Jewish Christianity.

Thus, although Valentinianism constitutes a step toward a possible reconciliation, because it attenuates the division between God and the world, the New Testament and the Old, the difference in respect to Jewish Christianity remains strong, even among the Valentinians. In works devoted to the person of James, the revelations of Christ to James are like a disavowal of what Jewish Christianity was going to become after James, and perhaps to what it partly already was in himself. As for signs of a reciprocal movement, of an evolution of the Jewish Christians bringing them toward Gnosticism, these signs remain feeble and rare, at least up to a certain time. The Jewish Christians seem to have preserved the essentials of their position, at least up to the beginning of the third century. The Elkesaites whom Mani knew were very far from being Gnostics. If they perhaps welcomed a few Gnostic ideas, this was only later, in the course of the mysterious process by which Mandeism was established.

III. MANDEISM AND "JEWISH GNOSTICISM" INSOFAR AS THE LATTER WAS PRE-CHRISTIAN

One of the first European travelers who discovered the Mandaeans in Mesopotamia in the seventeenth century, Father Ignace de Jésus, called them "Christians of Saint John." He thought that although they appealed to John the Baptist and not Christ, they were a type of Christian. Nowadays, most specialists of Mandeism judge things in a very different way. Mandeism is cited, by the supporters of a non-Christian origin of Gnosticism, as one of the most certain examples of a Gnosticism that cannot be of Christian origin. In fact one sees that, in the Mandaean texts, the "Roman," that is, the Byzantine Christ, is rejected and attacked. According to the Mandaeans, Christ is "devoted to oppression"; he "falsifies the forms of Religion and corrupts the words of Truth."⁴² The Mandaean texts also relate a host of myths that seem very strange and in which the modern Christian cannot recognize his religion. Finally, if the baptismal rites of the Mandaeans recall Christian baptism, they nevertheless differ from it in more than one respect, above all because Mandaean baptism could be renewed on certain occasions, whereas Christian baptism took place only once in the life of the Christian.

Perhaps one does have some reason to say that in one sense Mandeism is not Christian, since the Mandaeans themselves denied that they were. (Again the sort of Christianity they reject and the reasons for it must be

examined.) But that it was not of *Christian origin* is another question. It is not at all certain that this can be affirmed.

For whoever is acquainted with Gnostic Christians, in particular the Valentinians (with their epigones) and the Manicheans, there are striking, undeniable resemblances between their myths and those of the Mandaeans. If those of the Mandaeans do not derive from those of the Gnostic Christians, one must admit that the latter probably derive from Mandeism or some analogous doctrine. But it is very difficult to trace Mandeism back further than the third century A.D. (and even then one perhaps ought to say the fourth century). The supposition that myths analogous to theirs existed from the first century cannot be justified. The speculations of some scholars concerning a baptist sect analogous to that of the Mandaeans, whose teachings were the origin of the Johannine Prologue, have not been convincing. On the other hand, Jewish-Christian sects, so widespread beyond the Jordan during the first few centuries, present undeniable resemblances with Mandeism insofar as their rites and certain ethical points are concerned. Kurt Rudolph's statement,⁴³ that nowhere, apart from the realm of Jewish Baptism, does one find characteristics similar to those of Mandaean baptism (in particular the central place given to *renewable* baptismal rites), is a statement that seems to me to be debatable, unless one places Jewish Christianity within Jewish Baptism. For one finds these same characteristics in Jewish-Christian sects such as the Elkesaites.⁴⁴

About forty years ago, a Danish scholar, V. S. Pedersen, in studying the Mandaean texts thought he discerned a stage in the long history of the Mandaeans when their links with certain forms of Christianity were not just negative ones.⁴⁵ It seemed to him that Mandeism, in its earliest form, had been a Christian heresy. But twenty years later, Rudolph published his work *Die Mandäer*,⁴⁶ a scholarly and important work, which seems more complete than any other in this domain and in which he particularly tried to demonstrate that Mandeism had never been a Christian heresy; that its principal source was pre-Christian Jewish Baptism, a Baptism that Rudolph assimilated or thought he could link with a *pre-Christian* Jewish Gnosticism. In fact he thought that a Jewish Gnosticism had preceded Christianity and that it was at the source not only of Mandaean Gnosticism, and not even only of Gnosticism in general, but of certain essential ideas of nonheretical Christianity. Rudolph's authority seems to have caused Pedersen's analyses to be forgotten.

It is certain that the Jewish element in Mandeism is important, even though the Mandaeans are no less hostile to Judaism than they are to Christianity, or rather they are more so. It is also certain that a pre-Christian Jewish Baptism existed and that the latter was not without influence in the birth of Christianity, as the relation between John the Baptist and Jesus shows. But could this Baptist movement, thought dissident in relation to the Judaism of the Temple at Jerusalem, not be assimilated to a Gnosti-

cism? Was it linked to a Gnosticism? Today it is acknowledged that the people of Qumran were not Gnostics.

In his work Rudolph uses, as if they were proven, hypotheses that seem to be less and less probable. First of all, the very hypothesis of a pre-Christian Gnosticism. One realizes more and more that the fundamental doctrines of Gnosticism are not attested before Christianity. Even those scholars who think that Gnosticism is independent of Christianity acknowledge that it did not appear before the latter. When Rudolph considers the Gnostic belief in a savior to be pre-Christian, and when he states that the Mandaean form of this belief is *primitive* in comparison with the Christian form,⁴⁷ this seems difficult to uphold. Now, this conception allows him in more than one instance to explain resemblances between Christianity and Mandeism by arguing that these doctrines proceed from a common source and can therefore resemble each other without the influence of the one upon the other.⁴⁸ If one sets aside the existence of a pre-Christian Gnosticism, such arguments lose their value.

On the other hand, when he wrote *Die Mandäer*, Rudolph, along with many other scholars, thought that the Baptist community in which Mani passed his childhood was a Mandaean community. Now, this was only a supposition, which has been contradicted by an incontestable progress in our knowledge. We now know, since the discovery of the Manichean Codex of Cologne, that it was a community of Elkesaites, that is, of Jewish Christians.⁴⁹ First of all this weakens one of the reasons for thinking that Mandeism goes back to at least the beginning of the third century. Moreover, it demonstrates that Christianity is a *primitive* element in Manicheism, and not a secondary, superficial element. And as Manicheism seems to have influenced Mandeism, it follows that at least something in Mandeism is of Christian origin. Finally, this demonstrates that the Jewish Christians were established in the place where, a little later and up to our own day, we find Mandeans established. Thus it becomes easier and almost inevitable at least to suppose a Jewish-Christian influence on those who seem to have succeeded them in the same region and who observe the same rites. Especially since the Mandeans call themselves "Nazarenes,"⁵⁰ which is the name that was given to Christians in the East, particularly to Jewish Christians, who were the most numerous Christians beyond the Jordan. Henceforth one is much less inclined to explain this name, in the use the Mandeans made of it, by the Hebrew word *nâzîr*, which means "dedicated (to God)," but which is rarely met with in the Bible. For when the Mandeans gave themselves this name, how can one think it meant anything else than what it meant in their milieu where it was commonly given to Jewish Christians? It is not without reason that Quispel writes: "It is unthinkable that two different sects had, at the same time, the same names [Nazarene Baptists] and the same history [including an emigration from Transjordan to Haran.]"⁵¹ The conclusion is inevitable: the Mandeans are henceforth indebted to the Elkesaites for the rites, legends, and ideas that they have in

common with the Jewish Christians. This explains without any doubt at all the Western elements contained in their traditions."⁵²

But for Quispel Jewish Christianity is only one of the principal sources of Mandeism. "Elkesaism," he says, "might explain the rituals of the Mandaeans, not their Gnosticism."⁵³ As we have seen above and as Quispel also thinks, the Jewish Christians were not Gnostics. "The Elkesaites were not in the least Gnostic."⁵⁴ Where then does the Gnosticism that the Mandaean myths reveal come from? For Quispel as for Rudolph, it must come from a pre-Christian Jewish Gnosticism that, for Quispel, would also be the principal source of Gnosticism in general.

But where do we find this pre-Christian Jewish Gnosticism? Among scholars who speak of it, it always presupposed, never demonstrated. Or if someone thinks they can demonstrate some sign of it, it is either because of a misunderstanding or a very uncertain interpretation of some texts that are too vague. We have seen that the Maghâria Quispel speaks of, if they were pre-Christian, were certainly not Gnostics.⁵⁵ The analogies Cullman thought he found between Gnosticism and the heresies imputed by the rabbis to certain *minim* are too vague to enable one to be certain that they have anything to do with Gnosticism, and above all with a *Jewish* Gnosticism. These heretics may have been Christians or Gnostic Christians. A rabbi of the first half of the second century was accused of having admitted two "Powers."⁵⁶ But of what sort were these two Powers? Is it not a reference to a belief analogous to that of the Christians, who associated the Son with the Father? In fact for this Rabbi the second Power was Metatron, the highest of the angels who was a faithful servant of God. This is therefore not at all a figure of the same type as the Gnostic Demiurge. What resembles Gnosticism most in Judaism are the doctrines of the Kabbala, even though the traces of Gnosticism are attenuated here. But they only appeared much later, and even Scholem, who anyway confuses Gnosticism and esotericism, does not trace "Jewish Gnosticism" to a time before the appearance of Christian Gnosticism.⁵⁷ In fact, the most characteristic feature of Gnosticism, which is to depict the God of the old Law as a power inferior to the true God and as not knowing him, is perhaps unthinkable in Judaism.

When Quispel explains the Mandeans' rites by a Christian origin and their Gnosticism by a Jewish origin, he is doing almost the opposite of what it is reasonable to suppose. The Mandeans' rites might, in spite of everything, derive from pre-Christian Jewish Baptism—although they more probably come from Jewish Christianity. But it is their Gnosticism, their Gnostic myths that would be inexplicable if one could not relate them to analogous myths that appeared much earlier among Christian Gnostics. Gnosticism is precisely that feature of Mandeism which cannot directly derive from Judaism, not even a dissident Judaism. Concerning the supposition of a "Jewish Gnosticism" that would have been pre-Christian, or that was as old as Christianity, I will content myself with referring to what

Jonas already demonstrated twenty years ago,⁵⁸ which recent articles by Gruenwald⁵⁹ and Yamauchi⁶⁰ demonstrate anew, with other reasons.

In what way did a religion that was probably at first Jewish-Christian then become *Gnosticized*? In what way could the traditions of Jewish Christianity accord with the Gnostic traditions which, in so many respects, were profoundly different? How, when it was probably supported by Christianity on two sides at once (by Jewish Christianity insofar as rites and part of its morality were concerned, by Christian Gnosticism insofar as a criticism of Judaism, dualist myths, and criticism of the world and the body were concerned), could it completely forget its origin and become or believe itself anti-Christian? It is very difficult to explain. But those who believe in the Jewish origin of Mandeism also do not explain by what process this religion could have become what it is. In 1973 Rudolph acknowledged that the problems posed by the development of Mandeism remain very complicated and have not yet found a definitive solution.⁶¹ One might suppose that Manicheism played a role in the movement from Jewish Christianity proper to a Jewish Christianity mixed with Gnosticism. Mani followed the same path; to a certain extent he also created a synthesis of Jewish Christianity with Gnosticism, after having revolted against the first. For although the Gnostic spirit predominates in Manicheism, ideas inherited from Jewish Christianity might easily be discerned. It is possible that the Elkesaites of Mesopotamia, whom he vainly tried to convert, finally accepted many of his ideas, while in no way renouncing their rites as he had done. They may also have been influenced by a literature that the epigones of Valentinianism had diffused in the East. Certain Mandeian myths recall those of the Valentinians and the "Sethians." Bardesanes, a Syrian writer (ca. 154–222), who may have been regarded as Mani's master, was to a certain extent a Valentinian. The *Apocryphon of John* and other works of the same type seem to have been known in Mesopotamia in the fourth century, and perhaps a little before that.⁶² After all, the temporal dualism of the Jewish Christians could to a certain extent lead to the same attitude as the transcendental dualism of the Gnostics, and thus harmonize with it. Whether it is thanks to the revelation of the "Prophet" or thanks to a divine savior, the soul knows that she is destined for a world other than the present one. It is this exiled soul one hears in the poems of the Mandaeans.

Whatever the way in which the union of the two tendencies, the Jewish-Christian tendency and the Gnostic tendency, which were initially distinct, came about, this union was realized in Mandeism. It was not the result of a weak religion, subject to divisive tendencies, but on the contrary to a well-balanced religion that knew how to sustain itself during numerous centuries, since it still exists today.

The Mandaeans' hostility to Christianity (or rather to a certain Christianity that, judging by what they say, seems to have been oppressive to them) is not an insuperable objection to the hypothesis of a Christian

origin. Their (even more confirmed) hostility to Judaism does not stop Lidzbarski and Rudolph from supposing a Jewish origin. It is true that they place this origin within the confines of *heterodox* Judaism. But if it derived from Christian groups, it must also be placed within heterodox Christianity. That the Mandaean Savior is called "Knowledge and Life," or Anosh (Enoch, a name which means "Man"), or Shitil (Seth), or Hibil (Abel), or lâwar (Savior? Light?), or some other name, but never Christ or Jesus, is also not a decisive objection. We have seen how many strange names are given to Christ in doctrines that are probably derived from Valentinianism. Perhaps the Mandaean priests preferred to give their Savior names that distinguished him from Christ in order to remain independent of the Christian Church (and were perhaps more respected by it than if they had been Christian heretics).

The history of this Savior as it appears in their narratives seems to be the same history as Christ's. "Knowledge and Life" appeared in Jerusalem and was baptized by John the Baptist. Anosh, who is sometimes assimilated to the Word, appeared in Jerusalem in the time of Paltus (Pilate). He worked miracles, made the blind see, healed lepers, raised the dead.⁶³

That elements in this religion were borrowed from the pagan beliefs of the Mandeans' neighboring countries is only natural. But these elements remain marginal and do not explain the central core and fundamental inspiration. They are also probably less numerous than one thinks. The contrast between light-darkness is not necessarily Iranian, and the myth of the Seven is not necessarily drawn from Chaldean religion of astrology, even if it is associated with it. We have seen⁶⁴ that the myth of the Seven is probably based upon Genesis, at least in part. It is one of the expressions of the antibiblical polemic of the first Gnostic Christians.

The Mandeans' reference to John the Baptist seems to be late.⁶⁵ It is perhaps no earlier than the establishment of Islamic power, which in some way obliged them to appeal to a prophet. Puech points out that the Mandeans know nothing of John the Baptist that does not seem to be drawn from the Christian Scriptures.⁶⁶

Conclusions of Part 2

I have tried to show that the progressive formation of Gnosticism can be depicted by considering the development of a branch of Christianity, the Pauline, Johannine branch. It seemed to me that Gnosticism gradually took shape, by a series of stages, beginning with the Gnosticizing tendencies one finds in the New Testament, up to the moment when Gnosticism properly so-called appeared at the beginning of the second century; and that one can then sketch its evolution, without any interruption up to the moment when it occasionally produced speculations that seem very different from the Christianity we know. I have shown that there is a certain *continuity* between one stage and another, and that, despite variations in expression, images, and myths, there is basically little change in the general character of the doctrines; that even the Valentinian turning point simply bent the line of development but did not break it; that one is often allowed to assume that the teaching of one master proceeds from that of another master, either because the heresiologists point out a relation that seems plausible or because a teaching that is close to another in terms of time and place is also close in ideas.

I will recall here some of the stages through which we have passed in this attempt at a possible reconstruction (though necessarily still partly hypothetical and simply provisional).

I see no need to presume a pre-Christian Gnosticism, of which there is no certain pre-Christian text to attest its existence, and of which nothing in the New Testament provides a sufficiently clear indication. I do not see why the Epistle to the Colossians should be directed against the Gnostics. I do not see that Simon the Magician was a Gnostic, either before or after his conversion; nor do I see the necessity of doubting this conversion (unless everything is to be rejected in the account that is the most trustworthy source we have). On the other hand, I do see that according to Luke's account, Simon seems to have demanded a certain autonomy for the Samaritan Christians, in that he asked that the most notable among them (that is, himself) be given authorization to administer to his fellow citizens the gift of the Spirit, a sacrament for which they depended upon the community at Jerusalem. This not only seems to result from Luke's account but seems likely on the part of the Samaritan. This demand having been rejected, the desire for autonomy could have led to dissidence. Thus, groups of Christians independent of the ecclesial organization could have formed. (A Simonian origin has therefore been attributed to any group not

entirely under the Churches' control). More easily than others these groups may have developed particular ideas. Schism may have led to heresy, without it being necessary to think that it led to it immediately. Understood in this way, the ecclesiastical tradition according to which Simon is the father of the Gnostic heresy might contain some grain of truth.

I do not see why the Corinthian "heresy" should not simply be explained by the sojourn at Corinth of the preacher from Ephesus and native of Alexandria, Apollos. Although the Christian doctrine he taught had been completed and perhaps somewhat corrected by Paul's disciples, he could interpret Christianity by using not only Paul but also the ideas of Hellenistic Judaism, and his Christianity, without fundamentally differing from Paul's, perhaps in comparison with it presented differences analogous to those one might find between Johannine theology, which is also colored with Alexandrinism, and Pauline theology. If it was indeed differences of this type that separated Apollos's teaching from Paul's, this would affect nothing essential in Christianity and would not be a heresy. But the Johannine Gospel, without being Gnostic itself, nevertheless represented a step towards Gnosticism. Moreover, small differences could appear important at a certain time, and we know the Johannine Gospel seems to have been accepted by the early Churches only with some difficulty. Paul could have deemed important some differences that do not seem to us to be very serious. Moreover, his authority in the Church at Corinth had been shaken by the reputation of an eloquent man like Apollos.

As I have said, without being Gnostic itself or supposing an earlier Gnosticism, the Fourth Gospel took a step forward in the direction of Gnosticism. Now, the teaching of the Johannine author—whether oral teaching prior to the redaction of the Gospel or the teaching of the Gospel itself—seems to have been known very early on in the dissident Syrian School of Menander, which was established at Antioch, and whose head, according to the heresiologists, was of Samaritan origin. On the other hand, the same teaching may have affected a certain Cerinthus, who may have lived in the same region and at the same time as the Johannine author, and who, if Irenaeus's statements are right, seems to have reflected on his Gospel.

I do not think, however, that anything certain can be based on what the heresiologists say about Cerinthus, a problematic figure, depicted by some in a quite different way from others, who might even be a legendary heresiarch. If he really existed under this name, and if he really held the theory of Creation Irenaeus attributes to him, he may have been the first Gnostic properly speaking that we know of. But as Irenaeus relates it, this theory of Creation is rather vague, and we are not certain of really grasping its meaning. Is the creative power Cerinthus may have spoken of the God of the Old Testament? Irenaeus does not say so. On the other hand, Menander's School is one from which two men will come in the first half of the second century who are certainly Gnostics—Saturnilus and Basilides.

Menander himself was perhaps not yet a Gnostic properly speaking, for it is not absolutely sure that he taught the creation of the *world* by angels, despite what Irenaeus says. But he seems to have taught the creation of the human body by angels (like Philo), which implies a strong devaluation of the body. Moreover, he seems to have introduced into the Simonian schism, which had probably adopted Paul's ideas, certain Johannine ideas. For example, he seems to have emphasized realized eschatology. It is quite probable that he was in some way Docetic, or seemed to be. This Docetism may be that which Ignatius opposed at Antioch and which was already opposed by the Johannine author, although the latter had perhaps himself unconsciously inspired it.

Saturnilus and Basilides are perhaps the first Gnostics properly speaking, or at least the first we know of with any precision and certitude. I do not see why they should not be two disciples of Menander, as Irenaeus states. There are analogies between them and Menander. Like him they use Johannine themes together with Pauline themes. But they go beyond what might be attributed to Menander when they both intentionally reduce the God of the Old Testament to the level of an angel, that is, to an inferior power. In a sense this was to break with the Old Testament, while preserving it as an image of what ought to be passed beyond. This decisive step, prepared for by Paul's antinomianism and anticosmic attitude, and then by John's anti-Judaism and anticosmic attitude, might explain the growing tension between Christianity and Judaism, and the tendency for pagan-Christian communities to separate themselves from Judaism after the beginning of the second century.

I do not see why Carpocrates and Valentinus should not proceed from Basilides, and through him, from the Syrian school. They certainly have features in common with Basilides, as well as using Platonic philosophy like him, and even more than him. But Valentinus appreciably attenuates the strong division between God and the world, between Christianity and Judaism, which Saturnilus, and Basilides to an even greater degree, made. Doubtless the "God of the Jews" for Saturnilus and Basilides was an angel and therefore not without some link with the true God. But the ignorance and imperfection of the creator angel are opposed, without explanation or attenuation, to the perfection of the world above. Through the Valentinian myth of Sophia, imperfection already begins in the eternal world itself. This perhaps removes some perfection from this world—nevertheless called Plenitude—but it raises the created world. The latter is still due to imperfection and error, but the Demiurge becomes the son of a daughter of God. Sophia was mistaken in her search for God, but she is an eternal being in her essence, and even in her transgression she was moved by a desire to know God's greatness. This reveals the value of the ancient religions and wisdoms she represents. It reveals everything that comes from her, the Creator and creation. Moreover, according to the Valentinians, Sophia directed as best she could the work of her son, the Demiurge, and spoke in

the Old Testament through the mouth of the prophets. Thus, we see in Valentinus a bending of the line that derives from Saturnilus, but the line is not broken.

I do not see why the “Sethians,” or more precisely, the “Gnostics in the narrow sense,” should not primarily derive from Valentinianism, given that the characteristic themes of their doctrines seem to presuppose the speculations of the first Valentinians; and also given the fact that the character of their doctrines seems to indicate that they are no earlier than the second half of the second century. Finally, I do not see why some of the so-called non-Christian works of Nag Hammadi—which are only non-Christian hypothetically or by interpretation—should not come from the Christian “Sethianism” of the *Apocryphon of John*; and others from an “Ophitism,” which is the twin of “Sethianism,” and, in Irenaeus, also appears as Christian; and finally, others more directly from Valentinianism. For this is what a careful reading of the texts seems to suggest.

It does not seem to me that the hypothesis of a pre-Christian Jewish Gnosticism, or even a Jewish Gnosticism that existed in Talmudic times, is sufficiently well founded. Nor do I see that the Jewish Christians were Gnostics, at least in their early doctrines, and it seems to me that they were still not in the time of Mani. I do not think that what is Gnostic in the doctrines that are called pagan gnoses (which is only very feebly present in them anyway) is wholly independent of Christian Gnosticism. I do not think that what is Gnostic in Mandeism could derive from anything else but Christian Gnosticism. It is true that the Mandeans’ rites and part of their morality come from another tradition, but the most direct source of this tradition also appears to be Christian. This source is the Jewish-Christian branch of Christianity, which is not linked with Paul.

