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Treasure Hidden in a Field: Early Christian Exegesis of the Gospel of Matthew

Jorgensen, David William

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TREASURE HIDDEN IN A FIELD: EARLY CHRISTIAN EXEGESIS OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

David William Jorgensen

A DISSERTATION
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IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE
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Abstract

This dissertation is an integrated reception history of one of the early church's foundational documents, the Gospel according to Matthew. The project eschews traditional constructions of the boundaries of the church along retrospectively orthodox and heretical lines, in favor of a model that imagines the second- and third-century *ekklēsia* engaged in a struggle for the right to assert the label of orthodoxy. From this point of view, what would eventually become the center cannot be adequately understood without attending to groups and individuals that were later depicted by the ecclesiastical authorities as always having been on the margins. Therefore, this study shows how in the second and third centuries, the Valentinians were important contributors to a shared culture of early Christian exegesis of shared foundational documents. The dissertation examines the use of Matthew's Gospel in the Valentinian texts the *Gospel of Truth, Interpretation of Knowledge,* and Ptolemy's *Epistle to Flora,* as well as Irenaeus' *Against the Heresies,* Tertullian's *Prescription Against Heretics,* and the *Stromata* of Clement of Alexandria.

This approach illuminates a number of aspects of the history of the early church. I argue for a critical reevaluation of the false dichotomy between "orthodox" and "heretical" exegetical method, showing how Valentinian and patristic authors often apply the same innovative reading strategies to the same scriptural passages. I further argue that Valentinian exegetes made their own, unique contributions to what would become Christian orthodoxy, in two areas in particular: the application of allegorical interpretation to the New Testament, and a complex explanation of the historical and theological relationship between Judaism and Christianity. The project additionally deepens our knowledge of Irenaeus' grasp of Greco-Roman rhetoric, and of Valentinian cosmogonic

speculation. As the first monograph-length study of Valentinian exegesis of the Gospel of Matthew, it contributes to recent scholarship on Valentinian ethics and ecclesiology, matters with which Matthew's Gospel was particularly concerned. Finally, the project enriches our understanding of the process by which the Gospel of Matthew came to be thought of as Scripture, and thus put on the path to eventual canonization within the New Testament.

This dissertation is dedicated

to my mother, Marilyn Morgan Jorgensen,

and to the memory of my father, William Roy Jorgensen.

You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.
The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite,
and He bends you with His might that His arrows may go swift and far.

~ Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*

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Abbreviations

ANF	*Ante-Nicene Fathers*
BDAG	Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.* 3rd ed. Chicago, 2000
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LTK	*Lexicon für Theologie und Kirche*
LSJ	Liddell, H. G., R. Scott, H. S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon.* 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford, 1996
NPNF1	*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* Series 1
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
PGL	*Patristic Greek Lexicon.* Edited by G. W. H. Lampe. Oxford, 1961
RHPR	*Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses*
SC	Sources chrétiennes. Paris: Cerf, 1943–
VC	*Vigiliae Christianae*
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.* Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976
TLG	*Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*
ZAC	*Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum*
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*
ZTK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

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concerned with heresiology, gnostic and other esoteric traditions, and problems of nomenclature and categorization. These books have remained constant companions and friends along this long journey. I would be remiss if I did not extend my warm thanks to Donald Ostrowski and Stephen Mitchell at Harvard, and Reverend Thomas Mikelson, all of whom nurtured and encouraged me along this path.

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The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone discovered and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all he has and buys that field.

~ Matthew 13.44

Christ is the treasure that was hidden in the field... the treasure hidden in the Scriptures was Christ, since he was indicated by types and parables.

~ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 4.26.1

Inventio is the discovery of valid or seemingly valid arguments to render one's cause plausible.

~ Cicero, *De inventione* 1.7.9

I. Introduction

1. "Wicked Interpreters of Well-Said Words"

In about the year 180 C.E., Irenaeus, a leader of a Christian church in Lyons, began writing a treatise that would eventually swell to five lengthy volumes. He entitled his work *A Refutation and Overthrow of "Knowledge," Falsely So Called,* although it is now usually known by its shorter, Latin title, *Adversus Haereses (Against the Heresies).* In its pages, he condemned other Christians whom he knew personally for maliciously and intentionally twisting the words of the Scriptures to fit their own opinions. Irenaeus opens his treatise against them with the charge that "by falsifying the words of the Lord, they show themselves to be wicked interpreters of well-said words,"[1] and he identifies the opponents he so vociferously attacks throughout the treatise as "Valentinians," or, more precisely, the followers of Valentinus, an influential Christian active in Rome a generation before Irenaeus, circa 140-160 C.E. These others, he says, are clever, manipulating liars, wolves in sheep's clothing, out to deceive and destroy the church from within – and while other heretics have surfaced before, these are the most wily and nefarious yet encountered. Nevertheless, comfort is at hand: for anyone who ignores the clever arguments of these heretical teachers, and reads the Scriptures carefully under the guidance of the properly ordained elders of the church, will find Christ within them, like "treasure hidden in a field" (Mt. 13.44).[2]

This dissertation takes as its starting point the fact that Irenaeus frames his feud with the Valentinians as one primarily over correct exegesis of Scripture. Foundational documents, whether they be religious writings or state constitutions, are often subjects of

[1] *Haer.* 1.prf.1. Translations of ancient texts are my own unless otherwise indicated.
[2] *Haer.* 4.26.1-2.

intense exegetical inquiry and heated debate. What do the interpreters of these documents do when their authors are no longer present to explain what they meant? What strategies do exegetes develop to resolve ambiguities – and how do exegetes proceed when they cannot even agree upon whether ambiguity exists in a disputed passage? Although ambiguities may be resolved by referring to other, clearer passages or documents, or underlying themes presumed to be evident, how can progress be made when the parties do not agree on what these themes are, or which additional texts to admit as testimony? If an outside arbiter is granted authority to interpret, such as a bishop or judge, what might be the grounds for agreeing upon whom to select, or the scope of their authority? And on what grounds are abstract notions such as "common sense," or "tradition," acceptable as evidence? In short, how shall we decide what a foundational text "means"?

This project is motivated by these underlying questions, which have widespread application. But more specifically, it is focused on a particular time and place: the second and third centuries in the Mediterranean basin, which witnessed the explosive growth of the Christian movement during the height of the Roman Empire. It is also focused on the interpretation of a particular foundational document: the Gospel according to Matthew, which vied only with John's as the most popular Christian gospel during this period. All of the Christians under examination in this project relied heavily on the Gospel of Matthew as an authoritative source for the words and deeds of Jesus, and sought in it clues that would give meaning to his violent death.

This dissertation, focused on second- and early third-century Christian exegesis of the Gospel of Matthew, brings selected Valentinian, patristic, and other early Christian texts into conversation with one another; indeed, they were already in close conversation with one another when they were written. All of these exegetes participated in a shared late

antique Christian culture of reading and writing. These authors knew and drew upon classical Greco-Roman rhetoric, the long tradition of Jewish allegorical interpretation of Scripture, and the earliest exegetical adaptations of the first few generations of Christians. By integrating Valentinian interpretation of Matthew's Gospel into the reception history of that Gospel in the early church, we may see more clearly the unity and diversity of the early Christian movement, the nature of Valentinian Christianity, the deployment of exegesis in the formulation of discourses of orthodoxy and heresy, and, finally, the early sacralization of the Gospel of Matthew, which was a necessary step towards its ultimate achievement of canonical status. More specifically, this approach allows me to make contributions to scholarship in the following five areas.

First, I argue for a critical reevaluation of the false dichotomy between "orthodox" and "heretical" exegesis, which is supposedly made manifest in the writings of the patristic and Valentinian authors, respectively, and of which Irenaeus allegedly provides a neutral description in *Against the Heresies*. At times, Valentinian interpretations of Matthean parables or sayings are closer than contemporaneous patristic interpretations to current scholarly understanding of the meanings of the parables or sayings in their Matthean contexts. If "orthodoxy" were only a matter of getting Scripture right, then these examples would show the Valentinians to be more orthodox than the "orthodox." Then again, at other times Valentinian interpretations may be shown to be quite close to patristic readings – all of which collectively deviate significantly from their Matthean meanings. Here we can say that the Valentinians are fully participating along with the recognized "church fathers" in begetting and fostering new and shared Christian meanings of a shared Christian Scripture. In addition, I show that, *pace* Irenaeus' infamous representation, there is very

little to differentiate Valentinian from patristic exegetical *method* – with a few important exceptions.

Those differences there are to be found between Valentinian and other early Christian exegesis lead me to my second area of contribution. Not only should we understand Valentinians as full-fledged members of a shared Christian culture of reading and writing, but at times we may even detect their unique contributions to what will become orthodox exegetical method and theology that the so-called fathers of the church subsequently adopted. I argue for this influence in two areas in particular. The first, one of exegetical method, is the application of allegorical reading strategies to the Gospel of Matthew and other texts that would become part of the New Testament. The second, one of exegetical content (that is, theology), is the recognition of the need for a sophisticated explanation of the historical and theological relationship between Judaism and Christianity. I argue for Valentinian influence upon Irenaeus, and through him subsequent Christian orthodoxy, in these two areas.

The third area of contribution follows from the second. I propose an answer to the historical question of whatever happened to the Valentinians, as they have largely disappeared from the historical record by the end of the fourth century. I suggest that as it was primarily their exegetical innovations that drew the ire of Irenaeus and other catholic Christian thinkers, once these innovations were adopted into the catholic exegetical tradition and became thought of as orthodox reading techniques, the Valentinians were *de facto* absorbed into the catholic church and ceased to be a discernible political force within intra-Christian exegetical debate.

If scholars investigating the reception history of the Gospel of Matthew in the second and third centuries have largely been unaware of, or have ignored, this gospel's

frequent citation by Valentinian authors, this scholarly neglect might perhaps be explained on the basis of the prevailing false dichotomy, described above, between "orthodox" and "heretical" authors in the historiography of the early church. But this dichotomy does not explain a parallel underappreciation among scholars engaged in Gnostic and Nag Hammadi studies, who have often either ignored, or taken for granted, Valentinian use of Matthew, even while giving careful attention to Valentinian use of John or Paul. Given the ubiquity of Matthean material in Valentinian exegesis, this gap in the scholarship is somewhat surprising.

Therefore, a fourth area of contribution is the correction of this oversight. This gap in the scholarship might be plausibly explained when we recall that the earliest generation of scholars who had access to the Nag Hammadi Codices were understandably guided by conceptions of Valentinians and other "gnostics" that were heavily influenced by patristic writers who had zeroed in on their opponents' esoteric cosmological speculations – which in turn the Valentinians had often derived from concepts found in the Gospel of John. More recently, however, there has been what we might call a "worldly turn" in Valentinian studies, in which scholarship has shifted its focus away from arcane cosmology and esoteric ritual, and towards practical ethics and ecclesiology.[3] Given the centrality of these issues to Matthew's Gospel, it should be no surprise that the latter served numerous early Christian readers, including Valentinians, as a popular source for grist for the exegetical mill.

This dissertation is the first monograph-length study devoted to Valentinian exegesis of the Gospel of Matthew. While attending to aspects of Valentinian cosmology

[3] The first significant proponent of this approach was Michel R. Desjardins, *Sin in Valentinianism* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990). More recently, two monograph-length studies focus in whole or in part on Valentinian ethics and/or ecclesiology: Ismo Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), and especially Philip L. Tite, *Valentinian Ethics and Paraenetic Discourse: Determining the Social Function of Moral Exhortation in Valentinian Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

and soteriology supported by their readings of Matthew, my focus on Matthew also allows me to contribute to our understanding of Valentinian ethics and ecclesiology.

Finally, the fifth area of contribution is the reception history of the Gospel of Matthew itself. In many cases, Valentinian exegetes are either among the first, or are indeed the very first, known utilizers of the Gospel of Matthew in ways that suggest they regarded it as a sacred text. By widening our field of view to include Valentinian exegetes in a study of the reception history of this gospel, we clarify our understanding of how it first came to be thought of as Scripture and thus put on the path to eventual canonization within the New Testament.

Thus a study of the early reception of the Gospel of Matthew among both the Valentinians and their catholic theological opponents is a needed contribution to the study of early Christianity. This dissertation takes an integrated approach to the reception of the Gospel of Matthew, viewing this foundational document as the common inheritance of multiple competing Christian interpreters of the second and third centuries, not as the root of orthodox theology from which heretics subsequently deviated via improper exegesis, but as contested territory over which multiple orthodoxies competed for exegetical victory.

Having outlined the project's topic and its contributions to scholarship, I now turn to a more detailed overview of Valentinian exegesis of apostolic texts, some notes on nomenclature and methodology, and, finally, a summary of the subsequent chapters.

2. Valentinian Exegesis of Apostolic Texts

Previous scholars have observed that the Valentinian literature, taken as a whole, exhibits an interest in the exegesis of texts that would come to be collected in the New Testament, especially the Pauline epistles and the Gospels of Matthew and John. The

Valentinians are the first authors in the historical record to have written commentaries on these texts (Heracleon's commentary on the Gospel of John, and Ptolemy's commentary on the Johannine prologue); and some of their other texts, which scholars classify as either homilies or hortatory epistles, include precise exegesis of what we might call the apostolic texts – "New Testament exegesis" being an anachronism in this period before the emergence of a New Testament canon. Valentinian exegesis of apostolic texts may be found in the homilies of Valentinus himself, Ptolemy's *Epistle to Flora*, the *Gospel of Truth,* the *Interpretation of Knowledge,* and others. In this respect, Valentinians had much in common with those Christian authors considered by later church tradition to be "orthodox" or the "fathers of the church."

This Valentinian exegetical activity tells us something more about how they perceived these texts, which would come to be considered canonical. Their interest in interpreting and expounding the Pauline epistles and the Gospels of John and Matthew indicates that they considered the latter texts authoritative, and worthy of close scrutiny and deep understanding. Yet it is easy to lose sight of Valentinian interest in these apostolic texts, for Irenaeus encourages us to do so. Writing in defense of the fourfold gospel, he tells us that:

> [T]he followers of Valentinus, living without any fear whatever, put forth their own writings and boast of having more gospels than there really are. Indeed, they have carried their boldness so far that they give the title *Gospel of Truth* to a book which they have but recently composed, and which agrees in no wise with the gospels of the apostles.[4]

This statement implies that the followers of Valentinus imbue their own compositions with as much apostolic authority as other, earlier gospels, which they nonetheless use as well. Yet if the *Gospel of Truth* found at Nag Hammadi is the same text

[4] *Haer.* 3.11.9; trans. Unger and Steenberg.

to which Irenaeus refers, as most scholars believe to be the case, then an examination of its contents reveals that the situation is somewhat more complicated. It is true that the *Gospel of Truth* is very different in form from the Gospels according to Matthew and John, but this is because, to use Kendrick Grobel's memorable phrase, it is "a meditation on the gospel,"[5] rather than a biographical narrative that records the ministry and passion of Jesus. Furthermore, it is highly dependent upon the Gospels according to Matthew and John, quoting or alluding to them extensively (see Chapter 3). Irenaeus is thus inviting us to compare apples and oranges.

