

THE USE OF
THE OLD TESTAMENT
IN THE NEW AND
OTHER ESSAYS

STUDIES IN HONOR OF
WILLIAM FRANKLIN STINESPRING

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A STUDY OF GNOSTIC EXEGESIS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

ORVAL WINTERMUTE

Professor W. F. Stinespring has spent over thirty years at Duke University in a program of research and teaching which has provided many a student with knowledge of the necessary linguistic, historical and theological background for serious, scholarly exegesis of the Old Testament. Professor Stinespring would be the first to charge us with the "all fallacy" if we were to claim that all of his students became thoroughly skilled in the art of exegesis. Nevertheless, his success with the vast majority of students has contributed significantly to the present-day respect for serious biblical and theological studies in this region and elsewhere. Therefore it is a great privilege to dedicate this footnote on the history of Old Testament exegesis to my friend and patron, Professor Stinespring.

The library of Coptic texts discovered in the region of Nag³ Hammadi in 1945 contains among its treasures an untitled work by an unknown scholar of considerable genius. The text which this scholar composed is the fifth tractate in the well-preserved Codex II.¹ Schenke has provided a title for this tractate, "Die

It should be noted that students are not the only ones to benefit from Professor Stinespring's scholarly attitudes. His colleagues have also learned much from listening to his scholarly papers, reading the dissertations which he has directed, and participating with him in the oral examinations. His concern for serious scholarship is also reflected in the encouragement and support which he provides for the scholarly interests of his colleagues. Those who seek his advice on scholarly matters have learned to expect a sound and independent judgment. Over the years together he has taught me much. I should like to thank him.

1. The first fourteen pages of this tractate appeared at the end of the famous Labib volume: Pahor Labib, *Coptic Gnostic Papyri in the Coptic Museum at Old Cairo* (Cairo, 1956), vol. 1. Three years later, Hans-Martin Schenke published a German translation of that portion of the text together with a brief introduction and notes in *TLZ* (1959). In the same year, W. C. van Unnik's German edition of *Evangelien aus dem Nilsand* came to the attention of Hans Quecke, and he noticed that it contained three photographs (plates 5, 7, and 9) of an additional page of the manuscript, which he correctly identified and published in *Le Museon*, 72 (1959). The remainder of the text was made available in 1962, when Alexander Böhlig published a critical text of the entire tractate together with an introduction and a brief commentary in the form of footnotes to the text and translation. The *editio princeps* which Böhlig produced was made possible

Abhandlung [λόγος] über den Ursprung [ἀρχή] der Welt [κόσμος]."² This has been shortened in English to "On the Origin of the World," and is abbreviated here as OW.

Despite his anonymity, the author of OW reveals himself to be a scholar of considerable ability. He impresses the reader with his ability to move between abstract argument and a more familiar recitation of the Gnostic myths.³ He has a great interest in etiological notes,⁴ a fondness for linguistic arguments,⁵ a rich store of mythological data,⁶ and a considerable talent for correlating certain theoretical views about the nature of man and the cosmos with inherited mythological traditions.⁷ Like scholars of every

through the cooperation of Pahor Labib. The full title of the work is *Die Koptisch-Gnostische Schrift ohne Titel aus Codex II von Nag Hammadi* (Berlin, 1962).

The method of citing tractates has been confused for some time. Böhlig and Schenke both followed the pagination established by the page sequence in the Labib volume of photographic prints, but since the pagination in that volume did not correspond to that of the original codex its deficiency is obvious. A great deal of work has been done by Krause and Robinson in an effort to recover the original sequence of pages for all of the codices in the library. The pagination cited in the present study will follow that provided by James M. Robinson in his study of "The Coptic Gnostic Library Today," *NTS*, 14 (1967/1968), 356-401. It is hoped that this system will prevail in all future studies.

2. Hans-Martin Schenke, p. 246.

3. The tractate begins with an argument that Chaos cannot be the origin of all things (97:27-98:7). The author first argues in an abstract manner that Chaos is darkness and darkness is shadow. Therefore there must have been something prior to Chaos since there must have been something to cast the shadow. In line 98:8, the author begins to repeat the same argument in mythological form, describing how a veil (παραπετασμα) arose between the eon of truth and that boundless Chaos which lies beneath the veil and from which this world was finally created.

4. The author explains in line 109:28-29, for example, that the grape vine grew up from blood poured upon the earth by the virgin Pronoia in her lust for pneumatic Adam. It is because of the passionate origin of the grape that "those who drink it acquire for themselves the desire (ἐπιθυμία) for coitus (συνουσία)." There are a number of other etiologies of this sort in the text.

5. The author's linguistic arguments play a significant role in his exegetical method, and a number of examples will be given in the discussion which follows. Compare, for example, pp. 254-55 below.

6. In addition to the basic store of Gnostic mythology, this writer has preserved from Jewish sources an account of Sabaoth's exaltation and a description of his throne chariot (103:32 ff.). His discussion of the Phoenix (124:3 ff.) reflects Egyptian contacts, and from Greek sources he has preserved variations on the theme of Eros-Psyche (109:1 ff. and 111:8 ff.) and Aphrodite-Hermaphrodites (113:21 ff.).

7. The attempt to discover a basis for certain theoretical views within inherited mythological data is one of the motivating principles for his work. In line 117:28 ff., the author states his view of tripartite man, who is pneumatic, psychic, and choic. Elsewhere within the tractate, it is obvious that his reinterpretation of Genesis 1-2 is guided by this theoretical view of man with the result that his own exegetical skills

lead him to discover within the Old Testament mythological data which supports that theoretical view.

age, the author wanted the reader to understand that he knew far more than he had time to discuss. Therefore he subtly refers the reader to other authoritative works in which a particular subject was treated more exhaustively.⁸ As a result of this tendency to refer the reader to other works in search of detail, his tractate is often more interesting than many of the other Gnostic texts because he has spared the reader long lists of meaningless names and frequent repetitions.

The scholarship of the author has contributed significantly to the historical importance of this document. It accounts for the relative clarity with which he presents his case⁹ and the richness of the material which he has preserved for us. It also accounts for the manner in which he has preserved his material. Since he was apparently much more interested in preserving his sources accurately than he was in creating a smooth composition, the seams which join the several sources together are frequently transparent.¹⁰ The document is constructed in such a manner that it will prove to be a fertile text for both source criticism and form criticism. Ultimately, scholars should be able to write a fairly precise history

lead him to discover within the Old Testament mythological data which supports that theoretical view.

The use of the term *mythological* to describe the literature found in Genesis 1-3 is not simply the reflection of a contemporary perspective. Although the author does not use the term himself, he treats biblical episodes in the same manner that he deals with motifs drawn from Greek mythology. Placing them side by side, he accords them equal reverence. By so doing, he appears to be attributing the same status to biblical traditions that he would assign to the Greek tales, whatever that status may have been, e. g., myth, sacred stories, divine mysteries.

8. The list of works cited by this author includes the following: *The First Book (βιβλός) of Norea* (102:10), which may be the same as *The First Logos (λόγος) of Norea* (102:24), *The Archangelikè of Moses* (102:8), *The Book of Solomon* (107:3), *The Seventh Cosmos of Shieralais the Prophet* (112:23), *The Schemas of Heimarmene* (107:16), and *The Holy Book* (110:30 and 122:12).

9. This is a judgment based on a comparison of this work with works such as *Pistis Sophia* or *The Apocryphon of John*. The initial impression which this tractate makes on an uninitiated reader is hardly one of clarity. Nevertheless, careful rereading and study lead one to appreciate the author's logic.

10. In some cases the writer finds it necessary to insert a phrase at the end of a particularly long digression in order to help the reader recall the prior sequence from which he digressed. Thus, for example, after he interrupted his discussion of Light-Adam's appearance in order to insert a long digression dealing with Psyche and Eros, he drew the reader's attention back to the earlier account of Light-Adam by writing, "But before all these (things), when he (i. e. Light-Adam) appeared on the first day, he remained upon the earth thus two days" (111:29-31). The text contains many other seams which are equally obvious.

of many of the traditions which are found in this document, an achievement that would amount to describing the history of a very significant sector of Gnosticism since many of the basic motifs which are found in this text are shared by both "The Hypostasis of the Archons" (HA)¹¹ and "The Apocryphon of John" (AJ).¹²

The nature of the relationship between AJ, OW, and HA may be illustrated in various ways. One perspective is provided by a brief survey of three themes which appear in these texts. Each of the texts 1) describes the origin of the demiurge, Yaldabaoth, who began to create eons and archons, declared himself to be the *only* god, and was renounced for his hybris; 2) reinterprets the traditions found in Genesis 2-3; and 3) discusses the present plight of the pneumatics together with their ultimate release, which may be described in the context of an eschatological destruction of the powers of darkness.