I have not mentioned Marcion in particular because it was not necessary to demonstrate that he derives from Christianity. But I think it wise to recall here that he is probably also linked with Syrian Gnosticism, which seemed to me to be the first source of Gnosticism properly speaking. For I do not see why we should reject what the heresiologists tell us about his relation with Cerdo. The harsh division he places between the two Testaments, like his morality, recalls Saturnilus’s severity. I have not spoken of Manicheism because we now know for certain that it was Christian in origin, not through later influence.

On the subject of the Dositheans I have added nothing to what I said in my *hypotheses*, since this might suffice for the moment concerning such an obscure question.

I have not spoken of certain works from Nag Hammadi such as the *Exegesis of the Soul* and the *Authoritative Teaching*, which are sometimes said to present no features that are specifically Jewish or Christian. I ought to say that to me they clearly appear to be Valentinian, as the mention of, for example, the “bridal chamber” demonstrates. Moreover, they contain both Jewish and Christian features, like the comparison between the un-

faithfulness of the soul and prostitution, and other features that are only Christian, like the mention of the “evangelists” and quotations of the New Testament. Nor have I specifically spoken of all the doctrines that Hippolytus summarizes in Book 5 of his *Elenchos*. I think that all these doctrines are related to those of the “Gnostics in the narrow sense,” primarily derived from Valentinianism. They are related to the “Ophite” branch of these Gnostics, which Irenaeus describes in I, 30.

We have frequently established possible borrowings from Hellenistic, Platonic Judaism, and certain direct borrowings from Platonism. But these were made in order to elucidate or develop Christian texts. They are comparable to the use made of Platonism by the Fathers of the Church.

Someone will say that there are a lot of hypotheses in this work, and it is true. But one is obliged to make hypotheses in order to find the track a thought, belonging to such a distant time and a realm still so little known, may have followed. Moreover it is good to make new hypotheses, for many of those that are adhered to seem inadequate to elucidate the Gnostic movement and the texts it has left us. The most widespread theories concerning Gnosticism at the moment are also based on hypotheses, hypotheses that *unnecessarily* multiply obscurities in the history of the Gnostics and absurdities in their doctrines.

I think that at least some of my hypotheses might be useful to those who want to understand.

To conclude the two parts of this work, I think that the question of the origin of Gnosticism can scarcely receive a simple answer, even less an answer that is absolutely definitive. For, on the one hand, the sources upon which the Gnostics drew were numerous; on the other hand, research continues, and one can always hope for new discoveries. Nevertheless, taking account of what I said above (in the conclusion to Part 1) on the subject of syncretism, and also taking account of the documents we now have at hand and the information we have been able to gather on the present state of research, the hypothesis of a Christian origin still seems by far the most sound.

Addendum

I have proposed, pp. 396–97, an explanation of the name “Eleleth” (the name of the fourth illuminator in the doctrine of the “Sethians”), while avowing that this explanation scarcely satisfied me. Thinking of it again, it has occurred to me that this name perhaps comes quite simply from Greek, as do the names of the first two illuminators. In Greek, if I am not mistaken, *elelēthē* would be the pluperfect of the verb *lanthanō*, “to be hidden,” “to remain hidden,” “to be ignored.” *Elelēthē* (first person singular) would mean “I had been hidden,” or “I had finished remaining hidden”; *elelēthē* (third person) would mean “he had been hidden,” or “he had finished remaining hidden.” There could then be found there, as in the names of the other illuminators, a characteristic of the Gnostic Savior. He had not been revealed to the period of the old Law, the period when God was “withdrawn,” when he had not yet sent the mediator who alone allowed him to be known. I cannot here try to develop this hypothesis to see if anything can confirm it. I raise it on the off chance, as a hypothesis that might perhaps be envisaged.

Notes

Introduction

1. We now have a complete facsimile edition of the manuscripts: *The Facsimile Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices, published under the auspices of the Arab Republic of Egypt, in conjunction with the UNESCO*, 10 vols. (Leiden, 1972–77). There is an English translation of all of these works: The Nag Hammadi Library in English, Translated by Members of the Coptic Gnostic Library Project of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, James M. Robinson, director (San Francisco and Leiden, 1977) (= *NHL*).
2. It is true that Irenaeus often uses the word “Gnostic” (*gnōstikoi*) to refer to all of these sects. But the abstract term “Gnosticism” is modern. As for “gnosis” (*gnōsis*), for orthodox Christians this word would have referred to authentic, nonheretical Christianity. For them, it did not refer to Gnosticism unless one added that the term was not fitting and that the heretics used it improperly; for example, in the expression “the supposed gnosis,” “gnosis falsely so-called.”
3. R. Reitzenstein, *Poimandres* (Leipzig, 1904).
4. W. Bousset, *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis* (Göttingen, 1907).
5. Reitzenstein has expounded his theory in different works, in particular in *Das iranische Erlösungsmysterium* (Bonn, 1921).
6. Bousset, *Hauptprobleme*, 91–159.
7. As C. Colpe in particular has shown, *Die Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* (Göttingen, 1961).
8. H. Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, I (Göttingen, 1934; 2d ed. 1954; 3d ed. 1964); II, 1 (1954; 2d ed. 1966); *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston, 1958; 2d ed. 1963).
9. A. D. Nock is perhaps the first to have drawn attention to the fact that the Gnostic works are always acquainted with Judaism (*Gnomon* 12 [1936]: 605–12). It was a little after 1950 that research generally started to change direction, a turning point marked in particular by an article by E. Peterson entitled “Gnosi” in the *Enciclopedia cattolica* 6 (1951): 876–82; an article by G. Kretschmar (*ETh.* 13 [1953]: 354–61); and especially by the works of G. Quispel (in particular in *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 22 [1953] 195–234). The theory of the Jewish origin of Gnosticism had already been defended at the end of the nineteenth century by M. Friedländer, but without having much effect.
10. For e.g., W. C. Van Unnik, *VChr* 15 (1961): 65–82; H.-Fr. Weiss, *OLZ* 64 (1969): 540–51. Cf. also the idea of W. Schmithals, *Die Gnosis in Korinth*, 3d ed. (Göttingen 1969), 72–73.
11. Cf. H. Jonas, “Response to G. Quispel’s *Gnosticism and the New Testament*,” in *The Bible in Modern Scholarship*, ed. J. Ph. Hyatt (Nashville, 1965), 279–95; H. J. Schoeps in *OG*, 528–37.
12. A. D. Nock, in his last article (*HThR* 57 [1964]: 255–79), declared himself in favor of the Christian origin of Gnosticism. H. Langerbeck expressed the same opinion in the marvelous articles published after his death, *Aufsätze zur Gnosis* (Göttingen, 1967).
13. Since I wrote these lines, I have learnt that Mme B. Aland, whose remarkable works I had already read (but which simply bear on particular points in Gnosticism) defended the possibility of a Christian origin at the Yale Conference (1978). Cf. *RG* 1: 319–50. Also, E. M. Yamauchi, in his book *Pre-Christian Gnosticism, A Survey of the Proposed Evidences* (London, 1973), and in the supplements to

this book "Some Alleged Evidences for Pre-Christian Gnosticism," in *New Dimensions in New Testament Study*, ed. R. N. Longenecker and M. C. Tenney (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1974), 46-70, and "Pre-Christian Gnosticism in the Nag-Hammadi Texts?" *ChH* 48 [1979]: 129-41, has shown that there are no proofs that Gnosticism is earlier than Christianity.

14. The date of those of the *Hermetica* which can be considered as Gnostic is impossible to fix with any certitude. But according to most of the specialists, the works of the *Corpus Hermeticum* were written in the second to third century of our era. Moreover, if we take account of the parallels between Gnostic *Hermetica* and doctrines whose date is a little better known, for example, those of Valentinus or the middle-Platonism of Numenius, it seems that they cannot be earlier than about the middle of the second century. The painstaking study that Haenchen devoted to the *Poimandres* (*ZThK* 53 [1956]: 149-91) shows that this text, probably the oldest of Gnostic *Hermetica*, might have been written in the second half or perhaps even the last third of the second century. K. Rudolph, in his recent book *Gnosis* (Eng. tr., Edinburgh, 1983), 378, dates it around 150.
15. Eng. tr., Oxford, 1972-74. In what is the first volume of this work, Foerster was really obliged to place Simon and Menander at the beginning, since they are the earliest heretics mentioned by Justin and Irenaeus. One can only reproach him for having overconfidently entitled the next chapter "The first Christian Gnostics," as if it was well established that first, Simon and Menander were not Christians, second, they were already Gnostics properly speaking. I note only: first, that the earliest document on Simon (Acts 8:9-24), and the only one that goes back as far as the first century, where the characterization of this figure is not entirely shrouded by legend, shows Simon as converted to Christianity; second, that Justin, the first of the heresiologists, says that all the men whose ideas derive from those of Simon and Menander are called Christians (*Apol.* 1, 25); third, that if Haenchen tried to prove that Simon was a Gnostic before his conversion to Christianity, one cannot say that he succeeded. See, e.g., R. McL. Wilson, "Simon, Dositheus and the Dead Sea Scrolls," *ZRGG* 9 (1957): 24; R. Bergmeier, "Quellen vorchristlicher Gnosis?" in *Tradition und Glaube, Festschrift für K. G. Kuhn* (Göttingen, 1971), 202-8; K. Beyschlag, "Zur Simon-Magus-Frage," *ZThK* 68 (1971):410-11, and especially, by the same author, *Simon Magus und die christliche Gnosis* (Tübingen, 1974), 99-126 and 211-19.
16. The dates suggested by Rudolph (*Gnosis*, 377) for a certain number of the Nag Hammadi works, or at least for the "early form" or "basic elements" of these works, are purely hypothetical. We have a chronological reference only for the *Apocryphon of John*, and this reference simply indicates that a form of this work existed around 185. This does not authorize setting the date back to around 100. As for the other works, whose basic forms Rudolph says could have existed between 120 and 130, there are reasons for thinking rather that they cannot be earlier than the second half of the second century, or later.
17. Cf. E. M. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism*, 29-55.
18. Cf. E. Percy, *Die Probleme der Kolosser- und Epheserbriefe* (Lund, 1946), 167-68.
19. Schenke clearly saw that it is very difficult to attribute an angel cult to the Gnostics (*ZThK* 61 [1964]: 391-403). But since he wants it to have something to do with the Gnostics at all costs, he invents an explanation that presupposes a duplicity and cowardliness in the heretics that even the heresiologists did not attribute to them. He imagines that the Gnostics, considering the angels to be powerful in this world, had worshiped them while at the same time despising them. I do not think that any heresiologist would have invented that. Irenaeus accuses the Basilideans of being prepared to deny their faith; but this is not to say that they did in fact deny it, and ought to be understood as a possibility in the event of their persecution. Though the heresiologists might have exaggerated a lack of steadfastness in their polemics against their opponents, they did not accuse them of preaching or recommending worship that was not directed to the one they held to be the true God. The only text I know of that might seem to be in favor of Schenke's theory is one where Tertullian says, *Simoniana autem magiae disciplina angelis serviens* (*De praescr. haer.* xxxviii, 12). But Tertullian is referring

- to magic here, which for him consists in submitting to the angels in order to obtain their help. The sect that is perhaps the closest to the practices the Epistle to the Colossians might suggest is that of the Elkesaites; but besides the fact that this movement did not appear until the second century, it seems that it was much more Jewish-Christian than Gnostic, that is, it was rather the exact opposite of Gnosticism. W. Foerster acknowledged (in *Studia-biblica . . . Th. Chr. Vriesen dedicata*, [Wageningen, 1966], 71–80), following Percy (*Die Problema*, 137–78) and H. Hegermann (*Die Vorstellung vom Schöpfungsmittler im hellenistischen Judentum und Urchristentum* [Berlin, 1961], 161–68), that the Epistle to the Colossians did not refer to Gnostics. Cf. also R. M. Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity* (New York and London, 1959), 158ff.; S. Lyonnet, *OG* 544 and 547; E. M. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism*, 162.
20. W. Schmithals, *Die Gnosis in Korinth* (Göttingen, 1956; 2d ed. 1965; 3d ed. 1969); L. Schottroff, *Der Glaubende und die feindliche Welt* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1970), 115–227.
 21. U. Wilckens, *Weisheit und Torheit* (Tübingen, 1959). Wilckens later came back to the question of the meaning of the epistle and no longer holds the hypothesis that he seemed to propose. Cf. his article in *Theologia Crucis-Signum Crucis, Festschrift E. Dinkler*, ed. C. Andresen and G. Klein (Tübingen, 1979), 501–37.
 22. Cf., among others, A. D. Nock, *HThR* 57 [1964]: 277; R. M. Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity*, 137–38; R. McL. Wilson, *NTS* 6 (1959): 32–34; *NTS* 19 (1972): 65–74; and in *Paul and Paulinism: Essays in Honour of C. K. Barrett*, ed. M. D. Hooker and S. G. Wilson (London, 1982), 102–14; S. Arai, *VChr* 27 (1973): 430–37; E. Fascher, in *Gnosis und Neues Testament*, ed. K.-W. Tröger (Gütersloh, 1973), 281–91.
 23. The only text of the New Testament where a polemic against the distinction of God and the Creator might be located are the pastoral epistles. The opponents attacked in these epistles are depicted as teaching “myths” and “genealogies” (1 Tim. 1:4; Titus 3:9). This might mean that they thought there were a number of successive levels of supernatural beings, and one of these levels could be that of the Creator. (But it could also, for example, be the Logos, who, though he is creator, is not the Gnostic Demiurge, for, unlike the latter, he knows God and obeys him.) They also claimed “to know God” (Titus 1:16), which might mean knowing the true God as distinct from another who is not the true one. Finally, the author of the pastoral epistles affirms the unity of God (1 Tim. 2:5), which could indicate that others denied this unity in distinguishing the God of the Old Testament from the God of the Gospel. But all this remains hypothetical. Moreover, the Pastorals probably date to the end of the first century or the beginning of the second (Rudolph dates them to about 110), which means that they perhaps belong to the same time as when the distinction of Creator and the true God clearly appeared (beginning of the second century or, at a pinch, right at the end of the first century). If we consider everything in the New Testament that goes back almost certainly to the first century, which means almost all of it, the distinction between God and the Creator is neither taught nor rejected, it is unknown.
 24. *OG* 96.
 25. The first-century Gnostics (or more precisely, those few first-century figures who are thought of as Gnostics) are not known well enough to enable us to say what they called the possession of a doctrine of salvation. In any case, it seems that in the teaching derived from Simon, faith was understood as being the equivalent of knowledge (cf. Hippolytus, *Ref.* vi, 19, 7; on this, see Beyschlag, *Simon Magus*, 172; 190, n. 117; 194, n. 123; 199, n. 129). In the second century, when Gnosticism is well attested, the Gnostics who were thought of as the earliest spoke of faith just as much as knowledge. For Saturnilus, one is saved by faith (Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* i, 24, 2). Basilides speaks of faith as well as knowledge as procuring salvation (Irenaeus, i, 24, 4, and Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* ii, 10.1). For Carpocrates, one is saved by faith and love (Irenaeus, i, 25, 5). Marcion founds salvation on faith (cf. A. Harnack, *Marcion* [Darmstadt, 1960], 134–36, 197, 296*, and, in the last section, 8–9). The Valentinians are perhaps the first who

- wanted to make a clear distinction between faith and knowledge, and even among them, and after them, the distinction is not always made.
26. Cf. S. Pétremont, *RMM* 65 (1960): 385–421, particularly 390–95.
 27. He characterized Gnosticism as an “anticosmic and eschatological dualism” (*Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, 1, 5). But in this definition the word “dualism” means nothing other than anticosmic itself. For it means that one either opposes, or separates, or distances God and the world, one from another. It does not mean that the Gnostics were necessarily dualists in so far as basic principles are concerned. In respect to basic principles, many, if not the majority, of the Gnostics were monists, for they linked God and the world indirectly, through intermediaries. As for the word “eschatological,” to a certain extent it is fitting—eschatology figures in more than one Gnostic system. But the eschatological character of Gnosticism is less marked than in Jewish apocalyptic or the Christianity of the Synoptic Gospels. If Gnosticism does not do away with eschatology, it reduces its role and might therefore be considered as a tendency to reduce eschatology rather than as a properly eschatological tendency. The important word in Jonas’s definition is therefore “anticosmic.”
 28. Moreover it is the most general trait of heresy according to Justin (*Dialogue*, 35) and Irenaeus (1, *praefatio*, 1).
 29. Above, p. 8.
 30. *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, 1, 6–7.
 31. Cf. E. M. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism*, 164–71, 174, 184–86, and the authors he quotes. I only regret that Yamauchi quotes me inaccurately (184). I did not write that a Gnostic text earlier than Christianity *manquera toujours* (will always be lacking), but that it *manque encore* (which ought, I think, to be translated, “is still lacking”). See *RMM* 65 [1960], 387. It would be absurd to make a prediction like the one he attributes to me.
 32. *Gnosticism and Early Christianity*, 31–41.
 33. *OG* 157.
 34. Cf. E. M. Yamauchi, “Jewish Gnosticism?” in *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions, Presented to G. Quispel*, ed. R. van den Broek and M. J. Vermaseren (Leiden, 1981), 491.
 35. This is what, e.g., Basilides and Marcion do. Cf. Jonas’s reply to J. Daniélou on the subject of Grant’s hypothesis (*OG* 457–58). Cf. also, among others, Van Unnik (in the article cited above, reproduced in *Gnosis und Gnostizismus*, ed. K. Rudolph [Darmstadt, 1975], 484); H.-Fr. Weiss, *OLZ* 64 (1969): 544–45; K. Rudolph, *ThR* 36 (1971): 96–98; E. M. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism*, 157–58, and the authors he cites (J. M. Robinson, H. Jonas, R. Haardt).
 36. H. Jonas, *Zwischen Nichts und Ewigkeit* (Göttingen, 1963), 14.
 37. On Numenius, cf., among others, E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos* (Leipzig, 1913), 72–73, 109; H.-Ch. Puech, conclusion to the article “Numenius d’Apamée,” published in 1934 (reproduced in H.-Ch. Puech, *En quête de la Gnose*, vol. 1 [Paris, 1978], 25–54); E.-A. Leemans, *Studie over den wijsgeer Numenius van Apamea* (Brussels, 1937), 13; H.-Ch. Puech and E. R. Dodds in *Les Sources de Plotin, Entretiens sur l’Antiquité classique*, vol. 5 (Fondation Hardt, Geneva, 1960), 4–11, 36–39. It is true that in the preface to his work *En quête de la Gnose* Puech wrote, “Today I would no longer uphold some of the theories I have advanced concerning Numenius of Apamea.” But he adds: “The fact nevertheless remains that Numenius’s distinction between the Demiurge and the unknown God still poses a problem and calls for a comparison with gnosis.” As for Plotinus, we know that he was influenced by Numenius and was even accused of plagiarism. In any case, for a certain time he seems to have been quite close to the Gnostics, before opposing them. Cf. H.-Ch. Puech and R. Harder in *Les Sources de Plotin*, 183–85; E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Cambridge, 1965), 25, n. 5; G. Quispel, *Gnostic Studies*, vol. 1 (Istanbul, 1974), 158–61. See also J. Zandee’s comparison of Plotinus’s language with a Gnostic treatise that seems to be earlier than Plotinus (*The Terminology of Plotinus and of Some Gnostic Writings, Mainly the Fourth Treatise of the Jung Codex* [Istanbul, 1961]). According to Proclus, Porphyry also fell under Numenius’s influence. On the

- resemblances between his thought and that of the Gnostics, cf. A. D. Nock, *Gnomon* 12 (1936): 609; H.-Ch. Puech, *Les Sources de Plotin*, 38–39. It seems to me that for Jonas a philosophy like Neoplatonism is one of the goals to which the evolution of a Gnosticism such as that of the Valentinians tends. (H. Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, II, 1, 155–70). Langerberck suggests that not only Numenius but also Gaius and Albinus might depend on Gnosticism (*Aufsätze zur Gnosis*, 81).
38. It must be noted that Gnostics retain the account of Creation, though they modify it and assign a subordinate status to the Creator. It is not therefore simply a matter of incredulity or revolt against Judaism, for in that case the negation would be total. It is rather a matter of a religion that while retaining the Old Testament gives it an inferior place in relation to another revelation.
 39. For e.g., G. Kretschmar, G. Quispel, E. Schweizer, R. McL. Wilson, R. M. Grant. Cf. also E. M. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism*, 163–69, and the authors he cites.
 40. Bousset affirmed (*Hauptprobleme*, 321) that there were gnoses without a savior (the Ophites of Origen, the “Gnostics” of Epiphanius and his Archontics), and many scholars have repeated this affirmation. I think I have shown, in *RMM* 73 (1967), 348–49 and 367–68, that this affirmation is very inadequately supported.
 41. “Die neutestamentliche Christologie und der gnostische Erlöser,” in *Gnosis und Neues Testament*, ed. K. W. Tröger, 205–29, particularly 208.
 42. E. Percy, *Untersuchungen über den Ursprung der johanneischen Theologie, zugleich ein Beitrag zur Frage nach der Entstehung des Gnostizismus* (Lund, 1939), 287–99. K. Rudolph, *Die Mandäer*, vol. 1 (Göttingen, 1960), 101, n. 4; *Gnosis* (Eng. tr.), 119.
 43. “Die neutestamentliche Christologie,” 209–18. Also, K. Rudolph, who takes up this idea in *Gnosis*, 132–50.
 44. For the second-century Christian apologists, the Christian revelation was as old as the world. The preexistent Christ, the Logos, had been continuously at work in history. This is what Justin, for example, thought. Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria thought the same. For Theophilus of Antioch it was the Logos who spoke with Adam in Paradise (*Ad. Autol.* II, 22).
 45. “Die neutestamentliche Christologie,” 225–28.
 46. Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* IX, 28.
 47. “Vom Ursprung der Gnosis,” in *Christentum am Nil* (Recklinghausen, 1964), 124–30.
 48. *Der Glaubende*, e.g., 38.
 49. Rudolph thinks (*Gnosis*, 118–32) that the non-Christian origin of the Gnostic Savior is proved by the fact that the Savior can be depicted by all sorts of biblical or mythological figures and even by abstract concepts. Now, so far as biblical or mythological characters who play the role of saviors are concerned, it must be noted that in Christian gnosis (which, until proved otherwise, seems to be the earliest), they are expressly identified with Christ. They are figures of Christ. And to say that these figures are early and that assimilation to Christ is only a subsequent modification is merely an arbitrary hypothesis. So far as abstractions are concerned, for example, “a Call” considered as the Savior, it is perfectly natural that the action of the personal Savior, insofar as he calls and awakens, would have been considered in poetical and symbolic texts as itself bringing salvation. There is nothing here that proves a non-Christian origin.
 50. Cf. B. Aland in *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Gnosticism, Stockholm, 1973*, ed. G. Widengren (Stockholm and Leiden, 1977), 70–73.
 51. Cf. R. McL. Wilson, *The Gnostic Problem* (London, 1958), 218–25.
 52. Cf. R. M. Grant, *A Historical Introduction to the New Testament* (London, 1963), 203.
 53. This is not to imply that on all points the Gnostics were faithful to Paul and John. It is unquestionable that, for Paul and John, there is no Demiurge distinct from the true God.
 54. Despite the arguments of J. H. Charlesworth (*CBO* 31 [1969]: 357–69), I think, along with many others, that the *Odes of Solomon* are Gnostic. Charlesworth