Likewise, the Valentinian *Interpretation of Knowledge* is either a homily or an epistle that exhorts its readers by utilizing parables and teachings from the Gospel of Matthew and the Pauline epistles (see Chapter 4). Valentinian dependency on apostolic texts is even more evident in the short epideictic treatise known as the *Epistle to Flora,* which, while quoting verses from Paul, John, and especially Matthew, conforms to Greco-Roman rhetorical forms in much the same way as does Irenaeus' treatise *Against the Heresies* (see Chapters 2, 4, and 5). Therefore, these and other Valentinian works ought not to be compared to the apostolic gospels themselves, but should be compared to works of comparable genres by Irenaeus and other contemporary authors claiming the mantle of orthodoxy, in order to learn how these early Christians performed exegesis upon the same, shared apostolic texts.[6]

However, perhaps due to the influence of Irenaeus, scholars often think of the Nag Hammadi and related literature collectively as "Books That Did Not Make It Into The

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[5] Kendrick Grobel, ed. and trans., *The Gospel of Truth: A Valentinian Meditation on the Gospel* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1960).

[6] For an early proponent of this way of thinking, see Elaine Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis: Heracleon's Commentary on John* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1973).

New Testament," to be compared and contrasted with those canonical books that did.[7] Certainly the story of canonization is a fascinating and complex one, and I will touch upon some aspects of this story in this dissertation. But there is another story to be told here. By paying attention to the ways in which Valentinian authors utilized the same authoritative written gospels and epistles as did the "church fathers," we notice something else: all of these early Christians engaged in interpreting and expounding upon the theologies they believed to be contained in earlier texts authored by the first generation of apostles, especially Matthew, John, and Paul. From this shared foundation, they generated a large and ever-increasing corpus of Christian literature of various genres.

When the Valentinian corpus is examined, one thing that becomes apparent is that most of these texts contain a great number of quotations of, or allusions to, sayings, parables, and other Synoptic material, very often in their Matthean form. The ubiquity of Matthew in Valentinian sources was first noticed by Édouard Massaux. In his monumental study *Influence de l'Évangile de saint Matthieu sur la littérature chrétienne avant saint Irénée* (1950), he devotes one chapter to "Some Gnostic Writings" available to him in Greek prior to the publication of the Nag Hammadi Codices, including a small section on "Basilides and His Disciples," but devoting a second and far larger portion to "Valentinus and His School." Of the Valentinians, Massaux analyzes the writings of Valentinus, Ptolemy, and Heracleon; he omits only one major Greek text, the *Excerpts from Theodotus*, due to his hesitance to distinguish Theodotus' voice from that of Clement of Alexandria who quotes him. His conclusions, although framed within an umbrella category of "gnostics," are worth quoting at some length:

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[7] Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures: Books That Did Not Make It Into The New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

> If the Gnostics, in particular the Valentinians, paid particular attention to the [G]ospel of John, especially its Prologue, I must nevertheless point out that the Gospel of Matthew held for them a definitely *preferential* position... These conclusions imply that *the Gospel of Matthew must have been the gospel par excellence to refer to for the sayings of the Savior; it was recognized as the norm.* This observation is all the more significant when it has been established that neither Mark nor Luke has exerted a literary influence. The Gospel of Matthew was the solid ground upon which to start the exegesis of John or to set forth a teaching... Other than a definite influence of Matthew, but to a lesser degree, I must mention as well that the Gnostics undoubtedly knew and used the Pauline writings, which they quoted literally fairly often and which they used as an authority to confirm the exegesis of a text in John or the teaching in question. It is also interesting to note that, in some cases when they referred to the epistles of Paul, the Gnostics stated explicitly that they resorted to them, whereas they did not when they quoted even literally the Gospel of Matthew. This phenomenon is one more clue of the scope and major significance of the first gospel among these Gnostics: *Matthew was the source for a saying of the Savior and for his teachings, and there was no need to specify that they resorted to it,* for the Gospel of Matthew entirely superseded the other synoptics, provided they were even in existence in the Gnostic communities, because their influence was nil.[8]

Although Massaux arrived at these conclusions on the basis of his analysis of the Greek sources alone, his assessment of the general situation applies to the Coptic sources as well. In the years 1975-1995, the critical editions of the Nag Hammadi Codices were published, and in each volume the editors regularly indicated the scriptural citations they found or suspected, although almost always in footnotes or appendices, and without extensive commentary. In this practice they followed the editors of the critical editions of the Greek texts that had been available to Massaux.[9]

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[8] Édouard Massaux, *The Influence of the Gospel of Saint Matthew on Christian Literature before Saint Irenaeus,* trans. Norman J. Belval and Suzanne Hecht, ed. Arthur Bellinzoni (Macon, Ga: Mercer University Press: 1990), 2:289-290; emphasis added.

[9] Some additional analyses of individual texts' reliance upon the Synoptic tradition have appeared; e.g., Christopher M. Tuckett, "Synoptic Tradition in the *Gospel of Truth* and the *Testimony of Truth,*" *JTS* 35:1 (Apr. 1984): 131-145. However, there exists no comprehensive study devoted to this subject. Therefore, the lists produced by the various editors of the critical editions remain the best source of information on probable or possible citations or allusions to biblical material in the Nag Hammadi corpus.

These editorial notes reveal that Valentinian dependence upon Matthean sayings and imagery was vast. To be more specific, this data suggests the following:[10] (1) *All* of these Valentinian texts show some reliance on the Synoptic tradition to a lesser or greater degree; (2) material unique to Matthew appears in *many* of these texts; and (3) material unique to Mark or Luke is *rare or nonexistent* in *all* of these texts. With regard to the Synoptic material shared by two or three Synoptic Gospels, we may further observe that, at least in the opinion of some previous scholars, (4) *some* of these Valentinian texts can be shown to regularly rely on the Matthean form of *any* material with parallels in Mark or Luke (e.g. *Frag. Val, Flor., Gos. Truth*);[11] and (5) *some* of the other texts which do show some knowledge of another Synoptic still heavily favor Matthew (e.g. *Frag. Her.*[12] and *Exc.*,[13] both of which show knowledge of Luke). On the basis of the preceding five points, it seems that most or all of these texts not only rely on Matthew but prefer Matthew to the other Synoptics.

If we assume that the Valentinian texts are Christian texts, then this finding should come as no surprise, for, statistically speaking, the Gospel of Matthew was the most popular of the four canonical gospels in the first half of the second century, and remained the favored Synoptic Gospel among Christians in the second, third, and fourth centuries. This fact receives confirmation from a convergence of evidence from two independent sources: (1) the numbers of patristic citations of these gospels and (2) the papyrological record, both

[10] This analysis applies to the Valentinian corpus as defined subsequently.
[11] See Massaux, *Influence,* on the *Fragments of Valentinus* (2:267-8) and *Epistle to Flora* (2:279-89); and Tuckett, "Synoptic Tradition," on the *Gospel of Truth*.
[12] Clement, *Strom.* 4.9 [*Frag. Her.* 50], reports Heracleon giving an exegesis of a series of logia on martyrdom deriving from Mt. 10.32-33 and Lk. 12.8-12, yet Heracleon's explanation seems only to quote Matthew, not Luke. See Massaux, *Influence,* 2:268-79, esp. 275.
[13] E.g., *Exc.* 1.1-2 is an exegesis of Lk. 23.46, which has no Synoptic parallels.

of which show Matthew and John vying for popularity, followed by Luke, and then Mark.[14] It is not yet fully understood why this was the case, but the following brief sketch offers some plausible options.

One possibility is that in popular second-century Christian thinking, the Gospels according to Mark and Luke were deemed weak on one of the essential criteria for canonicity: their alleged apostolicity.[15] Once the authorial attributions had been affixed to the four most widely used gospels, the primacy of the Gospels according to Matthew and John by the later second century may in part have been due to their alleged authorship by members of the Twelve, in contrast to Mark's and Luke's derivative apostolic credentials, which were entirely based upon their assumed association with Peter and Paul, respectively.

This suggestion may seem surprising; after all, it is well known that Irenaeus accords the four gospels equal authority (*Haer.* 3.11.7-9), and his immediate predecessor Tatian had already demonstrated his own belief in the authority of these four, although in a radically different way, by his use of them as the sources for his harmonized gospel the *Diatessaron.* However, Tatian and Irenaeus are the first Christians known to explicitly give these four equal authority. Meanwhile, Tertullian, perhaps preserving an older view, distinguishes between Matthew and John, who were "apostles" *(apostoli),* and Mark and Luke, who were "apostolic men" *(apostolici);* i.e. they were not masters, but disciples, and

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[14] For patristic citations, see the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* and Biblia Patristica lists; for the papyri by the numbers, see the staggeringly meticulous and comprehensive compilation by Eldon J. Epp, "Are Early New Testament Manuscripts Truly Abundant?" in *Israel's God and Rebecca's Children: Christology and Community in Early Judaism and Christianity: Essays in Honor of Larry W. Hurtado and Alan F. Segal,* ed.David B. Capes, et al. (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2007), 77-117. In fact, Epp's research on the papyrological witnesses has shown that Matthew and John remained equal in popularity to each other, and roughly 50% more popular than Mark and Luke, through the eighth century, holding this edge even well after the introduction of four-gospel and complete New Testament codices.

[15] Harry Y. Gamble identifies four criteria important for the eventual canonicity of early Christian writings: apostolicity, catholicity, orthodoxy, and traditional usage. Gamble, *The New Testament Canon: Its Making and Meaning* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 67-72.

therefore inferior.[16] Tertullian further suggests that Luke's gospel is doubly inferior, since he received it from his teacher Paul, who, in turn, derived his own gospel in part from his conference with the disciples in Jerusalem (Tertullian cites Gal. 2.2). Therefore, Tertullian argues, Luke is twice removed from the men who recorded the spoken words of Jesus. Granted, this argument is rhetorically constructed as an attack on Marcion's sole reliance on the Gospel according to Luke, and elsewhere Tertullian is happy to cite Luke's Gospel as authoritative. But that Tertullian believed that the argument of Mark's and Luke's inferiority would be persuasive may suggest that it was, or had been, a more widely held view.[17]

On the other hand, the patristic citations and papyrological evidence that both favor Matthew and John need not say anything about Mark's and Luke's perceived apostolicity in the early church, only their frequency of use, which is not the same thing. Matthew's Gospel might well have been judged by most ancients as superior to Mark's composition on its own merits, at least for the uses to which these gospels were most often put. While Mark's Gospel is arguably the better narrative, only a relatively small percentage of all ancient utilizers of these gospels would have been able to read the Gospel of Mark straight through, the best way to appreciate its literary qualities. Matthew includes almost all of Mark's Gospel in his expanded version of it, improving both Mark's Greek and his Christology while padding the story with a sizeable portion of new sayings material, a

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[16] Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 4.2.

[17] Evidence from Justin Martyr may further support this possibility, although it is ambiguous. After analyzing his references to the ἀπομνημονεύματα ("memoirs") of the apostles, Robert M. Grant concludes that "It looks as if he was not concerned with any careful distinction between apostolic and sub-apostolic gospels." Grant, *The Earliest Lives of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), 20. Yet Grant's analysis seems to only support the elevation of Mark's Gospel, not Luke's, to the level of apostolic in Justin's eyes, as Justin ultimately ascribes Mark's Gospel to Peter (*Dial.* 106.3). Luke's, on the other hand, may be precisely what Justin is referring to when he describes the gospels as "composed by the apostles and by those who followed them" (*Dial.* 103.8), echoing vocabulary from Luke 1.1-4 – as Grant points out.

score of prophecy fulfillment proof texts, an infancy narrative, and post-resurrection appearances. The result is that the Gospel of Matthew is relatively unwieldy as a work of literature; but as a source to be mined for the words and deeds of Jesus, for uses ranging from homilies and prayers to apology and exegetical debate, Matthew's is unquestionably superior and renders Mark's obsolete. And if, as is widely believed, Luke's Gospel postdates Matthew's, even slightly, Matthew's may have held the edge merely due to early market penetration. Papias of Hieropolis, for example, does not seem to know of Luke, yet his description of a gospel attributed to Peter's disciple Mark convincingly matches canonical Mark, he knows one or more gospels attributed to Matthew, and although he does not mention a gospel attributed to John he seems to quote the Johannine Gospel a few times.[18] John's Gospel, of course, was not subject to intra-Synoptic competition in the marketplace of early Christian gospels, and by the end of the second century it had achieved the same popularity as Matthew.

The exact reasons for the popularity of Matthew and John over Luke and Mark remain largely speculative. Nevertheless, the Valentinian corpus has revealed an abiding interest in both of these gospels, just like the rest of Christianity from this period. However, as I indicated earlier, scholars of Gnostic and Nag Hammadi studies have tended to overstudy Valentinians' use of John for their cosmological speculations, while typically overlooking their use of Matthew for ethics and ecclesiology. This inclination has tended to reinscribe the limited view of the Valentinians that we have inherited from patristic heresiologists, a discrepancy this project seeks to rectify.

[18] *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.3-4. See Grant, *Earliest Lives of Jesus,* 16-19.

3. Nomenclature and Methodology

In their attempts to refute the exegeses of their Valentinian opponents, ancient heresiologists have documented for us the names of some of Valentinus' disciples and many accounts of their teachings. Caution is necessary when utilizing these reports as historical sources, however. Scholars need to adjudicate when these authors redacted their "heretical" sources for various purposes, including the selection, omission, and elision of these sources for polemical purposes, exaggeration for rhetorical effect, and even real misunderstanding about the complexities or nuances of others' theologies that they were reporting.

The nature of such "secondary" accounts necessarily complicates their interpretation by modern scholars, as has been gradually realized ever since 1945, when some infamous treasure was found hidden in an Egyptian field. The discovery of the Nag Hammadi Codices had an immediate impact on the study of early Christianity beginning in the 1950s, but, for a variety of colorful reasons, only became widely available to scholars in critical editions published between the 1970s and 1990s.[19] Now, almost seventy years after the find, the incorporation of the documents found near Nag Hammadi into the history of early Christianity remains one of the most important challenges and opportunities currently facing scholars in this field, and this dissertation participates in the ongoing work of accurately locating these recently recovered voices within the story of the diverse origins of the Christian religion. Various theories have abounded to explain what the Nag Hammadi

[19] James M. Robinson's celebrated tale of the Nag Hammadi find has overshadowed his companion narrative, no less fascinating, of the competition and collaboration among French, West German, East German, Canadian, and American "scholarly cartels" to gain access to and publish the manuscripts against the backdrop of Cold War Europe, the British withdrawal from Egypt, the Nasser government, and three Egyptian wars with Israel. James M. Robinson, "Nag Hammadi: The First Fifty Years," in *The Nag Hammadi Library After Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration,* eds. John D. Turner and Anne McGuire (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 3-33.

cache was and why these thirteen codices were buried rather than destroyed, the earliest and most famous of which was the theory that what had been discovered was a "secret Gnostic library."[20] This hypothesis remains as an artifact in the title of the definitive five-volume critical edition of these texts in English, the *Coptic Gnostic Library;*[21] as well as the English translation based upon this critical edition, *The Nag Hammadi Library in English.*[22] Many scholars today, however, believe that the codices found at Nag Hammadi were neither "gnostic" nor a "library." Rather, all the evidence now points to the fact that they were last used by fourth-century Christian monks, who buried them in order to save them from destruction at the hands of ecclesiastical authorities conducting purges of heretical books from the monasteries over which they had recently gained control.[23]

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[20] An early and influential proponent of this view was Jean Doresse, *Les livres secrets des gnostiques d'Egypte: Introduction aux écrits gnostiques coptes découverts á Khénoboskion* (Paris: Plon, 1958); idem, *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics: An Introduction to the Gnostic Coptic manuscripts discovered at Chenoboskion,* trans. Philip Mairet (London: Hollis and Carter, 1960).