In HA the first of these three themes is dealt with twice. It is treated in an abbreviated form near the beginning of the tractate (86:28-87:6) and again in a more expanded form (94:2-96:17) at the end of an extended reinterpretation of Genesis. The second of these passages (94:2-96:17) contains a digression in which Yaldabaoth's son, Sabaoth, repents and is redeemed after he witnesses the renunciation of his father. The reinterpretation of Genesis in HA extends beyond the third chapter of Genesis to include the story of Cain and Abel as well as the building of the ark in the time

11. "The Hypostasis of the Archons" is found in the same codex (II) as the tractate "On the Origin of the World." It is the fourth tractate in Codex II. The Coptic text appeared in the Labib volume. It was translated into German by Hans-Martin Schenke, "Das Wesen der Archonten: Eine gnostische Originalschrift aus dem Funde von Nag-Hamadi," *TLZ*, 83 (1958), 661-670. There is also an English translation by Roger Bullard, "The Hypostasis of the Archons: The Coptic Text with Translation and Commentary" (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1965).

12. This is one of the better known tractates. There are four copies of the text now available for study. It is written as the first tractate in Codices II, III, and IV. There is also a copy of the tractate preserved in the Berlin Gnostic Codes 8502 (BG 8502). The Berlin text was published by Walter Till in *Die gnostischen Schriften des koptischen Papyrus Berolinensis 8502*, (Berlin, 1955). The copy of the text from Codex II subsequently (1956) appeared in the Labib volume. More recently M. Krause has cooperated with Labib to produce *Die Drei Versionen des Apokryphon des Johannes im koptischen Museum zu Alt-Kairo*. *Abhandlungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo, Koptische Reihe*, vol. 1 (Wiesbaden, 1962). That work provides a critical text of the copy which first appeared in the Labib volume plus the copies from Codices III and IV hitherto unpublished. In the present study, the majority of quotations are taken from the Berlin Codex.

of Noah. HA concludes with a discussion of pneumatics and the eschatological destruction of the lower powers.

AJ is a much longer tractate than HA and contains many additional episodes. Nevertheless, the same three blocks of material can be discovered. AJ begins with a frame narrative which presents the document as a post-Resurrection revelation by the Savior to his disciple, John. The revelation itself begins with a praise of the unknown god in the familiar language of negative theology, followed by a description of the eons from Barbelo to Sophia. Thereafter the story follows the pattern outlined above: the story of Yaldabaoth, the reinterpretation of Genesis 2-3, and the discussion of the pneumatics. In the last of these three sections AJ has incorporated an allegorized version of the flood story, but the description of an eschatological downfall of powers is lacking.

OW is also much longer than HA, incorporating a large number of digressions. The longest of these digressions contains the tale of Eros and Psyche (109:1-111:24) and a series of comments on the phoenix (122:2-123:2). Nevertheless, the three themes outlined above are still discernable. After a rather formal opening in which the author argues that Chaos cannot be considered original, but rather implies a previous work on which it depends, the author begins to tell of the manner in which Yaldabaoth proceeded from Sophia. Like HA, this tractate contains an expanded version of the Yaldabaoth tale which includes the traditions concerning Sabaoth. The reinterpretation of Genesis follows, and the tractate ends with a discussion of pneumatics and the eschatological downfall of the powers of darkness.

A slightly different perspective on the relationship of these three tractates to one another is gained if one examines more closely the manner in which each of them reinterprets the material found in Genesis 2-3. Since English translations of HA and OW are not yet easily available, the relevant passages have been provided in an appendix to the present study. On the basis of a reading of these parallel sections, it is possible to make certain general observations. With regard to Genesis 2-3 it appears that OW falls somewhere between HA and AJ in terms of its distance from the original biblical narrative. In this respect it is clearly closer to HA than to AJ.

In HA the role of the God of the Old Testament is filled by the chief archon, an episode in which the archons attempt to sexually pollute Eve has been introduced,¹³ and there are numerous minor exegetical notes; for instance, Adam's sleep must be understood as ignorance, and the nakedness of Adam and Eve was a spiritual nakedness. The order of events, however, is essentially that of Genesis 2-3.

In OW, the pollution of Eve is included, but that episode together with the rib incident is placed before the command that man should not eat of the tree of knowledge. The naming of the animals has also been shifted in OW to follow the cursing of man. In this new position it is used to provide a new explanation for man's fall from Paradise, namely, the archons were jealous of the knowledge that man revealed in naming the animals. Finally, there is a more persistent attempt to expose the ignorance and powerlessness of the archons by means of exegetical comment. In other respects OW is quite close to HA.

When one turns to AJ, however, the variation in order and detail is so extensive that a detailed discussion would lead far beyond the bounds of the present paper. By way of illustration one may compare the excerpt dealing with Eve, which is found at the end of the appendix. In this excerpt, which is typical of the section in AJ which parallels Genesis 2-3, the Gnostic theological perspective has become so consciously authoritative that it provides a basis for correcting the Mosaic traditions. The statement, "Not as Moses said" illustrates the manner in which the author of this material has come to the outer limits of exegetical tolerance.

As surprising as this statement is, however, it becomes far less shocking when seen in the light of two earlier exegetical trends. One trend is represented by Philo, who assumed that there were two levels of meaning in the scriptural texts: a literal meaning and an allegorical meaning. In Philo, however, there seems to be a note of folly imputed to those who might be tempted to take certain texts in their simplest literal sense. Speaking of the account in which woman is produced from the rib of man, he describes the literal sense (*τὸ ῥητόν*) as being in the nature of "myth." He con-

13. This episode is well known elsewhere in Gnostic writings. Its ancestry is to be sought in Jewish speculation. See R. McL. Wilson, *The Gnostic Problem* (London, 1958), p. 166, for references.

tinues, "For how could any one concede that a woman or any person at all came into being out of a man's side?" (*Leg. Alleg.* II, 19). In a similar manner the author of AJ has rejected any crass literalism in favor of an allegorical interpretation.

A second exegetical trend can be traced back to the statement of Jesus concerning divorce (Matt. 19:4-9), in which Jesus appeals to the text of Gen. 2:24: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one," in order to provide the basic model for marriage. With regard to the Mosaic legislation, he seemed to imply that it was simply an accommodation to the hardness of men's hearts. The drastic implications of Jesus' exegetical method did not escape the notice of Gnostic scholars. In his "Letter to Flora," Ptolemaeus uses these words of Jesus to prove that the Old Testament contains three different levels of law: divine law, Mosaic law, and the traditions of the elders. Even more significantly for the history of exegesis he argues that in the case of the divorce legislation the law of Moses is actually contrary to the law of God. Thus Moses, who is held in respect by Ptolemaeus, is shown to be technically in error concerning the highest law.¹⁴ This leads one to the natural conclusion that Moses may have technically misstated certain other matters. For the author of AJ, the fantastic story about Adam's rib needed to be corrected. It appeared to him to have been poorly stated so as to lead the unwary into a literal interpretation. He corrected any such tendency with the blunt comment, "Not as Moses said."

A direct study of quotations from the Old Testament enables us to see these three tractates from a third perspective. Søren Giversen described the usage which he found in AJ in terms of the following four categories: 1) quotations which are introduced by citing the source; 2) quotations which are set forth without indication of the source; 3) sentences in which biblical expressions are recalled without actually quoting the Old Testament; and 4) one passage in which a single word alludes to an Old Testament passage. OW provides examples of all but the first of these categories.

14. Ptolemaeus' "Letter to Flora" is preserved in Epiphanius, *Panaria*, xxxiii 3-7. A translation appears in Robert Grant's anthology, *Gnosticism: A Source Book of Heretical Writings from the Early Christian Period* (New York, 1961), pp. 184-90.

In discussing the last of his four categories Giversen wrote:

In BG 44, 16–45, 1 it is stated, “The mother began to ἐπιφέρεσθαι.” . . . Nothing indicates a biblical passage. The solution is provided by the work itself, a little further on, BG 45, 6–19: John there asks Christ the meaning of the words: “But I said: Christ, what does ἐπιφέρεσθαι mean? But he smiled, and said: Do you think that it is as Moses said: upon the face of the waters?” . . . Thanks to AJ’s own explanation we thus see that a single word, which is not given in the form of a quotation, and which is not in itself suggestive enough to enable one to say immediately what it refers to, may very well be used with special reference to an expression in the OT.¹⁵

His point is well taken. Within the history of Gnostic exegesis there is a level of familiarity with certain biblical texts which enables the writers to allude to them with considerable subtlety. In OW, the reference to Gen. 1:2 is more explicit. It is found in 100:33 ff. “His thought was completed by means of the word, and it appeared as a spirit which went to and fro over the waters.” This type of allusion to the Old Testament is similar to the third of Giversen’s categories. The reference to “the word,” however, more nearly approximates the example which Giversen provided for his fourth category. Nevertheless, “the word” is so theologically pregnant that it is rather obvious in this case that the writer is exegeting Gen. 1:2 in terms of the prologue to the Fourth Gospel.