- bases what he says on a definition of Gnosticism that I do not believe to be correct; moreover, he neglects certain characteristics of Valentinian Gnosticism.
55. See below, Part 2, chapters 11 and 12.
 56. It is a matter of a passage in 1, 30, 15 and another in 1, 31, 3, linked with a passage in 1, 11, 1. An argument can also be drawn from the order in which the heresies are presented in Hippolytus's *Syntagma*, if it were certain that this order is independent of Irenaeus. But it is possible—in my view likely—that this order is itself based upon some passages of Irenaeus that we have already alluded to. For in the *Syntagma*, Hippolytus uses above all Irenaeus's great work, and it can be shown that when he modifies the order followed by Irenaeus he bases what he does on hints he found in Irenaeus himself.
 57. Cf. M. Smith in *RG* 2: 803–4.
 58. See Part 2, chapters 11 and 12.
 59. *RG* 1: 340.
 60. *JBL* 91 (1972): 44–72, n. 5.
 61. *ZThK* 49 (1952): 316–49.
 62. See his article "Simon Magus in Recent Research," *RSR* 3 (1977): 137–41.
 63. See above, n. 15.
 64. Cf. among others Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* II, 23, 13.
 65. Haenchen has corrected this article by a new article (in K. W. Tröger, ed., *Gnosis und Neues Testament*, 267–79), but takes his hypothesis still further. He reaffirms that Simon was a Gnostic before becoming acquainted with Christianity and goes so far as to say (278), "We hold for certain that the account of Simon's conversion is not historical." This is an astonishing statement, not only because it is very difficult to be sure in such a case, but because it robs the text of all its value, a text that is the only source concerning Simon that is perhaps not yet wholly legendary, a text on which Haenchen himself bases the essentials of his argument. If the account as a whole is false, why should the name "Great Power" and the fact that it could have been applied to Simon be the only authentic facts?
 66. Cf. G. Quispel in *RG* 1: 123.
 67. Cf. H.-M. Schenke, *ZRGG* 14 (1962): 266.
 68. See below, Part 2, chapter 13. Cf. also A. H. B. Logan in *Gnosis and Gnosticism*, ed. M. Krause (*NHS*, 17) (Leiden, 1981), 66–75.
 69. A number of reasons might be put forward to explain why Christ is not named in some works. (1) When the works are prophecies fictitiously attributed to figures earlier than Christ (Adam, Seth, Zoroaster), it is natural for the prophecy not to be too clear. Christ ought to have been predicted in a veiled way, as in Christian interpretation he is, by the prophets of the Old Testament. (2) Some Gnostics were actively interested in Greek philosophy. This interest is manifest in the doctrines in Hippolytus's *Elenchos* and in works such as *Eugnostos*, *Zostrianos*, and *Allogenes*. We also know that Gnostics followed Plotinus's Lectures. In wishing to discuss things with the philosophers, the Gnostics could have wished to present their Christianity as a philosophy, a system of concepts. The historical element therefore disappears, and Christ disappears behind concepts such as the "Autogenes," the Savior, the Son of Man or the Son of God, the perfect Man, the Logos, the Nous. (3) From a certain time, the Gnostics often sought to link themselves with ancient religions, proper to different peoples. They no longer so much wished to oppose religions as to interpret and integrate them into their own. They wished their own doctrine was the true meaning of these religions. Far from being Zoroastrians, Hermeticists, adherents of the Greek mystery religions who disguised themselves as Christians, they were Christians who disguised themselves as Zoroastrians, Hermeticists, followers of the mystery religions. We have a definite example in Mani. (4) There is a theme that is hardly ever spoken of but that perhaps ought to be taken account of, and that is persecution. It must not be forgotten that from the beginning of the third century the edict of Septimius Severus forbade the *teaching* of Christianity. It is sometimes thought that this edict was hardly enforced, but it was enforced in Egypt. There were therefore far more reasons for de-Christianizing (in appearance) a doctrine or a work, than for Christianizing it. It would be in one's interest to replace Christ by a person whom Christians knew to be a figure of Christ (Seth, Enoch, or Melchizedek, for

- example). A work such as the *Paraphrase of Shem* could be a de-Christianized form of the *Paraphrase of Seth* known to Hippolytus.
70. Cf. R. McL. Wilson in *Judéo-christianisme, recherches . . . offertes . . . au Cardinal Jean Daniélou* (Paris, 1972), 264.
 71. *Kair*. 7 (1965): 122–23.
 72. The 1968 edition.
 73. Cf. R. Ruyer, *La Gnose de Princeton* (Paris, 1974), 17 and 29. It seems to me that the use of the words “gnosis” and “gnosticism” to refer to scholars who are more or less spiritualists is regrettable, for it can lead to confusion.
 74. Valentinus and Marcion, for example, insist on the idea that the *good* God, the true God, is only known through Christ.
 75. They repeatedly quote as impious and foolish the statement of the Demiurge of the Old Testament: “I am God and there is no other God but me.”
 76. Origen, *Contra Celsum* v, 61.
 77. F. Wisse, *VChr* 25 (1971): 221.
 78. In *Mélanges d'histoire des religions offerts à Henri-Charles Puech* (Paris, 1974), 423.
 79. First published in part by A. Henrichs and L. Koenen, *ZPE* 5 (1970): 97–216; then as a whole by the same people, *ZPE* 19 (1975): 1–85, and *ZPE* 32 (1978): 87–199.
 80. In *Les Textes de Nag Hammadi*, ed. J.-E. Ménard (*NHS* 7) (Leiden, 1975), 82–122.
 81. In G. Widengren, ed., *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Gnosticism*, 27–33.
 82. Cf. R. McL. Wilson, *The Gnostic Problem*, 97.

PART ONE: SECTION ONE

Chapter I

1. See the texts of Plato quoted by A.-J. Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, 4:79–88.
2. Cf. Hilgenfeld's article republished by K. Rudolph in *Gnosis und Gnostizismus* [Darmstadt, 1975]: “Religious syncretism without doubt prepared the way for gnosis, but in no way did it produce it” (177). “This distinction [between God and the Demiurge] is new, but in no way the result of religious syncretism” (178–79).
3. Cf. what Hilgenfeld says (in K. Rudolph, ed., *Gnosis und Gnostizismus*, 174): “Gnosticism was without any doubt therefore born outside of Christianity, but under the fresh impression of the latter.” Cf. again, in the same collection, 181–82.
4. Lipsius then quotes Hilgenfeld: “Christ is only transformed into a cosmic principle (in Gnosticism) when salvation is no longer limited to humanity, but (. . .) becomes the goal of all human history. And really *so little can be said about the origin of Gnosticism outside of Christianity*, that on the whole the internal tendency that animated the development of Christian doctrine cannot be ignored (. . .); the tendency to grasp the absolute of Christianity *universally*, in the entirety of a total vision of the world. Whatever judgment might be brought to bear on Gnostic dualism and docetism, it is in any case *the first attempt at a vision of the world drawn from a Christian principle*” (K. Rudolph, ed., *Gnosis und Gnostizismus*, 36–37. “So little can be said . . .” and “the first attempt at a vision . . .” are my italics.)
5. In the Synoptic Gospels also one finds the famous saying that exegetes compare to a meteorite that has fallen from the Johannine sky: “No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (Matt. 11:27; Luke 10:22). It might be concluded that the Father was not known before the coming of the Son.
6. It seems that Acts 2:33–36; 3:13, 26; 5:31; 10:38 ought to be interpreted thus.

7. Cf. 1 Cor. 2:8.
8. See below, Part 1, pp. 148–51.
9. Below, Part 2, pp. 388–406.
10. O. Cullmann, *Le Problème littéraire et historique du roman pseudo-clémentin* (Paris, 1930), 186.
11. On the *minim* see, e.g., M. Simon, *Verus Israel* (Paris, 1948), 214–37, and the second edition of this work (1964), 500–501. The *minim* are often Christians. See also I. Gruenwald, in *RG* 2:713–23, particularly 720–21. Gruenwald writes: “There is nothing in Jewish writings of the pre-Christian and Talmudic eras to indicate the existence of a well-defined Jewish heresy.”
12. OG 455.
13. OG 457–58.
14. Cf. the editors’ note of the *Tripartite Treatise: Tractatus tripartitus*, ed. R. Kasser, M. Malinine, H.-Ch. Puech, G. Quispel, J. Zandee, *adjuvantibus* W. Vycichl, R. McL. Wilson (Bern, 1973–75), vol. II, 207.
15. Cf. G. Van Groningen, *First Century Gnosticism* (Leiden, 1967), 65–67.
16. For example in *Les Textes de Nag Hammadi*, ed. J.-E. Ménard (*NHS* 7), (Leiden, 1975), 120–21.
17. “[The Maghâria] think that the All-Powerful God, praised may he be, created all things among corporeal beings, complete and perfect from the beginning of creation” (translated in an article by R. de Vaux, “A propos des manuscrits de la mer Morte,” *RB* 57 [1950]: 422).
18. *JQR* 51 (1960): 89–106.
19. *JAOS* 80 (1960): 347–59.
20. Cf. *RB* 57 (1950): 422.
21. Cf. R.M. Grant, *OG*, 149 and 153.
22. *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis* (Göttingen, 1907), 351–55.
23. I refer to Saturnilus and Basilides, and perhaps also Cerinthus. For it does not seem certain to me that either Simon or Menander were Gnostics properly speaking. As for the author of the *Apocryphon of John*, I do not think he is earlier than Valentinus. See Part 2, chapters 11 and 12.
24. *Hauptprobleme*, 12. Cf. Epiphanius, *Pan*, 37, 3.
25. “Jaldabaoth Reconsidered,” in *Mélanges d’histoire des religions offerts à Henri-Charles Puech* (Paris, 1974), 405–21.
26. In his edition of Irenaeus’s *Adversus haereses* (Cambridge, 1857; reprint 1965), I, 230, n.1.
27. *VChr* 11 (1957): 148–49.
28. In his edition of the *Apocryphon Johannis* (Copenhagen, 1963), 199–201.
29. “Jaldabaoth Reconsidered,” 421.
30. The distinction between the Creator and the God of the Law appears, for example, in Apelles, a disciple of Marcion, and also seems to be found in Hippolytus’s Basilides, who is probably a Basilidean of the end of the second century or the beginning of the third. These two Gnostics are both more favorable to the Creator than to the God of the Law.
31. Cf. F. C. Burkitt, *JThS* 23 (1922): 280.
32. *VChr* 11 (1957): 148–49. Cf. also N. A. Dahl, *RG* 2:705, 36.
33. *Cahiers de l’université Saint Jean de Jérusalem*, vol. 5 (Paris, V, 1979), 148.
34. This is why Marcion could be thought of as believing in *two Gods* and as not being a monotheist, not only by Tertullian but by modern scholars such as E. de Faye. In fact, for Marcion the God of the Old Testament was not truly God because he could not really be God for the Christians. Marcion’s disciple Apelles does not “revert” to monotheism when he teaches that the Demiurge is only an angel. If Marcion did not perhaps say it expressly, it is because he limited himself to exegesis of Scripture and taught no myth concerning the origin of the world.
35. Hippolytus, *Ref.* VII, 29, 1; 30, 2.
36. Epiphanius, *Pan.* 33, 3–8.
37. Cf. Irenaeus, I, 5, 1; 5, 3; 5, 6; 6, 1.
38. Cf. *Extracts from Theodotus* 48, 1.
39. Cf. Irenaeus, I, 7, 3. (Achamoth is in one sense the Holy Spirit; cf. Irenaeus, I, 4, 1; 5, 3.)

40. Cf. frag. 5 of Valentinus.
41. See below, Part 2, chapter 11. Quispel saw clearly (*Gnostic Studies*, vol. 1 [Istanbul, 1974], 205) that there was a decisive change in the idea of the Demiurge among the "Gnostic scholars" of Alexandria. He attributed the responsibility for this to Basilides and Valentinus. But if he associated Basilides with Valentinus in this process, it was because he believed the true Basilides to be Hippolytus's portrayal. We will see (Part 2, chapter 9) that there is a good chance that the historical Basilides is Irenaeus's.
42. Cf. *Gospel of Truth* 18, 36—19, 7; *Tripartite Treatise* 76, 30—34.
43. *Mana* no doubt originally means "vase," but the word is used in the sense of "spirit" or "soul." Cf. metaphorical use of *skeuos* (vase) in the New Testament.
44. *Ginza*, pp. 477—78. Translation ultimately based on M. Lidzbarski's German trans., *Ginzā* (Göttingen, 1925; reprint 1978).

Chapter II

1. 1 Cor. 2:6—8.
2. Eph. 6:12. For this work we assume that the epistles to the Colossians and the Ephesians are by Paul. If for some they are not by him, they are nevertheless witnesses to early Christian thought.
3. Rom. 8:38; 1 Cor. 15:24; Col. 1:16; 2:10, 15; Eph. 1:21; 6:12.
4. Col. 2:15; 1 Cor. 2:6; 15:24—25.
5. Col. 1:16; 2:10.
6. Col. 2:15.
7. E.g., in Rom. 8:38; 1 Cor. 4:9; 6:3; 11:10; Col. 2:18.
8. 1 Cor. 8:5; 10:20—21. "Demon," as we know, meant divinity, a divine being. For Paul, the "demons" are not actually divine, but it seems that they exist, and are the "powers."
9. Gal. 4:8—9; Col. 2:18, compare with 2:8, 20.
10. E.g., the beings "in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth" of Phil. 2:10.
11. If one omits the pastoral epistles, which are very probably inauthentic.
12. Eph. 3:10; 6:12.
13. Compare Col. 2:15 with 2:8, 18, 20.
14. Rom. 8:38—39.
15. 1 Cor. 8:5.
16. 1 Cor. 15:24—26.
17. In his *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* (6, 1) Ignatius of Antioch mentions the "visible archons" (the social authorities) and the "invisible archons."
18. 2 Cor. 4:4.
19. Eph. 2:2. *Exousia* probably has a collective reference here.
20. John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11.
21. Heb. 2:5.
22. Luke 4:6.
23. Matt. 4:8.
24. Luke 10:18.
25. John 12:31.
26. Rev. 12:5—9.
27. 1 Pet. 3:22.
28. 1 Cor. 15:25.
29. Eph. 6:12.
30. *Christ and Time* (London, 1951), 129—30.
31. *Christian Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idiom of Atonement*, trans. A.S. Hebert (London, 1931; new ed. 1965), 4.
32. *The Patristic Doctrine of Redemption* (London, 1952), 52.
33. *Jub.* 2:2.
34. *1 Enoch*, 60:14—22.
35. *De gig.*, 6 and 16.
36. *De confus.*, 171.
37. *De confus.*, 171.
38. *De gig.*, 8—11; *De confus.*, 174; *De plant.*, 14; etc.

39. *De spec. leg.*, I, 13.
40. Cf. E. Bréhier, *Les Idées philosophiques et religieuses de Philon d'Alexandrie*, 2d ed. (Paris, 1925), 127.
41. 1 Cor. 6:2–3.
42. Col. 2:18 and 20.
43. Heb. 2:16.
44. John 17:9.
45. *Asc. Is.* 1:5.
46. *Jub.* 5:6, 9; 1 *Enoch* 10:4–6; 11–13; 18:14–16; 88:3; *Documents from Damascus* (CDC), II, 18; *The Book of Hymns Discovered near the Dead Sea* (1QH) x, 34 (trans., e.g., by G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 3d ed. [Sheffield, 1978], 193).
47. *Jub.* 10:8–9.
48. 1 *Enoch* 10:9, 12, 15; 12:6; 14:6.
49. 1 *Enoch* 5:1–4; 18:5; 60:14–22; 75:1; 80:1.
50. *Apoc. Bar.* 21:23.
51. 1QS iv, 16–17, 25.
52. See, e.g., 1QH i, 9–11; III, 21–23; VIII, 11–12; XII, 28–29; XVIII, 23.
53. 1 John 5:19, “The whole world is in the power of the evil one.”
54. P. Volz, *Die Eschatologie der jüdischen Gemeinde im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter* (Tübingen, 1934), 87–88.
55. Isa. 24:21–23.
56. Isa. 13:10–11; 34:4.
57. E.g., in Isaiah: 13:5–22; 14:24–26; 24:1–3, 19–20; 28:17–22; 30:27–33; 33:9–14; 34:2–15; 41:15–16; 63:19.
58. 1 *Enoch* 80. In 1 *Enoch* 90:21–24 it is only a matter of the guilty angels of Genesis 6 assimilated to the stars, and not of all the stars.
59. *Sib. Or.* 5:514–31.
60. *Sib. Or.* 5:256–59.
61. Job 4:18–19 (“If madness is found in the angels, how much more in those who live on earth!” simply means that nothing can be as wise as God and that in comparison to him even the angels are mad.)
62. 1QH III, 22–23; XVIII, 23.
63. 1 *Enoch* 89:64.
64. Cf. 1 *Enoch* 89:61: “Consider and see all that the shepherds do to their sheep, for they kill more than I commanded them to.” The same idea, but without mythology, is found, e.g., in Isa. 10:5–7; 17:6.
65. See e.g., O. Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, 129–30.
66. Sir. 17:17; *Jub.* 15:31–32. In Daniel (10, 13, 21), Israel itself has an angel for its head, that is Michael.
67. *Jub.* 15:31–32: “All the nations have a spirit which governs them to mislead them. But over Israel He has not set up an angel or a spirit, for He alone is their governor; He will protect them and claim them back from the hand of his angels and his spirits and from all his powers, to preserve them and bless them so that they might be His and He theirs forever.”
68. Cf. W. Carr, “The Rulers of this Age,” (*NTS* 23 [1976]: 20–23).
69. John 17:25; 1:10; 14:17; 1 John 3:1.
70. 1 Cor 1:21.
71. 1 Cor. 11:32.
72. Gal. 6:14.
73. 1 Cor. 2:12. Cf. 2 Cor. 7:10: the opposition between “godly grief” and “worldly grief.”
74. Col. 2:8.
75. Rom. 3:19.
76. 1 Cor. 1:20: “Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?” 1 Cor. 3:18: “If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise, for the wisdom of this world is folly with God.” These texts show that Paul uses the two words almost as synonyms.
77. Gal. 1:3–4; cf. Eph. 5:16.

78. Rom. 12:2.
79. John 15:18.
80. John 7:17.
81. John 16:33.
82. 1 John 5:4.
83. 1 John 2:15–16.
84. 1 John 4:5–6.
85. 1 John 5:19.
86. Heb. 11:7; cf. 11:38.
87. James 1:27.
88. James 4:4.
89. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:6; Phil. 3:20; Heb. 11:13–16; 13:14; 1 Pet. 1:1; 1:17; 2:11.
90. *De op.*, 72–75; *De confus.*, 176–79. It is doubtless to this theory of Philo's, or analogous theories, that Justin alludes (*Dial.*, 62, 3), and perhaps also to the *Tripartite Treatise* in the passage 112, 36–113, 1.
91. This idea is found, e.g., in Papias, Athenagoras, Methodius of Olympus. See J. Daniélou in OG 452.
92. Christ could well have said, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law. . . ." It is nevertheless true that, even in Matthew, the most Jewish-Christian of the Evangelists, one sees that he treated the Law quite freely, and that it is one of the reasons why he made the Pharisees and priests hate him. Moreover, it is possible that in the later part of his teaching he had envisaged a thoroughgoing reform of the Law, a reform that he perhaps symbolized by the destruction of the Temple and its rebuilding. In any case he seems to have predicted the destruction of the Temple, and even this prediction could indicate a certain detachment in respect to what was still the center and unifying element of Judaism. We know that it was brought up in his trial.
93. Acts 6:13.
94. Acts 7:48–50.
95. Acts 7:30; 7:35; 7:38; 7:53.
96. Exod. 3:2.
97. Deut. 33:2. (in the LXX translation). Cf. *Jub.* 1:27, 29; 2:1; Josephus, *Ant. Jud.* xv, 5, 3.
98. The rulings of the Law are always put in the mouth of Yahweh himself, without there being any question of the angel of Yahweh or the angels.
99. Acts 7:53.
100. Gal. 3:19.
101. Gal. 3:19. The mediator in question is no doubt Moses.
102. Col. 2:18.
103. Col. 2:16.
104. Col. 2:20–22.
105. *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 2d ed. (Bern, 1954), 213.
106. *Die Probleme der Kolosser-und Epheserbriefe* (Lund, 1946), 167–68.
107. *Commentarium in Canticum canticorum* II, Baehrens, 160–61.
108. *Epistula* cxxi, 10, 10–15, Hilberg, vol. 3, 44–46.
109. Col. 2:8.
110. In the Fourth Book of Maccabees, e.g., Judaism is presented as a philosophy; in Philo and in the Jewish apologetic writing inserted in the pseudo-Clementine novel. It could be well be the case, as it is easy to find links with Stoicism, the dominant philosophy at this time.
111. Gal. 4:3–5.
112. Gal. 4:9–11.
113. Cf. M. Simon, *Les Premiers Chrétiens* (Paris, 1952), 66: "One thing at least is certain: 'to be under the Law' is practically the same for Paul as 'to be subject to the elements of the world.'" Cf. also E. Percy, *Die Probleme*, 156–67.
114. Col. 2:14–15.
115. It is much more likely that he too considered the Law to have been given by the angels (Heb. 2:2).