[21] James M. Robinson, ed., *The Coptic Gnostic Library: A Complete Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices,* 5 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

[22] James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English,* 4th ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

[23] For a comprehensive overview of the history of scholarship on the question of provenance, see James E. Goehring, "The Provenance of the Nag Hammadi Codices Once More," *Studia Patristica* 35 (2001): 234-53; see also Michael A. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 241-47. For an important study on the fourth-century ecclesiastical establishment in Egypt, see David Brakke, *Athanasius and Asceticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1998). For a recent penetrating argument for the likely monastic provenance of Codex I in particular – the codex in which we find the Valentinian *Gospel of Truth* and *Tripartitate Tractate* – see Lance Jenott and Elaine Pagels, "Antony's Letters and Nag Hammadi Codex I: Sources of Religious Conflict in Fourth-Century Egypt," *JECS* 18:4 (Winter 2010), 557-589. Jenott and Pagels show that "Codex I sets forth a curriculum that encourages an open attitude toward ongoing revelation, by contrast with the curriculum that Athanasius would seek to institute within Egyptian monasteries" (585). For an important dissenting view, see Stephen Emmel, "The Coptic Gnostic Texts as Witnesses to the Production and Transmission of Gnostic (and Other) Traditions," in *Das Thomasevangelium: Entstehung, Rezeption, Theologie,* eds. Jörg Frey, Enno Edzard Popkes and Jens Schröter (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 33-49; and idem, "The 'Coptic Gnostic Library of Nag Hammadi' and the Faw Qibli Excavations," in *Christianity and Monasticism in Upper Egypt,* Vol. 2., *Nag Hammadi – Esna,* ed. Gawdat Gabra and Hany N. Takla (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2010), 33-43. Emmel attributes the production of the Nag Hammadi Codices to "a kind of Egyptian-wide network... of educated, primarily Greek-speaking... philosophically and esoteric-mystically like-minded people, for whom *Egypt* represented (even if only somewhat vaguely) a tradition of wisdom and knowledge to be revered and perpetuated" (2008:48; 2010:41). Although Emmel accepts the codices' northern Upper Egypt provenance (2010:42) and Robinson's find story (2010:38), his hypothesis for the codices' production does not explain how they came to be buried near Nag Hammadi, nor is it inconsistent with the more widely held view that, however they might have been produced, they were last used in monasteries near the find site.

On the basis of the theological framework laid out by the ancient heresiologists, scholars have provisionally classified about six of the roughly fifty Nag Hammadi tractates as "Valentinian." With the discovery of these "primary sources" for Valentinian theology – i.e., works that seem to have been written by actual "Valentinians" – scholars began to reimagine the nature of this form of early Christianity, previously only known through the oppositional lens of "secondary sources"; i.e., the patristic authors who wrote against them. The Nag Hammadi texts, however, are anonymous treatises, and they do not mention Valentinus or any of his followers by name. Therefore, although we would seem to have the other side of the story, a different kind of caution concerning the study of these texts is advised. This methodological problem is well recognized, and was stated clearly over twenty-five years ago by Michel Desjardins:

> There is something of the chicken and egg mentality at play here: some of the Nag Hammadi works are designated Valentinian on the strength of the patristic accounts, so in effect the "primary sources" are only primary insofar as one accepts the claims made in the "secondary sources."[24]

From this observation, it follows that we may only reconstruct Valentinian Christianity through the use of both sets of sources, and that scholars must make adjudications on both the reliability of the individual patristic authors as well as the Valentinian credentials of any alleged "Valentinian" text. These questions remain live issues and are part and parcel of the study of Valentinian Christianity and of the Nag Hammadi literature in general. Christoph Markschies has even called into question the Valentinian credentials of Valentinus himself, suggesting that the cosmological and

[24] Michel Desjardins, "The Sources for Valentinian Gnosticism: A Question of Methodology," *VC* 40:4 (Dec. 1986), 342-47 (343).

anthropological speculations for which the Valentinians were known in antiquity are more likely the innovations of Valentinus' followers.[25]

We must likewise maintain a bit of "agnosticism" towards the Valentinian credentials of any particular text. It is important to keep in mind that the category "Valentinian" is what cognitive linguist George Lakoff calls a "fuzzy" category; that is, one based largely upon shared family resemblance characteristics rather than properties common to all members, and having degrees of membership rather than clear boundaries.[26] Therefore, when scholars do attempt to erect clear boundaries around the Valentinian corpus, they quite naturally do not agree on which texts should count as "Valentinian." For the purposes of this project, I have relied upon three influential demarcations of the Coptic Valentinian corpus: those of Michel Desjardins, Einar Thomassen, and Ismo Dunderberg. Furthermore, I have conservatively restricted the boundaries of the Coptic corpus to include only those texts upon which all three of these scholars agree. This method produces the following list.[27]

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[25] Christoph Markschies, *Valentinus Gnosticus? Untersuchungen zur valentinianischen Gnosis mit einem Kommentar zu den Fragmenten Valentins* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1992).

[26] For a good overview of the development of category theory from Ludwig Wittgenstein to Eleanor Rosch, see George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal About The Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

[27] Ismo Dunderberg, "The School of Valentinus," in *A Companion to Second-Century Christian 'Heretics'*, eds. Antti Marjanen and Petri Luomanen (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 64-99, also includes the *(First) Apocalypse of James* (NHC V,*3*) [*1 Apoc. Jas.*], now also known from the tractate *James* in Codex Tchacos , and the *Prayer of the Apostle Paul* (NHC I,*1*) [*Pr. Paul*]. Michel R. Desjardins, *Sin in Valentinianism,* 3-8, includes all of the texts in my list, plus *Pr. Paul,* as a "defensible corpus." Einar Thomassen, "Notes pour la délimitation d'un corpus valentinien à Nag Hammadi," in *Les Textes de Nag Hammadi et le problème de classification*, eds. Louis Painchaud and Anne Pasquier (Quebec: Laval, 1995), 243-63, includes all six of the Coptic texts in my list, plus *1 Apoc. Jas.* and minus *Gos. Truth* and *Treat. Res.,* in his highest tier of "provenance valentinienne certaine, ou très probable"; he includes the two remaining texts, *Gos. Truth* and *Treat. Res.* (and no others), in the next tier, "provenance valentinienne probable."

Coptic Text	Abbrev.	Codex, Tractate No.
Gospel of Truth	*Gos. Truth*	NHC I,*3*
Treatise on the Resurrection	*Treat. Res.*	NHC I,*4*
Tripartite Tractate	*Tri. Trac.*	NHC I,*5*
Gospel of Philip	*Gos. Phil.*	NHC II,*3*
Interpretation of Knowledge	*Interp. Know.*	NHC XI,*1*
A Valentinian Exposition	*Val. Exp.*	NHC XI,*2*

Table 1. Coptic Valentinian Texts

These six Coptic texts are added to the four Valentinian sources known to us previously from citation in Greek in the patristic authors:

Greek Text	Abbrev.	Source(s)
Fragments of Valentinus	*Frag. Val.*	Clement of Alexandria & Hippolytus[28]
Fragments of Heracleon	*Frag. Her.*	Origen & Clement of Alexandria[29]
Excerpts from Theodotus	*Exc.*	Clement of Alexandria[30]
Ptolemy's *Epistle to Flora*	*Flor.*	Epiphanius, *Panarion*[31]

Table 2. Greek Valentinian Texts

Additional Valentinian sources are those from patristic writers who do not quote from the writings of Valentinian authors but nevertheless provide lots of potentially useful information about their exegetically based teachings. Of these, I focus especially on reports from Irenaeus concerning the followers of Ptolemy (*Haer.* 1.1 – 1.9, Irenaeus' *grand notice*

[28] See Walther Völker, *Quellen zur Geschichte der christlichen Gnosis* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1932), 57-60; see also Christoph Markschies, *Valentinus Gnosticus?*

[29] Frags. 1-48 are preserved in Origen, *Commentary on John;* Frags. 49-50 in Clement, *Eclogae propheticae* 25.1 and *Stromata* 4.71-72. See Völker, *Quellen,* 63-86; Robert M. Grant, *Gnosticism: A Sourcebook of Heretical Writings from the Early Christian Period* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), 195-208.

[30] See Robert P. Casey, ed. and trans., *The Excerpta Ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria* (London: Christophers, 1934).

[31] Ptolemy's *Epistle* is found in *Pan.* 33.3-8. The standard edition is that by Karl Holl, ed., *Epiphanius,* Vol. 1., *Ancoratus und Panarion Haer. 1-33* (Leipzig: Hinrich: 1915); see also Völker, *Quellen,* 87-93. For additional discussion of the text of the *Panarion,* see Chapter 5.

or "model Valentinian cosmological system"),[32] and the followers of Marcos (*Haer.* 1.13 – 1.21).

A related problem of methodology is the question of whether these texts are "gnostic," which is related to the larger question of what, if anything, "Gnosticism" might be. The latter question is currently stalemated.[33] None of the Valentinian literature uses the term "gnostic" (*gnostikos*), nor, indeed, do any of the texts found at Nag Hammadi, which seriously weakens any claim that this may have been a term the authors of those texts used to describe themselves. The application of the ancient term "gnostic" or the modern term "Gnosticism" as meaningful outsiders' terms, either to the Valentinians or other ancient groups, is likewise problematic. We must not make the mistake of rejecting any and all outsiders' categorical terminology; for example, the important text from the collection of the "Apostolic Fathers" known as the *Epistle of Barnabas* never uses the term "Christian,"

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[32] Einar Thomassen, in *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the 'Valentinians'* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), has suggested "model Valentinian cosmological system" as a more neutral replacement for the loaded term "*la grand notice,*" coined by François Sagnard in *La gnose valentinienne et le témoignage de saint Irénée* (Paris: Vrin, 1947), to describe the one cosmological system that Irenaeus takes to be typical of Valentinian thought.

[33] For the now classic statement of the historiographical problems with the category "Gnosticism," see Michael A. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category*. For a study of the history of scholarship underpinning the category's resilience, see Karen L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 2003); on this history see also Eduard Iricinschi, "The Scribes and Readers of Nag Hammadi Codex II: Book Production and Monastic *Paideia* in Fourth-Century Egypt" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2009), ch. 1. For a useful collection of various stances on this debate, see Antti Marjanen, ed., *Was There a Gnostic Religion?* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005). Important recent contributions that uphold the scholarly utility of "gnostic" terminology include: Christoph Markschies, *Die Gnosis* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2001); idem, *Gnosis: An Introduction,* trans. John Bowden (New York: T&T Clark, 2003); and David Brakke, *The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010). For two different defenses of "gnostic" as a meaningful insiders' term, see Bentley Layton, "Prolegomena to the Study of Ancient Gnosticism," in *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks,* eds. Michael L. White and O. Larry Yarbrough (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 334-50; and Morton Smith, "The History of the Term Gnostikos," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut, March 28-31, 1978,* ed. Bentley Layton (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 2:796-807. Ironically, firm evidence for "gnostic" as an insiders' term exists only for individuals or groups not generally considered "gnostic" by scholars, such as Clement of Alexandria and later Eastern Christians influenced by Clement; see idem, 802-805. Debate on "gnostic" terminology is, necessarily albeit unfortunately, confined to that subset of scholars who have expertise in "Gnosticism." Numerous scholars in the broader field continue to assume the viability and meaning-imparting ability of "gnostic" terminology; it is therefore often unclear what non-specialists believe they mean when they use it.

but one would not want to categorize it as non-Christian simply on that basis. Yet I am persuaded by the numerous and weighty arguments that have been made against the utility and meaningfulness of "gnostic" and "Gnosticism" as historiographical categories, and I do not use these terms in this dissertation as my own. Nonetheless, as we have already seen, the history of scholarship on Valentinianism is pocked with references to a "Gnosticism" of which "Valentinianism" is supposed to be a subset. In fact, part of the appeal of the category "Valentinian," I suspect, is that it functions as a compromise category that may be used both by scholars who accept the broader category of "gnostic," and those who reject it – a compromise that is perhaps indicated by the title of Ismo Dunderberg's 2008 monograph on the subject, *Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus.* I do discuss Irenaeus' application of the label "gnostic" to his opponents in Chapter 2, but otherwise do not feel it is necessary to rehash this debate, as the lines are by now well drawn. Needless to say, this debate over terminology reflects more sweeping changes that are afoot in a field that had long understood "Gnosticism" as either a Christian heresy or a non-Christian religion of late antiquity, a "threat" outside of, and distinct from, the embryonic "Christian church" to which the latter needed to "react" in a corporate way.[34]

Since this dissertation argues, in part, for the full inclusion of Valentinian and other so-called "heretical" literature into the study of the history of early Christianity in general, and the reception history of the canonical Gospel of Matthew in particular, part of the argument of this dissertation is related to the more fundamental question of what "heresy"

[34] Even more might be said of phenomenological approaches to Gnosticism that see it as a particular tendency to which any "world religion" might be susceptible, but this view is increasingly rare among scholars of late antiquity. On this view, see the literature cited above.

and "orthodoxy" actually are. One of the most salient features of Walter Bauer's legacy[35] has been to complicate any discussion of "orthodoxy" and "heresy" as reified historical essences or theological parties. It is now widely recognized that "orthodox" and "heretical" are doctrinally-informed labels rather than neutral, historical descriptors, and so may not be used to describe the various actors in any history that aspires to conform to modern historiographic standards.

Despite this awareness, it has proven difficult to speak of subsets of ancient Christians for whom "heretical" and "orthodox" previously served as handy labels. When discussing a "heretical" individual, group, text, or doctrine, there is always easy recourse to the name of that particular "heresy" – in this case, "Valentinian" – although these labels have their own problems, to be discussed below. But the field has proved surprisingly unable to come up with an adequate replacement for "orthodox." Some scholars have suggested that the solution is to simply refer to all of the agents and texts under consideration as "Christian." However, I maintain that at times it is useful to speak collectively of that subset of Christian writers known in patristic studies as "church fathers" or "patristic authors" – a category that was constructed retrospectively by the later Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches, and subsequently by other Christian denominations. I thus advocate the term "retrospectively orthodox" for such a group designation, as well as for these authors as individuals – for this, in fact, is a label that accurately represents why and when these various thinkers came to be grouped.[36] It may

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[35] Walter Bauer, *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1934). It was republished in a second edition with minor additions, corrections, and two supplementary essays by Georg Strecker (Tübingen: Mohr, 1964). This second edition was translated into English by a team working under the aegis of the Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins, and published as *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity,* eds. Robert A. Kraft and Gerhard Krodel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).
[36] For the term "retrospectively orthodox," I am indebted to Annette Yoshiko Reed, personal communication.

also be usefully applied to, or withheld from, individual texts or doctrines, whoever their authors might be. Thus, for example, Irenaeus may justly be called "retrospectively orthodox," even though his doctrine that Jesus lived to be more than fifty years old (*Haer.* 2.22.4-6) may not.