This particular method of exegeting scriptures by means of conflated readings in which a detail from one portion of scripture is added to details found elsewhere provides us with another example of the subtle employment of the Old Testament, in which the briefest sort of expression is clearly intended to be understood by readers steeped in certain critical texts from the Old Testament. Consider the following quote from OW:

Then [τότε] Justice [δικαιοσύνη] created Paradise [παράδεισος]. It was beautiful and outside the circuit [κύκλος] of the moon and the circuit [κύκλος] of the sun in the luxuriant [τροφή] earth, which is in the East in the midst of the stones. (110:2–6)

15. Giversen, S., “The Apocryphon of John and Genesis,” *StTh* 17 (1963), pp. 64–65.

This description of Paradise, somewhere beyond the sun and moon, rests upon a long tradition of speculation which grew in apocalyptic circles such as we meet in II Enoch or III Baruch, but despite its complex history the description has retained or reintroduced the eastward reference of Gen. 2:8 and the “stones” of Ezek. 28:14. A fuller understanding of Paradise is thus made possible by adding Scripture to Scripture, but the method is so subtle that contemporary scholars have tended to miss the allusion to Ezek. 28:14 in this passage.¹⁶

There are a number of passages in OW in which biblical expressions are used apart from direct quotes. Compare, for example, 103:21 ff., “He will trample upon [καταπατεῖν] you like potter’s [-κεραμευς] clay, which one treads, and you will go with those who are yours down to your mother, the abyss.” This recalls the language of Isa. 41:29. Such a use of biblical language would seem to suggest an easy familiarity with the text, which enables the writer to clothe his own thoughts in biblical language.

There are a number of clear quotes in OW although the context is generally changed and there is a frequent tendency to expand. Thus it is the archons who say, “Adam, where are you?” (119:27), adding the vocative to the quote. Nevertheless, the dependence on the biblical text is sometimes extremely literal. Thus “the wild beast” says to Eve, “Don’t fear. You will surely not die, for he knows that when you eat from it your mind will be sobered, and you will become like the gods” (118:33–119:1). Although the injunction, “Don’t fear,” is not part of the text of Gen. 3:4–5, the brief phrase “You will surely not die,” is a precise quote. It is stated somewhat awkwardly in Coptic. If rendered literally in English, it would read, “You will not die in a death,” a literal rendering of the Greek, οὐ θανάτῳ ἀποθανεῖσθε, which in its turn represents an attempt to reproduce the infinitive absolute construction of Hebrew. This wooden literalness is then followed by an interpretive rendering which replaces the opening of the eyes with a sobering of the mind. The full quotation illustrates quite well the most frequent method of using material quoted from the

16. The stones which are mentioned in both Ezekiel and OW are probably “thunderstones,” bright, fiery stones which flash through the sky and thunder to the earth in the midst of a summer storm.

Old Testament: partially expanded, partially literal, partially rendered in an interpretive manner.

As noted above, OW does not contain the first type of scriptural quotation mentioned by Giversen, i. e. quotes in which the source is explicitly cited. There are several ways to interpret this fact. It could be simply a matter of personal style on the part of the authors. It could reflect the needs of the intended readers; the more sophisticated readers would not need to be informed of the source. In the case of HA, the reason for including a quotation of this type is transparent. There is a single citation quote at the beginning of that tractate, in which the author cites "the great apostle," who said, "Our contending is not against flesh [σάρξ] and blood, but rather [ἀλλά] against the powers [ἐξουσία] of the world [κόσμος] and what pertains to the spirit [πνευματικόν] of wickedness [πονηρία]. . . ." (86:23–25).¹⁷ In this context, the citation quote serves as a "proof-text," as if to say that Paul also alluded to the matters which are discussed in HA. A citation of this sort would most logically arise in a segment of the Gnostic community which was seeking to win favor among churches where Paul was held in esteem. By way of contrast, OW seems uninterested in that type of proof-text argument.

Except for the single citation quote in HA, neither HA nor OW contains any citation quotes within the material which parallels Genesis, but it is precisely within this parallel material that AJ introduces quotes of this type, both positively and negatively, as the following example dealing with Adam's sleep will show.

But he said, "Not as Moses said, 'He caused him to sleep,' " but [ἀλλά] he covered over his perceptions [αἰσθησις] with a covering. He dulled him with imperception [ἀναίσθησια]. For [γάρ] he also [καί] spoke through the prophet [προφήτης] saying, "I will make thick the ears of their hearts in order that they might not understand [νοεῖν] and in order that they might not see." (BG 58:15–59:5)¹⁸

Two observations appear to be justified on the basis of this passage. On the one hand, the author appears to be acutely conscious

17. Cf. Eph. 6:12.

18. Cf. Isa. 6:10.

that his exegesis of Genesis is in conflict with other, more literal, traditional readings of the text. In rejecting them, he assumes an attitude of superiority vis-à-vis the text with the surprising statement, "Not as Moses said." On the other hand, he feels called upon to support his own exegesis by supplying a proof-text from the prophet (cf. Isa. 6:10). Such a use of scripture would suggest that a debate over the proper exegesis of Genesis took place within circles where a proof-text from the prophet would still represent a reasonably persuasive argument.

The evidence provided by biblical quotations tends to offer a mild support for earlier conclusions that the group for which AJ was written is somewhat further removed from easy familiarity with the Old Testament text than the readers of either OW or HA. Although Giversen was able to illustrate a very subtle use of the word ἐπιφέρεισθαι, that the author immediately explained the allusion suggests that he may have guessed that his readers would not recognize it.

OW and HA both reinterpret the Genesis material, but neither document appears to be as self-conscious about it as AJ. We hope to show that in the case of OW much of the reinterpretation came about by applying traditional methods of exegesis to the biblical text. If that is true, there would have been no particular reason to defend the new interpretation by inserting a proof-text. In OW and HA it was sufficient to set two scriptures side by side in order to exegete one by means of another. It is only in a community where exegetical methods are not self-evident that a new interpretation needs to be defended by citing the authority of someone such as "the prophet."

The parallels between HA, OW, and AJ are helpful inasmuch as they reveal the manner in which the several texts rework a common body of traditional material, providing an external reference which may help to determine what the unique contribution of each author may have been. Despite the help provided by parallel texts, however, the task of separating the author from his sources is enormously difficult. As we turn to consider the text of OW by itself, it is immediately obvious that much of the material which it contains has a considerable history. A hint of the complexity of materials assembled by the author of OW is provided by the linguistic and geographical spread of references within the text. Many

of the oldest materials embedded in this text come from the Semitic world. For example, a primitive type of exegesis which assigned Aramaic meanings to words found in the Hebrew text gave rise to reading HYH "wild animal" in Genesis 3 as an Aramaic participle meaning "instructor" (114:2 ff.). Many other examples of an Aramaic background are also available. A similar example illustrates the Greek background of materials found in this text, for the author has passed along an attempt to interpret Adam in terms of *ἀδαμαντίνη*, "steel-like" (108:24). An example such as this shows that the material was not simply translated into Greek, but it was carefully reworked in Greek. Again, there are many examples of material derived from Greek sources. There is also clear evidence that the author is drawing on sources which are peculiar to Egypt. He concludes his interpretation of the Phoenix and the three baptisms in 122:9 ff. with the following statement. "These great signs [*σημείον*] appeared only in Egypt, not in other lands [*χώρα*], signifying [*σημαίνειν*] that it is like the Paradise [*παράδεισος*] of God" (122:33-123:2).

If there were no parallel texts, it would be tempting to assume that the text of OW grew with the geographical expansion of the sect which produced it. One might assume that the earliest stratum was created within the Aramaic-speaking community. As the sect moved away from its Aramaic-speaking homeland the Greek and finally the Egyptian strata were added. Such a thesis might actually be valid for some of the material contained in OW, but a comparison with HA, which appears to be an earlier, briefer text, reveals that the supplementary material found in OW is derived from all three sources: Aramaic, Greek, and Egyptian. The additional material in OW is often introduced in the form of an expansion or commentary on material of briefer compass attested in HA. Thus, for example, HA mentions the chariot of Sabaoth briefly:

He made himself a great chariot [*ἄρμα*], cherubin [*χερουβίν*], with four faces [*πρόσωπον*], and numerous angels [*ἄγγελος*], without number, in order that they might serve [*ὑπηρετεῖν*]. (95:26-30)

OW, by way of contrast, contains an expanded version of this material:

Then in front of his dwelling place he created a great throne [*θρόνος*] on a chariot [*ἄρμα*]; it was four-faced [*-πρόσωπον*] and called Cherubin [*χερουβίν*]. And [*δέ*] the Cherubin [*χερουβίν*] has eight forms [*μορφή*] at each [*κατά*] of the four corners—lion forms [*-μορφή*] and bull forms [*-μορφή*] and human forms [*-μορφή*] and eagle [*ἀετός*] forms [*μορφή*] so that [*ὥστε*] all of the forms [*μορφή*] amount to sixty-four forms [*μορφή*] plus seven archangels [*ἀρχάγγελος*] who stand before him. He is the eighth, having authority [*ἐξουσία*]. All of the forms [*μορφή*] amount to seventy-two, for [*γάρ*] from this chariot [*ἄρμα*] the seventy-two gods received a pattern [*τύπος*]. . . . (104:35-105:14)

The parallel passage in OW actually continues through line 106:5, describing the angelic host which surrounds the chariot, but the nature of the expanded material is clear from the excerpt cited above.