116. E.g., Aristides, *Apol.* 14, 4; *Kerygma Petri* (Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* vi, 41, 2). This is also found in Celsus (Origen, *Contra Celsum* i, 26; v, 6), who probably bases what he says on Christian descriptions of Judaism.
117. Cf. A. D. Nock, "A Coptic Library of Gnostic Writings," *JThS* n.s., 9 (1958): 332.
118. *Apol.* i, 26. Cf. Tertullian, *De Praescriptione haereticorum* 34.
119. *Ref.* vi, 7–18.
120. *Ref.* vi, 19–20. Incidentally, this part contradicts the preceding one, where the "infinite Power" appears as creative.
121. "La gnose simonienne, nos sources principales," II (RecSR 16, 1926), 7. It concerns *Hom.* II, 22.
122. Compare *Recogn.* II, 12, 15 with *Hom.* II, 25–26. The mention of the creator God figures in one of these texts but not in the other. Where Simon attacks the creator God, it is probably Marcion who is depicted in the guise of Simon.
123. *Gnosis als Weltreligion* (Zurich, 1951), 60; "Der gnostische Anthropos," *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 22 (1953): 199; *Gnostic Studies*, vol. 1 (Istanbul, 1974), 216.
124. Cf. Irenaeus i, 23, 3: "Cum enim male moderarentur Angeli mundum . . ." This expression might be more authentic than the passages where Irenaeus speaks of the creator angels.
125. See below, Part 1, chapter 3.
126. Tob. 12:15. Perhaps it should be linked with Ezekiel 9, where seven men who represent the angels are referred to. But these are destructive angels, charged with chastisement, and it would be strange if they were given the highest rank among the angels.
127. *1 Enoch* 20 (Greek recension); 81:5; 87:2; 90:21–22.
128. A. Dupont-Sommer, *Les Ecrits esséniens découverts près de la Mer Morte*, 2d. ed. (Paris, 1960), 428–30.
129. Rev. 1:4; 5:6; cf. 3:1; 4:5; 8:2.
130. *Testament of Levi* 8.
131. *Shepherd*, Vision III, 4.
132. *Shepherd*, Similitude ix, 6 and 12.
133. *Strom.* v, 35, 1; vi, 143, 1; *Eclogae prophetae*, 51, 1–52, 1; 56, 7–57, 1; etc.
134. R. Reitzenstein, "Eine frühchristliche Schrift . . .," *ZNTW* 15 (1914): 82.
135. *De Genesi ad litteram*, in particular iv 21f.; *De civitate Dei*, book xi, chap. 9.
136. Cf. M.-Th. d'Alverny, "Les Anges et les jours," i, *CA* 2 (1957): 283.
137. Cf. J. Daniélou, *Theology of Jewish Christianity* (Eng. tr., London, 1964), 300, and also 109, 118, 256.
138. Boll has shown that it presupposes a knowledge of a certain order of the planets, an order only known by the Greeks (article "Hebdomas" in *PW* VII (1912), col. 2557–60).
139. W. Rordorf, *Sunday* (Eng. tr., London, 1968), 28–30.
140. *PW*, VII, col. 2574.
141. *Sunday*, 29 and 39.
142. *Ref.* VIII, 14, 1.
143. *1 Enoch*, 20.
144. It is only on the subject of Ptolemy and his disciples that he says that for them the heavens are the "angels" (i, 5, 2).
145. Irenaeus, i, 30, 9–10.
146. Irenaeus, i, 30, 11.
147. *Contra Celsum* vi, 32.
148. Codex II, 101, 27–28.
149. *Johannesbuch*, Lidzbarski (Giessen, 1915), 192, lines 18–19.
150. Cf. R. Macuch, "Anfänge der Mandäer," in F. Altheim and R. Stiehl, *Araben in der alten Welt*, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1965), 113.
151. Cf. J. Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Notre Dame, 1956), 262–86.
152. J. Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, 257.
153. Irenaeus, i, 24, 2.
154. Theodoret, *Haer. fab. comp.* i, 3; Hippolytus, *Ref.* VII, 28, 5.
155. Cf. in particular *De spec. legibus* II, 56f. G. C. Stead (in *JThS* 20 (1969): 80) writes: "Philo's language about the *hebdomas* is distinctly extravagant."

156. John Lydus (*De mensibus* iv, 53) seems to interpret Sabaoth as deriving from "seven." There might be a confusion here between Hebrew words meaning respectively "armies," "seven," and "repose."
157. *Ad Autol.* II, 12: "The Hebrew word *sabbat* is translated in Greek as the seventh day."
158. Rom. 14:5.
159. Cf. R. Riesenfeld, in *New Testament Essays, Studies in Memory of T. W. Manson*, ed. A. J. B. Higgins (Manchester, 1959), 210–17.
160. *Magn.* 9, 1–3.
161. *Sunday*, 140.
162. *Magn.* 9, 1–3.
163. *Barn* 15, 8–9; Justin, *Dial.* 24; 41; 138; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* vi, 138, 1f.
164. In C. Schmidt, *Gespräche Jesu mit seinen Jüngern nach der Auferstehung* (Leipzig, 1919): 276–81.
165. *Theology of Jewish Christianity*, 174–81.
166. *Asc. Is.* 7:17; 8:27f.; *T. Levi* 2–3; 2 *Enoch* 3–9.
167. It might be noted that in the *Apophysis megale* attributed to Simon Magus by Hippolytus a hebdomad is referred to. But it is a hebdomad of entities derived from the "infinite Power," that is, from the true God. Even though the *Apophysis megale* is in all probability not by Simon, it might be that one can find some trace of early Simonianism here, and the fact that the number seven is not linked to the inferior powers in this work, might be a sign that in this school in the first century, the creator God was still the true God.
168. Cf. J. Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, 260–61.
169. *Ep. apost.* 18 (29).
170. *The Bible and the Liturgy*, 350–54.
171. *The Bible and the Liturgy*, 347.
172. G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism & Talmudic Tradition* (New York, 1960), 65–69.
173. *Ap. of John*, BG 42, 7–9 and parallels.
174. Cf. J. Daniélou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture* (London, 1973), 431–32.
175. W. Anz, *Zur Frage nach dem Ursprung des Gnostizismus*, TU, 15 4 (Leipzig, 1897).

Chapter III

1. E.g., Irenaeus, *Adv. haer* I, 30, 1; Hippolytus, *Ref.* vi, 35; ix, 13; Epiphanius, *Pan.* xxi, 2 and 4; xxv, 5; Filaster, *Haer.* 33; etc.
2. E.g., the *Apocryphon of John* (BG, p. 117 and parallels); the *Gospel of Philip* 107, 18–27; 118, 24–25; 119, 16–18; *Apocryphal Epistle of James* 6, 20–21; *Origin of the World* 153, 30; *Gospel of Thomas* 98, 1 and 17; etc.
3. Origen, *Joh. Comm.* II, 12; Jerome, *Comm. Mich.* 7, 6; *Comm. Is.* 40, 9; *Comm. Ex.* 16, 13.
4. Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autol.* I, 7; II, 15 and 18; Irenaeus, *Demonstr. apost.* 5 and 10. Cf. J. Daniélou, *Theology of Jewish Christianity* (Eng. tr., London, 1964), 213.
5. *Aphrahat's . . . Homilien, übers. v. G. Bert*, TU 3, 3–4 (Leipzig, 1888), 297.
6. Cf. S. Pètrement, "Une suggestion de Simone Weil à propos d'Apocalypse XII," *NTS* II (1965): 291–96. Quispel defended the same idea at the eighth International Patristic Conference at Oxford in 1979.
7. E.g., Sir. 24:3; Wis. 1:4–7; 7:22–25; 9:17.
8. U. Wilckens, *Weisheit und Torheit* (Tübingen, 1959), 157–59.
9. See below, Part 2, chapter 1.
10. See above, pp. 64–65.
11. E.g., when he recounts that Simon bought back Helen with the same money with which he wished to pay for the ability to give the Holy Spirit (*De Anima*, 34).
12. Among the Valentinians, e.g., the inferior Sophia, Achamoth, could be called the Holy Spirit. Cf. Irenaeus, I, 4, 1; 5, 3. Similarly with Rūhā among the Mandeans.

13. Cf. Ps. 104:24.
14. Cf. C. H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks*, 3d ed. (London, 1964), 125.
15. E.g., Rom. 8:4–6, 10 and 13; 12:11; 2 Cor. 6:6; Col. 1:8.
16. E.g. Acts 18:25.
17. *The Patristic Doctrine of Redemption* (London, 1952), 81.
18. W. Foerster, in OG 190–96; Foerster, Krause, and Rudolph, eds., *Die Gnosis* (Eng. tr., Oxford, 1972–74), 1:27–29.
19. See below, Part 2, chapter 1.
20. He is certainly wrong on the subject of the statue he believes to be that of Simon. He is probably also wrong when he states that almost all the Samaritans worshiped Simon as the first God. Cf. H. G. Kippenberg, *Garizim und Synagoge* (Berlin, 1971), 137.
21. *Hom.* II, 23–25; *Rec.* II, 8–12.
22. G. Quispel, *Gnosis als Weltreligion* (Zurich, 1951), 63–64.
23. *Simon Magus* (Tübingen, 1974), 24, n. 31.
24. *Ketzergeschichte* (1884), 185.
25. See below, Part 2, chapter 1.
26. Without taking into account the fact that Irenaeus, or these who provided him with information, were perhaps mistaken in thinking that it was Simon whom they depicted in the guise of Zeus. It was perhaps a matter of God and the Holy Spirit, and the identification of Simon and his companion with them was perhaps merely a supposition made by the sect's enemies.
27. Cf. P. Vincent, "Le Culte d'Hélène à Samarie," *RB* 45, (1936): 221–32; G. Quispel, *Gnosis als Weltreligion*, 62.
28. *RHR* 152 (1957): 152.
29. Cf. M. Detienne, "La Légende," 133–34.
30. J. Daniélou, *Les Manuscrits de la Mer Morte et les origines du Christianisme* (Paris, 1957), 89–93; *Theology of Jewish Christianity*, 72.
31. Cf. M. Simon, *Les Sectes Juives au temps de Jésus* (Paris, 1960), 85.
32. *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis* (Göttingen, 1907), 77–83.
33. Cf. K. Beyschlag, *Simon Magus*, 185.
34. See above, p. 77.
35. Cf. Tertullian, *Adv. Val.* 4.
36. Cf. G. C. Stead, "The Valentinian Myth of Sophia," *JThS*, n.s., 20 (1969): 75–104, 87–88: "There is some other evidence that the Valentinian School preserved the opinion that the separate names of the aeons represent a phase in the knowledge of God which ought to be transcended."
37. "The Valentinian Myth of Sophia."
38. G.W. MacRae, "The Jewish Background of the Gnostic Sophia Myth," *NovTest* 12 (1970): 86–101.
39. Cf. Acts 24:5, 14.
40. Cf. Rom. 8:20.
41. Above, p. 47–48.
42. MacRae ("The Jewish Background of the Gnostic Sophia Myth") rightly links the figure of Sophia with that of Eve.
43. It can be noted that in the *Exegesis of the Soul* this "soul" that repents could at the same time be Israel. For, in describing her infidelities, it cites the texts of the Old Testament that speak of Israel's infidelity to God.
44. Similarly in the *Gospel of Philip*, passages 52, 21–22 ("when we were Hebrews . . ."), and 75, 32–4, are explained by 62, 5–6: "He who has not received the Savior is still a Hebrew."
45. See, in the second part, chapters 11 and 12.
46. *Sancti Irenaei . . . libros quinque adversus haereses . . . edidit W. Wigan Harvey*, (Cambridge, 1857; reprint 1965), I, 221.
47. *Hauptprobleme*, 14.
48. G. Quispel, "Gnosticism and the New Testament," *VChr* 19 (1965): 65–85, and *Gnostic Studies*, vol. 1 (Istanbul, 1974), 203.
49. *VChr* 19 (1965): 65–85.
50. *Hauptprobleme*, 162.
51. Cf. G. C. Stead, "The Valentinian Myth of Sophia," 97–98.

52. Cf. S. Giversen, *Apocryphon Johannis* (Copenhagen, 1963), 166.
53. "Der gnostische Anthropos und die jüdische Tradition," *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 22 (1953): 195–234.
54. "Der gnostische Anthropos," 215.
55. "Der gnostische Anthropos," 209–11. The passages from the *Epinomis* referred to are 981b and 984c.
56. *Weisheit und Torheit*. See above, n. 8.
57. See below, Part 2, chapter 2: "The 'Gnostics' at Corinth."
58. Cf. A. Feuillet, *Le Christ Sagesse de Dieu d'après les épîtres pauliniennes* (Paris, 1966); J.-E. Ménard, *RevSR* 41 (1967): 227–36. This is also what H. Koester seems to think: *Gnomon* 33 (1961):590–95.
59. Cf. C. K. Barrett, *BJRL* 46 (1963–64): 283.
60. E.g., *Weisheit und Torheit*, 2: "Paul speaks just like a gnostic," and also 98, 117.
61. See above, n. 8.
62. See further, Part 2, pp. 384–85.
63. Part 2, pp. 385, 386, and 415.

Chapter IV

1. *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis* (Göttingen, 1907), 160–219.
2. Cf. C. Colpe, *Die Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* (Göttingen, 1961) 169, 205.
3. "Der gnostische Anthropos in die jüdische Tradition," *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 22 (1953):195–234., 214, 225.
4. *Der Gott "Mensch" in der Gnosis* (Göttingen, 1962), 3.
5. *Hauptprobleme*, 169–71, 177, 216–17.
6. *Der Gott "Mensch,"* 34, 64–65, 69.
7. *Odes Sol.* 13:1–2. One would have expected: "Look at yourselves in him." It could be that the transmission of the text is defective at this point.
8. Below, Part 1, pp. 107–10.
9. Schenke, *Der Gott "Mensch,"* 69.
10. *Kephalaia*, vol. 55, ed. H. J. Polotsky and A. Böhlig (Stuttgart, 1935–40), 134 (6–13).
11. These two contrary affirmations doubtless belong to two different traditions. One, following which the Audians attribute to God a corporeal form, represents them only as schismatics, not as gnostics. See Puech, article "Audianer," *RAC* 1 (1950), col. 913.
12. Cf. Irenaeus, I, 5, 5; *Extracts from Theodotus* 50.
13. See below, Part 1, p. 185, Part 2, p. 251, and chapter 8.
14. *Apocryphon of John*, BG 47, 15–16, and parallels.
15. See below, Part 1, pp. 107–10.
16. And CG V, 8, 18–28, according to Krause's translation in *Gnosis*, vol. 2, ed. W. Foerster, M. Krause, and K. Rudolph (Oxford, 1972–74), 33.
17. Cf. T. W. Manson, "The Son of Man in Daniel, Enoch and the Gospels," *BJRL* 32 (1950): 174–75; P. Lamarche, "Le 'Blasphème' de Jésus devant le Sanhedrin," *RecSR* 50 (1962): 79; A. Caquot, "Problèmes du messianisme israélite," *AEPHE*, sect. 5, 74 (1966–67): 102: "The 'Son of man' in Daniel is not 'more than a man,' as the mythologizing theories pretend; he did not descend from heaven, he will rather ascend there. . . . He represents no preexistent heavenly being."
18. Cf. A. J. B. Higgins, "Son of Man-Forschung," in *New Testament Essays, Studies in Memory of T. W. Manson* (Manchester, 1959), 125–26; J. C. Hindley, *NTS* 14 (1968): 561–5; R. Leivestad, *NTS* 18 (1972): 246.
19. In these milieus, to speak of the "son of man" was to make allusion to the prophecy of Daniel. The "son of man" had not become a mythical figure but a technical, political expression to recall that the oppressed people would have victory one day.
20. *Hauptprobleme*, 170, 217.
21. Cf. Col. 1:18; 2:19; Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23.
22. E.g., *A Manichaean Psalm-Book*, part 2, ed. and trans. C. R. C. Allberry (Stuttgart, 1938), 25 (13–14).

23. The *Gospel of Philip* underlines the paradox when it says that in the kingdom of heaven, contrary to what takes place in this world, clothes will be better than those who wear them (57, 21–22).
24. *A Manichaean Psalm-Book*, part 2, 88 (12–13). Cf. *Kephalaia* LXXI, 176 (4–5): “The pillar of glory will be united with the first man.”
25. Cf. also *Kephalaia* LXIII, 156 (10–11): “The Church is founded on him [the First-born]. . . . They are one body.”
26. *Leib und Leib Christi* (Tübingen, 1933), 185–86.
27. *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (Eng. tr., London, 1931), 116; Cf. E. Käsemann, *Leib und Leib Christi*, 185.
28. It seems to me anyway that Philo does not in general use the expression “first man” to designate the heavenly man; on the contrary, he uses it to designate the earthly man (*De Op.* 136, 142, 145). I only see *Leg. all.* II, 5, as implying the use of the name “first man” for the heavenly man.
29. *Hauptprobleme*, 167–71.
30. H. Schlier, *Christus und die Kirche im Epheserbrief* (Tübingen, 1930), 31–34.
31. *Der Gott “Mensch,”* 57–60.
32. *Die Gnosis*, 1:263.
33. *Autogenes* (engendered of himself) is applied to Christ in certain Gnostic writings. That probably means that Christ, being substantially united with God, is engendered not by another but by himself. See below, Part 2, pp. 412–18.
34. It could be that Hippolytus, in v, 7, 33, has confused the distinction between the Word and Christ with the distinction between the Word and Jesus. For in v, 8, 21 it is Jesus whom the Naassenes say is “the perfect man who has received a form from on high, from one who is without form.”
35. *Corpus Hermeticum*, ed. A. D. Nock, trans. A.-J. Festugière, vol. 1 (Paris, 1945), 7–28.
36. “On Apparatus and Furnaces, Authentic Commentaries on the Letter Omega,” in Berthelot-Ruelle, *Collection des anciens alchimistes grecs*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1888), 228–33. Zosimus lived at the beginning of the fourth century. According to some, he was Christian; according to others completely foreign to Christianity; pagan, but influenced by Christianity, according to Reitzenstein.
37. Matter, according to Plato, is not the same thing as the world (*cosmos*). The latter is an *order* and Plato admires it, even in his early philosophy (cf. *Gorgias*, 507e–508a). There is no anticosmism in Plato.
38. Above, pp. 70–71.
39. Cf. John 17:2. This idea is often taken up in the Valentinian writings, e.g., *Extracts from Theodotus* 43, 2; Irenaeus, I, 4, 4; *Tripartite Treatise* 87, 33–6. By all the evidence, it is not a matter only, at the end of *Poimandres*, of power over the animals, as in *Poimandres* 14 and in Gen. 1:26–28.
40. Cf. J. Duchesne-Guillemin, “Et spiritus Dei . . .,” in *Mémorial Monneret de Villard*.
41. Cf. M. Tardieu, *Trois mythes gnostiques* (Paris, 1974), 85–139.
42. R. Reitzenstein, *Poimandres* (Leipzig, 1904), 106.

PART ONE: SECTION TWO

Chapter I

1. See Introduction, n. 25.
2. Cf. S. Pétrement, *RMM* 65 (1960):392–95.
3. *RMM* 65 (1960): 385–421.
4. E.g., Luke 11:52; Rom. 2:20; 15:14; 1 Cor. 8:1, 7, 10–11; 12:8; 13:2, 8; 14:6; 2 Cor. 6:6; 8:7; 11:6; Col. 2:3; Eph. 3:19; *Didache* 9:3; 10:2; 1 *Clem.* 1, 36 and 40.
5. *Gnosis, la connaissance religieuse dans les épîtres de saint Paul* (Louvain, 1949).
6. E.g., Mal. 2:7: “For the lips of the priest should guard knowledge [gnosis] and men should seek instruction from his mouth”; Hos. 4:6: “My people have be-

- come like one without knowledge [*gnosis*]. Because you have rejected knowledge [*epignosis*], I will also reject you.”
7. *Gnosis*, 372: “*Gnosis* could be for a Jew knowledge of God, which is identified with adherence to the Mosaic religion and with the practice of justice. On a more intellectual level, it signifies, in Judaism, understanding of the Law and of all the prescriptions attached to it; from the priestly privilege it had been on the eve of the Exile, this *gnosis* had become, by the time of Christ, the prerogative of the doctors of the Law.” Cf. 539: “*Gnosis* for the rabbis was understanding of the scriptures.”
 8. That is why he says sometimes that all Christians have *gnosis* and sometimes that all do not have it.
 9. “*Gnôsis*: le sens orthodoxe de l’expression jusqu’aux Pères alexandrins,” (The Orthodox Meaning of the Word until the Alexandrine Fathers) (*JThS*, 4, 1953, 188–203). Cf. J. Daniélou, *Theology of Jewish Christianity* (London, 1964), 34: “We know now that *gnosis* is also a characteristic of Later Judaism. It is knowledge of eschatological realities.”
 10. “*Gnosis*: The Orthodox Meaning,” 202.
 11. Hilgenfeld (*Ketzergeschichte* [1884], 285–87) shows that it is probably a little after 140 that Valentinus, at Rome, began to be taken for a heretic. He had not been considered a heretic in Egypt, nor even at Rome during the pontificate of Hyginus.
 12. *Tractatus tripartitus*, vol. 2, 231–32 (see n. 14 above, Section 1, chapter 1). (The emphasis of the last words is mine.)
 13. Cf. frag. 17 (Origen, *In Joh. comm.* XIII, 10); frag. 20 (XIII, 16); frag. 32 (XIII, 41); frag. 40 (XIII, 60).
 14. See below, Part 2, pp. 376–77 and 475.
 15. See below, Part 2, pp. 474–76.
 16. Cf. *Tractatus tripartitus*, vol. 1 (1973), 311; and G. Quispel, *Gnostic Studies* vol. 1 (Istanbul, 1974), 159.
 17. Cf. 1, 26–28; 6, 5–7; 8, 11–12; 12, 39–13, 1.
 18. Cf. 8, 26–27; 9, 19; 12, 38–39.
 19. Cf. Hennecke-Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 1 (London, 1963), 309.
 20. *Koptisch-gnostische Schriften*, vol. 1 (3d ed. Schmidt-Till, Berlin, 1962), 335–67.
 21. *Eugnostos*, CG III, 74, 10–20; 78, 1–5; 82, 5–10; 83, 1. *Wisdom of Jesus Christ*, BG 90, 9–10; 103, 7–9.
 22. One could multiply examples. See, e.g., *Dialogue of the Savior*, 121, 136, 142; *Interpretation of Knowledge*, 1; *Testimony of the Truth*, 49; *Acts of Peter*, BG 139.
 23. Vol. 1, (Paris, 1945), 105, n. 35.
 24. Cf. H.-Ch. Puech, *Sur le Manichéisme* (Paris, 1979), 321–26, 349–52.
 25. Vol. 1, (Paris, 1978).
 26. See further on, Part 2, pp. 222–23 and 321.

Chapter II

1. RMM 72 (1967): 348–49 and 367–68.
2. W. Foerster, “Das Wesen der Gnosis,” in *Die Welt als Geschichte*, vol. 15 (1955), 100–14; “Vom Ursprung der Gnosis,” in *Christentum am Nil* (Recklinghausen, 1964), 124–30.
3. S. G. F. Brandon, e.g., in *The Fall of Jerusalem* (London, 1951), an otherwise remarkable book, says that Paul represents the Gentiles as being in the power of certain demonic forces, from which they have been redeemed by God, and adds: “The exact means of redemption is obscure, but certainly it was produced by the sending of the Son into the world” (p. 64). What is there obscure in the idea that to venerate a man killed unjustly and humiliated by the powers of the world is to escape in spirit from the hold of these powers? Because one no longer believes in their *value*, one can only no longer submit to them physically.
4. Cf. what I have said above (p. 54) about the most ancient theory of redemption according to Gustav Aulén. He has shown that, for the first Christians, Christ

saved by triumphing over the “powers.” Now how could he triumph over the powers? By showing, through the cross, that they do not know God, that they are mistaken as to the good. It is then by teaching that Christ saves, according to early Christianity.