As this term is, admittedly, something of a mouthful, I also use a few other options. The traditional term "patristic" is an adequate signifier for those authors retrospectively understood to be "church fathers," as well as the writings they produced, and has the advantage over "orthodox" of being applicable only to a specific set of writers, rather than some larger, amorphous, "orthodox" party presumed to have existed. Also, there are two points in the dissertation at which I will use the term "catholic" (*katholikos,* "universal"), when "retrospectively orthodox" would be anachronistic. The ancient term "catholic" has the advantage over "orthodox" of being a self-designation that was actually used in the second century by Justin, Irenaeus, Clement, and Tertullian. In Chapter 2, when discussing Irenaeus' discursive representation of the "church," I will use this term, as I will in Chapter 5, when explaining Ptolemy's reduction of the variety of Christian opinions into three; by the first of these, he means to represent discursively a "catholic Christianity," even though he does not use this term in his *Epistle.*

So much for the retrospectively orthodox.[37] The term "Valentinian" presents another problem of nomenclature. This is an outsiders' term, applied by the ancient heresiologists to their opponents as one of the strategies employed to deny them the name "Christian." Not only do none of the so-called "Valentinian" texts use the term "Valentinian," but it is almost certain that all of the "Valentinian" writers would have considered themselves Christian: all of them quote or allude to the apostolic texts attributed

[37] I discuss this nomenclature problem in greater depth in a forthcoming methodological article.

to Paul, John, and/or Matthew; all of them are concerned with the soteriological role of a being known as Jesus, Christ, Lord and/or Savior; and some of them, notably the *Gospel of Philip,* use "Christian" as the insider term. Furthermore, Justin Martyr tells us that the followers of Valentinus called themselves Christians, even as he remarks that it is more appropriate, following the convention of pagan philosophical sects, to call them after the name of their human leader.[38] As should be evident from the foregoing discussion, it is axiomatic for the current project that the Valentinians are to be understood as Christians.

Still, as with the retrospectively orthodox, it is sometimes useful to refer to them not merely as "Christians," but as a smaller subset to distinguish them. In taking these facts into account, Thomassen justifies the title of his magnum opus, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the "Valentinians,"* with the suggestion that "the spiritual seed" is the proper term that the Valentinians called themselves. This term has previously been taken to be a fundamental Valentinian doctrine in earlier, synthesized accounts of Valentinianism,[39] and, even before the discovery at Nag Hammadi, the concept was read into other Valentinian documents wherever their authors perform exegesis of Matthean parables of seeds or sowing. For example, Gilles Quispel suggests that Ptolemy's application of the parable of the Sower at the close of his *Epistle to Flora,* although seemingly a commonplace gospel allusion, in fact betrayed an ulterior motive, and was an oblique reference to an esoteric system. Quispel refers the reader to Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.7.5.[40] I argue in Chapter 4 that

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[38] Justin, *Dial.* 35.6.

[39] Especially Sagnard, *La gnose valentinienne,* ch. 11, "La semance pneumatique," 387-415; but see also Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity,* 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), ch. 8, "The Valentinian Speculation," 174-205 (195).

[40] Gilles Quispel, ed. and trans., *Ptolémée: Lettre à Flora: Analyse, Texte Critique, Traduction, Commentaire et Index Grec,* 2nd ed. (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1966), 105. All citations of Quispel's commentary are to this edition.

Ptolemy's allusion to the parable serves another purpose entirely.[41] In addition, it was partly due to the recurrent term "the seeds" (ⲛ̄ⲥⲡⲉⲣⲙⲁ) in the untitled tractate of Nag Hammadi Codex XI that caused scholars to name it *A Valentinian Exposition* in the first place.

However, the term "spiritual seed" itself is rare in Valentinian sources, appearing only in the *Excerpts of Theodotus.*[42] Although it is mentioned by the heresiologists, in none of the texts from Nag Hammadi, "Valentinian" or otherwise, do we encounter the term "spiritual seed" – either as a technical term within a cosmogony or anthropology, or as a self-designation for the inscribed community. Thomassen cites *Tri. Trac.* as such an instance.[43] However, he himself has introduced the term "Spiritual Seed" into a subsection heading of his own translation of this tractate in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures;*[44] the term mentioned in *Tri. Trac.* 116.6 is in fact ⲟⲩⲥⲓⲁ, "essence." The primary justification for identifying "essence" with "seed" would seem to be on the basis of Irenaeus' equation of the two terms in his report of Valentinian cosmogony in *Haer.* 1.6.4 – 1.7.5. Again, though, "spiritual seed" (σπέρμα πνευματικόν / *semen spiritale*) appears only once in all five books of *Adversus Haereses,* at *Haer.* 1.7.2.[45] Other, less reliable heresiological sources also mention the term in connection with Valentinians.[46] What little evidence there is that the Valentinians used the term "spiritual seed" to describe themselves does not constitute

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[41] See also Sagnard's discussion (*La gnose valentinienne,* 416-19) of the Marcosian ritual formula alluding to the parable of the mustard seed, recorded by Irenaeus in *Haer.* 1.13.2.

[42] "Spiritual seed" appears twice in *Exc.* 1 and twice in *Exc.* 53. The concept is developed extensively in this text: 1-3, 17, 21, 26, 31, 34-5, 38, 40-42, 49, 53, 55, 59, 67, 79.

[43] Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed,* 5n3.

[44] Marvin Meyer, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: The International Edition* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 92.

[45] An additional appearance of "spiritual seed" in the widely used *Anti-Nicene Fathers* translation at 1.7.1 is an interpolation of the translators; the phrase translated is only τοὺς πνευματικοὺς / *spiritales.* Another instance of "the [spiritual] seed" in the *ANF* translation (brackets in the original), translates only ἐκεῖνο τὸ σπέρμα / *illud semen*, as the brackets indicate. In Irenaeus see also *Haer.* 1.8.3; 1.13.7; 2.6.3; 2.19.1-8.

[46] E.g. Tertullian, *Val.* 4, 25-29; see also his *De anima* 18, on the *spiritali suo semine* of the Gnostics and Valentinians, and *De anima* 23, concerning the *semen Sophiae* of the Valentinians.

grounds for substituting the term as a proper self-designation. And so "Valentinians" must suffice. Even Thomassen implicitly acknowledges this, for, his short note on his title notwithstanding, he swiftly drops this "insiders' term," and uses "Valentinians" for the rest of his book, as shall I for the rest of this dissertation.

4. Chapter Overview

A study such as this must necessarily be selective, with regard to the Valentinian, patristic, and other early Christian texts examined, as well as the Matthean pericopes they interpret. I have selected those texts and pericopes that seemed to me most conducive to a comparative analysis. In this study I offer new readings of select Valentinian and patristic texts, especially the *Gospel of Truth,* the *Interpretation of Knowledge,* Ptolemy's *Epistle to Flora,* Irenaeus' *Against the Heresies,* Clement's *Stromata,* and Tertullian's *Prescription Against the Heretics.* These readings not only contribute to our understanding of these specific texts and authors, but they draw useful lines of comparison across reified retrospectively orthodox/heretical lines, in order to better illuminate the vast and complex network of communication within which early Christians read, discussed, and debated the Gospel of Matthew and their other shared foundational texts.

I begin this investigation by turning to a close reading of Irenaeus' charges of duplicitous Valentinian exegesis in Chapter 2. I will argue that this charge obfuscates the Valentinians' engagement in the multifaceted world of early Christian exegesis, as they used methods identical to those of their theological and ideological detractors. By properly situating Irenaeus' arguments against the dual background of (1) prevalent Christian reading strategies and (2) Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions, I begin to undermine the long and influential shadow he has cast upon historiographies of exegesis, and I situate

Valentinian thinkers more authentically within a shared reception history of the Gospel of Matthew among early Christians.

In Chapter 3 I turn to the reception of the parable of the Lost Sheep. Our earliest known interpretations of this parable are by Valentinians: the Ptolemaeans and Marcosians as reported by Irenaeus, and the anonymous *Gospel of Truth* from Nag Hammadi, a text of which Irenaeus was aware. Irenaeus also provides us with two extensive applications of this parable to his own theology. In all cases, the exegetes in question interpreted the parable allegorically, and applied it to competing theories of cosmology and Christ's salvific activity in the world. Only for Valentinian exegetes, however, do the cosmological and soteriological implications of their exegesis lead to ethical imperatives for Christians. This suggests that it is the Valentinian author of the *Gospel of Truth* who remains most faithful to the paraenetic thrust of the Matthean parable, even as he allegorizes its meaning. More significantly, however, I argue that this example indicates an early Christian foray into allegorical exegesis of New Testament texts, an innovation that was pioneered by the Valentinians and swiftly adopted by the catholic church, from which point it became standard orthodox exegetical practice. Although the paucity of the data from this period often makes it risky to suggest lines of influence between known thinkers, given Irenaeus' Valentinian contacts and his attempts to undermine Valentinian "parabolic" exegesis (as analyzed in the previous chapter), this example suggests direct Valentinian influence upon Irenaeus' theology and his exegetical method, which would have enormous influence on subsequent Christian orthodoxy.

In Chapter 4, I examine the reception of two more Matthean parables: the parable of the Sower, and one with which it was often combined, the parable of the Wheat and the Tares. Combining passages of Scripture without justification was a charge that Irenaeus

makes against Valentinian exegetical technique, as analyzed in Chapter 2. Here, however, I examine numerous examples of both Valentinian and retrospectively orthodox writers combining the same two parables in their exegesis. The authors and texts I consider here are Clement's *Stromata,* Tertullian's *Prescription Against Heretics,* Ptolemy's *Epistle to Flora,* and the anonymous *Interpretation of Knowledge* from Nag Hammadi. All of these authors, remarkably, agree that these parables have implications for Christian teaching and ecclesiology, including negotiating problematic diversity within the *ekklēsia*. However, they nevertheless find grounds to differ on how to handle that diversity. In this chapter I build upon the previous one to show that contemporaneous early Christians endowed parables, even commonly hybridized parables, with shared topical meanings. Just as both Valentinian and patristic authors interpreted the parable of the Lost Sheep to be about soteriology, so, too, do they both interpret the hybrid Sower-Tares parable to be about problematic diversity. Furthermore, these Christian exegetes agree on the topical meaning even while disagreeing about the specific interpretations of the topic. This chapter further reveals the Valentinian exegetes to be full participants in this culture of reading and interpretation, with no noticeably distinct method as Irenaeus had claimed.

In Chapter 5, I return to Irenaeus in order to conduct a close comparison of his doctrine of the Jewish law with that outlined in Ptolemy's *Epistle to Flora.* Ptolemy's *Epistle* is one of the Greek Valentinian texts known to us from prior to the Nag Hammadi discovery. However, since the 1966 edition of Gilles Quispel's commentary on *Flora,*[47] there have been few studies on this important text, and nothing of great length, and so his conclusions remain influential to this day. Yet Quispel labored without the benefit of the decades of research on the Nag Hammadi find that have changed what we thought we

[47] Quispel, *Lettre à Flora.*

knew about "Valentinian Gnosticism." In addition, important new research in the study of the Pseudo-Clementine literature has rendered obsolete Quispel's assumptions about the context in which Ptolemy's ideas originated. Therefore, a fresh study of this text is warranted, especially considering the text's complete reliance upon the Gospel of Matthew for all of its key exegetical moves.

For second-century Christians, the articulation of the exact relationship between Judaism and Christianity had become a pressing theological concern, and Irenaeus is often credited with making major contributions to the construction of an orthodox, supersessionist story of Christian origins. In this chapter I argue that, as with the parable of the Lost Sheep, Irenaeus' exegesis of key Matthean pericopes bearing on the role of the Jewish law shows close affinities with the exegesis of the same passages in those of his Valentinian exegetical adversaries – in this case, Ptolemy himself. Although there have been numerous attempts to situate the *Epistle to Flora* with regard to other known contemporary Christian and Jewish thinkers, no one, to my knowledge, has commented upon the theological proximity that Ptolemy reveals in this text to his greatest rival and close contemporary, Irenaeus of Lyons. In this chapter I argue that the affinities are so numerous and close as to raise questions of influence and appropriation, although Irenaeus seems not to know of Ptolemy's text directly. I suggest that either Irenaeus and Ptolemy both received the same exegetical teaching on these matters, perhaps in Rome, or that Ptolemy's teaching was passed on to Irenaeus through the former's followers, with whom Irenaeus says he had direct personal contact. Either way, this chapter, like Chapter 3, indicates Valentinian influence upon the theology and exegesis of Irenaeus, and through him, upon the orthodoxy of the nascent Christian religion.

Of course, Irenaeus does not admit this to be the case. As it is Irenaeus' description of Valentinian exegesis that has been so influential upon successive heresiology and, even more importantly, upon modern scholarship, it is to him and his depiction of them as "wicked interpreters of well-said words" that we first turn.

II. Irenaeus, the Valentinians, and the Rhetoric of Interpretation

1. Introduction

The five-volume opus of Irenaeus of Lyons, usually known by its shorter title, *Adversus Haereses (Against the Heresies),* has been fundamental to how Valentinian Christians have been conceptualized ever since its publication circa 180-189 C.E. Aside from an oblique reference in Justin's *Dialogue,*[1] Irenaeus provides us in *Adversus Haereses* with our first external report of the Valentinians, a report that is both extensive and highly influential for succeeding heresiology. In his description, he frames his feud with Valentinian thinkers as one primarily over correct interpretation of Scripture, opening his massive treatise with the charge that these opponents, "by falsifying the words of the Lord, show themselves to be wicked interpreters of well-said words."[2] He thereby sets the terms of the debate by means of a sustained focus on scriptural interpretation that he maintains throughout the work. Moreover, by defining Valentinians in terms of their wrong-headed exegesis, he establishes them as a heretical ideal type on this basis. His sustained attack against what he frames as Valentinian eisegesis will become influential, to some extent defining, both for future heresiologists and for generations of modern scholars, what was unique about Valentinus and his followers.

It is a testament to Irenaeus' ingenuity that even relatively recently some reputable scholars have been persuaded of the historical accuracy of his accusation of Valentinian eisegesis. To take a particularly illustrious example, at the close of his analysis of "The Gnostic Use of the New Testament" in light of the newly available Nag Hammadi

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[1] *Dial.* 35.6.

[2] *Haer.* 1.prf.1. Greek: ῥᾳδιουργοῦντες τὰ λόγια Κυρίου, ἐξηγηταὶ κακοὶ τῶν καλῶς εἰρημένων γινόμενοι. Latin: *falsantes verba Domini, interpretatores mali eorum, quae bene dicta sunt, effecti.*

documents, Robert McL. Wilson restated Irenaeus' fundamental claim in somewhat more nuanced but ultimately affirmative tones:

> It is no wonder that such fathers as Irenaeus waxed wroth with the Gnostics, for they were mishandling the Church's scriptures, and moreover they were doing so on principles and methods which the 'orthodox' themselves employed; for we can observe the use of the same methods and the same principles even in the works of the opponents of Gnosticism. The vital difference lay not so much in the methods as in the controlling factor: such a writer as Irenaeus is governed by the Church's Rule of Faith, whereas the Gnostics endeavour to mould the Scriptures to suit their own theories. The distinction is still relevant, and still merits consideration by exponents of modern theologies. There is all the difference in the world between an interpretation that is brought to the text from without and one which emerges from the text itself.[3]

On the one hand, Wilson correctly notes that the Valentinians and Irenaeus utilize "the same methods and the same principles" of scriptural exegesis. Here he refers to the repertoire of exegetical techniques from which Christian interpreters might draw – on a gross level distinguishable as literal, allegorical, typological, etc., while further distinctions at finer levels of granularity might be made.[4]

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[3] Robert McLachlan Wilson, *Gnosis and the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 84. Although Wilson is discussing "Gnostic" exegesis, he has taken his cue to conflate "Valentinians" with "Gnostics" from Irenaeus himself. Irenaeus sets out to describe a particular Valentinian threat, typified by their exegetical method and thus distinguishable from Marcionites (as we shall see, below). However, as part of his polemical strategy, he casts Valentinians as a part of a larger heretical group whom he designates "Gnostics." E.g., "Let those persons, therefore, who blaspheme the Creator, either by openly expressed words, such as the disciples of Marcion, or by a perversion of the sense [of Scripture], as those of Valentinus and all of the Gnostics falsely so called, be recognized as agents of Satan by all those who worship God..." (*Haer.* 5.26.2, trans. *ANF*). We should therefore take Wilson's "Gnostics" to refer primarily to Valentinians, for it is these opponents whom Irenaeus discusses at length. Moreover, Irenaeus further declares the Valentinians' doctrine "to be a recapitulation of all the heretics (*recapitulationem esse omnium haereticorum*).... For they who oppose these men by the right method, do oppose all who are of an evil mind, and they who overthrow them, do in fact overthrow every kind of heresy" (*Haer.* 4.prf.2; cf. 2.31.1; and 2.18.3: "One need not drain the whole ocean if one wishes to learn whether the water is salty."). Irenaeus thus wants both to expose his immediate opponents, whom he frames as "Valentinians," as a special case of heresy, and by so doing, to make them stand for all "Gnostics" and even all "heretics" generally. On this point see Bernhard Mutschler, "John and his Gospel in the Mirror of Irenaeus of Lyons: Perspectives of Recent Research," in *The Legacy of John: Second-Century Reception of the Fourth Gospel,* ed. Tuomas Rasimus (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 319-343 (333). For an analysis of Irenaeus' inconsistencies in his presentations of "Valentinians," "Gnostics," and "Ptolemaeans," see Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed,* 13-22.