In most instances the material introduced by OW appears to be later than the material found in HA. There are, however, a few examples in which material preserved by OW is clearly presupposed by HA. Thus one is able to understand more fully the role of the "wild beast" (*θηρίον*) who speaks to Eve in the garden (OW 118:24 ff.) because the interpretation of "wild beast" as instructor was provided beforehand. In HA, however, the spiritual woman who enters the serpent to speak with the fleshly woman is also called "the instructor" (90:11), but the reader would never have guessed that such a casual allusion was based on close biblical exegesis had not OW incidentally preserved the tradition that Eve (HWH) also means "instructor" on the basis of an Aramaic reading of the root. The etymology is found in OW 113:13 where it is preserved in relation to the spiritual Eve. It thus appears that the relative age and peculiar history of many of the materials contained in OW will require many years of labor to unravel.

Another way of illustrating the complexity of materials within this tractate is to review the evidence for literary sources which lie behind both HA and OW. Source criticism of the documents has scarcely begun, but A. Böhlig has already shown that the basic account of the demiurge together with the parallel discussion of Genesis 2-3 must have circulated in two parallel accounts, one of

which made use of the term *archons* (ἄρχοντες) whereas the other used *authorities* (ἐξουσίαι). Both HA and OW depend on these two sources, sometimes following one version, sometimes the other. One of the surprises which emerges from a comparison of sources within OW and HA is the fact that both documents contain a digression dealing with the redemption of Sabaoth. The material clearly falls outside both the *archon* and the *authorities* sources and is so obviously tendentious in OW that one would have quite naturally assumed its insertion to have been an original contribution of the author of that tractate had not the author of HA inserted the same digression at exactly the same point. Unexpected parallels of this sort make judgments about what is unique within a particular document particularly tentative.

With such reservations in mind, it is possible to consider the exegetical labors of the author of OW. There are two ways of viewing his work; one may consider the exegetical methods employed in the document or one may seek to discover the attitudes and presuppositions which led the author to certain conclusions about the biblical text. With regard to exegetical methods, certain observations have already been made. The author is particularly fond of interpreting a text by means of introducing an etymology for names appearing in the text. This method is based on biblical examples such as "The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living" (Gen. 3:20).¹⁹ This method of exegesis permits the meaning which is concealed in a name to be added to the literal meaning of the text or to serve as the starting point for an allegorical interpretation. Sometimes the etymologies were arrived at by relating two meanings to a common root. Thus ἤΥΗ yields both "wild animals" and "instructor." Sometimes a similar sounding word is suggestive. This is the case with the interpretation of ³Adam, "man," in light of *dam*, "blood," and ἀδαμαντινή "steel-like" (108:20 ff.).

Words are capable of yielding new meanings in still other ways. In the case of words which are homographs, it is always possible to substitute one meaning for another. Thus φοῖνιξ, which means "date-palm" in Ps. 91:13 (LXX) is interpreted in terms of "the

19. This, of course, involves the similarity between the root ἤΥΗ, from which "life, living" is derived, and a root ἤΥΗ, on which the name "Eve" appears to be based.

Phoenix bird" in (122:29). Likewise, if a word has a well known figurative meaning, it is subject to the same principle of substituting one meaning of a word for another. Since "to see" in certain contexts clearly means "to intellectually perceive," "to see with the mind's eye," it is possible to apply that meaning to the serpent's words, "your eyes shall be opened," in Gen. 3:5. Thus OW reads the serpent's words as "your mind [νοῦς] will be sobered [νήφειν]" (119:1), an interpretation which was surely suggested to a careful exegete on the basis of Gen. 3:7, "And the eyes of both of them were opened, and they *knew*. . ."

Another method of exegesis involved the interpretation of one text by means of another. An example has already been given which involves adding a detail from Ezek. 28:14 to the description of Paradise. Another example is provided in 116:20 ff. "Let us teach him [Adam] in his sleep as though [ὥς] she came to be from his rib so that woman will serve [ὑποτάσσειν] and he will be lord over her." The exegesis in this case takes into account two difficulties. On the one hand, the Gnostic found it hard to understand the rib episode in Gen. 2:21 ff. On the other hand, it was equally difficult for the Gnostic to see why the act of eating from the tree of knowledge—a positively good act for the Gnostic—in which both Adam and Eve participated jointly should result in subjecting one to another as stated in Gen. 3:16. Nevertheless, within his world women were apparently subjected to men. All these problems are solved by exegeting Gen. 2:21 ff. in the light of Gen. 3:16.

These are some of the more frequent methods of exegesis found in the text of OW. There are undoubtedly a number of other methods employed in this text, awaiting the research of scholars who are thoroughly familiar with the exegetical techniques of the first two centuries of the Christian era.

The exegetical methods illustrated thus far are not peculiar to this text. Although the author may have understood and approved of most of the exegesis discussed up to this point, it is probable that most of the exegetical work had been done on this material before he inherited it in his sources. At one point, the author appears to have made his own exegetical contribution. A type of allegorical interpretation was well known to the author. He applied it to non-biblical material in the phoenix passage (122:2 ff.), arguing that the three phoenixes stand for three races of men and three baptisms.

The two bulls in Egypt also contain a mystery (*μυστήριον*), apparently representing the sun and the moon. With regard to biblical exegesis, the author seems to make the equation light = fire = *πνεῦμα* in such a way that he understands the appearance of light in Gen. 1:3 to stand for the advent of pneumatic Adam.²⁰ The author's doctrine of three Adams is discussed below.

There are two groups of presuppositions with which the author of OW approaches the text. The first group of presuppositions the author shares with other Gnostic exegetes. There are at least three of these: 1) a basic assumption that the biblical text contains knowledge about the true character of God and man; 2) an assumption that baser powers of the universe are also exposed therein in accord with truth about their nature; and 3) a reluctance to predicate anything inferior of the true God. The second group of presuppositions are those which are peculiar to this text. Two of these are particularly significant: 1) the author brings to the text a prefabricated, tripartite anthropology; and 2) the author has a strong aniconic view which resulted in a peculiar exegesis of Gen. 1:26.

The assumption that the biblical text contains knowledge about the true character of God and man led to a respect for the text and an assiduous attempt to interpret it skillfully in order to demonstrate the wisdom which it contained. This perspective, which in many ways parallels that of Philo, stands in contrast to a rabbinic attempt to find within the Old Testament texts a basis for legislation or the attempt of Qumran sectaries to discover a prophetic message outlining details of their own eschatological time of crises.

The Gnostic writers, of course, had more than one perspective on scripture. They knew how to exploit a proof-text in order to buttress theological assumptions which appear to have arisen elsewhere. Nevertheless, there are two texts—Genesis 2–3 and Isa. 45:18(?)—which the Gnostics quote in a manner which indicates that the text itself had unique authority within Gnostic circles rep-

20. The author's understanding of Gen. 1:3 is somewhat complex. He apparently began his work on the basis of the homograph *φῶς* which means both "light" and "man." When he read *φῶς* as "man" in that passage, however, he did not give up the meaning "light." The result was his "Light-Adam." The question which next needs to be considered is, "How does Light-Adam come to stand for pneumatic-Adam?" and the answer is to be sought in the general Gnostic tendency to symbolize *pneuma* in terms of fire or light.

resented by AJ, OW, and HA. The fact that AJ, OW, and HA represent different strains within Gnosticism simply proves that these two passages of Scripture exercised authority within a rather broad segment of Gnosticism, an observation that should be confirmed and amplified as more texts from Nag⁷ Hammadi are published.

AJ, OW, and HA each exegete Genesis 2–3 in different ways, but in each case the text of Genesis 2–3 appears to be a given factor, a text which they cannot ignore or in any way pass by. They must stop and exegete it. They are forced to take it seriously because it is a real source of wisdom about the nature of man. In this respect their regard for the authority of the Old Testament appears to be as vigorous as that of their orthodox opponents.