5. *Gnostiques et gnosticisme*, 2d ed. (Paris, 1925), 99–100. Cf. P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Chicago, 1957), 166: “For the early Greek Church, death and error were the things from which one needed and wanted to be saved.”

Chapter III

1. It is from the Greek verb *dokeō*, to appear, that the word “docetic” derives.
2. See above, Part 1, chapter 1, n. 6, and below, Part 2, pp. 469 and 472.
3. See above, the chapter “Christian Savior and Gnostic Revealer.”
4. See below, n. 18 and Part 2, pp. 324–25.
5. Cf. Irenaeus *Adv. haer* I, 23, 3; Tertullian, *De Anima* xxxiv, 4; Epiphanius, *Pan.* xxi, 2, 6.
6. E.g., those of Irenaeus, I, 30 (cf. I, 30, 12).
7. Cf. J. Daniélou, *Theology of Jewish Christianity* (London, 1964), 206–14.
8. ix, 13. Cf. III, 13; VIII, 10, 26.
9. Cf. John 7:28, where Jesus seems to confirm their words: “You know me, and you know where I come from.” See R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (Oxford, 1971).
10. John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32–33; 13:31–32.
11. See below, Part 2, chapter 6.
12. See the various theories cited by R. Schnackenburg, *Die Johannesbriefe* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1953), 13–19.
13. Cf. C. Clemen, “Beiträge zum geschichtlichen Verständnis der Johannesbriefe,” *ZNTW* 6 (1905): 271–81. See below, Part 2, chapter 6.
14. Or “dissolve Jesus,” according to a variant. Certain manuscripts add “come in the flesh” here, but the editors of the New Testament reject these words as being a secondary addition.
15. “Beiträge zum geschichtlichen Verständnis.”
16. Cf. S. de Ausejo, “El concepto de ‘carne’ aplicado a Cristo en el IV. Evangelio,” in *Sacra Pagina*, (1959; Bibliotheca Ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium, XIII), 219–34; esp. 226.
17. Cf., e.g., the parallelism between 1 John 5:1 and 1 John 5:5.
18. J. Daniélou dates this work between about 90 and 100 (*Theology of Jewish Christianity*, 13). The editors of the *Apocryphal Epistle of James* (in *Epistula Jacobi apocrypha*, ed. M. Malinine, H.-Ch. Puech, G. Quispel, W. Till, R. Kasser, R. McL. Wilson, J. Zandee, [Zurich, 1968], note to 2, 19–21, p. 40) date it between 80 and 100. See also below, in the present work, Part 2, appendix to chapter 7.
19. See below, Part 2, chapter 7.
20. “Der Kirchenbegriff im Evangelium und den Briefen des Johannes,” in *Studia Evangelica* (Berlin, 1959), 376.
21. *Die Glaubende und die feindliche Welt* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1970), 275–80.
22. Tertullian, *Adv. Marcion* III, 11.
23. Frag. 3 of Valentinus (Völker).
24. Irenaeus, I, 24, 4.
25. Cf. R. M. Grant, “Gnostic Origins and the Basilidians of Irenaeus,” *VChr* 13 (1959): 123.
26. Cf. Grant, “Gnostic Origins,” 123–24.
27. *Homilies on Joshua* VIII, 3; cited by J. Daniélou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture* (London, 1973), 189f. On Origen’s tendency toward Docetism, cf. A. Miura-Stange, *Celsus und Origenes* (Giessen, 1926), 142–49.
28. Cf. also *Treatise on the Resurrection* 45, 25–26: “We suffered with him.”
29. Cf. A. von Harnack, *Marcion* (Darmstadt, 1960), 124–26 and, in the part “Neue Studien zu Marcion,” 19, n. 2.
30. *Extracts from Theodotus* 61, 6.
31. *Acta Johannis* 101 (Hennecke-Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 2 [London, 1963], 234).

32. *A Manichaean Psalm-Book*, part 2, ed. and trans. C. R. C. Allberry (Stuttgart, 1938), 191.
33. E.g., *A Manichaean Psalm-Book*, II, 120-1, 129, 142.
34. *The Sources of the Synoptic Gospels* (Cambridge, 1953), 75.
35. C. Schmidt, *Gespräche Jesu mit seinen Jüngern nach der Auferstehung* (Leipzig, 1919), 367.
36. *Strom.* vi, 71, 2. Cf. *Adumbrationes in epist. I Johannis* i, 1.
37. H. von Soden, in *Theologische Abhandlungen für C. Weizsäcker* (1892), 118. Cf. S. G. F. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem* (London, 1951), 68: "Paul is ever occupied with the work of the pre-existent Son of God and not with the historical Jesus."
38. Cf. P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Chicago, 1957), 98-99, 127-28, 138, 144, 160 and elsewhere. Tillich often calls the Docetic tendency "monophysite"; cf. 160: "The Docetic-monophysite direction of Christian thinking . . ."

Chapter IV

1. Above, pp. 107-10.
2. For Isa. 25:8, see the end of verse 8, and also 26:19-20. For Ezekiel, see 37:12-14 and the entire end of the chapter.
3. Cf. Matt. 6:8-9; Luke 3:8.
4. Mark 11:17. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke, while following Mark, delete "for all the nations" (Matt. 21:13; Luke 19:46). But account must be taken of the fact that they are both (even Luke) a little more Jewish Christian than Mark. The latter, the most ancient of the Gospels, can be regarded as the surest witness.
5. Cf. Mark 8:31; 10:33; 12:1-8, 15-17, 38-40; 13:9.
6. Cf. below, section 7 of the present chapter.
7. Cf. below, p. 167.
8. OG 178.
9. The translation "drawn" is that which is found in the first edition of this epistle (*De Resurrectione*, ed. M. Malinine, et al. [Zurich, 1963], 7). But the sun does not draw its rays to heaven, it emits them from heaven. Further, if we were only drawn to heaven, we would not have already ascended to heaven, as the author of the epistle thinks. It must then rather be understood that we are *attached*, *linked* to heaven, as the rays are linked to heaven because they adhere to the sun and by that to heaven. Being linked to heaven, we are there already in some way, and are not only drawn toward it.
10. F. C. Burkitt, *Church and Gnosis* (Cambridge, 1932), 21, 27-28, 57.
11. In *JTS* 36 (1935): 57-58.
12. Cf., e.g., Matt. 12:28; Luke 11:20; 17:21.
13. Van Hartingsveld says that for John to "judge" most often means to condemn, and that from the fact that the believers will not be condemned one cannot conclude that they will not be judged (*Die Eschatologie des Johannesevangeliums* [Assen, 1962], 34-40). But what does judgment mean if condemnation is excluded? More than one commentator has thought that for John future judgment has become useless.
14. One could also translate: "unless one is born from above." It is probably that *anōthen* here has both senses at once: it is necessary to be born anew, and this second birth is a birth from above.
15. Justin, *Apol.* i 26; Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* i, 23, 5; Tertullian, *De Anima* 50; Pseudo-Tertullian, i, 3; etc.
16. Below, Part 2, end of Chapter 1.
17. Part 2, pp. 219-20 and pp. 315-16.
18. Fragment of the *De Resurrectione* of Hippolytus, preserved in Syriac. I cite it after the translation found in the first edition of the Valentinian Epistle to Rheginos, also called the *Treatise on the Resurrection* (see above, n. 9: *De Resurrectione*, ed. M. Malinine, et al.) p. xi, n. 1.
19. I will cite only: J. Bowman, "Samaritan Studies, I: The Fourth Gospel and the Samaritans," *BJRL* 40 (1958): 298-308; W. A. Meeks, *The Prophet King* (Leiden, 1967); G. W. Buchanan, "The Samaritan Origin of the Gospel of John,"

- Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of E. R. Goodenough* (Leiden, 1968): 149–75; C. H. H. Scobie, “The Origin and Development of Samaritan Christianity,” *NTS* 19 (1973): 390–414; Ö. Cullman, “La Samarie et les origines de la mission Chrétiennes,” *AEPHE*, section 5 (1953–54): 3ff.; “L’Evangile Johannique et l’histoire du salut,” *NTS* 11 (1965): 111–22; *The Johannine Circle* (London, 1976).
20. Cf. among others C. L. Mitton, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (Oxford, 1951); E. J. Goodspeed, *The Key to Ephesians* (Chicago, 1956); P. Pokorny, *Der Epheserbrief und die Gnosis* (Berlin, 1965). Father Benoit, whom one feels is very tempted to admit its inauthenticity, resorts to the hypothesis of a disciple-secretary of Paul’s, whose interference in this epistle must have been substantial (*Dictionnaire de la Bible*, Supplément, vol. 7, 1966, col. 195–211). Other commentators, for example, A. Van Roon, *The Authenticity of Ephesians* (Leiden, 1974), believe in its probable authenticity. In any case, the question remains open.
 21. Cf. H. Schlier, *Christus und die Kirche im Epheserbrief* (Tübingen, 1930); and *Der Brief an die Epheser* (Düsseldorf, 1957); E. Käsemann in *RGG*, 3d ed., vol. 2, col. 517ff.; P. Pokorny, *Der Epheserbrief und die Gnosis*. Even though the “Gnostic” interpretation of Schlier and Käsemann has been opposed, it is difficult to deny the resemblances they point out. I quite agree that these resemblances are not due to a pre-Christian Gnosticism. But they might be due to a Gnosticism in the process of formation.
 22. Below, Part 2, chapter 4.
 23. See, e.g., Rom. 6:2–4, 11, 12, 22–23.
 24. Cf. H.-Fr. Weiss, “Paulus und die Häretiker,” in *Christentum und Gnosis*, ed. W. Eltester (Berlin, 1969), 116–28.
 25. In *Gnosticism and Early Christianity* (New York and London, 1959), 155–61.
 26. See above, n. 12.
 27. The author only mentions it in passing (6:2), “. . . among the elementary teachings which the recipients of the Epistle ought to have passed beyond long ago . . .” (J. Héring, in *The Background of the New Testament . . . in Honour of C. H. Dodd* [Cambridge, 1956], 451). Cf. C. Spicq, *L’Épître aux Hébreux*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1952), 128.
 28. Above, p. 161.
 29. Cf. C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of The Kingdom* (London, 1953), 34–110; *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1955), 446–47; *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1963), 416–20; J. A. T. Robinson, *Jesus and His Coming* (London, 1957), in particular 162–85; “The New Look of the Fourth Gospel,” in *Studia evangelica* (Berlin, 1959), 338–50.
 30. S. Pétrement, “Une suggestion de Simone Weil . . .,” *NTS* 11:293, n. 2.
 31. One of the manuscripts has “the peace to come” instead of the “age to come.” But this does not change the conclusion that can be drawn from it. For the “peace to come” would exist from the creation of the world.
 32. See above, pp. 109–10.
 33. *Enderwartung und gegenwärtiges Heil, Untersuchungen zu den Gemeindeliedern von Qumran* (Göttingen, 1966). See the conclusion, 113–17.
 34. A. Stuiber, *Refrigerium interim, die Vorstellung vom Zwischenzustand und die frühchristliche Grabekunst* (Bonn, 1957).
 35. O. Cullmann, *Immortalité de l’âme ou résurrection des morts* (Neuchâtel, Paris, 1956).
 36. *Immortalité*, 67–76.
 37. *Immortalité*, 76–77.
 38. Above, p. 167.

Chapter V

1. Th. Hyde, *Historia religionis veterum Persarum* (Oxford, 1700).
2. Chr. Wolff, *Psychologia rationalis* (Frankfurt, 1734), §39.
3. See J. Duchesne-Guillemain, “Dualismus,” in *RAC*, vol. 4, 334–50.
4. *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist* I (Göttingen, 1934; 2d ed. 1954; 3d ed. 1964), 5.
5. See Introduction, n. 27.

6. *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist* 1, 34–49.
7. Cf. H.-Ch. Puech, *Sur le Manichéisme* (Paris, 1979), 103–51.
8. Cf., e.g., John 3:6–8; 8:23, 38, 42–44; 15:19; 17:14, 16; 1 John 3:8–10, 19; 4:2–7; 5:18–19; 3 John 11.
9. O. Böcher, *Der johanneische Dualismus im Zusammenhang des nachbiblischen Judentums* (Gütersloh, 1965), 52.
10. I am making no distinction here between the author of the Fourth Gospel and the author or authors of the Johannine epistles. I believe that the reasons given to distinguish a number of authors in the literature attributed to John are, except insofar as the Apocalypse is concerned, very inadequate. See below, Part 2, chapter 5, n. 14.
11. *Der johanneische Dualismus*.
12. Cf. M. de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Assen, 1953); “The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs and the New Testament,” in *Studia evangelica* (Berlin, 1959) (TU 73), 546–56; *NovTest* 4 (1960–61): 182–235, and 5 (1961–62): 311–19; J. T. Millik, “Le Testament de Lévi en araméen,” *RB* 62 (1955): 398–406. Cf. also J. Jervell, in *Studien zu den Testamenten der zwölf Patriarchen*, ed. W. Eltester, (Berlin, 1969), 30–61.
13. See above, chapter 2, “The Seven Creator Angels,” nn. 70–76.
14. Above, pp. 36–38 and 58–59.
15. K. G. Kuhn, *ZThK* 47 (1950): 211; *ZThK* 49 (1952): 296–316. Cf. A. Dupont-Sommer, *RHR*, 71st year, vol. 142 (1952): 5–35.
16. H. W. Huppenbauer, *Der Mensch zwischen zwei Welten, der Dualismus der Texte von Qumran* (Zurich, 1959), 10–12.
17. *Der johanneische Dualismus*, 12 and 15.
18. *Yasna* 30, 3.
19. According to *Yasna* 47, 3. In other passages, it is true, Ahura Mazda seems to be identified as the Good Spirit.
20. Cf. J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *La Religion de l’Iran ancien* (Paris, 1962), 145; “Symbol und Mythos im alten Iran,” *ZDMG*, Supplement iv:xx (Deutscher Orientalistentag, 1977, Vorträge 57–65), 58–59; M. Molé, “Une histoire du mazdéisme est-elle possible?” *RHR* 162 (1962): 55. According to Molé, this is also Zaehner’s and Widengren’s opinion.
21. *Yasna* 51, 10.
22. Cf. H.-Ch. Puech, *Sur le manichéisme*, pp. v–vi.
23. *Kephalaia*, p. 220. See also F. Decret, *Mani* (Paris, 1974), 102–3.
24. *Yasna* 46, 6.
25. *Histoires* 1, 1, 140.
26. Cf. J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *Zoroastre . . . avec une traduction commentée des Gâthâ* (Paris, 1948), 144: “An essential feature of Zarathustra’s teaching, which we must keep in the first place, is its aggressive character.”
27. M. Molé, *Culte, mythe et cosmologie dans l’Iran ancien* (Paris, 1965).
28. Cf. J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *La Religion de l’Iran ancien*, 152.

Chapter VI

1. C. Schmidt, *Gespräche Jesu mit seinen Jungern nach der Auferstehung* (Leipzig, 1919), 323.
2. See below, Part 2, chapter 6.
3. See in particular M. Tardieu, “*Psuchaios spinthêr*, Histoire d’une métaphore dans la tradition platonicienne jusqu’à Eckhart,” *REA* 21 (1975): 225–35. In this article M. Tardieu brings together numerous ancient texts in which the spark symbolizes the soul or spirit, or an element of the soul or spirit. But it seems to me that none of these texts, with the exception of the Book of Wisdom, is before the time of Saturnilus. M. Tardieu thinks that this metaphor might be of Platonic origin; he shows that one can envisage it by combining a number of ideas or expressions found in Plato. But he acknowledges that it is not found either in Plato, or Aristotle, or the Stoics, or in the traditions that depend on these philosophers in the classical age (227).
4. Hippolytus, *Ref.* vii, 28, 5. Irenaeus’s Latin translation reads, “It is these men who have *his* spark of life [that of Christ].” This expression demonstrates even better that he is referring to the grace brought by Christ.

5. See above, p. 105.
6. Cf. R. M. Grant, *RBL* 69 (1950): 321.
7. It is possible that for Saturnilus there was a sort of fall of Adam after the descent of the spark. Cf. below, pp. 200–201, and Part 2, chapter 8.
8. Cf. the doctrine attributed to the Valentinians by Tertullian (*Adv. Val.* 29).
9. See below, Part 2, chapter 9.
10. *Aufsätze zur Gnosis* (Göttingen, 1967), 49–54 and 73–77.
11. *Aufsätze zur Gnosis*, 51–52. Cf. Plato, *Republic* 519b and 611d–612a.
12. In the text to which Clement refers Basilides states that only involuntary transgressions, committed in ignorance, are pardoned. It is the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews who condemns voluntary faults as unpardonable, meaning by this those committed after one has had knowledge of Christian truth (Heb. 10:26).
13. *Aufsätze zur Gnosis*, 47–49, 54–56, 73–75.
14. In 34, 18–29 it is a matter of a “psychic modeling” which is “like cold water” and needs to be warmed by the Spirit. But it is also a reference to humanity in general, not a particular class which was that of the psychics. Moreover, the Spirit warms this humanity by making it enter the Pleroma by *faith*, which implies that there is no distinction between faith and knowledge.
15. Cf. RG 1:124–25.
16. Cf., for example, K. Rudolph, *Gnosis* (Eng. tr., Edinburgh, 1983), 119–20.
17. Cf. K. Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 254: “At times it looks as if libertinism appeared rather late. . . .”
18. *Gnosis*, 254.
19. *Gnosis*, 261.
20. *Gnosis*, 261.
21. Cf. F. Wisse, *VChr* 25 (1971): 220–21.
22. H.-M. Schenke, “Die Gnosis,” in *Umwelt des Christentum*, vol. 1, ed. J. Leipoldt and W. Grundmann (Berlin, 1965), 371–415.
23. K.-W. Tröger, *Mysterienglaube und Gnosis in Corpus Hermeticum XIII* (Berlin, 1971).
24. *Mysterienglaube und Gnosis*.
25. To be born *anōthen* might mean “to be born anew” or “to be born from on high,” but it is likely that in John 3:3 it means both. The meaning “born anew” is in any case attested by Nicodemus’s reply and by the expression given as its equivalent, “to be born of water and the Spirit” (3:5).
26. Cf. John saying that he who is born of God does not sin (1 John 3:9).
27. “Erwählungstheologie und Menschenklassenlehre, die Theologie des Herakleion . . .” in *Gnosis and Gnosticism: Papers Read at the Seventh International Conference on Patristic Studies*, Oxford, 1975, ed. M. Krause, *NHS* 8 (Leiden, 1977): 148–81.
28. *Aufsätze zur Gnosis*, 71.
29. *Strom.* iv, 71.
30. *Aufsätze zur Gnosis*, 72–73.
31. See above, pp. 105 and 184–85.
32. L. Schottroff, *Der Glaubende und die feindliche Welt* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1970), 38.
33. Below, Part 2, chapter 12.
34. *Aufsätze zur Gnosis*, 78.
35. F.-M. Braun, *Jean le Théologien*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1959), 226–27.
36. “Pleroma and Fulfilment,” *VChr* 8 (1954): 193–224, in particular 206–7.
37. “Vom Ursprung der Gnosis” in *Christentum am Nil* (Recklinghausen, 1964), 124–30, particularly 129–30. Cf. also M. Spanneut, *Le Stoïcisme des Pères de l’Eglise* (Paris, 1957), 46: “Gnosticism appeared . . . as an anti-Stoicist attitude.”

PART TWO

Chapter I

1. Cf. H.-Ch. Puech, *Où en est le problème du gnosticisme?* (Brussels, 1934), 7. In *En quête de la Gnose*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1978), 149, Puech corrects “in the

- Lycos valley" to "in Asia Minor." But in both cases, it is probably a matter of Colossae.
2. See above, Part 1, pp. 6-7 and 62-64.
 3. See above, Part 1, pp. 64-65, 77.
 4. For J. Frickel (*Die "Apophysis Megale" in Hippolytus Refutatio*, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, 182, 1968) and J. M. A. Salles-Dabadie (*Recherches sur Simon le Mage, I, L' "Apophysis Megalè,"* [Paris, 1969]) a part of the work Hippolytus speaks of may go back to Simon. B. Aland, in *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Gnosticism . . . 1973* (Leiden, 1977), 34-73, opposes this theory and shows that the work cited by Hippolytus is a late work, whose author wished to incorporate into his own text a philosophical exposition that was not Gnostic. B. Aland's analysis seems to me to be right. But if someone wished to attribute to Simon a text that did not separate the Demiurge from the true God, it was perhaps because it was remembered that Simon had not separated them.
 5. See above, Part 1, 78-80.
 6. A. H. Goldfahn, quoted by G. Kretschmar, *Eth* 13 (1953): 358, n. 16a.
 7. *Gnosticism and Early Christianity* (New York, 1959), 88-89.
 8. H. Langerbeck, *Aufsätze zur Gnosis* (Göttingen, 1967).
 9. 2 Peter 3:15-16.
 10. E. Haenchen, in *Christentum und Gnosis*, ed. W. Eltester (Berlin, 1969), 21, says that the community at Damascus must have been of the same spirit as Stephen's group, since before his conversion Paul wished to persecute the Christians of Damascus.
 11. "Gab es eine vorchristliche Gnosis?" *ZThK* 49 (1952): 316-49; "Simon Magus in der Apostelgeschichte," in *Gnosis und Neues Testament*, ed. K.-W. Tröger (Gütersloh, 1973), 267-79.
 12. Cf. above, Part 1, p. 21. Cf. also W. A. Meeks, who has revised his first evaluation of Haenchen's article: see his article "Simon Magus in Recent Research," *RSR* 3 (1977): 137-42.
 13. At the Messina Conference in 1966 (OG 485).
 14. Irenaeus, in I, 27, 4, makes Simon the "initiator of the *apostasy*."
 15. B. H. Streeter (*The Four Gospels*, 10th ed. [London, 1961], 531) says that this enuch was "a Jew by blood, but one who might not be a member of the Jewish congregation." He observes that at this stage the Gospel was not yet taught to Jews or half-Jews.
 16. In *Gnosis und Neues Testament*, ed. Tröger, 277-79.
 17. Cf. J. Daniélou, in J. Daniélou and H. Marrou, *Nouvelle histoire de l'Eglise*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1963), 49: "He thus became a sort of Bishop. . . ." On this subject J. Daniélou speaks of Simon's "insincerity," who for him, apparently, was only moved by ambition. But a Samaritan, devoted to the religious independence of his country, might have had another motive than ambition for not wanting to leave the administration of the sacraments in Samaria only to the privilege of the community at Jerusalem.
 18. Cf. K. Beyschlag, *Simon Magus*, 10, n. 10.
 19. According to Quispel (*Gnostic Studies*, vol. 2 [Istanbul, 1975], 211 and 216), quotations of the Gospels in Justin have more in common with the quotations of the Gospels in the pseudo-Clementines.
 20. OG 190-96; *Die Gnosis*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1974), 27-33.