[4] See Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 186-212.

On the other hand, however, Wilson recapitulates Irenaeus' claim that his own interpretation "emerges from the text itself," while the Valentinian interpretation is "brought to the text from without." Furthermore, implicit in Wilson's summary of Irenaeus' position is that Irenaeus derives not only the content of his exegesis but also his hermeneutical method – his "controlling factor" – from that very Scripture to which he applies its lens, the "controlling factor" being the infamous "rule of truth" or "rule of faith." Although Wilson assumes Irenaeus is merely following a well-established rule, it is unclear how old this "rule" really is, as it is Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses* in which the "rule of truth" makes its first appearance in the historical record. Furthermore, Wilson accepts Irenaeus' argument, which I will examine in detail below, without acknowledging the circularity inherent in the concept of a rule that emerges from the text and yet governs the meaning of the same text.[5] This understanding of the difference between "orthodox" exegesis and "Valentinian" eisegesis – indeed, all "heretical" eisegesis – remains persuasive, in some academic circles, to this day.[6]

Whether Irenaeus actually saw his fundamental difference with the Valentinians as one of exegesis is a difficult question to answer. Scholars who have addressed this question, such as Wilson, have usually taken Irenaeus' claims at face value, while a few have begun to question these assumptions. Elaine Pagels, for example, has suggested that it is more

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[5] To acknowledge circularity in Irenaeus' interpretive method is not to discredit him or his method. The understanding of a text will inevitably involve a "hermeneutical circle," a dialectical process by which the meaning of the whole informs the meaning of the parts, and vice versa. Wilson's mistake here, which I take to be representative of much orthodox theology and modern scholarship, is to view Irenaeus' interpretive method as "objective" and the heretics' as "subjective." See Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 20-26.

[6] For portrayals of "Gnostic" eisegesis in twentieth-century Anglican and Protestant scholarship, most influentially by H. E. W. Turner, Hans Jonas, Kurt Rudolph, and Birger Pearson, see Michael Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism",* 54-7, and 76-9. Among Eastern Orthodox scholars, Irenaeus' rhetorical framing of "orthodox/catholic" versus "gnostic/heretical" exegesis has been regularly represented as historical fact until very recently; for an influential articulation of this position, see Georges Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View* (Belmont, Mass.: Nordland Pub., 1972), 77-80.

complicated: that the real problem was a combination of exegetical teaching communicated through initiation rituals that had the effect of creating distinct groups within the broader *ekklēsia,* a combination that Irenaeus viewed as thoroughly divisive for fragile Christian communities sorely in need of stability and cohesiveness, especially given that they were facing increasingly frequent local persecutions.[7] Her thesis is persuasive, and is compatible with what I argue in the following pages.

In this chapter I do not focus on the motives underlying the composition of *Adversus Haereses.* My claim is more limited: by *framing* the problem as a question of legitimate exegesis, Irenaeus is able to draw upon a vast arsenal of rhetorical techniques that had long been a staple of Greco-Roman secondary education for elite young men. Therefore, because Irenaeus was so foundational both for defining the nature of the Valentinian "threat" and for articulating a "rule" for an orthodox reading of Scripture, it is important to situate him within the broader context of exegetics and hermeneutics in late antiquity, with particular attention to rhetorical education. It is this contextualization that is the goal of this chapter.

I begin the chapter with a demonstration that Irenaeus establishes Valentinus and his followers as a new type of heretic, distinguished by their illegitimate exegetical practices, and contrasted especially with Marcion of Sinope, whom his readers would have recognized as perhaps the best known "heretic" of their day. Having demonstrated this, I move on to a discussion of two key terms for Irenaeus: the *hypothesis,* a term originating in Greco-Roman rhetorical education; and the "rule of truth," which, especially in its alternate form as the "rule of faith," will become a foundational term for Christian exegesis

[7] Elaine Pagels, "Irenaeus, the 'Canon of Truth,' and the Gospel of John: 'Making a Difference' through Hermeneutics and Ritual," *VC* 56:4 (Nov. 2002): 339-371 (348-9).

and of which Irenaeus is our earliest surviving exponent. I then move to an overview of the evidence that Irenaeus had a firm foundation in Greco-Roman rhetorical training, drawing upon recent scholarship on Greco-Roman *paideia* itself as well as the work of a few scholars who have commented upon Irenaeus' use of the fruits of this education. Often contrasted with the "useless knowledge" offered by the philosophers, the tools learned from the rhetor had practical applications for ambitious men eager to win friends and influence people – whether as statesmen, orators at private or public events, or, especially, advocates debating forensic cases in courts of law, cases that often hinged on the correct interpretation of textual evidence.

I then turn to my main thesis, that Irenaeus drew upon this education in order to construct the "orthodox" and "heretical" methods of reading Scripture that he presents in *Adversus Haereses.* Here I compare his techniques to those found in rhetorical handbooks, especially Cicero's *De inventione* ("On Discovery"), perform a close reading of his description of the Valentinian method through his use of two memorable metaphors, and examine his adaptation of the Christian concept of the *parabolē* ("parable") to the rhetorical commonplace of insisting a piece of written evidence is obscure and ought not to be interpreted according to the letter. I conclude with an analysis of Irenaeus' chameleon-like attitude towards the inherent clarity or inscrutability of Scripture. This chapter, then, represents a clearing of the ground, the sweeping away of preconceptions of Valentinian eisegesis that have persisted in scholarship largely due to the failure to recognize the genius of Irenaeus' rhetorical skill. This chapter will then prepare the way for a more objective investigation, in the succeeding chapters, of the Valentinian literature's exegesis of the Gospel of Matthew.

2. VALENTINUS IS THE NEW MARCION

Irenaeus' attack against Valentinian "eisegesis" proved immediately influential upon late antique heresiology. In particular, illegitimate interpretation of Scripture is, for Irenaeus, an important point with which he may contrast the followers of Valentinus to those of Marcion, probably the most well-known and important "heretic" of Irenaeus' day, owing to the ongoing success of his rival *ekklēsia*. On this point, I am persuaded by the arguments of Elaine Pagels, Tuomas Rasimus, and others who suggest that Irenaeus took various materials originally developed against Marcionites and adapted them in *Adversus Haereses* for use against Valentinians.[8]

One of Irenaeus' purposes in Book One is to fit the newer threat of the Valentinians into a genealogy of heretics inherited from his heresiological predecessors, one that begins with Simon Magus and climaxes with Marcion (*Haer.* 1.23-27). At the end of his coverage of the latter (*Haer.* 1.27.4), he pauses to reinforce the connection between this arch-heretic and the subject of his treatise, Valentinus and his disciples: by recalling "all those who in any way adulterate the truth and do injury to the preaching of the Church,"[9] he reminds the reader of his opening salvo against the Valentinians in his Preface. While the centrality of this connection may be obscured for the reader by the cornucopia of heresies presented in the sections immediately following (*Haer.* 1.28-31), Irenaeus will develop explicitly the contrast between Marcion and Valentinus in Book Three. Sometimes Irenaeus pairs the two men with little to no differentiation, thus suggesting that they are the two most

[8] Pagels, "Irenaeus," 343-7; Tuomas Rasimus, "Ptolemaeus and the Valentinian Exegesis of John's Prologue," in *The Legacy of John: Second-Century Reception of the Fourth Gospel,* ed. Tuomas Rasimus (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 145-71 (151-4).
[9] Trans. Unger and Dillon.

significant heretics his readers should know about;[10] while elsewhere he explicitly contrasts the two, thereby indicating two different ways by which one might deviate from the true faith. Whereas Marcion and his followers "disown some books entirely, and mutilate the Gospel of Luke and the letters of Paul and assert that these alone, in their shortened form, are genuine," "all the rest who are puffed up with a false knowledge indeed recognize the Scriptures, but they pervert their interpretation." And while the followers of Marcion "blaspheme the Creator directly," "the followers of Valentinus use more honorable names [for the Creator], and prove that He who is the Maker is Father and Lord and God, [but] nevertheless they hold an even more blasphemous thesis, or heresy."[11]

Coming shortly after the passages just cited, I suggest that the entire chapter *Haer.* 3.14 is an anti-Marcionite argument only slightly redacted by Irenaeus to accommodate Valentinus as well. When acknowledging the numerous words and deeds of Jesus that are known only from the Gospel of Luke, Irenaeus notes that the followers of both Marcion and Valentinus make use of them, and then adds:

> It is necessary, then, that these men accept the rest of Luke's narrative or discard also these parts; for no person with intelligence will permit them to accept some of the things Luke narrated, as if they belonged to the truth, and to discard the others, as if he had not known the truth. Now if Marcion's followers discard them, they will have no Gospel at all! For, as we have said, they mutilate the Gospel of Luke and then boast that they have a Gospel. *And let the followers of Valentinus stop their senseless talk; for from Luke they got many of the pretexts for their subtleties, daring to wickedly interpret things that he said well.* If, however, they are compelled to accept also the rest, they must give heed to the complete Gospel, and to

[10] Simple oppositions of the two figures, without the appearance of any other figures Irenaeus considered to be heretics, occur especially in Book Three, at 3.3.4; 3.4.3; 3.11.2; 3.11.7; 3.11.9; and 3.12.5. A few of these contain mention of one or two heretical groups (Ebionites, "those who use the Gospel of Mark," other Gnostics), but no other heresiarchs are mentioned.

[11] *Haer.* 3.12.12, trans. Unger and Steenberg.

> the doctrine of the apostles, and so repent that they may be saved from danger and ruin.[12]

If we remove the single italicized sentence referring to the followers of Valentinus, as well as the words "and Valentinus" immediately before this passage, then the entire passage may be taken to refer to Marcionites without difficulty. As it stands, however, the sentence about Valentinians introduces a passing reference to bad exegesis into a long discussion (occupying all of 3.14) of the necessity of the complete Gospel of Luke. The italicized sentence does not obviously follow what comes before, and does not connect at all with what follows after, for the subject "they" (in "they are compelled to accept also the rest") must now refer to both Marcionites and Valentinians, but it is not the Valentinians that Irenaeus has accused of rejecting any of Luke, but only the Marcionites.

Furthermore, some of the words of this particular italicized sentence seem familiar. The words of Irenaeus' ancient Latin translator, *interpretari audentes male, quae ab hoc bene sunt dicta,* ("daring to wickedly interpret things that he said well"), are almost identical to those I quoted at the beginning of the chapter from the Preface to Book One: *interpretatores mali eorum, quae bene dicta sunt effecti* ("they [show] themselves [to be] wicked interpreters of well-said things"). So it seems most likely that just as in the Preface, these are Irenaeus' own words as well, and that Irenaeus inserted this sentence into an anti-Marcionite source that he was working from at this point. I suggest that he did this in order to keep his main opponents, the followers of Valentinus, from receding too far from the forefront of his readers' minds as he reproduces a long anti-Marcionite passage from his source material.

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[12] *Haer.* 3.14.4, trans. Unger and Steenberg, modified. They render the key sentence *interpretari audentes male, quae ab hoc bene sunt dicta* as "daring to give a bad interpretation to things he [i.e., Luke] has said well."

As Irenaeus adapts existing anti-Marcionite polemics to meet the newer Valentinian threat, he often groups these two "heresiarchs" together, but distinguishes them on this basis: while up until the present time Marcion has been "the only one who openly dared to circumcise the scriptures and attack God more shamelessly than all others,"[13] now Valentinus, the wily fox,[14] has arisen as a subtler, and thus even more dangerous foe of the true church. This contrast between the two heresiarchs is one that Irenaeus will repeat the last time he mentions Marcion, Valentinus, or indeed any "heretic" by name, as he approaches the conclusion of the fifth and final book of his magnum opus:

> Let those persons, therefore, who blaspheme the Creator, either by openly expressed words, such as the disciples of Marcion, or by a perversion of the sense [of Scripture], as those of Valentinus and all of the Gnostics falsely so called, be recognized as agents of Satan by all those who worship God...[15]

These words restate in summary form the contrast that Irenaeus had developed in Book Three and was implicit even in Book One.

This distinction between Marcion and Valentinus, expressed as two heretical ideal types, will be further developed a few decades later by Tertullian, in his *De Praescriptione haereticorum (Prescription against Heretics):*

> One man perverts the Scriptures with his hand, another their meaning by his exposition. For although Valentinus seems to use the entire volume, he has none the less laid violent hands on the truth only with a more cunning mind and skill than Marcion. Marcion expressly and openly used the knife, not the pen, since he made such an excision of the Scriptures as suited his own subject-matter. Valentinus, however, abstained from such excision, because he did not invent Scriptures to square with his own subject-matter, but adapted his matter to the Scriptures;[16] and yet he took away more, and

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[13] *Sed huic quidem, quoniam et solus manifeste ausus est circumcidere Scripturas, et impudorate super omnes obtrectare Deum... Haer.* 1.27.4. Trans. Robert M. Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (London: Routledge, 1997).
[14] *Haer.* 1.31.4.
[15] *Qui ergo blasphemant Demiurgum, vel ipsis verbis et manifeste, quemadmodum qui a Marcione sunt; vel secundum eversionem sententiae, quemadmodum qui a Valentino sunt, et omnes qui falso dicuntur esse Gnostici; organa Satanae ab omnibus Deum colentibus cognoscantur esse... Haer.* 5.26.2, trans. *ANF.*
[16] *Valentinus autem pepercit quoniam non ad materiam scripturas sed materiam ad scripturas excogitauit.*

> added more, by removing the proper meaning of every particular word, and adding fantastic arrangements of things which have no real existence.[17]

As Tertullian certainly made use of Irenaeus' treatise,[18] we may see already in Tertullian the beginning of the long shadow of influence that Irenaeus was to cast upon both future heresiology and modern scholarship with regard to the way Valentinians would be conceptualized.