With regard to the quotation from Isa. 45:18(?), the three tracts, AJ, OW, and HA, are equally emphatic. It appears in OW as a quotation placed in the mouth of the Archigenetor, "I am god and no other one exists apart from me" (103:12). This boast takes place "after the heavens established themselves and their powers" and is interpreted in all Gnostic texts as an act of hubris on the part of the Demiurge. Sometimes it is a boast made in partial ignorance, and sometimes it is made in open revolt, but its importance for the Gnostics cannot be denied. It is quoted three times in OW (103:12, 107:30, 112:28), twice in HA (86:30, 94:21) as well as once in AJ, where it is expanded in the light of Exod. 20:3–5 (cf. Deut. 5:7–9) to read, "I am a jealous God, beside me there is no other" (BG 44:14). There are several Old Testament passages which may be regarded as the source of this quotation. Compare Isa. 43:11; 44:6, 8; 45:21–22 or Hos. 13:4. The context of Isa. 45:18 (LXX version) is strikingly similar to that which is found in OW. It reads, "Thus says the Lord who made the heaven, this God who established the earth . . ." (*ἐγὼ εἶμι, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἕτι*). In a number of manuscripts the text is expanded to read *ἐγὼ εἶμι κύριος*. There are even Sahidic fragments which attest a reading *ὁ θεός* for the expanded *κύριος* and add *πλὴν ἐμοῦ* to the text. There is no justification for putting undue stress on the Sahidic manuscript tradition which provides a precise parallel to the Gnostic text, nor is there any need to insist on a precise parallel. The text in its simplest form would have been read by a Gnostic as the boast of the Demiurge, "the lord who made heaven."

The text of Isaiah may well have been understood by the Gnostics in the light of an exegetical tradition which began in Dan. 11:36 ff. where we read of a king who will magnify himself "above every god." The theme is resumed in II Thess. 2:3 ff. The text speaks of "the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God." The theme is carried one step further in the "Ascension of Isaiah" 4:2 ff., where it is reported that Beliar, who has ruled this world since it came into being, will descend and enter an earthly monarch who will boast, "I am God and before me there has been no other" (4:6). In light of this sort of exegetical development, it is not difficult to understand how a Gnostic theologian might come to interpret Isa. 45:18 as the boastful words of a Demiurge, who would certainly deserve to be punished at the end of this age.

The repeated appeal to this text in Gnostic circles²¹ suggests that this particular interpretation of the Old Testament text established something of a landmark in the history of Gnostic exegesis. Although the interpretation given to this text is understandable in view of earlier exegetical trends, it is nevertheless a bold interpretation, establishing the fact that the Old Testament contains unworthy statements made by the Demiurge as well as the truth about the nature of God and man. The exegete henceforth needed to discern between the good and evil which appeared in the biblical text. Thus Gnostic exegesis of the passage from Isaiah²² provided a manifesto encouraging the reader to have a wary eye for traces of the Demiurge lurking behind every text in the Old Testament.

Gnostic exegesis should not be considered in isolation at this point. Pseudepigraphic writings beginning with the *Book of Jubilees* tended to find fallen angels, Satan, Beliar, or Mastema behind

21. From the earlier Gnostics, an episode describing the Demiurge's boasting is preserved in Irenaeus' report on the Barbelo-Gnostics (*Adv. haer* I.29) and the Sethian-Ophites (*Adv. haer* I.30). In the first of these, the quotation is influenced by Exod. 20:3-5 and has strong parallels to AJ.

22. Since the statement of the Demiurge was influenced by Exod. 20:3-5 as early as the time of Irenaeus' contact with the Barbelo-Gnostics, the texts from Nag' Hammadi (AJ, HA, OW) must be used with caution in seeking to determine the precise text which has thus been reworked by the Gnostics. The earliest Gnostic texts dealing with the hybris of the Demiurge show evidence of conflating Old Testament passages.

most of the sins and human misfortunes of the Old Testament. *The Apocalypse of Moses*, for example, describes in some detail the manner in which Satan persuaded the serpent to serve as a vessel through which he might speak to Eve. In view of this it is hardly surprising to discover that the Gnostic writer of HA understood that a spiritual woman entered the serpent to speak with Eve.²³ In general, however, the Gnostic exegetes believed that the Old Testament contained information about inferior powers who came into being on this side of the veil which separates our cosmos from the pleroma. More orthodox(?) exegetes of the Old Testament believed that it bore witness to the works of Satan. Satan was implicated wherever there was wickedness, cruelty, or senseless suffering. The key to Gnostic exegesis is equally straightforward. A reference to some inferior deity is recognizable wherever something inferior is predicated of a deity. One of the clearest presuppositions of the Gnostics is the assumption that nothing inferior could ever be attributed to the highest deity. In so much as the created world falls short of perfection it cannot be either the work or the will of the highest deity. The highest deity cannot be ignorant, jealous, angry, or vengeful. In fact any anthropomorphism is considered degrading. The Gnostic god doesn't love anyone.

In order to set this Gnostic position in perspective it is helpful to begin with Philo. In dealing with the problem of relating a transcendent deity to the created world, Philo appealed to both the Divine Reason (Logos) and the "Powers" of God. According to Philo, two of the "Powers" are represented by the divine names "God" and "Lord," names which designate his goodness and sov-

23. For the Gnostics it was a good thing for Eve to eat the fruit of Gnosis. Therefore, a good power, "spiritual woman," entered the serpent. *The Apocalypse of Moses* is more orthodox in viewing the eating of the fruit as harmful to man. Thus the author understood that an evil power, Satan, entered the serpent. In describing the manner whereby the power came to enter the serpent, however, the author of *The Apocalypse of Moses* permits his imagination free rein in order to fill in the dialogue between the serpent and Satan, as Satan tricks the serpent into permitting the use of his body. In OW, the writer simply states that the "spiritual woman" entered the serpent. Behind both interpretations, however, there is probably a similar assumption. If the serpent was able to speak with man in such a way that he could be understood, it was only possible through the agency of a higher power which had entered the serpent.

In OW the basic identity of "the one who is wiser than (*παρά*) all of them" is "the instructor." It is only of secondary significance that "he was called the wild beast (*θηρίον*)" (118:25-26). Therefore it is not surprising that the "instructor" should speak in his own right.

ereignty. In two passages, however, Philo charges the "Powers" with the creation of evil (see *De Opificio Mundi* 73–75 and *De Fuga* 65–72). In both cases Philo attempts to exegete Gen. 1:26, "Let us make man in our image." He explains that Moses used the plural to indicate that God was holding parley with his "Powers." God who created the rational, ruling part of the soul considered it proper that his subservient powers create the subservient, mortal portion of the soul. Philo then adds a second reason for the plural. Since the human soul is open to conceptions of both good and evil, it is not fitting that a God who is totally good should create it alone. The text continues, "Therefore he considered it necessary to distribute the creating of evil (things) to other craftsmen [δημιουργοῖς]" (*De Fuga* 70).

Philo, the Platonist, has thus exegeted Gen. 1:26 in terms of the doctrine found in *Timaeus*. His great concern for the transcendent goodness of God has led him to state his own position so sharply that the "craftsmen" in this text receive an independent status which enables them to bear the responsibility for an action which is too degrading to predicate of God. Gnostic exegesis involves carrying a number of the separate notions expressed in Philo to their logical conclusions. Philo would never have named Yahweh and Elohim as the creators of evil. The context in which he identifies them as "Powers" of God is separated from the passages in which he assigns the creation of evil to the "Powers." Nevertheless, the world view which Philo reflects was shared by many others so that it was simply a matter of time until some unknown scholar who was working with similar data and presuppositions would make the sort of judgment which Philo did not care to make, giving rise to a type of exegesis which is characteristically Gnostic.

Once a first step was made, everything within the text confirmed the inferiority of the "Powers" discussed in Genesis 2–3. In the mind of the Gnostic exegete, God did not want man to eat of the tree of knowledge and become "like the gods" because he was "jealous" (OW 119:5). When Adam hid, the archon had to ask, "Adam where are you?" because he didn't know (HA 90:20 ff.). The archons cursed the serpent because they were powerless to do anything else (OW 120:5, 6). Straightforward exegesis of the text clearly reveals the inferiority of the deities described there. It was

obvious to the Gnostic exegete that Yahweh and Elohim were inferior powers. A literal reading of the text reveals that they were petty, jealous, and even hostile to man.