Chapter II

1. Cf. R. McL. Wilson, "How Gnostic Were the Corinthians?" *NTS* 19 (1972): 65-74; "Gnosis at Corinth," in *Paul and Paulinism: Essays in Honour of C. K. Barrett*, ed. M. D. Hooker and S. G. Wilson (London, 1982), 102-14.
2. Cf. J. C. Hurd, Jr., *The Origin of I Corinthians* (New York, 1965), 104-5.
3. Cf. Hurd, 97-98, and the commentators he cites, esp. R. M. Grant, "The conflict really seems to be between Paul and Apollos, or rather between adherents of both."
4. In any case, as Barrett says, exegesis of the text furnishes no clear proof ("we lack clear exegetical evidence"). Rather it is Paul's response to his adversaries that

- makes room for the construction of a kind of myth of Wisdom (cf. C. K. Barrett, *BJRL* 46 [1963–64]: 283).
5. Cf. *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, vol. 1, part 1 (1926), col. 774–76 (article Apollos, by E. Le Camus); C. K. Barrett, *BJRL* 46 (1963–64): 273, n. 1.
 6. C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London, 1968), 86–91.
 7. Cf. S. G. F. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem* (London, 1951), 18.
 8. Cf. Hurd, *The Origin of I Corinthians*, 206–7.
 9. Cf. D. Georgi, *Die Gegner des Paulus im 2. Korintherbrief* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1964), 45.
 10. Paul does not repeat *hymas* (“you” in the accusative) before “devour” (or “nibble”: *katesthieî*) nor before “take” (*lambanei*). It can be supposed that *hymas* is understood, or that Paul understands something like “what is yours,” “what does not belong to him” (if someone devours your goods, if someone takes what does not belong to him).
 11. See, however, G. Friedrich, “Die Gegner des Paulus im 2. Korintherbrief,” in *Abraham unser Vater . . . : Festschrift für Otto Michel* (Leiden, 1963), 181–82, 197–98. Friedrich thinks that in 2 Cor. 11:22, “Hebrews” does not mean anything other than Jews in general.

Chapter III

1. Cf. E. R. Goodenough, *By Light Light* (New Haven, 1935), 79: “The Sadducees denied the resurrection of the body, an idea which also does not appear in Philo.”

Chapter IV

1. Cf. E. Käsemann, *ZThK* 49 (1952): 144–54.
2. See above, Part 2, pp. 269–70.
3. See above, Part 1, pp. 165–66.
4. I think I can admit, with most scholars, that the Fourth Gospel was composed in Asia Minor. It is true that we have no certainty on this subject, but several reasons permit us to hold this hypothesis as the most likely. J. A. T. Robinson (*Redating the New Testament* [Philadelphia, 1976], 291) enumerates the following reasons: (1) the antiquity of the tradition that places the origin of the Fourth Gospel in “Asia”; (2) the relations of the Johannine writings with the Apocalypse, which itself must certainly belong to Asia Minor, as least as far as the letters to the seven churches are concerned; (3) the similarities between the Johannine writings and certain gnosticizing teachings witnessed in Asia Minor by the epistles to Timothy and the Apocalypse; (4) the fact that the earliest, in any way certain citation of a Johannine writing is found in the epistle of Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna.

Chapter V

1. *JBL* 81 (1962): 35–43.
2. If one believes Mark and Luke on this subject, the sons of Zebedee seem to have been of a quite violent disposition, subject to anger and quick to intolerance. In Luke 9:54 they want Christ to allow them to make fire fall from the sky upon a Samaritan village that had not received them. It was apparently because of impulses of this type that Christ nicknamed them “sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17). In Mark 9:38–40 and Luke 9:49–50, John wishes to stop a man expelling demons in the name of Christ because that man did not belong to the group of the disciples. Moreover, eschatological hopes and apocalyptic prophecies seem to have been very important to the sons of Zebedee (Mark 10:27; 13:3–4), which would agree very well with the spirit of the Apocalypse, but very little with that of the Fourth Gospel. Among the historians who do not accept the attribution of this Gospel to the Apostle John might be mentioned (among many others): R. M. Grant, “The Origin of the Fourth Gospel,” *JBL* 69 (1950): 305–22; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to Saint John* (London, 1955), 83–114; C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1963), 10–17; H.

- Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament* (London, 1969), 321; B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (London, 1972), 28–34.
3. In particular in “Über den Ursprung des vierten Evangeliums,” *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie* 3 (Jena, 1860), 169–203.
 4. “Wer hat das vierte Evangelium verfasst?” *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* (Gotha, 1911), 446–61.
 5. *The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate*, 282–83.
 6. *The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate*, 532.
 7. *The Gospel of John* (Oxford, 1971), 18, 108.
 8. *L'Épître aux Hébreux* (Paris, 1952–53).
 9. J. A. T. Robinson (*Redating the New Testament* [Philadelphia, 1976], 200–20) is not the only one who places this epistle before 70: he cites (201) numerous exegetes who in recent years uphold the same opinion.
 10. Luke's Gospel and Acts seem to have been written during the years 80–90, the Gospel perhaps around 85 and Acts around 90.
 11. *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, vol. 1, 202.
 12. When he refers to the Old Testament, it is more often in an implicit way than in literal quotations.
 13. Above, Part 2, p. 272.
 14. I think that the same author wrote the Gospel and the Johannine epistles. The differences that have been pointed out are of too minor an importance in comparison to the resemblances to force one to assume two authors (or more than two). Cf. B. H. Streeter, *The Fourth Gospels*, 10th ed. (London, 1961), 458–60. In any case, it is beyond doubt that the epistles came from the same circle as the Gospel and are inspired by the same spirit. Cf. O. Cullmann, *The Johannine Circle* (London, 1976), 21, 54, 70. Sander's attempt and argument, inspired by Dodd, to convince us that the Gospel and the epistles are not by the same author (*The Fourth Gospel in the Early Church*, 5–11) rests on very questionable arguments. According to him the author of the Gospel must have completely transformed early Christian eschatology. This is inexact. He did not transform it completely, for if he teaches a present eschatology, he also teaches a future eschatology. And the author of the epistles not only teaches a future eschatology, he also teaches a present eschatology (“you have eternal life,” 1 John 5:13). The death of Jesus is said to be presented as an expiatory sacrifice in the epistles and as a glorification in the Gospel. This is inexact, for in the Gospel it is considered a glorification but also a sacrifice. Christ is said to be the Paraclete in the epistle, but not in the Gospel. This is inexact, for he is also this in the Gospel (“he will send you *another Paraclete*” 14:16). The idea that believers are “born of God” has a moral sense in the Gospel, but it also seems to have a metaphysical sense, as in the epistles. The differences of style are minimal and cannot carry conviction. I think that only Dodd's authority could lead a certain number of commentators to share his opinion. But many have not shared it. See, for example, the authors cited by J. A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, 288, n. 161. See especially Streeter's just remarks (*The Fourth Gospel*, 458–60) on the resemblance between the character of the man who wrote the epistles and the character of the man who wrote the Gospel.
 15. More than one exegete has understood Luke's account as intending to depreciate Apollos's teaching a little. See, e.g., S. G. F. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem* (London, 1951), 26; E. Käsemann, *ZThK* 49 (1952):144–54.
 16. See especially C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1955), 74–96.
 17. For a brief summary of these theories and a judgment in this respect, see, e.g., Dodd, *The Interpretation*, 74–75; Barrett, *The Gospel According to Saint John*, 8–11.
 18. R. M. Grant, *JBL* 69 (1950):304–22, particularly 317–22.
 19. J. L. Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (New York, 1968). Martyn shows that this Gospel is a sort of continuous discussion between the Johannine author and the synagogue. This corresponds perfectly with what Luke says of Apollos's activity.

20. W. C. Van Unnik, "The Purpose of Saint John's Gospel," in *Studia Evangelica* (Berlin, 1959), 382–411, and J. A. T. Robinson, *NTS* 6 (1959–60): 117–31, thinks that the Fourth Gospel is essentially addressed to the Jews of the Diaspora. Van Unnik says (410): "The purpose of the Fourth Gospel was to bring the visitors of a synagogue in the Diaspora . . . to the belief in Jesus as the Messiah of Israel."
21. Cf. among others B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, 376; M. Simon, *Les Premiers chrétiens*, 122; O. Cullmann, *The Johannine Circle*, 49.
22. Cf. W. A. Meeks, *JBL* 91 (1972): 72.
23. See above, Part 1, pp. 148–51.
24. Cf. eg., H. M. Teeple, *NovTest.* 4 (1960): 6–25; F. C. Grant, *Ancient Judaism and the New Testament* (Edinburgh, 1960), 20.
25. Cf. H. Braun, *ThR* 28 (1962): 194, and by the same author *Qumran und das Neue Testament*, vol. 1 (Tübingen, 1966), 98. J. H. Charlesworth's position, *NTS* 15 (1968–69): 389–418, is more nuanced, but he recognizes himself that John's "dualism" does not come from that of Qumran, though John could have borrowed certain terminology from it. On O. Böcher, *Der johanneische Dualismus*, and on John's dualism in general in relation to that of Qumran, see above, Part 1, pp. 175–77.
26. J. A. T. Robinson (*NTS* 6 [1959–60]: 130) says that he sees less and less a polemic against the Baptist or against Gnostic groups in the Fourth Gospel. I share this feeling. Now, if the Johannine author is not polemicalizing against the Baptist or those who appealed to him, it must be for another reason that he states that John the Baptist was not the Messiah. Could this not be because he is defending himself against the charge of being a disciple of the Baptist rather than of Christ?
27. See above, n. 7.
28. Above, Part 2, pp. 268–70.
29. *The Johannine Circle*, e.g., 81.
30. *The Johannine Circle*, e.g. 34, 71.
31. *The Johannine Circle*, 39–56.
32. I mean composed by himself insofar as the form is concerned; for as far as the substance is concerned, he certainly relies on the traditions he has collected.
33. E. Käsemann, *ZThK* 48 (1951): 301, 303.
34. J. A. T. Robinson, *Jesus and His Coming* (London, 1957), 104–111. Cf. C. H. Dodd, "Matthew and Paul," in *New Testament Studies* (Manchester, 1953), 53–56.
35. *Jesus and His Coming*, 111–15.
36. Cf. e.g., F. L. Cribbs, *JBL* 89 (1970): 38–55.
37. At least in most of this Gospel, and more than in the Synoptics. R. Bultmann, in *ZNTW* 41 (1925): 101, states that the Fourth Gospel relates the life of Jesus as that of a *theios anthrōpos*.
38. I say "perhaps" because the text is not absolutely certain.
39. Cf. J. Dupont, *Gnosis, la connaissance religieuse dans les épîtres de Saint Paul* (Louvain, 1949), 1–50, 250–52, 369–76.
40. J. A. Bailey, *The Traditions Common to the Gospels of Luke and John* (Leiden, 1963), thinks that the fourth evangelist knew the Gospel of Luke. But it seems to me that this opinion is not generally shared. O. Cullmann, in *The Johannine Circle* (p. 6), says that it is more and more admitted that the Gospel of John "is independent of the written synoptic Gospels." Cf. also R. Kysar, "The Source Analysis of the Fourth Gospel: A Growing Consensus," *NovTest* 15 (1973): 134–52.
41. *JBL* 91 (1972): 44–72.
42. B. W. Bacon and J. N. Sanders, in the works cited above, p. 276.
43. Cf. E. Käsemann, *ZThK* 48 (1951): 292–311; and *The Testament of Jesus* (Eng. tr., London, 1966), 39, where Käsemann said that the Johannine group had been a group "driven into a corner."
44. Barrett, among others, lists the principal parallels between the Apocalypse and John's Gospel (*The Gospel According to Saint John*, 52).

45. Cf. Sanders, *The Fourth Gospel in the Early Church* 5, who refers to Charles's analysis: this analysis "appears to furnish decisive evidence against their being works of the same author or even of the same 'school.'"
46. In *Mélanges d'histoire des religions offerts à Henri-Charles Puech* (Paris, 1974), 353, n. 1.
47. W. Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (Eng. tr., London, 1972), 101. It was perhaps against men of the Johannine circle that Paul, according to Luke, warned the leaders of Ephesus as a future danger (Acts 20: 29–30).
48. The solemnity of this affirmation prevents us from thinking that Dodd was right when he suggested (*Historical Tradition*, 12) that by "these things" the author of this verse wanted perhaps to designate only the preceding verses. It certainly seems that he had in view the Gospel as a whole.
49. D. Merejkowsky, *Jésus inconnu* (Geneva, 1946), 75. Cf. Sanders, *The Fourth Gospel in the Early Church*, 45; Cullmann, *The Johannine Circle*, 84.
50. *The Johannine Circle*.
51. *The Johannine Circle*.
52. If one absolutely had to propose a name for the beloved disciple, I would suggest, as has been done already, the raised Lazarus. There are several reasons for this: (1) The beloved disciple appears only after the resurrection of Lazarus (he is raised in chap. 11, the disciple appears from chap. 13 on). (2) It is said and repeated that Christ loved Lazarus; and that is said of no other disciple. (3) It is specified that the risen Lazarus was among the guests at a meal offered by Christ (chap. 12), as if to prepare for the first appearance of the beloved disciple in the course of a meal, in chap. 13. (4) Granted that, for the Johannine author, the convert is in a way risen (chap. 3), a man raised by Christ could appear to this author as the type of the perfect Christian. (5) It would be very natural to think that someone raised from the dead would die no more; even if there was not added to that a word of Christ that had been badly understood.
53. See above, n. 2.

Chapter VI

1. We shall see that for the *Alogi* and for the Roman priest Caius the Fourth Gospel was the work of a heretic. Further, it is apparently the suspicion of heresy that explains the silence of the Great Church over this Gospel for more than half a century.
2. Cf. S. de Ausejo, "El concepto de 'carne' aplicado a Cristo en el iv. Evangelio" (*Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium* XIII: *Sacra Pagina* 2 [1959]: 219–34). Similarly J. C. O'Neill, *The Puzzle of I John* (London, 1966), considers that the adversaries in the first Johannine epistle are Jews rather than Gnostics. If that is so, the aim of the First Epistle is the same as the aim of the Gospel. R. M. Grant has shown in a convincing way (*JBL* 69 [1950]: 304–22) that the Gospel was not directed against Cerinthus, despite Irenaeus's affirmation (*Adv. haer.* III, 11, 1), but against the unbelief of orthodox Jews.
3. Pseudo-Tertullian says (chap. 10) that for Cerinthus the God of the Jews was only an angel. But Pseudo-Tertullian, or his source, could be amplifying what Irenaeus said, conjecturing that the doctrine of Cerinthus was analogous to that of Gnostics later than Saturnilus and Basilides.
4. See above, Part 1, pp. 41–42.
5. Above, Part 1, pp. 64–65 and 76–77; Part 2, p. 220.
6. Above, Part 1, pp. 148–51.
7. E. Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus* (London, 1966), 32, 54.
8. *Der Glaubende und die feindliche Welt* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1970), 275–80.
9. *Der Glaubende*, 271–81.
10. *The Testament of Jesus*, 27–28.
11. *The Testament of Jesus*, 111. For that see G. Bornkamm, *Geschichte und Glaube*, vol. 1 (Munich, 1968), 104–21.
12. See above, Part 1, pp. 174–75.
13. Cf. H. Hegermann, in *Der Ruf Jesu* (*Mélanges J. Jeremias*) (Göttingen, 1970), 112–31. See also, on Schottroff's interpretation, the arguments against him of,

- among others, E. Ruchstuhl, in *Neues Testament und Geschichte* (Mélanges O. Cullmann) (Tübingen, 1972), 143–56, and R. Bergmeier, *NovTest* 16 (1974): 58–80.
14. Unless it is Irenaeus, or his source, who has excessively simplified the doctrine of Cerinthus.
 15. At least in the notice of Irenaeus and in Hippolytus, *Ref.* vii, 33, 1. But in the final résumé of the *Refutatio* (x, 21, 1), Hippolytus adds the word “angelic” to the word “power.” It is perhaps only an interpretation by Hippolytus, and it is not certain that he had any source other than Irenaeus’s notice, which he follows more faithfully in the body of his work.
 16. Unless one can make some link between Cerinthus and the mysterious Gortheios, named by Hegesippus among the heresiarchs he enumerates. This Gortheios would have been the leader of the Gorathenians, heretics as mysterious as their leader. Epiphanius, who mentions them (*Pan.* 12), tells us hardly anything about their ideas.
 17. C. Schmidt, in Schmidt-Wajnberg, *Gespräche Jesu mit seinen Jüngern nach der Auferstehung* (Leipzig, 1919), 404, placed its date between 160 and 170. K. Beyschlag (*Simon Magus und die christliche Gnosis* [Tübingen, 1974], 73–74, n. 157) does not think that it can go back earlier than 150. In contrast, H. Duensing (Hennecke-Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 1 [London, 1963], 191) and M. Hornschuh (*Studien zur Epistula Apostolorum* [Berlin, 1965], 116–19) think that this writing is from the first half of the second century.
 18. Cf. C. Schmidt, *Gespräche Jesu*, 404.
 19. Above, Part 1, pp. 148–51.
 20. *Gespräche Jesu*, 417–19. Cf. also Beyschlag, *Simon Magus*, 26, n. 33; and 27–28.
 21. Cf. C. Schmidt, *Gespräche Jesu*, 417.
 22. Cf. G. Bardy, “Cérinthe,” *RB* 30 (1921): 344–73, 366.
 23. *Dionysius Bar-Salibi, In Apocalypsim . . . Interpretatus est L. Sedlacek* (C.S.C.O., *Scriptores Syri, versio, series II, vol. CI*, Rome, Paris, Leipzig, 1910), 1.
 24. That is to say: it teaches that the elect will receive material food and drink.
 25. Epiphanius recounts that Cerinthus fought against Paul because he had not circumcised Titus (*Pan.* 28, 4); he says that it was he whom Paul treated, along with his disciples, as false apostles and perfidious workers (*ibid.*). (This statement, Denys Bar-Salibi, or at least the Latin translation of his text, attributes by error to Cerinthus speaking against Paul.) Epiphanius says also that for Cerinthus the world was created by angels (*Pan.* 28, 1). As for the idea that there would be in the Kingdom, according to Cerinthus, material food and drink, it could have been taken from Eusebius, who quotes Denys of Alexandria to that effect.
 26. Pseudo-Tertullian, *Adv. omnes haer.* III, 1–3.
 27. *Gnostiques et gnosticisme*, 2d ed. (Paris, 1925), 434–35.
 28. Cf. H. Pognon, *Inscriptions mandaites des coupes de Khouabir*, Part 2 (Paris, 1899), 215.
 29. The author of the *Epistle of the Apostles*, according to Hornschuh (*Studien zur Epistula Apostolorum*, 20), belonged to a principally Jewish-Christian community, deriving from the primitive Palestinian community.
 30. *Histoire des origines du Christianisme*, vol. 6 (Paris, 1879), 53–54.

Chapter VII

1. John hardly speaks of the angels. When he speaks of them (1:51; 5:4; 12:29; 20:12), it is not a matter of powers governing the world over whom it is necessary to triumph. In two of the texts it is a matter of heavenly messengers by whom popular belief explained a particular event. In 1:51, which is based on a biblical passage (Gen. 28:10–17), the angels relate the Father to the Son of man, and are therefore far from representing a world alien to Christ and the Christians. Further, as W. A. Meeks has seen (*JBL* 91 [1972]:51), the attention of the Evangelist in this passage is fixed not on the angels but on the idea of ascent and descent. In 20:12 too they are messengers of the true God, who watch over the tomb of Christ.

2. See above, Part 1, pp. 162–64.
3. Cf. above, Part 2, p. 219.
4. Hilgenfeld has remarked (*Ketzergeschichte*, [1884] 33, 35, 45) that the lists of heresies given by Hegesippus do not link Menander and Simon as closely as Justin seems to do. Further, the fact that Menander is said to have been the master of Saturnilus and Basilides supposes that he had taught at least up to the end of the first century or the beginning of the second. I confess that I do not understand the chronology proposed by Foerster when he says (*Gnosis*, vol. 1 [Eng. tr., Oxford, 1972–74], 34) that Simon and Menander lived until about 60 or 70. That would fit for Simon, but not for Menander. R. M. Grant says (*Gnosticism and Early Christianity*, [New York and London, 1959], 93) that it was probably under Trajan (98–117) that Menander taught in Antioch.
5. We have seen that there are relations between the doctrine attributed to Simon and Paulinism, and that the Simonian School probably adopted very soon certain of Paul's ideas. Cf. above Part 1, pp. 78–79; and Part 2, pp. 234–36.
6. Cf. R. M. Grant, *JBL* 69 (1950): 321.
7. See below, p. 343.
8. *The Johannine Circle* (London, 1976), 61.
9. "The Johannine Church had drawn members . . . from Samaritan circles" (*The Prophet King* [Leiden, 1967], 318).
10. "The Origins and Development of Samaritan Christianity," *NTS* 19 (1973): 390–414.
11. "The 'Others' of John 4:38," in *Studia Evangelica*, TU 73 (Berlin, 1957), 510–15.
12. *The Johannine Circle*, 73–77.
13. J. Bowman, "Samaritan Studies I: The IVth Gospel and the Samaritans," *BJRL* 40 (1958): 314.
14. *The Fourth Gospel* (Uppsala, 1929; reprint Amsterdam, 1971), 185.
15. "Samaritan Studies I," 302, 308, 313.
16. Cf. above, Part 2.
17. Cf. J. A. T. Robinson, "The 'Others' of John 4:38," 514; A. Parrot, *Samarie* (Neuchâtel Paris, 1955), 6, 94–98.
18. Cf. above, n. 1.
19. Meeks, *The Prophet King* (Leiden, 1967).
20. See below, p. 481.
21. See in A. von Harnack, *Marcion*, 2d ed. (Leipzig, 1924), Appendix 2, the texts drawn from Pseudo-Tertullian, Epiphanius, and Filaster.
22. See below, Appendix to chapter 7.
23. *Eph.* vii, 2; xx, 2; *Magn.* i, 2; vii, 2; *Smyrn.* iii, 2–3; *Pol.* iii, 2.
24. *Eph.* greeting; xviii, 2; *Magn.* xi; *Trall.* ix, 1–2; x; *Smyrn.* i, 1–2; ii; iii; iv, 2; v, 2.
25. See above, Part 2, third section of chapter 1.
26. Above, Part 1, pp. 64–65.
27. *Phld.* viii, 1; ix, 1–2; *Magn.* viii, 2.
28. *Smyrn.* vii, 2; *Phld.* v, 2; *Magn.* viii, 2; ix, 2.
29. *De Resurrectione carnis*, 5.
30. See above, Part 1, pp. 60–61.