3. IRENAEUS' *"HYPOTHESIS"* AND "RULE OF TRUTH"

Irenaeus thus frames the debate with Valentinian Christians as one over exegesis. In the course of charging them with innovating illegitimate interpretations of their shared sacred texts, Irenaeus introduces a few influential innovations of his own. Frances Young has called him the first Christian systematic theologian on record, as he builds a unified theology out of an emerging biblical canon whose contours he helped reinforce by means of his own utilization of them in his grand narrative.[19] The first, so far as we know, to describe and defend the fourfold gospel, he also included as authoritative the Acts of the Apostles, most of the greater Pauline corpus, most of the catholic letters, and the Revelation of John. Elevating all of these writings to the level of the Hebrew Scriptures, he narrates an unfolding history of salvation that incorporates all of these disparate materials into a unified

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[17] *Praescr.* 38; trans. *ANF.*
[18] *Adversus Valentinianos* 5.
[19] Frances M. Young, *The Art of Performance: Towards a Theology of Holy Scripture* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1990), 54, 63. For similar claims, see Eric Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), xiv; Rowan A. Greer, "The Christian Bible and Its Interpretation," in *Early Biblical Interpretation,* by James L. Kugel and Rowan A. Greer (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 107-208, at 156. Of course, once we accept the Valentinians as Christians, then the authors of those Valentinian systematic treatises (ὑπομνήματα) known to Irenaeus might well lay claim to this title, depending upon how we define "systematic theology." Furthermore, depending upon how we date some of the pseudepigraphic and anonymous systematic treatises from Nag Hammadi, the same might be said for them; e.g., the Valentinian *Tripartite Tractate* (NHC I,*5*), the untitled tractate known as *A Valentinian Exposition* (NHC XI,*2*), the untitled, non-Valentinian tractate known as *On the Origin of the World* (NHC II,*5*), and the *Apocryphon of John.* Einar Thomassen may lean toward this view; cf. *The Spiritual Seed,* 20-2.

whole, a "Scripture" with a single author (God), a single hero (Christ),[20] and a single underlying *hypothesis* (ὑπόθεσις; Latin: argumentum). This last term, having its origins in Greek rhetorical education, indicates the matter that lies at the basis of any written or artistic representation, including its plot, subject matter, contents, theme, and/or its "argument."[21] In analyzing a poem, a dramatic piece or a political speech, one might attempt to demonstrate that a proposed *hypothesis* is the "real" one; that is, the one intended by the author. Irenaeus works hard to demonstrate not only the truth of his *hypothesis,* but that "Scripture," as he defines its borders, has one at all.[22] As Elaine Pagels incisively points out, if second-century Christians had thought Irenaeus' *hypothesis* was obvious, he would not have needed to compose a massive, five-volume refutation of the alternatives.[23]

Nonetheless, Irenaeus' postulation of what he calls the apostolic faith was to prove enormously influential. Rowan Greer writes:

> [I]n broad terms the theological framework articulated by Irenaeus remains a constant throughout the [third to fifth centuries]. Christian theology revolves around the Christian story that traces human progress from creation to the incarnation and to its consummation in the age to come. The story moves from the immaturity or the unstable perfection of Adam in paradise to the maturity or stable perfection of the resurrection life in the heavenly city.[24]

Greer presents here an abridged version of Irenaeus' "story" or *hypothesis,* which Irenaeus himself presents three times in slightly different ways, at *Haer.* 1.10.1, 1.22.1, and 3.4.2, the first and third of which contain numerous elements that would appear in later creeds. As

[20] Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation,* 155-6.
[21] Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons,* 47-9.
[22] Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons,* 46.
[23] Pagels, "Irenaeus," 351.
[24] Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation,* 185.

Frances Young points out,[25] none of these Irenaean "stories" are adequate summaries of Scripture, as they omit significant events from Israel's history while including some elements, such as the eternal punishment of rebellious angels, that have no obvious counterpart in the writings Irenaeus found authoritative.[26] The history of salvation narrative that Irenaeus tells is necessarily selective in its use of Scripture. Concerning Irenaeus' *hypothesis,* Wayne Meeks writes:

> Irenaeus seems to be the first author, of those whose works survive, to articulate the notion that the whole of humankind and of the world has one history, which is told in the biblical narrative... the dramatic plot as a whole had not previously (as far as we know) been worked out. Yet its power, once stated, can be sensed by the extent to which, even now, it seems to us a natural way to read the Bible. From the ever so much more elaborate exposition of these themes in Augustine's *City of God,* through the medieval cycles of miracle plays and narrative sequences in stained glass, through Milton and a large part of the corpus of modern literature, to twentieth-century "biblical theology," the Christian Bible, beginning with Genesis and ending with Apocalypse, is construed as a single, complex drama.[27]

As a corollary to his defense of his *hypothesis,* Irenaeus is also the first to articulate a "rule of truth" (ὁ κανὼν τῆς ἀληθείας, *regula veritatis*) for reading Scripture, a term that appears frequently in *Adversus Haereses.* In his later treatise, *Epideixis tou apostolikou kērygmatos (Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching),* Irenaeus – at least, according to the Armenian translator of that work – will prefer the term "rule of faith."[28] This latter term was also known to his Asian contemporary and correspondent Polykrates of Ephesus, who, according to Eusebius, appealed to ὁ κανὼν τῆς πίστεως in his letter to Victor,

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[25] Young, *Art of Performance,* 49-54.
[26] On this point and Irenaeus' corresponding views on sin and its origins, see D. R. Schultz, "The Origin of Sin in Irenaeus and Jewish Pseudepigraphical Literature," *VC* 32 (1978): 161-190.
[27] Wayne A. Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 159-60.
[28] The only complete copy of the *Epideixis,* a thirteenth-century manuscript found in 1904, comes from an Armenian translation of Irenaeus' Greek dating to c.572-591. For the most recent English translation, see John Behr, ed. and trans., *St. Irenaeus of Lyons: On the Apostolic Preaching* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997); for notes on the manuscripts, see idem, 27-35.

bishop of Rome, during the Quartodeciman controversy.[29] The "rule of faith" (*regula fidei*) is also an important concept for our earliest Latin Christian author, Tertullian,[30] and will eventually eclipse the former term in popularity, remaining a fundamental concept, with varying definitions, for churches to this day.[31]

There is a long history of scholarship on what, exactly, Irenaeus means by the term "rule of truth" in *Adversus Haereses.* The polyvalence of the term in Irenaeus' hands was observed as early as 1910 by a Danish scholar, S. A. Becker, in a monograph devoted to the subject. His countryman Valdemar Ammundsen has summarized and slightly modified his findings in a 1912 article in English,[32] in the introduction of which he states his belief that Becker "has contributed a good deal to bringing to an end the dissension amongst scholars on that point." These words were not destined to be prophetic. In fact it is the term's

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[29] *Hist. eccl.* 5.24.6.

[30] E.g. Tertullian, *Praescriptione Haereticorum* 12-13, 26-27. Tertullian also uses the term *regula fidei* in his (probably later) treatises *Adversus Marcionem* 4.2 and *Adversus Praxean* 2, and alludes to "our rule" in *Adversus Hermogenem.* Timothy D. Barnes dates *Praescr.* to c. 203 C.E. Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 55. Barnes confirms this date in the postscript to the revised edition (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 326.

[31] Valdemar Ammundsen, in "The Rule of Truth in Irenaeus," *JTS* 13 (1912), 574-80 (578), had raised the possibility that the Armenian translator of Irenaeus' *Epideixis* might have harmonized "rule of truth" with the perhaps more popular "rule of faith," introducing the latter term where Irenaeus had written the former. However, the accuracy of the translation has since been upheld on the basis of an Armenian translation, in the same manuscript, of Books Four and Five of *Adversus Haereses.* Both translations are "from the same period of the same school of translation," a period in which literal accuracy triumphed over literary value, and comparison of the translations shows that "the translator did indeed scrupulously render the Greek, word by word, into Armenian" (Behr, 32-4). Furthermore, if we assume that Eusebius has faithfully copied Polykrates' letter, then he has preserved a contemporary instance of the phrase "rule of faith" in Greek. Irenaeus was in correspondence with Polykrates and other of their Asian countrymen during the Quartodeciman controversy, as he intercedes with Victor on behalf of the Asian churches (*Hist. eccl.* 5.24.11-13). Irenaeus therefore may well have become familiar with the phrase "rule of faith" at this time if not before, and thus may have preferred it in his later writing to "rule of truth." Irenaeus uses "body of truth" in *Epid.* 1 and "rule of faith" in *Epid.* 3 and 6, but does not use "rule of truth" in that treatise at all. However, if Ammundsen's hunch is correct, and we may trust neither the Armenian translator of *Epideixis* nor Eusebius' report on Polykrates, then the first appearance of κανὼν τῆς πίστεως in Greek is in Clement of Alexandria (e.g. *Strom.* 4.15, where its precise meaning is uncertain). But Clement also uses κανὼν τῆς ἀληθείας as a guide to scriptural exegesis (*Strom.* 7.16), signifying the persistence into the third century of Irenaeus' preferred phrase in *Adversus Haereses.*

[32] Valdemar Ammundsen, "The Rule of Truth in Irenaeus," *JTS* 13 (1912), 574-80.

polysemous quality that is the source of not only the difficulty scholars have had in defining it, but its rhetorical force under Irenaeus' pen.

Irenaeus uses the term "rule of truth" in at least two ways. Along the lines of the primary semantic range of κανών (and also of *regula*), Irenaeus usually presents this "rule" as a standard with which to measure or compare an interpretation, in order to assess its truth. Having as its basic meaning a workman's straightedge or mason's line used to assure straight measurement, κανών already in Attic Greek could comprise the metaphorical meaning of "standard" or "rule" in a more general sense. Thus Aristotle may say that the good man is himself the "standard and measure" (κανὼν καὶ μέτρον) of the noble and pleasant, for he alone sees the truth of each thing clearly,[33] and for Philo, a "standard of right discipline" (παιδείας κανὼν ὀρθῆς), upon which one may lean like a staff, is one of the genuine goods.[34] In this sense, the term "rule of truth" designates a function: for Irenaeus, it functions as a hermeneutical key for Scripture.

As the first range of meaning shows, however, the rule works by providing a standard, and thus the rule is also synonymous with the content of the interpretation, the exegetical product, or *hypothesis.*[35] It is "the extra-canonical framework or 'overarching

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[33] ὁ σπουδαῖος γὰρ ἕκαστα κρίνει ὀρθῶς, καὶ ἐν ἑκάστοις τἀληθὲς αὐτῷ φαίνεται· καθ᾽ ἑκάστην γὰρ ἕξιν ἴδιά ἐστι καλὰ καὶ ἡδέα, καὶ διαφέρει πλεῖστον ἴσως ὁ σπουδαῖος τῷ τἀληθὲς ἐν ἑκάστοις ὁρᾶν, ὥσπερ κανὼν καὶ μέτρον αὐτῶν ὤν. "For the good man judges everything correctly; what things truly are, that they seem to him to be, in every department [of character and conduct] – for special things are noble and pleasant corresponding to each type of character, and perhaps what chiefly distinguishes the good man is that he sees the truth in each kind, being himself as it were the standard and measure of the noble and pleasant." Aristotle, *Ethica nichomachea* 3.4.4-5, trans. Rackham, LCL.

[34] γνήσια μὲν οὖν ἀγαθὰ πίστις, εἰρμὸς καὶ ἀκολουθία λόγων πρὸς ἔργα, παιδείας κανὼν ὀρθῆς, ὡς ἔμπαλιν κακὰ ἀπιστία, τὸ ἀνακόλουθον, ἀπαιδευσία, τὰ δὲ νόθα, ὅσα τῆς ἀλόγου φορᾶς ἀπηώρηται. "Now genuine goods are fidelity, sequence and correspondence of words with acts, a standard of right discipline (as on the other hand evils are faithlessness, inconsistency, lack of discipline); while the counterfeits are all things that depend upon irrational impulse." Philo, *De fuga et inventione* 152, trans. Colson and Whitaker, LCL. Cf. *Fug.* 149-151, where Philo corresponds the three securities Judah gives Tamar in Gen. 38.18 – a signet ring, a cord, and a staff – with these three allegorized goods.

[35] Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons,* 48-9; Young, *Biblical Exegesis,* 20.

story' by which the scriptures were to be read and interpreted";[36] or, "the basic and overarching message, the very heart of the Gospel."[37] It may be used to explain the details: castigating some Valentinian exegetes for their illegitimate numerological speculation, Irenaeus remarks that "the rule does not derive from numbers, but the numbers from the rule."[38] Furthermore, as the correct *hypothesis* of Scripture, the term ὁ κανὼν τῆς ἀληθείας might, at times, be understood as containing a genitive of opposition, that equates the rule with the truth itself.[39] This is made most clear at *Haer.* 2.28.1: "Having, therefore, the truth itself as our rule..."[40] At one of the three places Irenaeus outlines his *hypothesis* that I mentioned earlier, he calls it the "rule of truth,"[41] but at the other two, he refers to it as merely "the truth."[42] This truth, says Irenaeus, "can be obtained easily from the Church; for the apostles most abundantly placed in her, as in a rich receptacle, every thing that belongs to the truth."[43] On this level, the rule, or the truth, is also expressed by the terms "body of truth," "gift of truth," or simply "the faith." Signifying the content of faith, "the rule of truth" can mean both the entirety of Christian doctrine that is contained in Scripture and taught by the church[44] as well as a summary of that faith as learnt by catechumens at baptism.[45]

When these two meanings work together, the "rule of truth" is the alleged content of the apostolic preaching that functions as a hermeneutical standard to which scriptural

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[36] Young, *Biblical Exegesis,* 18.
[37] Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition,* 76.
[38] *Non enim regula ex numeris, sed numeri ex regula. Haer.* 2.25.1.
[39] Ammundsen, "The Rule of Truth in Irenaeus," 576.
[40] *Habentes itaque regulam ipsam veritatem...*
[41] *Haer.* 1.22.1.
[42] *Haer.* 1.9.4 - 1.10.1; 3.4.2.
[43] *Haer.* 3.4.1; trans. Unger and Steenberg.
[44] Norbert Brox, *Offenbarung: Gnosis und gnostischer Mythos bei Irenäus von Lyon: Zur Charakteristik der Systeme* (Salzburg: A. Pustet, 1966), 105-13.
[45] *Haer.* 1.9.4.

interpretations may be compared. Thus the hermeneutical method advocated by Irenaeus is to develop the exegesis with reference to "the rule of truth" – that is, to a *hypothesis* known in advance by the exegete – to ensure harmony between the two. If it is the apostolic tradition that safeguards the validity of the *hypothesis,* however, then the interpretation cannot be said, *pace* Wilson, to "emerge from the text itself" independently of the influence of that stream of tradition.

Irenaeus attacks the Valentinians on each of these points. Their *hypothesis* (content) could not fail to be wrong, he says, because they do not adhere to the correct "rule" (hermeneutic) for determining it. Yet, without any sense of irony, he also attacks their *hypothesis* as a preexisting one, claiming that they attempt to adapt the evidence of Scripture to suit their case – which is just another way of saying that they utilize their *hypothesis* as a hermeneutical key, as does Irenaeus himself. And although Irenaeus admits that the Valentinians appeal to the apostolic tradition, he argues that they in fact stand outside of it, instead deriving their "tradition" from an alternate genealogy that may be traced back to Simon Magus. We are now at a position to foreshadow one of the main conclusions of this chapter: Irenaeus attacks Valentinian *exegetical content* by decrying their *hermeneutical method* as illegitimate; however, so far we have not seen anything to indicate that their *method* is any different from his own.