In addition to the exegetical presuppositions shared with other Gnostic writers, the author of OW has certain unique views. These may be illustrated by a discussion of two passages in the tractate. The first of these reads as follows:

Moreover the first Adam of the light is pneumatic [πνευματικός]. He appeared on the first day. The second Adam is Psychic [ψυχικός]. He appeared on the fourth day, which is called "Aphrodite." The third Adam is Choic [χοϊκός], i. e. "man of law" [-νομος]. He appeared on the eighth day, i. e. "the rest [ἀνάπαυσις] of the poverty," which is called "sunday" [ἡμέρα ἡλίου]. (117:28–118:2)

This understanding is obviously based on the presupposition that man is a tripartite creature: pneumatic, psychic, and choic. There is also a reference to a span of eight days. In order to interpret this passage it is worth recalling that as early as the *Book of Jubilees* there was developed a scheme for reading Genesis 1–2 in sequence. The author of that work considers the creative activity described in Gen. 1:1–2:3 to be a description of the events of the first seven days whereas Gen. 2:4 ff. describes events which began on the eighth day. Although it would have been logical to place the creation of man "of the dust from the ground" (Gen. 2:7) on the eighth day, *Jubilees* brushes over the fact that there are two accounts of the creation of man by accepting the view that man was created in the first week and ignoring Gen. 2:7 (*Jubilees* 3). By the time of Philo, however, the two different accounts of creation are explained. The creation of 1:27 is the creation of a heavenly man, man viewed as a "genus" consisting of both male and female, and the account of 2:7 deals with the creation of an earthly man, an individual man who is molded of clay. Thus the number of Adams has grown to two. If one were to apply the chronology of *Jubilees* to the system of Philo he would conclude that the first Adam was created on the sixth day and the second Adam was created on the eighth day. The author of OW adds yet another Adam. Moving backward from the choic Adam, who was created on the eighth day, he rein-

interpreted the Adam of 1:27 as a psychic, and then he discovered an earlier pneumatic Adam in Gen. 1:3 created on the first day. For reasons of his own—perhaps just a sense of balance—he moved the creation of psychic Adam, who is mentioned in Gen. 1:27, from the sixth day to the fourth day.

The Gnostic author of OW seems to have been motivated by a presupposition that man is a tripartite creature. He sought to confirm this opinion by means of an allegorical interpretation of Gen. 1:3. Within the Gnostic world view the equation Light = Fire = Pneuma is so widely understood that it was possible to see in the first appearance of light a reference to the advent of pneumatic Adam. On the basis of such an equation, the author of OW replaces the terse Hebrew phrase “and God said ‘let there be light,’ and there was light,” with a rather lengthy paraphrase, “‘If someone exists before me, let him appear in order that we might see his light.’ And immediately, behold a light came out of the eighth, which is above. It passed through all of the heavens of the earth. When the archigenetor [ἀρχιγενέτωρ] saw the light, that it was beautiful [and] radiant, he was amazed. And he was very much ashamed. When the light appeared, a human likeness, which was very wonderful, was revealed within it” (107:36–108:9). Despite the poetic expansion, it is still possible to see that this text is based on Gen. 1:3.

A second passage which reveals a unique presupposition of this author is the passage in which he deals with Gen. 1:26. This follows the episode which describes the hybris of the Demiurge and the appearance of the heavenly light. When the archons saw Light-Adam, they recognized him as one who destroyed their work. They immediately questioned the Demiurge, who replied:

“Yes, if you desire that he not be able to destroy our work [ἔργον], come, let us create a man from the earth according to [κατά] the image [εἰκόν] of our body [σῶμα] and according to the likeness of that [one], and let him serve us in order that whenever that one sees his likeness and loves it he will no longer [οὐκέτι] destroy our work [ἔργον], but [ἀλλά] those who are begotten by the light we will make serve us through all the time [χρόνος] of this eon [αἰών].” (112:32–113:5)

In passing, it may be noted that this text provides an additional example of early attempts to interpret the text by means of conflation. Man is here said to be created in an image and likeness, which is in agreement with Gen. 1:26, but the text also reports that he is “from the earth,” a detail taken from Gen. 2:7. The same type of conflation is attested in HA (87:23), a fact which suggests that a conflated form of the text came to the author of OW in his sources. Actually it is here somewhat out of place in the text of OW, since the molding (πλάσσειν) of man, which corresponds to Gen. 2:7, is not discussed in OW until 114:29 ff.

Excluding the reference to Gen. 2:7, the quotation cited above reveals several themes which are significant for the author of the tractate. He understood that man contained within himself both good and evil. The theme appears in the quotation just cited as well as elsewhere in the tractate. It is described in many different ways. In mythological terms, the author understood that man was subjected to afflictions at the hand of his zoomorphic (θηρίον, μορφή) makers (πλάστης), whose form he shared. Nevertheless, the gift of illumination from on high, which came as the result of eating the fruit of Gnosis, enabled him to loathe (σικχαίνειν) his makers (119:11–19). Man is the scene of a cosmic drama, for it is within man that heavenly Gnosis confronts and rebukes the powers of this world. On the basis of his exegesis of Gen. 1:26, the author of this tractate was able to show that man is ontologically structured in conformity with his special role in that drama. On the one hand, he is created in the likeness of the heavenly Light-Adam, while on the other hand, he is created in the image of the powers of this world.

Several factors are involved in the author’s strange exegesis, which separates the likeness from the image. The writer is obviously conditioned by his own dualistic presupposition about the nature of man. Within Gen. 1:26, however, the Gnostic imagination was stimulated by the plural possessive pronoun in the Greek text: ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον κατ’ εἰκόνα ἡμέτερον καὶ καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν. A Gnostic exegete would find it difficult to think of the supreme, unknown god as a plurality. Therefore it was obvious to him that the biblical text referred to the “image” of lesser beings. An intense aniconic feeling in certain circles may have encouraged placing a

negative value on the word *εἰκών*. The reason for treating *ὁμοίωσις* as a positive term is a bit more elusive. It is difficult to believe that the Gnostics were so ignorant of Greek as to be unaware of the fact that the plural pronoun might also apply to the “likeness.” No, they purposely read the text as they did because of their presupposition about the nature of man. They were certainly encouraged to give a positive value to the “likeness” by the LXX reading of Gen. 5:3, where we are told that Adam begot Seth: *κατὰ τὴν ἰδέαν αὐτοῦ, καὶ κατὰ τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ*. In this text the dualistic structure of man, who was created in Gen. 1:26, is passed on from Adam to Seth, but the word *ἰδέα* has been substituted for *ὁμοίωσις*. In the Massoretic text, the same words are used in Gen. 1:26 and 5:3, “image” (*šēlem*) and “likeness” (*d²mūth*). Speculation as to why the LXX translated *d²mūth* as *ἰδέα* in Gen. 5:3 would lead us too far astray, but it is certainly safe to assume that the Gnostic exegete would be inclined to understand the term *ἰδέα* in light of hellenistic reinterpretation of Platonic philosophy. That would explain the Gnostic readiness to postulate a transcendent origin for the *ἰδέα* / *ὁμοίωσις*, “likeness” in man.

Once the basic structure of man has been confirmed through exegesis of Gen. 1:26, the author expands on the biblical account, explaining that the archons made man in their “image” and according to the “likeness” of Light-Adam so that he (Light-Adam) might be enticed by means of his own likeness to refrain from destroying the work of the archons. Thus “their moulded image [*πλάσμα*] became a hedge for the light” (113:9–10). The scheme of the archons failed, however, because the heavenly man is destined to “appear in the presence of his likeness and condemn them [the archons] by [means of] their moulded image [*πλάσμα*].” Why does man have to have a nature inherited from both the archons of this world and the heavenly man? It is because the primary task of man in the world is to repudiate the archons. He must participate in that which is from above because the archons can only be repudiated by a higher power. Man must also participate in that which belongs to the archons because he is the agent of a peculiar justice which demands that the archons be repudiated by means of their own work. At this point, however, the Gnostic theology has gone far beyond simple exegesis.

APPENDIX

In the texts which follow, a | is used to indicate the end of a line of Coptic text. Every fifth line is indicated by ||.

Excerpt from “The Hypostasis of the Archons”

(88:11) After | these (things) the Spirit (*πνεῦμα*) saw the psychic (*ψυχικός*) man | upon the earth. And the Spirit (*πνεῦμα*) came out of | the steel-like earth (*ἀδαμάντινη*). He (the Spirit) descended and dwelt ||¹⁵ within him, and that man became a | living soul (*ψυχή*). He called his name Adam because (*γάρ*) | he was found moving upon the earth. A voice | came out of the Incomprehensibility for the help (*βοήθεια*) of Adam.