Chapter VIII

1. The Greek text of Theodoret (*Haer. Fab. Comp.* i, 3), which is not exactly the same as that of Hippolytus, could be itself also that of Irenaeus. But despite differences, the meaning is the same insofar as it concerns the very strong opposition that is made between the "God of the Jews" and the true God. See above, Part 1, p. 69.
2. Part 1, Section I, chapter 2.
3. I think that the thesis of G. Van Groningen (*First Century Gnosticism* [Leiden, 1967]), who wants to explain Gnosticism by scientific or scientist preoccupations ("Gnosticism motivated by scientism"), is not right. In particular, Van Groningen ignores the fact that, for the first Gnostics as for the earliest Christianity, gnosis and faith were much the same thing.

4. Above, Part 1, pp. 105 and 184, and Part 2, p. 219.
5. Cf. R. M. Grant, *RBL* 69 (1950): 321.
6. In *Gnosis and Gnosticism: Papers Read at the Seventh International Conference on Patristic Studies*, Oxford, 1975, ed. M. Krause, *NHS* 8 (Leiden, 1977), 171.
7. See above, Part 1, pp. 184–85 and 200–201.
8. Above, Part 1, pp. 185–86.
9. See the last chapter of the first part.
10. Granted that Christ is the Wisdom of God for Paul, and that he is creator.
11. See above, Part 1, pp. 60–61 and 184.

Chapter IX

1. E.g., W. Foerster, "Das System des Basilides," *NTS* 9 (1963): 233–55.
2. See above, Part 1, pp. 152–53.
3. Cf. Agrippa Castor, cited by Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* iv, 7, 7.
4. See above, Part 1, 186.
5. "Das System des Basilides," 248.
6. Cf. H. Langerbeck, *Aufsätze zur Gnosis* (Göttingen, 1967), 146–66.
7. Cf. Langerbeck, *Aufsätze zur Gnosis*, 158–61.
8. In *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Gnosticism, Stockholm, 1973*, ed. G. Widengren (Stockholm and Leiden, 1977), 34–73.
9. On the angels of the nations, see above, Part 1, pp. 57–59.
10. See above, Part 1, pp. 129–33.
11. Cf. above, Part 2, chapter 8, section 3.
12. See above, Part 1, Section 2, chapter 3, section 2.
13. See above, *ibid.*
14. Part 1, Section 2, chapter 3, sections 1 and 2.
15. In the case of Basilides, Clement of Alexandria can be a control for Irenaeus. We have no such control for Saturnilus. But the example of Basilides permits us to suppose that Saturnilus can only have been docetic in a sense.
16. Above, Part 2, pp. 331–32.
17. See above, Part 1, p. 187.
18. Cf. Langerbeck, *Aufsätze zur Gnosis*, 48–49, 53–54.
19. Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* iv, 83, 2, and Origen, *In Epistulam ad Romanos* v, 1.
20. Cf. Agrippa Castor, in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* iv, 7, 7; and also Irenaeus, i, 24, 6.
21. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* ii, 114, 2.
22. Irenaeus, i, 24, 7.
23. The *Acts of Archelaus* (LXIII) mention a certain prophet Parcus whom they associate with Labdacus, "son of Mithra," and who disputed with Buddha-Terebinth, the author of books, from which Mani drew his doctrine. This Parcus (Parcos) could be the same as the prophet Parchor, about whom Isidore wrote in his *Exegetica*, according to Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* vi, 53, 2–5.
24. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* iv, 7, 7.
25. Cf. Joseph Barsabbas, surnamed Jude, in Acts 1:23, and 15:22.
26. Irenaeus (i, 24, 5) says that the Basilideans used as a name a certain expression (made of Hebrew words), "Caulacau." But first of all, it is not seen exactly to whom or what the Basilideans gave this name, for the text is corrupt at this point (end of paragraph 5). However, the continuation permits the understanding that they designated the Savior thus insofar as he descended into the world through the heavens, invisible to the angels and known to them (24, 6). This is confirmed by Theodoret, who says that Caulacau designated Christ. The name is drawn from an expression used by Isaiah in a passage that is far from clear (28:10), and that for this reason had given rise to many speculations, perhaps already within Judaism.
27. *Strom.* iii, 3, 3.
28. Cf. G. Quispel, "L'Homme gnostique (la doctrine de Basilide)," *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 16 (1948): 89–139, 112–14: "The shape of the thought is that of Platonic philosophy. However, the movement of the thought is not at all platonic. . . . Ac-

ording to him [Basilides], it is not man who rises to rejoin God, but it is God who descends to be revealed to man. It is from above downward that revelation spreads. . . . By Christ . . . man receives gnosis from an unknown and transcendent God."

29. Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* VII, 106, 4.
30. Cf. the fragment cited by Clement, *Strom* III, 2, 1, and that cited by Origen, *In Epist. ad Rom.* v, 1.
31. Basilides seems to have taught a little later than Saturnilus, which suggests that he could have been a little younger. Cf. M. Tardieu, "Saturnilus and Basilides constitute the first historical generation of Gnostics, the first in the first quarter of the second century, the latter in the second quarter" (*REA* 21 [1975]: 227, n. 12).
32. Cf. Clement, *Strom.* III, 3, 3.

Chapter X

1. The Latin translator of Irenaeus reads "the unbegotten Father" (Irenaeus, I, 25, 1); Epiphanius (*Pan.* XXVII, 2) and Theodoret (*Haer. fab.* I, 5) read "the unknown Father."
2. Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* I, 25, 4.
3. Irenaeus, in I, 25, 1, sometimes says that Jesus received "a power" and sometimes "powers."
4. Alain thought that the speculations on the city in the *Republic* were only a kind of Platonic myth, the city being only an image representing the individual soul.
5. Above, Part 1, pp. 188–89.
6. At least if Platonism knew any kind of grace, something that is open to discussion.
7. Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* III, 5, 2) says that Epiphanius, the son of Carpocrates, was after his death honored as a god in the island where his mother originated. But besides there being perhaps some exaggeration—was he really honored "as a god"?—Clement does not indicate whether this cult was approved by Carpocrates.
8. Above, Part 1, p. 188.
9. A. von Harnack, *Zur Quellenkritik der Geschichte des Gnosticismus* (1873), 13, 87.

Chapter XI

1. Cf. K. Rudolph, *Gnosis* (Eng. tr., Edinburgh, 1983), 62. See also above, Part 2, chapter 9, n. 31, what M. Tardieu says about the approximate periods of Saturnilus and Basilides: they taught, he says, the one in the first quarter, the other in the second quarter of the second century. Now, Irenaeus (III, 4, 3) places the height of Valentinus's activity under Pope Pius I (140–54) and says that he was still in Rome under Pope Anicetus (154–66), probably therefore some years still after 154. And according to Epiphanius (*Pan.* 31, 7), he still went on teaching after his departure from Rome.
2. See the note of the editors of the first volume of *Adversus haereses*: Irénée de Lyon, *Contre les hérésies*, Book 1, ed. A. Rousseau and L. Doutreleau, 2 vols., *Sources Chrétiennes*, 263–64 (Paris, 1979), vol. 1, 296–300.
3. *Die gnostischen Schriften des koptischen Papyrus Berolinensis 8502*, ed. W. C. Till, TU 60 (Berlin, 1955).
4. *Die drei Versionen des Apokryphon des Johannes im Koptischen Museum zu Alt Kairo*, ed. M. Krause and P. Labib (Wiesbaden, 1962).
5. In *Zur Quellenkritik des Epiphanius* (Vienna, 1865).
6. F. Wisse, *VChr* 25 (1971): 215.
7. Cf. P. Perkins, *VChr* 30 (1976): 193–99, esp. 197–99.
8. J. Frickel, "Naassener oder Valentinianer?" in *Gnosis and Gnosticism*, ed. M. Krause, *NHS* 17 (Leiden, 1981), 95–119.
9. Frickel thinks rather that the Valentinians and the Naassenes derive from a common source, which would be a more ancient Christian Gnosticism ("Naassener oder Valentinianer?" 119).

10. See above, Part 2, p. 357, the witnesses of Epiphanius and Irenaeus showing that the Valentinians called themselves Gnostics.
11. *Pan.* 38, 2.
12. *Pan.* 27, 1.
13. *De Anima* 18; *Adv. Val.* 39; *Scorp.* 1.
14. *Adv. Val.* 39.
15. Both meanings are possible. On the other hand, it seems to me impossible to translate the phrase as Quispel does in his communication at the Yale Conference (RG 1:120): "The budding doctrines of the Valentinians have outgrown even the jungles of the Gnostics in wilderness."
16. *Die Quellen der ältesten Ketzergeschichte*, 222.
17. In the Greek text of Irenaeus, which we know for this part from Epiphanius, *Pan.* xxxi, 32.
18. The numeration of the fragments is that of W. Völker, *Quellen zur Geschichte des christlichen Gnosis* (Tübingen, 1932), 57–60.
19. It is true that the creators can be themselves creatures, for they can be angels; but they can also be emanations, or, as rightly in this fragment of Basilides, a principle entirely separate from the Good.
20. *Nous* is called "the Father" in Irenaeus, I, 11, 1.
21. See above, Part 2, p. 312.
22. See above, n. 1.
23. However, it is perhaps because he was moved without his knowing it by Sophia, or even by the Savior, that the Demiurge could make copies of beings on high. Cf. Irenaeus, I, 5, 1.
24. An idea certainly suggested by the "Johannine" *logion* of Matt. 11:27 and Luke 10:22.
25. A. von Harnack, *Ein jüdisch-christliches Psalmbuch aus dem 1. Jahrhundert*, TU 35, 4 (Berlin, 1910).
26. J. Wellhausen, in *Göttingsche gelehrte Anzeigen* (1910), 629–42.
27. T. Zahn, in *Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift* (1910), 667–701, 747–77.
28. H. Gunkel, *ZNTW* 11 (1910): 291–328.
29. R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (Eng. tr., Oxford, 1971), 28–31.
30. Cf. S. Schulz, *RGG*, vol. 5, 3d ed. (1961), col. 1339.
31. J. H. Charlesworth, *CBQ* 31 (1969): 357–69.
32. *RGG*, vol. 5, col. 1339.
33. H. Gunkel, *ZNTW* 11 (1910): 291–328.
34. R. Bultmann, *ZNTW* 24 (1925): 100–46.
35. F.-M. Braun, *RTh* 57 (1957): 597–625; article reprinted in *Jean le Théologien*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1959), 224–51.
36. S. Schulz, *RGG*, vol. 5.
37. K. Rudolph, *RQ* 16 (1964): 523–55.
38. At the end of Gunkel's article, p. 328, n. 3.
39. *ZNTW* 13 (1912): 29–58.
40. H.-M. Schenke, *Die Herkunft des sogenannten Evangelium Veritatis* (Göttingen, 1959), 29, n. 21.
41. *VChr* 11 (1957): 149–51.
42. *RTh* 57 (1957): 597–625.
43. *Papyrus Bodmer, X–XII . . . , XI: Onzième Ode de Salomon . . . Publié par Michel Testuz* (Bibliotheca Bodmeriana; Cologne-Geneva, 1959).
44. Cf. above, Part 1, pp. 136–39.
45. *Epistula Jacobi apocrypha* (Zurich, 1968), p. xxv. Cf. G. Quispel, *Gnostic Studies*, vol. 2 (Istanbul, 1975), 221; W. R. Schoedel, *NHL* 242.
46. *Koptisch-gnostische Apokalypsen . . . herausgeben . . . von Alexander Böhlig und Pahor Labib* (Halle-Wittenberg, 1963), 27.
47. *Koptisch-gnostische Apokalypsen*, 65; cf. 28.
48. *Koptisch-gnostische Apokalypsen*, 28.
49. Heracleon, frag. 40. Cf. *Gospel of Truth* 42, 5.
50. Cf. Böhlig's note to 44, 17 (*Koptisch-gnostische Apokalypsen*, 66).
51. H.-Ch. Puech, *En quête de la Gnose*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1978).
52. Origen, *Contra Celsum* v, 61.

53. See above, Part 2, pp. 365 and 371.
54. Nevertheless, Plato has it said to Socrates: "But it is impossible that evil disappear, for there has always to be a contrary to the good" (*Theaetetus* 176a).
55. See above, Part 1, p. 198.
56. Cf. Philo, *Leg. all.* II, 1; *De posteritate Caini* 15–16; 167–69; *De mutatione*, 7–10; *De somn.* I, 184.
57. Cf. G. Quispel, *Gnosis als Weltreligion* (Zurich, 1951), 86; Puech-Quispel, *Les Ecrits gnostiques du Codex Jung* (extract from *VChr*, 1954), 20.
58. See above, Part 1, pp. 75–77.
59. See above, Part 1, pp. 111–13 and 116–17.
60. *Apocryptein apo* can mean "to hide from." Cf., in the LXX, 4 Kingdoms (= 2 Kings) 4:27.
61. My italics added throughout this quotation.
62. RG 1:385.
63. RG 1:386.
64. RG 1:387.
65. RG 1:389.
66. W. C. Van Unnik, "The Gospel of Truth and the New Testament," in *The Jung Codex*, ed. F. L. Cross (London, 1955), 90–104.
67. Above, Part 2, pp. 378–80.
68. Above, Part 2, pp. 249–51.
69. *Apesképse*, pours down like rain in a storm, or rushes along like a hurricane.
70. See above, Part 1, pp. 91–92.
71. It is the same problem as we discussed above, pp. 90–91.
72. Cf. the note of the editors of the *Tripartite Treatise* on the versions A and B of the myth (*Tractatus tripartitus*, vol. 1, 339).
73. Following the translation of H.-G. Bethge and O. S. Wintermute, *NHL* 162.
74. See below, pp. 411–12.

Chapter XII

1. *Apocryphon* means "secret book." This work is sometimes called by the name of the *Secret Book of John*.
2. It would remain, it is true, to explain where the author of the *Apocryphon* himself found the myth, or how he formed it.
3. Above, Part 2, chapter 11, section 1.
4. Cf. H.-M. Schenke, *Das sethianische System . . .*, in *Studia Coptica*, ed. P. Nagel (Berlin, 1974), 165–73.
5. *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis* (Göttingen, 1907), 338–39.
6. *Apocryphon Johannis* (Copenhagen, 1963), 183–85.
7. "Le 'Livre sacré du grand Esprit invisible,' ou 'L'Evangile des Egyptiens,' II (commentaire)," in *Journal Asiatique* 256 (1968): 340–43.
8. *Das sethianische System*.
9. RG 2: 540–62.
10. On the qualification of *Autogenes* given to Christ, see below, pp. 412–18.
11. Doresse has recognized this relation ("Le 'Livre sacré,'" 341).
12. *NHL* 377.
13. My emphasis.
14. This relation is also pointed out by Doresse ("Le 'Livre sacré,'" 341). But Doresse does not mention the meaning of the word *hormos* and thus draws no conclusion as to the meaning of Armazel.
15. "Le 'Livre sacré,'" 343.
16. Hippolytus, *Ref.* v, 9, 22.
17. "Le 'Livre sacré,'" 342.
18. A. M. Kropp, *Ausgewählte koptische Zaubertexte*, 3 vols. (Brussels, 1930–31).
19. Isa. 22:22: "And I will place on his shoulder [Eliakim's] the key of the house of David; he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open." Rev. 3:7: "The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens." In the text cited by Kropp, it is "the keys of divinity" and not "the key of David." But

it is still clearer that it is a matter of Christ, for neither the simply human David nor Eliakim could ever have had the keys of divinity.

20. Cf. the note of the editors of the *Tractatus tripartitus*, vol. 1, 359.
21. See below, p. 418.
22. Cf. BG 34, 19–36, 15; CG II, 8, 28–9, 24; III, 12, 24–14, 9. This passage is missing in CG IV. In what concerns the souls placed in the fourth aeon, there is a contradiction on one point between the long version (CG II, 9, 18–22), where it is said that these souls *did not know* the pleroma and were not straightway converted, and the short version (BG 36, 9–12 and CG III, 14, 4–6), which says that they *recognized* their perfection (or their pleroma) but were not straightway converted. What is certain, in any case, is that they were slower to be converted.
23. In the short version of the *Apocryphon* this part is so abridged that it is almost incomprehensible and cannot be understood except by reference to the long version.
24. If, at the limit, there is a relation of succession between the first two aeons, it is because the first, who receives Adamas, is that of Man, and the second, that of the *Son of Man*. But this succession is only the myth of a relation concerning the essence, for Man and the Son of Man are both eternal beings. The descent indicates all the more a relation of closeness in respect of the First Source, as the relation between Nous and Logos, a sort of hierarchy. Similarly, there is a difference of proximity in respect to God between the souls who are in the third and the fourth aeons.
25. On the weakness of the Samaritan hypothesis as far as the figure of the divine Seth, the Savior, is concerned, cf. R. Kraft, in RG 2:510.
26. We have seen (Part 1, pp. 105–7) that it is the principal explanation of the Gnostic myths in which God the Father is called Man.
27. In the *Apocalypse of Adam* (65, 5–9), Adam gives to his son the name of Seth “because it is the name of this Man who is the seed of the great generation.” Thus the divine Seth is other than the human Seth and preexists him.
28. However, Seth is already for them the symbol of the spirituals. Cf. Irenaeus, I, 7, 5; *Extracts from Theodotus* 54; Tertullian, *Adv. Val.* 29.
29. He gives them names however, in *Enoch* 82:13. But they are names made up for the occasion, not names known otherwise as being those of certain stars.
30. One could note that the names of the two last illuminators have endings that could make of them feminine beings: *Daveithai*, *Davithea*, *Eleleth*.
31. “Commander-in-chief of the Luminaries”: S. Giversen and B. A. Pearson’s translation, NHL 400.
32. NHL 73.
33. Cf. Irenaeus, I, 7, 1; *Extracts from Theodotus* 21, 3; 36, 2; 64.
34. Cf. in the first edition of the *Tripartite Treatise* the editors’ notes to 115, 31 and 115, 32 (*Tractatus tripartitus*, vol. 2, 210). I would add that the Valentinians could have been inspired by Phil. 2:15, where Christians belonging to the first generation of converts, among whom Christianity has spread, are compared to *phōstères*: “a generation, among whom you shine as lights [*phōstères*] in the world.”
35. *Koptisch-gnostische Schriften*, vol. 1, ed. C. Schmidt, W. Till (1962), 27, beginning of chap. 31.
36. That shows also that for the author of the *Apocryphon*, and perhaps already for Valentinus, the Archons have not only *heard* a voice, they have also *seen* a light. If such was the myth of Valentinus, that would make it still more like that of Saturnilus and Basilides.
37. Cf. B. A. Pearson in RG 2:475 and 491: for the Valentinians Seth is “an allegorical symbol” of the spirituals.
38. Part 1, chapter 3, section 5.
39. See above, Part 1, p. 95.
40. Till’s punctuation of this passage needs correction, it seems. Cf. CG III, 10, 22–23.
41. “The Historical Background of Proclus’ Doctrine of the *Authupostata*,” in *Entretiens sur l’Antiquité classique*, vol. 21 (Vandoeuvres, 1975), 193–237.
42. Cf. the texts cited by Whittaker, “Historical Background,” 219–20.

43. "Historical Background," 230, n. 1.
44. "Historical Background," 224, n. 1.
45. It is difficult to agree with Whittaker that the idea of derived principles engendering themselves is already found in Philo. It is only a deduction that Whittaker draws from what Philo says apropos the number seven. Philo says that this number does not engender and is not engendered, and he compares it to the immovable God of the Pythagoreans. "Philo here argues that since generation involves movement the supreme principle cannot generate. Once one has reached this conclusion the self-generation of the second principle becomes a logical requirement" ("Historical Background," 221). There is perhaps here a logical requirement; the comparison Philo uses *leads* to saying that second principles generate themselves. But in fact, so far as I know, Philo does not say it. I would add that Whittaker thinks now that the title of "Autogenes," applied to the second principle, appears with the Gnostics before it appears with the philosophers. Cf. *RG* 1 (1980), 190.
46. H. W. Attridge and D. Mueller (*NHL* 58) translate "self-begotten," that is, engendered by itself. But in the first edition of this treatise (*Tractatus tripartitus* vol. 1, 77) the editors translate "engendering themselves," "he engenders," "he is engendered," "he produces," always active forms, never passive. Cf. also 58, 3-4: "Father of himself," and not "Son of himself."
47. Cf. above, Part 2, 385.
48. Simone Weil rediscovered it in her turn.
49. It is not named here, but is later on (75, 13; 76, 30-34; 82, 12).
50. It is thus that, for Simone Weil, the withdrawal of God, being what permits the existence of the world, is creation itself. But in the *Tripartite Treatise*, this withdrawal at first permits the existence of only the spiritual world. It is true that from that the rest follows, and that in the *Gospel of Truth* there is no clear distinction between the universe of aeons and that of humanity.
51. We have seen that the aeons, in the *Gospel of Truth*, can be human beings at the same time. If it is the same for the *Tripartite Treatise*, something that cannot be investigated here, there could be seen here an affirmation of human freedom.
52. *NHL* 67.
53. Cf. 78, 17-19, in Attridge and Mueller's translation: "His perfect (self) left him and raised (himself) up to those who are kin." And 80, 22-24: "He was powerless, once his Totality and his exaltation abandoned him."
54. See above, Part 1, pp. 43-46.
55. Since the *Apocryphon of John* seems to me to be later than the teaching of the first Valentinians, there is nothing perhaps to stop one thinking that it could be the work of Prodicus, or come from his School. The disciples of Prodicus called themselves "Gnostics," according to Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* III, 30, 1), probably like the heretics of Irenaeus, I, 29-31. According to the same Clement, they boasted of possessing secret books of Zoroaster, which makes one think of *Zostrianos*, a "Sethian" book, which seems to derive from the *Apocryphon of John*. Further, the long version of the *Apocryphon* mentions a "Book of Zoroaster" (CG II, 19, 10 and parallels). This Prodicus could have lived toward 200, according to K. Rudolph (*Gnosis*, 325). According to Quispel, he would have been a near contemporary of Clement of Alexandria (*RG* 1:128). But it seems to me that he could have been a little earlier, for Clement seems to know his disciples rather than himself, and in the first book of his *Stromateis* he already knows that he had founded a sect (69, 6). He could then have taught between 180 and 190, maybe even between 170 and 190. Tertullian knows him and associates him with Valentinus (*Scorp.* 7; *Adv. Prax.* 3), as he associates the "Gnostics" with the Valentinians and with them alone. Quispel judges it difficult to bring Prodicus and the *Apocryphon of John* into relation one with another, not only because he believes the *Apocryphon* older than Valentinus (something I do not believe), but also because, according to Clement, the disciples of Prodicus were libertines, while the doctrine of the *Apocryphon* tends rather toward asceticism (*RG* 1:128). Here, it is true, there is a difficulty. It must, however, be granted that in morality disciples are sometimes unfaithful to their master (it was the case with the Basi-

lideans, according to Clement). Perhaps also Clement is too severe in what he says of the partisans of Prodicus.