The "rule of truth" is thus a fundamentally crucial concept for Irenaeus' espoused hermeneutical theory of orthodox and heretical exegesis. Owing to the polyvalence of the term, Irenaeus may argue both that it is guaranteed externally by the apostolic tradition, and that it "emerges from the text itself," as Wilson would put it, as Scripture's true *hypothesis.*

And yet, as Elaine Pagels has indicated, Irenaeus' theory would seem to stand in some tension with his own pragmatic behavior during the Quartodeciman controversy concerning the date of Easter.[46] In this historical moment, when faced with conflicting claims to tradition as a source for scriptural exegesis in service of communal ritual observance, Irenaeus does not advocate for a single apostolic teaching on the matter. On the contrary, in that circumstance, he advised Victor, bishop of Rome, not to excommunicate the churches of Asia for their differing custom on the grounds that "the variance in observance [between the Asian churches and the rest] did not begin in our own time, but much earlier, in the days of our predecessors," and that in a previous generation the churches had agreed to disagree, each spokesman saying "that he ought to keep the custom of those who were presbyters before him."[47]

How may we explain this apparent contradiction between, on the one hand, his rhetorical claim of the worldwide unity of the apostolic preaching and, on the other hand, his support of two ancient yet conflicting traditions concerning the timing of the most important festival of the Christian calendar? I am persuaded by Pagels' argument that what concerned Irenaeus most was whatever he believed was truly divisive.[48] He gambled that a disagreement over the dating of Easter represented a degree of diversity that the church should be able to tolerate, whereas Victor's attempted excommunication of the Asian churches over their dating practice crossed the line, as did the activities of Irenaeus' Valentinian opponents.

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[46] Pagels, "Irenaeus," 347-8.
[47] Text of the letter from Irenaeus to Victor, as preserved by Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.24.12-13; trans. Lake, LCL.
[48] Pagels, "Irenaeus," 347-8.

Pagels rightly characterizes Irenaeus as tolerating, in this case at least, a diversity of practice. Yet we should also observe that the diverging dating practices ultimately derived from differing exegeses of the passion narratives, and depending upon whether one favored the Roman or Jewish calendars, both traditions had equal claim to scriptural authority. Therefore this, too, was a disagreement that might well have been framed as one not merely of differing custom, but of exegesis. Irenaeus might have argued for one true scriptural interpretation on the matter, and might have chosen to challenge one of the competing claims to tradition by various means (such as, for example, labeling one of the traditions "secret teachings"). However, in this case Irenaeus was a strong and persuasive advocate for pluralism of practice and, by implication, pluralism of exegesis, although he did not acknowledge this in these terms.

We may not be able to precisely reconstruct the theoretical grounds by which he would have distinguished the one situation from the other. What we do know is that Irenaeus can deploy the "rule of truth" pragmatically according to the needs of the *ekklēsia* as he understood them, thus indicating that it was not a rigid standard. Rather, by merging it with the concept of the *hypothesis,* Irenaeus produces a flexible rhetorical tool to refute rival Christian appropriations of shared Scriptures.

This example is just one piece of evidence that suggests Irenaeus not only had acquired some basic rhetorical education, but made use of it in *Adversus Haereses*. I will now briefly summarize some of the more important evidence for this claim before turning to a closer analysis of how Irenaeus drew upon this education in order to construct the Valentinian heresy as one primarily defined by its eisegesis.

4. Evidence of Irenaeus' Rhetorical Training

4.1 External Evidence from Recent Research on Greco-Roman *Paideia*

Recent studies on Greco-Roman *paideia* in the ancient Mediterranean basin have shown that it remained remarkably stable through the Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman periods, and displayed no appreciable differences between the Greek East and the Roman West.[49] It may be imagined as a pyramid of access to learning and power, with a great deal of individual variation.[50] At the bottom of the pyramid were those boys and some girls who had managed to distinguish themselves from the unlettered through the completion of some primary education, in which they attained a number of basic skills. Through incessant drilling with little room for critical thinking, students would learn how to first copy, then write from memory the letters of the alphabet, especially those comprising their own name so that they could sign official documents themselves. Many students would never learn to read or write any more than this, and as adults would remain "signature literates" only.[51] Nevertheless, basic copying skills, in addition to being able to produce one's own signature on demand, themselves represented valuable skills with immediate utility, and also provided, for some students, the foundation either for a career as a professional scribe, to be furthered at specialized vocational schools, or for further education in the grammar school. Work with syllables led to basic skills for writing and reading, and thereby introduction to a "modest cultural package"[52] of texts such as Aesop's *Fables* or Homer. A final set of skills taught at the primary level and continued through all levels of education,

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[49] Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2001), 6-10; Teresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 22-25 & 44-46; Konrad Vössing, *Schule und Bildung im Nordafrika der Römischen Kaiserzeit* (Brussels: Latomus, 1997), 11.
[50] For this portrait I am dependent upon Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind,* esp. 1-44 and 160-252.
[51] Cribiore, 167.
[52] Cribiore, 184.

essential for those few elite young men who would go on to develop oratory skills under the tutelage of the rhetor, was a strong emphasis on exercises that strengthened the natural capacities of the mind for information storage and retrieval.

Together, this basic set of skills gave even those with only a primary education distinct advantages over the truly illiterate. Although these skills may seem minor by our standards, Cribiore sums up this phase of Greco-Roman *paideia* with this keen observation: "The possession of a modest cultural package and of basic techniques in the art of decoding writing engendered a strong sense of distinction from the uneducated. Being able to cite from memory a *bon mot,* to copy a short text, to sign, to jot down a phrase, and to read words from documents of the central government posted in large clear letters were not small accomplishments."[53]

And so most students would not progress beyond this elementary level of education and into the grammar school. The vast majority of those who did were male students, and all of them would have needed the resources to pay for the steep fees demanded by their teachers at this level.[54] The skills learned under the grammarian were those required for advanced reading: rules of grammar, punctuation, accentuation; tools of literary analysis; exposure to a wide range of classical authors, especially poets and tragedians. At least in the Greek curricula, translations of Homer into more current Greek via the use of synonyms was an important skill, as it ensured confidence with classical vocabulary. Overall the goal was reading with comprehension. In addition, students began to learn compositional skills, the most important practical benefit of which was the ability to write letters. Not all students completed the full program, some leaving early due to

[53] Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind,* 184.
[54] Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind,* 187.

circumstances or lack of financial resources, and thus there existed, even among the upper classes that had access to the grammar school, a wide range of familiarity with both the cultural heritage and the skills of reading and writing. However, those few who completed the full program, almost invariably elite young men, would then have the chance to progress to the final stage of education and study under the rhetoricians. They would typically begin this course of study at the age of fourteen or fifteen, and, depending upon their financial resources and the availability of suitable teachers, they would remain under the tutelage of these professors for up to six years.[55]

These students would go on to become the leaders of Greco-Roman society. When the male student reached the top of the educational pyramid, "his superiority over the rest of mankind was consecrated."[56] Quintilian defined rhetoric as *scientia bene dicendi,* the knowledge of how to speak well,[57] and described three basic kinds of speeches: the forensic (persuasion about past events, such as occurred in law courts), the deliberative (persuasion about future events, such as a course of action a civil body should take), and the epideictic (a speech of praise).[58] Indeed, although the goal of rhetorical education was the ability to speak well when the occasion demanded it, the skills learned could readily be applied to writing. In fact, writing played an essential role in rhetorical education. Even the crowning achievement of the pedagogical program, the oral declamation, was carefully planned in advance in writing. As in previous levels of education, numerous exercises were set for the students to develop the skills necessary to achieve the final goal. These exercises, known as

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[55] Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind,* 56. These ages are typical but not uniform, as there was individual variation of progress through all levels of education based upon the students' innate talents and financial means.
[56] Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind,* 220.
[57] Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria (On the Education of the Orator)* 2.15.38.
[58] Quintilian here upholds the three divisions described by Aristotle in *Rhet.* 1.3. Likewise, Cicero organizes the second book of *De inventione* around these three types of speeches.

progymnasmata or *gymnasmata* and thus invoking the analogy of physical training for the mind, progressed in difficulty. Early *progymnasmata* included enlarging and developing a saying, developing the truth of the saying by means of comparison or illustration, or disproving the saying through similar means.[59] With forensic speeches, students learned how to conform their short speeches to expected norms by setting the heart of their argument within the framework of introduction, narration, consideration of alternatives, proof of their proposal, and conclusion. Students learned numerous tactics suitable to arguing a forensic case. A wide repertoire of exercises were available to set for the students, including impersonations of mythological or literary characters in particular situations, and epideictic speeches of praise of the same figures. The students' cultural literacy continued to expand through constant reading, with histories being added to the menu of poets and playwrights. Familiarity with a broad range of texts would give students access not only to a wide palette of literary models upon which to base their own compositions, but a wealth of characters and subplots that could be mined for specific gems to drop into their own arguments, cultural references that their audiences would recognize and appreciate.

4.2 Internal Evidence from *Adversus Haereses*

Through this short description of the steps leading to the completion of a rhetorical education, it will be seen that someone capable of composing a forensic treatise such as *Adversus Haereses* could have learned these skills only at this, final tier of the educational

[59] Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind,* 223.

pyramid. And yet there are some specific points of evidence internal to *Adversus Haereses* that suggest Irenaeus may have been an advanced student.[60]

Let us begin with an apology he makes in his Preface for his alleged *lack* of rhetorical ability:

> Not that we are accustomed to writing books, or practiced in the art of rhetoric; but it is love that prompts us to acquaint you and all your people with the teachings which up till now have been kept secret, which, however, by the grace of God have at last come to light. "For nothing is covered that will not be revealed, and nothing hidden that will not be known." (Mt. 10.26) From us who live among the Celts and are accustomed to transact practically everything in a barbarous tongue, you cannot expect rhetorical art, which we have never learned, or the craft of writing, in which we have not had practice, or elegant style and persuasiveness, with which we are not familiar. Rather, you must welcome in charity what in charity we write to you – simply and truthfully and unaffectedly. You yourself, as one more competent than we, will develop these points, receiving from us, as it were, only the seeds and beginnings. In the broad range of your mind you will reap abundant fruit from our brief statements, and will forcefully present to your people what we have reported but feebly.[61]

This lengthy apology for what he says will be a poorly crafted treatise that is to follow, an appeal to value the truth of his statements over the affectations of others, and a denial of his rhetorical skill, should not be taken at face value, but on the contrary as a fine example of a rhetorical commonplace, or *topos,* with which Irenaeus was familiar. In

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[60] Previous scholarship on Irenaeus' knowledge of Greco-Roman rhetoric is infrequent. D. B. Reynders, "La polémique de S. Irénée," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 7 (1935): 5-27, drew attention to a few of Irenaeus' rhetorical techniques, but without connecting these to any participation in Greco-Roman *paideia.* Scholars who have pursued the latter include: Robert M. Grant, "Irenaeus and Hellenistic Culture," *HTR* 42 (1949): 47-51; William R. Schoedel, "Philosophy and Rhetoric in the *Adversus Haereses* of Irenaeus," *VC* 13:1 (April, 1959): 22-32; Robert M. Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, esp. 46-53; and Scott Moringiello, "Irenaeus Rhetor" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2008). Additional scholarship on the influence of rhetorical education on patristic exegesis in general includes: Frances M. Young, "The Rhetorical Schools and their Influence on Patristic Exegesis," in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick,* ed. Rowan Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 182-99; Kathy Eden, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition: Chapters in the Ancient Legacy and its Humanist Reception* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Christoph Schäublin, "The Contribution of Rhetorics to Christian Hermeneutics," in *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity,* by Charles Kannengiesser et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1:149-63; Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul, the Corinthians, and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[61] *Haer.* 1.prf.2-3; trans. Unger and Dillon.

opening with a desire to speak the plain facts, unadorned with rhetorical sophistry, he has not only conformed to this rhetorical *topos* but has skillfully adapted it to his particular circumstances as a Greek from Asia Minor now living in southern Gaul, far from the places where smooth speech is taught. In a similar manner, Plato performs his own variation on this well-known theme when he has Socrates open his *Apologia* by stating that it would be unseemly for him, at this grave moment in his life, to appear before the men of Athens in the role of a juvenile orator. Instead, he will speak the plain truth, not using prepared and ornamented speeches like his accusers, but simply whatever ideas come to him at the time. Furthermore, he begs patience of his audience, for he must use the same kinds of expressions that he uses everyday in the agora: as he has not once in his entire life been on trial before, he is a stranger to the courtroom and has never before had occasion to use the forms of language that are customary for these occasions. Therefore, they should imagine he is a foreigner, and is forced to speak in a language that is not his native tongue.[62]

The point here is not that we may be certain whether Irenaeus was intimately familiar with Plato's *Apologia;* rather, Socrates' speech would have been typical of the classical examples of this rhetorical *topos* studied by the educated elite in the Greco-Roman system of *paideia* outlined above. Paul, too, shows knowledge of this rhetorical *topos,* adapting it to theological language when he writes to the Corinthians, "I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom... I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so

[62] On parallels between Irenaeus' and Plato's opening apologies, see William Schoedel, "Philosophy and Rhetoric," 27. In this passage from his Preface, Irenaeus also makes use of the Greco-Roman rhetorical *topos* of the teacher as a sower of seeds, which I discuss in Chapter 4.

that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God."[63] While Irenaeus certainly knew this example of the trope, he did not copy it, but instead utilized his own rhetorical skill to compose his own, personal variation on the theme.[64]

Moving beyond the Preface of *Adversus Haereses* to the overall structure of the work, some scholars have noticed that it roughly follows the format of a Greco-Roman oration. There was no single such format, as not only would there be natural variation on these forms according to the occasion, but ancient rhetoricians differed slightly on the recommended parts of a speech. I find most convincing William Schoedel's comparison of the parts of the *Adversus Haereses* to the divisions recommended by Cicero in his later work *De partitione* (which is in agreement with a rhetorical handbook by Theon, the *Progymnasmata*).[65] According to this scheme, the *Adversus Haereses* opens with an *exordium,* an introduction whose goal is to incline the audience favorably toward the speaker and to obtain their attention (1.prf.1-3). The *exordium* is followed by a combined *narratio* and *divisio* (comprising Book One and the Preface to Book Two). The *narratio* contains the facts of the case, while the *divisio* flags in advance the main lines of argument that will follow. Then, the bulk of Books Two through Five comprise the combined *confutatio* and *confirmatio,* that is, refutation of the opposing case alternating with confirmation of one's own. Within this *confutatio-confirmatio,* Irenaeus further orders his

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[63] 1 Cor. 1.1-5; c.f. 2 Cor. 4.1-2.

[64] Similarly, Justin interrupts his *Dialogue with Trypho* to state that, as he lacks talent in the rhetorical arts, he intends to quote Scripture "without any reliance on mere artistic arrangement of arguments," relying instead only on the grace that God has given him to understand the Scriptures; Trypho (according to Justin) responds by suggesting Justin is dissembling (*Dial.* 58.1-2). This particular rhetorical commonplace has remained popular; for a more recent example, consider Antony's funeral oration in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar:* "For I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth, / Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech, / To stir men's blood: I only speak right on; / I tell you that which you yourselves do know; / Show you sweet Caesar's wounds, poor poor dumb mouths, / And bid them speak for me: but were I Brutus / And Brutus Antony, there were an Antony / Would ruffle up your spirits, and put a tongue / In every wound of Caesar, that should move / The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny."