And then the Archons assembled ||²⁰ all of the beasts (*θηρίον*) of the earth and | all of the birds of the sky, and they brought them to Adam | in order to see what Adam would call them | (and) in order that he might name each of the birds | and all of the cattle. (Then) they took Adam ||²⁵ and left him in Paradise in order that he might work | it and guard it. And the Archons commanded | him, saying, “From | [every] tree which is in Paradise you may eat. | But (*δέ*) from the tree of knowledge of ||³⁰ good and evil, don’t eat! and don’t (*οὐδέ*) | [touch] it! because (on) the day which you eat | of it you will surely die.” They | [say] this to [Adam] but they do not know what it is | [which they have spoken] to him. But (*ἀλλά*) by the will of ||^{89:1} the Father they said this in this manner so that | it might be eaten, and Adam might see them, esteeming them | as material (beings) (*ὕλικός*).

The Archons took counsel together | and said, “Come, let us bring a ||⁵ sleep upon Adam.” And (then) he slept |—but (*δέ*) the sleep is the ignorance which | they brought upon him—and (then) he slept. They laid open | his rib like a living woman. | And they (re)built his side with flesh (*σάρξ*) ||¹⁰ in its place.

And (then) Adam came to be | wholly psychic (*ψυχικός*). And (then) the spiritual (*πνευματική*) woman | came to him. She spoke with him and said | “Arise, Adam.” And when he saw her | he said, “You are the one who gave me life; ||¹⁵ you will be called ‘the mother of the living’ | because she is my mother, (and) she is the physician | and the wife and the one who gave birth.” |

Then (*δέ*) the Authorities (*ἐξουσία*) came to their Adam | But (*δέ*) when they saw his companion-likeness (fem.) speaking with ||²⁰ him, they were greatly agitated, | and they loved her. They said to one another, | “Come, let us cast our seed (*σπέρμα*) | upon her.” They pursued (*διώκειν*) her, and | she laughed at them because of their ||²⁵ senselessness and their blindness. And (then) she became a tree | beside them. She left her shadow | before them, and they defiled it | in an abominable

manner. And they polluted the seal (*σφραγίς*) | of her voice in order that (*ἵνα*) they might be themselves condemned ||³⁰ by means of their moulded image (*πλάσμα*) of her | likeness.

Then (*δέ*) the spiritual (*πνευματική*) woman came [into] | the serpent, the Instructor (masc.). And he instructed [them], | saying, "What did [he say] to you? 'From every tree in ||³⁵ Paradise you may eat, [but (*δέ*) from the tree] ||^{90:1} of knowledge of evil and good | don't eat!' " The woman of flesh (*σαρκική*) said, | "He not only (*οὐ μόνον*) said, 'Don't eat,' but (*ἀλλά*) | 'Don't touch it because in the day which you ||⁵ eat of it you will surely die.'" | And the serpent, the Instructor (masc.), said, | "You will surely not die since (*γάρ*) he said this to you | in jealousy (*φθονεῖν*), but rather (*μᾶλλον*) your eyes will be opened | and you will become like the gods, ||¹⁰ knowing evil and good." | And (then) the Instructor (fem.) was removed from the serpent, | and she left him alone as an earthly (creature). |

And the woman of flesh (*σαρκική*) took from the tree, | and she ate, and she gave to her husband also. ||¹⁵ And the psychic (beings) (*ψυχικός*) ate, and their baseness (*κακία*) | was exposed within their ignorance. And | they knew that they were naked with respect to that which is of the Spirit (*πνευματικόν*). They took fig leaves and bound them | on their loins. Then (*τότε*) the Chief ||²⁰ Archon came, and said, "Adam, where are you?" | since (*γάρ*) he was not aware of what happened. | And Adam said, "I heard your voice, and I was | afraid because I was naked, and I hid." | The Archon said, "Why did you hide? unless perchance ||²⁵ (*εἰμήτι*) you ate from the tree | (concerning) which I ordered you, 'Don't eat | of it alone!' and (then) you ate." | Adam said, "The woman whom you gave to me, [she gave] to me, and I ate." And the Wilful (one) (*αὐθάδης*) ||³⁰ of the Archons cursed the woman. (Then) the woman said, | "The serpent is the one who enticed (*ἀπατᾶν*) me, and I ate." |

[And (then) they (the Authorities) came] to the serpent and cursed his shadow | [but (*δέ*) they were] powerless since they did not know | that it was (only) a moulded image (*πλάσμα*). From that day ||^{91:1} the serpent came to be under the curse of the Authorities (*ἐξουσία*) | until the perfect (*τέλειος*) man comes. | (As For) that curse, it came upon the serpent. (Then) they turned | to their Adam and seized him and cast him and his wife out of ||⁵ Paradise.

Excerpt from "On the Origin of the World"

(114:24) But (*δέ*) in ||²⁵ that time (*καιρός*), then (*τότε*) the Archigenetor | gave a decree (*γνώμη*) to those who were with him concerning | the man. Then (*τότε*) each one of them cast | his seed (*σπέρμα*) on the midst of the navel of the | earth. From that day, the seven ||³⁰ Archons moulded (*πλάσσειν*) the man. His body (*σῶμα*) (+*μέν*) | is like their body (*σῶμα*), but (*δέ*) his likeness is | like the man who appeared to them. | His moulded image (*πλάσμα*) came to be according to (*κατά*) a part (*μέρος*)

of each one. Their (*δέ*) chief created ||³⁵ the brain (*εὐκέφαλον*) and the marrow. Afterward | he appeared as (*ὡς*) (the one) before him. He became ||^{115:1} a psychic (*ψυχικός*) man, and they called | him "Adam," i. e. "the father," according to (*κατά*) | the name of the one who was before him. But (*δέ*) after | Adam was completed, he left him in a vessel (*σκεῦος*) since he had ||⁵ received a form (*μορφή*) like the miscarriage, having no spirit (*πνεῦμα*) in him. | Because of this deed, when the Chief Archon | remembered the word of Pistis, he was afraid | lest perhaps (*μήπως*) the true (man) come into | his moulded image (*πλάσμα*) and rule over it. Because of this he ||¹⁰ left his moulded image (*πλάσμα*) forty days without (*χωρίς*) | psyche (*ψυχή*) and he withdrew (*ἀναχωρεῖν*), and left him.

But (*δέ*) in the | forty days Zoe-Sophia sent | her breath into Adam, who had no psyche (*ψυχή*). He began to (*ἄρχεσθαι*) move upon the earth ||¹⁵ And he was not able to rise . . . (Line 115:15-30 contains a description of the Archons' concern at seeing Adam move. When they questioned him, he responded in such a way as to give them rest.)

(115:31) Sophia | sent Zoe, her daughter, who is called | "Eve," as (*ὡς*) an instructor in order that she might | raise up Adam, in whom there is no psyche (*ψυχή*) ||³⁵ so that those whom he would beget might become | vessels (*ἀγγεῖον*) of the light. When ||^{116:1} Eve saw her companion-likeness cast down, she | pitied him, and she said, "Adam, live! | rise up upon the earth!" | Immediately, her | word became a work (*ἔργον*), for (*γάρ*) when Adam ||⁵ rose up, immediately he opened his eyes | When he saw her, he said, "You will be called | 'the mother of the living' because you are the one who | gave life to me."

Then (*τότε*) the authorities (*ἐξουσία*) were informed | that their moulded image (*πλάσμα*) was alive, and had raised up. ||¹⁰ They were very agitated, and they sent seven | archangels to see that which had come to be. They came | to Adam. When they saw Eve speaking with | him they said to one another, "What is this (female) | light being? for truly (*καὶ γάρ*) she is like the likeness which ||¹⁵ appeared to us in the light. Now, | come! let us seize her and let us cast | our seed (*σπέρμα*) on her so that if she is polluted | she will not be able to go up to her light, | but (*ἀλλά*) those whom she will produce will serve (*ὑποτάσσειν*) ||²⁰ us. But (*δέ*) let us not tell Adam because he is not | from us, but (*ἀλλά*) let us bring a sleep | upon him. And let us teach him in his | sleep as though (*ὡς*) she came to be from | his rib so that the woman will serve (*ὑποτάσσειν*) ||²⁵ and he will be lord over her.