Chapter XIII

1. The name of Esepech seems to have remained unexplained hitherto. Böhlig (in *Mus.* 80 [1967]: 24–25) says that this name is “difficult and problematic” and he does not give the impression that it is Greek. It seems to me, however, that it could come from Greek. Since Esepech is described as being “he who holds glory” (CG III, 59, 24), could it not be thought that his name contains the Greek verb *epecho* (to hold), preceded by the particle *es* (= *eis*)? Esepech does not differ much from Esepech. (Anyway *ephexis*, for example, is a derivative from *epecho*, *phi* being substituted for *p*.) Böhlig remarks (*ibid.*) that this figure is described in a certain way as Christ is in the *Apocryphon of John*. On the other hand, we find in *Zostrianos* (13, 10–11) that Esepech is Son of God and “perfect Man.”
2. *Nag Hammadi Codices III, 2 and IV, 2: The Gospel of the Egyptians* (Leiden, 1975) (NHS 4), 32–33: cf. also Böhlig in *Mus.* 80 (1967): 376.
3. Cf. A. Böhlig in *Christentum und Gnosis*, ed. W. Eltester (Berlin, 1969), 17; J. Doresse in *JÄ* 256 (1968): 326–28.
4. I would add that the name “Child” given to Christ could be drawn from chapter 12 of the Apocalypse.
5. However, as we have seen (Part 2, chapter 12, n. 55), Clement of Alexandria already knows disciples of Prodicus who pretend to possess secret books of Zoroaster (*Strom.* 1, 69, 6).
6. Cf., e.g., 58, 14–16. Several trinities can be found in *Zostrianos*, but that of Father, Mother, and Son seems to be the most important.
7. Cf. R. McL. Wilson, *Gnosis and the New Testament* (Oxford, 1968), 138; L. Koenen, in *RG* 2:752.
8. J. H. Sieber’s translation, in *NHL* 381.
9. In *RG* 2:608.
10. *NHL* 374.
11. See above, Part 2, p. 407, for how this idea can be attached to an account of the fall of Sophia such as is found in the *Tripartite Treatise*.
12. Plotinus, *Ennéades*, ed. and trans. E. Bréhier, (Paris, 1924), 17. Cf. also H.-Ch. Puech in *Les Sources de Plotin*, *Entretiens sur l’Antiquité classique*, vol. 5 (Fondation Hardt, Geneva, 1960), 163 and 175. Bréhier translates *hairetikoi* by “sectaires” (sectarians); but it seems to me that Porphyry could very well have known that, among the Christians, there were those whom their co-religionists regarded as heretics; he could be referring to Christian usage.
13. *NHL* 377. It is true that the translation seems conjectural so far as the word “hope” is concerned.
14. Cf. J. M. Robinson, in *NHL* 362.
15. *NHL* 362.
16. P. Bellet, in *Nag Hammadi and Gnosis*, ed. R. McL. Wilson, *NHS* 14 (Leiden, 1978), 50–51.
17. Above, Part 2, pp. 230–32.
18. In *Koptisch-gnostische Apokalypsen*, ed. A. Böhlig and P. Labib (Halle-Wittenberg, 1963), 86–117.
19. *Koptisch-gnostische Apokalypsen*, 95.
20. In *Christentum und Gnosis*, ed. W. Eltester, 2, n. 5.
21. Cf. R. McL. Wilson, *Gnosis and the New Testament*, 138; the group of Berlin, in *Gnosis und Neues Testament*, ed. K.-W. Tröger (Gütersloh, 1973), 46; H.-M. Schenke in *RG* 2:608. Schenke, evidently, considers Christianity in this passage as “secondary.” But it is at least present, and what proof is there that it is secondary?
22. Cf. R. McL. Wilson, *Gnosis and the New Testament*, 138; L. Koenen in *RG* 2:752.
23. Böhlig’s translation: “dead works (*Tote Werke*).”

24. *Koptisch-gnostische Apokalypsen*, 92.
25. Cf. R. McL. Wilson, *Gnosis and the New Testament*, 139; P. Perkins, *CBQ* 39 (1977): 384. Schenke at first judged the same, but retracted this opinion in *RG* 2:607.
26. Cf. E. M. Yamauchi, *ChH* 48 (1979): 130–35, and the authors he cites.
27. Cf. J. M. Daniélou, *RecSR* 54 (1966): 31–34; R. McL. Wilson, *Gnosis and the New Testament* 233–39; G. M. Shellrude, “The Apocalypse of Adam, Evidence for a Christian Gnostic Provenance,” in *Gnosis and Gnosticism*, ed. M. Krause, *NHS* 17 (Leiden, 1981), 82–91, and the authors he cites p. 83, n. 3.
28. Cf. Epiphanius, *Pan.* xl, 7; and the “Bruce Anonymous” in *Koptisch-gnostische Schriften*, ed. Schmidt-Till (1962), 341–42.
29. According to B. Layton (*HTbR* 69 [1976]: n. 84), “their son,” in 91, 12, would signify the son of the Archons. But there follows in the text the statement that Adam knew his wife *again*, which seems to indicate that Cain was already the son of Adam. “Their son” could then mean the son of Adam and Eve.
30. Cf. B. Layton, *HTbR* 67 (1974): 364.
31. Cf. Layton, *HTbR* 67 (1974): 364.
32. 87, 15; 89, 24–25.
33. Cf. K. M. Fischer, “Die Paraphrase des Sêem,” in *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honour of Pahor Labid*, ed. M. Krause, *NHS* 6 (Leiden, 1975), 255–67; esp. 260.
34. “Die Paraphrase des Sêem,” 261: “diese durchgehende Tilgung von konkreten Namen kann doch nicht Zufall sein”; 264: “alle Namen, an die man sich halten könnte, sind getilget.”
35. “Die Paraphrase des Sêem,” 266.
36. Cf. K. Rudolph, “Coptica Mandaica I” in the same volume (*NHS* 6), 210. He says that Soldas represents Yahweh.
37. “Coptica Mandaica I,” 210.
38. Cf. *Gnosis und Neues Testament*, ed. Tröger, 58–59.
39. In *Mus.* 88 (1975): 90.
40. “Die Paraphrase des Sêem,” 266.
41. “Die Paraphrase als Form gnostischer Verkündigung,” in *Nag Hammadi and Gnosis*, ed. R. McL. Wilson, *NHS* 14 (Leiden, 1978), 90, n. 42.
42. “Die Paraphrase des Sêem und der Bericht Hippolyts,” in *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Gnosticism, Stockholm, 1973*, ed. G. Widengren (Stockholm and Leiden, 1977), 101–10.
43. *OG* 197–202; *Mus.* 85 (1972): 425–50.
44. “Die Paraphrase,” 87.
45. *NovTest* 12 (1970): 138.
46. “Paraphrase de Sem et Paraphrase de Seth,” in *Les Textes de Nag Hammadi*, ed. J.-E. Ménard, *NHS* 7, 153.
47. *NovTest* 12 (1970): 135, 139; *NHL* 308.
48. *NovTest* 12 (1970): 135; *NHL* 308.
49. “Paraphrase de Sem et Paraphrase de Seth,” 151.
50. Above, pp. 442–43.
51. K. M. Fischer, “Die Paraphrase des Sêem,” 266–67; B. Aland, “Die Paraphrase,” 86.
52. J.-M. Sevrin, in *Mus.* 88 (1975): 69–96.
53. M. Tardieu, “Les livres mis sous le nom de Seth,” in *Gnosis and Gnosticism*, ed. M. Krause, *NHS* 8 (Leiden, 1977), 205, n. 6, and 208.
54. *Die Gnosis*, 131.
55. Cf. Tardieu, “Les Livres,” 208.
56. Cf. Tardieu, “Les Livres,” 208.
57. The title, in the manuscript, is not completely legible. But the restitution proposed by M. Krause (*Gnostische und hermetische Schriften aus Codex II und Codex VI*, by M. Krause and P. Labib [Glückstadt, 1971], 122) seems to be the most probable. That proposed by the Circle of Studies of Berlin (*ThLZ* 98 [1973]: 97–104) seems hardly compatible with the rest of the title. On the meaning this title can have, according to Krause’s reading (“Thunder”), cf. M. Tardieu, *Mus.* 87 (1974): 523–30, and 88 (1975): 365–69.

58. NHL 271.
59. G. Quispel, "Jewish Gnosis and Mandaean Gnosticism, Some Reflections on the Writing Brontè," in *Les Textes de Nag Hammadi*, ed. J.-E. Ménard, NHS 7, 82–122.
60. Cf. 15, 29–30; 16, 27–29.
61. Cf. 18, 18–19: "I am the Spirit for all the men who are with me" (Bethge's translation); or: "the spirits of all the men are with me" (Krause's translation).
62. See above, Part 1, chapter "The Mother."
63. Cf. Y. Janssens, *La Prötenmoia trimorphe* (Quebec, 1978), 3–12.
64. "Jewish Gnosis," 83.
65. *ThLZ* 98 (1973): 99.
66. See above, Part 1, p. 85.
67. See above, Part 1, p. 80 among others.
68. See above, Part 2, pp. 416–18.
69. Cf. E. M. Yamauchi (*ChH* 48, [1979]: 139), who says that Quispel is trying to build up an imposing edifice on too narrow a base, granted that the phrase "I am the prostitute and I am the saint" is only one of numerous paradoxes contained in *The Thunder*. Cf., from the same author, "The Descent of Ishtar, the Fall of Sophia . . .," in *Tyndale Bulletin* 29 (1978): 148.
70. NHL 161.
71. *Origin of the World* 114, 8–15.
72. See above, Part 2, the chapter on the *Apocryphon of John*, and, in the present chapter, the section on the *Hypostasis of the Archons*.
73. *The Gospel of Philip* (New York, 1962), 60–61.
74. NHL 150–51.
75. R. Unger, "Zur sprachlichen und formalen Struktur des gnostischen Textes *Der Donner*," *OChr* 59 (1975): 106. Cf. E. M. Yamauchi, "Some Alleged Evidences for Pre-Christian Gnosticism," in *New Dimensions in New Testament Study*, ed. R. N. Longenecker and M. C. Tenney (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1974), 57–58. Yamauchi cites passages that he suspects of being allusions to texts of the New Testament.
76. G. Quispel, *Gnosis als Weltreligion* (Zurich, 1951), 5; J. Doresse, *Les Livres secrets des gnostiques d'Égypte* (Paris, 1958), 209–18; H.-Ch. Puech, in Hennecke-Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 1 (London, 1963), 248.
77. "Das literarische Verhältnis des *Eugnostesbriefes zur Sophia Jesu Christi*," in *Mullus, Festschrift Theodor Klauser, JAC*, supp. 1 (Münster, 1964), 215–23.
78. *Die gnostischen Schriften des koptischen Papyrus Berolinensis 8502* (1955), 54.
79. "Nag Hammadi Studien II," *ZRGG* 14 (1962): 265–66.
80. "Das literarische Verhältnis."
81. "Das literarische Verhältnis," 220.
82. NHL 225–28.
83. Cf., in the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ*, passage BG 103, 10–106, 9; or CG III, 106, 24–108, 16.
84. Cf. P. Bellet, "The Colophon of the Gospel of the Egyptians," in *Nag Hammadi and Gnosis*, ed. R. McL. Wilson, NHS 14 (Leiden, 1978), 47.
85. Cf. E. M. Yamauchi, *ChH* 48 (1979): 138; G. Quispel, in *RG* 1: 123.
86. Cf. J. M. Robinson, in *NHL* 17.
87. "The Colophon," 55.
88. "The Colophon," 55.
89. Cf. P. Bellet himself, "The Colophon," 55.
90. My emphasis.
91. *RG* 1:123.
92. *RG* 1:123.
93. The only way of saving the coherence of *Eugnostos* on this point would be to suppose, with M. Tardieu, that the phrase "and thus was revealed the deficiency of the feminine" is a gloss introduced into the text. But that is a way to be used when there is no other. And not only have we no proof that it is a matter of a gloss, but the comparison I have made between the theology of *Eugnostos* and that of the *Gospel of the Egyptians*—two theologies quite similar in their optimist, even triumphalist, orientation, whose similarity reunites two works already

united by the name of Eugnostos—this comparison suggests rather that the mention of the “deficiency of the feminine” might well be found in *Eugnostos*. For the *Gospel of the Egyptians* also mentions a deficiency (CG III, 49, 16; 59, 18), and this deficiency is hardly explained there.

94. P. 422.

95. *Gnosis*, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1974), 26.

96. *Gnosis and the New Testament*, 115.

97. I have compared above (Part 1, p. 17) the *Epistle of Eugnostos* to a Valentinianism gone mad. Now, A. H. B. Logan, in an article published recently (in the collection *Gnosis and Gnosticism*, ed. M. Krause, *NHS* 17 [Leiden, 1981], 66–75), shows that *Eugnostos* has close relations with the Valentinian letter, considered as belonging to a late period, cited by Epiphanius in his *Panarion* (chap. 31). It could certainly be said that this letter represents Valentinianism gone mad. Logan considers it influenced by *Eugnostos* rather than the other way about. But it seems to him that *Eugnostos* influence had not been exercised on Valentinian texts earlier than this late text. He concludes from this that *Eugnostos* could hardly be pre-Christian. Further, even if he admits that *Eugnostos* is not Christian, he also remarks that since a late Valentinian has been inspired by it, this writing was not felt by a Valentinian to be a writing totally foreign and totally free from Christian influence.

(Thus one begins perhaps, timidly and step by step, to go back on the judgment of Krause.)

Chapter XIV

1. R. Reitzenstein, *Poimandres* (Leipzig, 1904), 81–102.
2. W. Bousset, *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis* (Göttingen, 1907), 183–84.
3. Cf. Reitzenstein, *Poimandres*, 82.
4. *Gnosis*, vol. 1 (Eng. tr., Oxford, 1972), 261. Cf. also W. Foerster, “Die Naassener,” in *Studi di storia religiosa della tarda antichità*, ed. U. Bianchi (Messina, 1968), 21–33.
5. *Der Glaubende und die feindliche Welt* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1970), 18.
6. “Qualche osservazioni sulle presunte interpolazioni della Predica dei Naasseni,” *Vetera Christianorum* 7 (1970): 115–24.
7. “La Gnose valentinienne et les Oracles chaldaïques,” in *RG* 1:194–235.
8. See above, Part 1, Introduction, n. 37.
9. See above, Part 1, pp. 117–25.
10. *Corpus Hermeticum*, Nock-Festugière, vol. 2, 217–18.
11. *Corpus Hermeticum*, vol. 2, 208.
12. Cf. above, Part 1, pp. 195–97.
13. Cf. J.-P. Mahé, *Hermès en Haute-Egypte* (Quebec, 1978), 113–14, note on 58, 10–14.
14. Cf. Mahé, *Hermès*, 110.
15. Mahé thinks that, with the Peratai and in the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, this series could come from Hermeticism (Hermès, 48–50). For the Peratai knew Hermes as an astrologer, and the *Gospel of the Egyptians* could have some relation with the *Poimandres* (cf. “Poimael” in CG III, 66, 1). But the name of *Poimandres*, in CH I, could be a mark of Christian influence, rather than the name of *Poimael*, in the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, a mark of Hermetic influence. As for the Peratai, if they knew the works of astrology attributed to Hermes, it is not certain that they knew philosophical and religious Hermeticism. Since the series “Unbegotten, Begotten of oneself, Begotten” does not ordinarily appear in Hermeticism, since it is found only in *The Ogdoad and the Ennead* (a writing that could be quite late), there is hardly any reason why Hippolytus’s Peratai, who are earlier than 235, should have found it in Hermeticism, which in their period perhaps did not have it, while they could have found it among Christian Gnostics, since the self-generation of the second principle is attested among them from about the middle of the second century.
16. Cf. J.-P. Mahé, *Hermès*, 55–56.
17. *Hermès*, 56.

18. See above, Part 1, Introduction, n. 14.
19. See above, Part 1, pp. 117–21.
20. To the three treatises that we have considered, there could be added at least CH IV and CH VII. The latter could be by the same author as *Poimandres*. CH IV is a treatise, the doctrine of which is above all Platonic, but it seems that there is a question of baptism.
21. *Hauptprobleme*, 197.
22. Cf. O. Cullmann, *Le Problème littéraire et historique du roman pseudo-clémentin* (Paris, 1930), 85.
23. See above, Part 1, pp. 129–36.
24. *Le Problème littéraire*, 245.
25. See above, Part 1, pp. 144–55.
26. See above, Part 1, pp. 171–180.
27. *Hauptprobleme*, 136–59.
28. Part 1, pp. 179–80.
29. See above, Part 1, pp. 129–36.
30. See above, Part 1, pp. 140–43.
31. *Le Problème littéraire*.
32. “Jewish Gnosis and Mandaean Gnosticism,” in *Les Textes de Nag Hammadi*, ed. J.-E. Ménard, *NHS* 7, 116.
33. “Jewish Gnosis,” 109.
34. *Hauptprobleme*, 156. Cf. J. Daniélou, *Theology of Jewish Christianity* (Eng. tr., London, 1964), 59.
35. *Hauptprobleme*, 154; cf. J. Daniélou, *Theology of Jewish Christianity*, 64.
36. These last are considered by Epiphanius as a purely Jewish sect, and different from the Nazarenes. Whether he is right or wrong in that is a problem that we cannot discuss here. But at first sight, after what is said about the Nasoraean (Pan. 18), one could doubt whether he is right—at least that the Nasoraean were Nazarenes entirely reverted to Judaism.
37. M. Simon, *Les Sectes juives au temps de Jésus* (Paris, 1960), 89, appears to attribute to a blunder on Epiphanius’s part the distinction between Essenians and Osseniens.
38. Certain Ebionites admitted, however, that Jesus had been born of a virgin, while others denied it (cf. Theodoret, *Haer. fab. comp.* II, 1).
39. H. Jonas, “Response to G. Quispel’s *Gnosticism and the New Testament*,” in *The Bible in Modern Scholarship*, ed. J. Ph. Hyatt (Nashville, 1965), 279–93.
40. S. E. Williams (*NHL* 36) translates: “he revealed to us children (?) who are to come after us, after bidding (us) to love them . . .” The meaning of the word translated by “children” is uncertain, but it is apparently a matter of certain persons whom the disciples do not know yet.
41. See above, Part 1, pp. 189–200.
42. Cf. H.-Ch. Puech, “Le Mandéisme,” in *Histoire générale des religions*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1945), 73.
43. *Die Mandäer*, vol. 2 (Göttingen, 1961), 380.
44. Rudolph has defined these characteristics in the same work (vol. 2, 376). Now, it seems to me they are precisely what is found in Elkesaism.
45. *Bidrag til en Analyse af de mandaeiske Skrifter* (Aarhus, 1940).
46. Two vols., Göttingen, 1960–61.
47. *Die Mandäer*, vol. 1, 102, n. 1.
48. E.g., *Die Mandäer*, vol. 1, 101 and 111.
49. See above, Part 1, Introduction, n. 79. Rudolph does not give enough importance to this discovery in “Zum gegenwärtigen Stand der mandäischen Religionsgeschichte” (*Gnosis und Neues Testament*, ed. Tröger, 121–48).
50. I write “Nazarene” for I do not see why the word *nazoraïos* should be translated “Nazorean” when it is a matter of Mandeans, while it is translated “Nazarene” when it is found in the New Testament.
51. See above, in the present work, Part 2, pp. 229–30. Cf. S. Pines, “The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries . . . According to a New Source,” *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 1966), 13.
52. “Jewish Gnosis,” 115.

53. "Jewish Gnosis," 115.
54. "Jewish Gnosis," 116.
55. See above, Part 1, pp. 41–42.
56. Cf. Cullmann, *Le Problème littéraire*, 186; A. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven* (Leiden, 1977).
57. G. G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism & Talmudic Tradition* (New York, 1960).
58. Jonas, "Response to G. Quispel's *Gnosticism and the New Testament*," 279–93.
59. I. Gruenwald, "The Problem of the Anti-Gnostic Polemic in Rabbinic Literature," in *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions, Presented to G. Quispel*, ed. R. Van den Broek and M. J. Vermaseren (Leiden, 1981), 171–89. Gruenwald writes (188): "No proof has yet been found for the existence of Jewish heretic circles. Thus, it appears, we have also to eliminate the possibility that the polemic of the rabbis was directed against gnosticizing Jews." And further on (189): "Despite a number of similarities between Gnosticism and Merkabah mysticism, the latter is too distinctly separated from the Gnostic worldview and, thus, may not be referred to as 'Jewish Gnosticism.'"
60. E. M. Yamauchi, "Jewish Gnosticism?" in the same collection that I have just cited in note 59, 467–97.
61. In *Gnosis und Neues Testament*, ed. Tröger, 147.
62. Puech has shown, as early as 1936, that the Audians described by Theodore bar Konai, whose sect is supposed to have been founded in the fourth century by Audi of Edessa (northern Mesopotamia), knew some "Sethian" writings. Cf. *En quête de la Gnose*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1978), 271–300, esp. 285, n. 1, and 295–98, where one sees that the Audians knew the *Apocryphon of John*. Cf. also F. Wisse, *NHL*, 98. The "Sethian" literature would have been known also in southern Mesopotamia, since Mani made of "Sethel" a prophet (cf. the Manichean texts cited by M. Tardieu in his article on the Three Steles of Seth, *RSPbTh* 57 [1973]: 556), and an *Apocalypse of Seth* is cited in the Manichean Codex of Cologne (cf. A. Böhlig, *RG* 2:509–10).
63. Cf. H.-Ch. Puech, "Le Mandéisme," 74.
64. Above, Part 1, Section 1, chapter 2.
65. Cf. Puech, "Le Mandéisme," 82; Rudolph, *Die Mandäer*, vol. 1, 66–80, esp. 70, n. 4.
66. "Le Mandéisme," 82.

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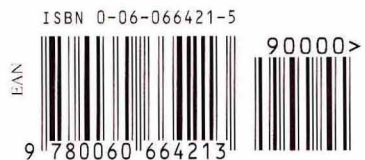
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