Then (*τότε*) Eve, being | a power (*δύναμις*), laughed at their purpose (*γνώμη*). | She darkened their eyes. She left | her likeness there stealthily beside Adam. She entered | the Tree of Gnosis. She remained there, ||³⁰ but (*δέ*) they followed her. It appeared | to them that she had entered the tree and became | tree. But (*δέ*) when they came to be in a great | fear, the blind ones ran away. Afterward | when they sobered (*νήφειν*) up from their sleep, they came ||³⁵ to Adam, and when they saw the likeness of that one ||^{117:1} with him, they were agitated, thinking that this |

was the true (*ἀληθινή*) Eve. And they acted recklessly (*τολμᾶν*). They came to her; they seized her, and they | cast their seed (*σπέρμα*) upon her. They did it ||⁵ villainously (*πανουργος*), polluting (her) not only (*οὐ μόνον*) | naturally (*φυσικῶς*), but (*ἀλλά*) corruptibly, | polluting the seal (*σφραγίς*) of her first voice, | which spoke with them, saying, "What is the (one) who exists | before you?" (They did this) in order that they might pollute those who say ||¹⁰ that they are begotten through the word | by means of of the true (*ἀληθινός*) man in the consummation (*συντέλεια*). | But they erred (*πλανᾶσθαι*), not knowing | that they were polluting their (own) body (*σῶμα*). It is the likeness | which the authorities (*ἐξουσία*) in every form polluted ||¹⁵ with (the aid of) their angels (*ἄγγελος*). (Line 117:15–118:16 reports that Abel was born to the Chief Archon and the other children of Eve to the seven Authorities. The author then continues to spell out his own peculiar theological conclusions, stating that Eve contained all seed in accord with Heimarmene. This is followed by his systematic description of the three Adams, who are created in eight days. At the end of this section, the Archons are again discussed. They stand before Adam in fear, suspecting that he might be the true man who blinded them.)

(118:16) Then (*τότε*) they | took counsel (*συμβούλιον*) among the seven. They came to | Adam and Eve fearfully (*φόβος*). They said to him | "Every tree which is in Paradise ||²⁰ whose fruit (*καρπός*) may be eaten, was created for you. But (*δέ*) the Tree | of Gnosis, beware! don't eat | from it. If you do eat, you will | die." After they gave them a great fright (*φόβος*) | they withdrew (*ἀναχωρεῖν*) up to their authorities (*ἐξουσία*). ||²⁵

Then (*τότε*) the one who is wiser than (*παρά*) all of them, | one who was called "the wild beast" (*θηρίον*), came. | And when he saw the likeness of their mother, | Eve, he said to her "What is it that god said to you? 'Don't eat from the tree ||³⁰ of Gnosis!' " She said, "He not only (*οὐ μόνον*) said, | 'Don't eat from it,' but (*ἀλλά*) 'Don't touch it lest (*ἵνα*) you die.'" He said | to her, "Don't be afraid. You will surely | not [die], for (*γάρ*) [he knows] that when you eat ||^{119:1} from it your mind (*νοῦς*) will be sobered (*νήφειν*) and | you will become like the gods, | knowing the distinctions (*διαφορά*) which exist between | the human evil (*πονηρός*) and the good (*ἀγαθός*). For (*γάρ*) he said ||⁵ this to you, being jealous (*φθονεῖν*) lest you eat from it." Then (*δέ*) Eve was confident (*θαρρεῖν*) of | the words of the Instructor, and she peered into | the tree. She saw that it was beautiful and | tall. She desired it, and took some of ||¹⁰ its fruit (*καρπός*) and ate. She gave to her | husband also, and he ate. Then (*τότε*) their mind (*νοῦς*) | was opened. For (*γάρ*) when they ate, the light | of Gnosis illuminated them. When they put | on shame, they knew that they were naked ||¹⁵ with regard to Gnosis. When they sobered up (*νήφειν*) they saw themselves, | that they were naked, and they loved one another. | When they saw their makers (*πλάστης*), since they were | wild animal (*θηρίον*) forms (*μορφή*), they loathed (*σικχαίνειν*) them.

Then (*τότε*) when the Archons knew that ||²⁰ they had transgressed (*παραβαίνειν*) their commandment (*ἐντολή*), they came in an earthquake | with a great threat (*ἀπειλή*) into | Paradise to Adam and Eve in order to see | the result (*ἀποτέλεσμα*) of the help (*βοήθεια*). Then (*τότε*) Adam and Eve were very much disturbed. ||²⁵ They hid under the trees which are in Paradise. | Then (*τότε*) the Archons did not know where they were. | They said, "Adam, where are you?" He said, "I am in | this place. But (*δέ*) because of your fear, I hid | when I was ashamed." But (*δέ*) they said to him, in ||³⁰ ignorance, "Who is the one who spoke to you of the shame which you put on unless (*εἰμήτι*) | you have eaten from the tree?" He said | "The woman whom you gave me, she is the one who | gave to me, and I ate." And (*δέ*) then (*τότε*) they said ||^{120:1} "What is this which you did?" She answered and said, "The Informer is the one who enticed me, and I | ate." Then (*τότε*) the Archons came to the Informer, | and their eyes were blinded by him. ||⁵ They were not able to do anything to him. They cursed | him since (*ὡς*) they were powerless. Afterward they came to | the woman, and they cursed her and her sons. After the woman they cursed Adam and the earth because of him | and the fruit (*καρπός*). And everything which they created ||¹⁰ they cursed. There is no blessing | from them. It is impossible that good (*ἀγαθόν*) be produced from | evil (*πονηρόν*).

From that day the authorities (*ἐξουσία*) | knew that truly (*ἀληθῶς*) the strong one is | before them. They would not have known except (*εἰμήτι*) that ||¹⁵ their command (*ἐντολή*) was not kept (*τηρεῖν*). They brought a great | envy into the world (*κόσμος*) only (*μόνον*) because of | the deathless man. But (*δέ*) when the Archons saw | their Adam, he came to be in another Gnosis | (and) they desired to test (*πειράζειν*) him. They gathered ||²⁰ all of the beasts and the wild animals (*θηρίον*) of the | earth and the birds of the heaven, and they brought them to | Adam in order that they might see what he would call them. | When he saw them, he named their | creatures (*κτίσμα*). They were troubled because Adam had sobered (*νήφειν*) ||²⁵ from all anguish (*ἀγωνία*). They gathered together and | took counsel (*συμβούλιον*). They said, "Behold, Adam | has become like one of us to | know the distinction (*διαφορά*) of the light and the | darkness. Now lest perhaps (*μήπως*) he be deceived in the manner of ||³⁰ the Tree of Gnosis, and he comes also | to the Tree of Life and eats from it | and becomes immortal and rules and condemns (*καταφρονεῖν*) | us and regards all our glories as folly | (and) afterward passes judgment (*κατακρίνειν*) on ||³⁵ us and the world (*κόσμος*), come let us cast him ||^{123:1} out of Paradise down upon the earth, | the place from whence he was brought so that he | will not be able henceforth to know anything more | about us." And thus they cast Adam and his wife ||⁵ out of Paradise. And this | which they did did not suffice them. But (*ἀλλά*) when they were frightened | they came to the Tree of Life and they set great terrors around it, fiery living (*ζῶον*) beings | called "Cherubin." And they left ||¹⁰ a flaming

sword in their midst, turning | continually in a great terror in order that
(ἵνα) no one among earthmen might ever enter to | that place (τόπος).

Excerpt from "The Apocryphon of John"

(Line 58:1-12 contains a discussion of the role of the serpent. It was his desire to withdraw the power which was found within Adam, and it is at this point that the present excerpt begins. The Christ is speaking.)

(58:12) And (then) | he cast a BSHE (n.b. this Coptic word can mean either "sleep" or "forgetfulness.") over | Adam. I said to him, ||¹⁵ "O Christ, what is the BSHE?" Then (δέ) he | said, "(It is) not as (κατά) | Moses said, 'He | caused him to sleep,' but (ἀλλά) he | covered over his perception (αἰσθησις) ||²⁰ with a covering and he made him dull through ||^{59:1} the lack of perception (ἀναισθησία). For truly (καί γάρ) | he spoke through the prophet (προφήτης) | saying, 'I will make dull | the ears of their hearts (= minds) lest ||⁵ they perceive (γνοῖν) and see.' " |

Then (τότε) the Thought (fem.) (ἐπίνοια) of the | light hid within him, and by | his will he desired to bring her | out of the rib. But (δέ) (as for) her, the ||¹⁰ Thought (ἐπίνοια) of the light, since | she is unattainable, when the darkness pursued | her it did not catch her. (Then) he (the serpent) desired | to bring the power out of him (Adam) | to make once more a moulded image (πλάσις) ||¹⁵ with a feminine form (μορφή). And he set (her) up before him. | (It was) not as (κατά) Moses said, "He took a rib (and) created the woman beside him." ||²⁰

Immediately, he was sobered (νήφειν) from | the drunkenness of the darkness, (and) ||^{60:1} the Thought (ἐπίνοια) of the light | removed the covering which was over his heart (= mind). | Immediately, as soon as he knew | his substance (οὐσία) he said, "This ||⁵ now is bone of my | bone and flesh (σάρξ) of | my flesh (σάρξ)." Therefore man will leave his father | and his mother and cleave to ||¹⁰ his wife and the two of them will become | one flesh (σάρξ). Because they will be sent forth | from the consort (σύζυγος) of the mother, and she will be established, therefore Adam named her, "the mother of all the living."

(The text used in this excerpt is that of the *Coptic Papyrus Berolinensis* 8502.)