[65] I will discuss the rhetorical handbooks in more detail below.

arguments according to the rhetorical principle that one should begin with the weakest arguments and work up to the strongest: thus Book Two comprises arguments from reason, Book Three arguments from the apostolic tradition, and Book Four arguments from the words of the Lord himself. The last of Cicero's divisions, the *peroratio* or summing up, Schoedel believes to be missing, although Scott Moringiello suggests that this is one of the purposes of Book Five, in addition to providing further proofs from the Pauline literature, the four gospels, and apocalyptic literature.[66]

In addition to displaying an overarching structure indicative of a Greco-Roman forensic oration, the *Adversus Haereses* is filled with numerous *topoi* taught in the rhetorical schools, as previous scholars, including D. B. Reynders, Robert Grant, and William Schoedel have observed. These *topoi* include: inquiring into the possibility of the opponent's proposition; arguing for the lesser on the basis of the greater, and, in some cases, for the greater on the basis of the lesser; demonstrating the ease of following the course proposed as compared to the difficulty of the opponent's case; assessing the "profitability" and "harmoniousness" of various propositions; showing that we are neither the only one nor the first to believe what is proposed; the use of the dilemma; and even the use of the *ad hominem* attack.[67]

These and other commonplaces, used frequently by Irenaeus, are evidence of his previous training in ancient rhetoric. This training would have most likely occurred as a

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[66] Moringiello, in his dissertation "Irenaeus Rhetor," also argues that Irenaeus followed a standard Greco-Roman plan for an oration, but departs from Schoedel on this point, suggesting instead that Irenaeus' five-book treatise most resembles Quintilian's recommendations for a five-part forensic speech. We should not expect to find a precise match with one or another rhetorician's proposed divisions, in part because there is some evidence that Irenaeus originally intended his treatise to be only two books, but modified this plan during the course of writing Book Two (by the time he writes 2.31.1 he is promising the reader multiple future books). For discussion, see Michael Slusser's introduction to Dominic J. Unger and John J. Dillon, *Against the Heresies: Book Two* (Mahwah, N.J.: Newman Press, 2012), 2-3, 8-9.

[67] For examples from *Adversus Haereses* of these and other rhetorical *topoi,* see Reynders, "La polémique," Grant, "Irenaeus and Hellenistic Culture," and Schoedel, "Philosophy and Rhetoric."

young man by the age of twenty, well before his arrival in the land of the Celts and their "barbarous tongue," in his hometown of Smyrna, Asia Minor, one of the larger centers of Hellenistic learning in the Roman Empire.[68]

5. Influence of Rhetorical Education on Irenaean Exegesis

Having reviewed the evidence that Irenaeus received an education in rhetoric and made extensive use of that education in *Adversus Haereses,* I turn now to my main thesis, that Irenaeus utilized specific tools learned in that training in order to frame his dispute with Valentinians as one of correct exegesis. With the exception of a few passing observations, this aspect of the influence of rhetorical education on Irenaeus' work has not been mentioned in previous scholarship.[69]

5.1 The Process of *Inventio,* or, Treasure Hidden in a Field

The rhetoricians instructed their students to utilize a variety of strategies for reading textual evidence against their opponents, who were imagined in practical terms as lawyers presenting opposing sides of a case that hinges on interpretation of the texts in question. These reading strategies include: attending to the differences between the letter of the text and the intent of the author; attending to, and even defining, the appropriate context by

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[68] Although this geographical suggestion cannot be definitive, Jared Secord has recently arrived at the same conclusion, in "The Cultural Geography of a Greek Christian: Irenaeus from Smyrna to Lyons," in *Irenaeus: Life, Scripture, Legacy,* eds. Sara Parvis and Paul Foster (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 25-33 (25-6). On the significance of Smyrna, see Ewen Bowie, "The Geography of the Second Sophistic: Cultural Variations," in *Paideia: The World of the Second Sophistic,* ed. Barbara E. Borg (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004), 65-83 (68).

[69] See Mitchell, *Paul, the Corinthians, and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics,* 25-26, 46-48. In what follows I am indebted to Mitchell's work, as well as Kathy Eden, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition*, though their focus is on Paul (both Eden and Mitchell), Basil of Caesarea and Augustine (Eden), and Gregory of Nyssa, Eustathius of Antioch, John Chrysostom, and others (Mitchell).

which a particular sentence should be understood; and claiming that ambiguous texts are clear (and, as implied by the previous two points, vice versa).

A number of rhetorical handbooks, that compiled these guidelines in systematic form, have been preserved for us by both Greek and Latin authors. In Greek these include the *Progymnasmata* of the grammarian Theon of Alexandria (fl. 1st cent. C.E.), and some of the works of Hermogenes of Tarsus (fl. 160-180 C.E.), and in Latin the treatise of unknown authorship entitled *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (c. 90 B.C.E.), Cicero's *De inventione*, and Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria.* As I indicated earlier, scholars of late antique education have found that, at least through the fourth century, there were no appreciable distinctions among the educational curricula in the Greek East and the Roman West, and the contents of these rhetorical handbooks proved no exception. Minor differences did exist; for instance, in Greek practice, the forensic cases students were given to argue typically involved historical figures from the classical past put on trial for some imagined charge, whereas Roman educators typically crafted forensic exercises out of material taken from contemporary legal cases. Differences like these, however, are only minor variations on a system of elementary education that was virtually universal in both East and West.[70]

Cicero's *De inventione* is a particularly good example of the kind of instruction given in Greco-Roman rhetorical training.[71] Written during Cicero's youth and designed to be just such a manual as those that he himself had recently studied, it preserves a detailed account of *inventio,* the first and most important of the five sequential steps in constructing

[70] Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind,* 2-9 for discussion of similarities, and 226-27, 232-33 for differences. For the similarity of Eastern and Western curricula, see also Teresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds,* 22-25, 44-46.
[71] Mitchell, *Paul,* 21-25.

an oration.[72] *Inventio,* the discovery of arguments, was followed by the arrangement of arguments (*dispositio*), selection of the right words, or elocution (*elocutio*), committing the speech to memory (*memoria*), and finally the delivery (*pronuntiatio*). As is evident from the sequence, the speech was prepared in writing in the early stages, and so the bulk of the rhetorical arts had application for written forensic treatises such as *Adversus Haereses*. Furthermore, we must remember such a treatise need not have been read only privately, but may well have been read aloud for an audience, and even written with this possibility in mind.

Cicero defines *inventio* as "the discovery of valid or seemingly valid arguments to render one's cause plausible."[73] Most useful for our purposes are the strategies he provides for arguing either side of a forensic case involving the interpretation of a written document, strategies that adapt the written evidence available to the case at hand (2.40-51). As I discussed earlier, students in the rhetorical schools practiced these techniques by being set exercises (first *progymnasmata,* preliminary exercises, followed by *gymnasmata*)[74] in which they would be assigned a controversy and instructed to argue one side or another, making use of the same textual evidence. Unlike Cicero's later treatise *De oratore,* which was composed at the height of his career as an advocate[75] and assumes its reader will be familiar with the basic arguments learned at school, the *De inventione* gives these techniques in great detail.

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[72] *De inventione* 1.7.9.
[73] *Inventio est excogitatio rerum verarum aut veri similium quae causam probabilem reddant. Inv.* 1.7.9. All translations of *De inventione* are from Hubbell, LCL.
[74] Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind,* 222.
[75] H. M. Hubbell, LCL 386, vii.

"A controversy turns upon written documents," Cicero observes, "when some doubt arises from the nature of the writing."[76] There are three main reasons this might occur: (1) ambiguity (*ambiguitas*) on the level of word, sentence, or passage; (2) a conflict between the literal meaning (*scriptum*) and the intent of the author (*voluntas*); and (3) contradiction, either within a text or between two related texts (*ex contrariis legibus*).[77] As the goal is to win one's assigned case, it may behoove one side to create usable controversy along one of these lines in order to resolve it in his favor. And although these three reasons are separated in theory, there will inevitably be some overlap in application of the various strategies for dealing with (or introducing) each type of conflict. For example, Cicero writes that "the speaker who opposes the letter will profit greatly... by showing that it contains some ambiguity; then on the basis of that ambiguity he may defend the passage which helps his case."[78]

Ultimately, these three causes for controversy, one of which is "ambiguity" in the narrow sense, revolve around the broader concept of "ambiguity" on the level of the document in question. Fundamental to the rhetor's taxonomies of controversies arising from texts is the premise, understood by all who could read, that "*all texts are at least potentially ambiguous,* and hence must be pushed to support a claim of clarity for the present purpose."[79] This principle was woven into the very fabric of the rhetorical educational system described above. In his later treatise, Cicero "remarks in passing that

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[76] *De inventione* 2.40.116.
[77] In *De inventione,* Cicero gives two additional reasons: (4) from reasoning by analogy (which can be understood to be a type of ambiguity, as it seeks to define the broader context of meaning), and (5) definition of words, which is another type of ambiguity. In *De oratore,* Cicero will incorporate these latter two into the first three. *Rhetorica ad Herrenium* lists these same five, adding a sixth, translation.
[78] *De inventione* 2.48.142.
[79] Mitchell, *Paul,* 22; emphasis in original.

every schoolboy knows how to counter an argument for *scriptum* with one for *voluntas*."[80] Thus, in his earlier notebook, the various strategies he outlines for responding to one's adversary's positions all revolve around the fundamental issue of how to argue persuasively that one's own reading of the textual evidence is not only correct, but that it is perfectly clear; it could not be otherwise.

Not only is this fundamental premise – what Margaret Mitchell calls the "agonistic paradigm of interpretation"[81] – a key element of rhetorical education, but, as Kathy Eden has persuasively argued in her studies on Paul, Basil of Caesarea, and Augustine, it undergirds the formulation of patristic exegesis.[82] As I have been arguing, Irenaeus, too, participates in this agonistic paradigm of interpreting written texts, and draws upon its stock of strategies and techniques to demonstrate the truth of his *hypothesis* that he claims underlies the whole of the unified scriptural "text" and reflects the *voluntas* of its divine author.

In fact, I suggest that Irenaeus draws upon the rhetorical concept of "discovery" or "invention" (εὕρεσις / *inventio*) in order to interpret a Matthean parable containing this language, and to discover that the parable can signify the process of scriptural exegesis itself. The parable, which in the canonical gospels appears only in Matthew,[83] is brief, and is unaccompanied by any dominical interpretation:

> The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone discovered (εὑρών / *invenit*) and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all he has and buys that field. (Mt. 13.44)

[80] Eden, *Hermeneutics,* 8; Cicero, *De oratore* 1.57.244.
[81] Mitchell, *Paul,* 22.
[82] See also Christoph Schäublin, "The Contribution of Rhetorics to Christian Hermeneutics."
[83] The parallel in *Gospel of Thomas* 109 has some interesting differences, but is apparently unknown to Irenaeus.

In his interpretation, Irenaeus claims that "Christ is the treasure that was hidden in the field... the treasure hidden in the Scriptures was Christ, since he was indicated by *typoi* and *parabolai.*"[84] Irenaeus uses this interpretation of this kingdom parable, alongside other scriptural proofs, to argue in *Haer.* 4.26.1 for the inherent inscrutability of Scripture prior to the advent of Christ. However, now that Christ has come, an exegete who "reads the Scriptures with attention will find in them an account of Christ";[85] i.e., an account in line with the "rule of truth." Irenaeus thus explicitly compares the process of reading Scripture to finding treasure hidden in a field, implying that the true meaning, although perhaps concealed, is only awaiting "discovery" by the one with the right means. By contrast, his Valentinian adversaries, he charges, "invent" a meaning via eisegesis. These charges must be seen in light of his implicit technique, the process of *inventio* outlined by the Greco-Roman rhetors as the first step in interpreting a text, which very method involves the accumulation of charges of the "discovery" of one's own, clear reading and the "invention" of one's opponent's.

Keeping firmly in mind Irenaeus' rhetorical training and skill, we now turn to a crucial section in Book One (or, the *narratio*) of *Adversus Haereses,* in which Irenaeus describes the Valentinian exegetical method. Here, in *Haer.* 1.8.1 – 1.9.4, Irenaeus establishes the "facts of the case" as a foundation for the sustained argument that will follow as he attacks the Valentinian *hypothesis* of Scripture and defends his own.

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[84] *Hic* (Greek: Χριστός) *est enim thesaurus absconsus in agro... absconsus vero in Scripturis thesaurus Christus, quoniam per typos et parabolas significabatur. Haer.* 4.26.1. Origen, *Commentary on Matthew* 10.5, will also give the parable this meaning, among others.

[85] *Si quis igitur intentus legat Scripturas, inveniet in iisdem de Christo sermonem... Haer.* 4.26.1.

5.2 IRENAEUS' DESCRIPTION OF THE VALENTINIAN "METHOD"

After describing one of the main Ptolemaean cosmogonies in his so-called "grand notice" of *Haer.* 1.1-7, Irenaeus moves on to a general discussion of the Valentinian "method" (μέθοδος) in *Haer.* 1.8.1 – 1.9.4. He claims that "they try to set up their fabrication by misusing the Scriptures."[86] Specifically, they lift expressions out of their original scriptural context, and set them down alongside other scriptural passages taken from elsewhere. What is created, he charges, is a fabricated demonstration of a *hypothesis* that seems scripturally based, but is in fact their own invention.

Irenaeus explicitly describes their false interpretive method in this way (here follows Harvey's Greek text of the beginning of 1.8.1, with my translation):

Τοιαύτης δὲ τῆς ὑποθέσεως αὐτων οὔσης, ἣν οὔτε Προφῆται ἐκήρυξαν, οὔτε ὁ Κύριος ἐδίδαξεν, οὔτε Ἀπόστολοι παρέδωκαν, ἣν περισσοτέρως αὐχοῦσι πλεῖον τῶν ἄλλων ἐγνωκέναι, ἐξ ἀγράφων ἀναγινώσκοντες,	This, then, is[87] their *hypothesis,* which neither the prophets announced, nor the Lord taught, nor the apostles handed down, and which they boast that they have come to understand[88] more abundantly[89] than all others. "Reading" from things unwritten,[90]

[86] *Haer.* 1.9.1; trans. Unger and Dillon. On *plasma* ("fabrication"), see below.

[87] Οὔσης, a circumstantial participle, introduces a complex subordinate clause using the genitive absolute. As the main clause will be further interrupted by two additional, nominative participles (ἀναγινώσκοντες and ἐπιτηδεύοντες) whose subjects, unlike οὔσης, agree with the main verb (πειρῶνται), *ANF* as well as Rousseau and Doutreleau break the genitive absolute into its own main clause in order to retain the distinction between the two subjects. I cannot improve upon this decision.

[88] The perfect infinitive of γιγνώσκω signifies completed action.

[89] Harvey (1:66) reconstructs περισσοτέρως from the Latin *(abundiantus),* noting that the Greek here reads περὶ τῶν ὅλων ("concerning everything"). This is one place where the Latin translator seems to have preserved a more accurate rendering than the later Greek copyists. Both *ANF* and Rousseau and Doutreleau follow Harvey's reconstruction here, as do I. Furthermore, I agree with the sense of *ANF* that "more abundantly than all others" modifies "come to understand" rather than "boast," although grammatically either is possible.

[90] Literally, ἐξ ἀγράφων ἀναγινώσκοντες = "reading from things unwritten." *ANF* translates this as "gathering their views from other sources than the Scriptures," which accurately captures the meaning, although omits the irony that I suspect Irenaeus intended. Rousseau and Doutreleau, however, have "tout en alléguant des textes étrangers aux Écritures"; i.e., "quoting from texts foreign to the Scriptures," and note that ἀγράφον here is practically synonymous with "apocryphon"; likewise, Unger and Dillon translate as "citing it [i.e. their system] from non-scriptural works," while referencing Rousseau and Doutreleau approvingly. I feel these translations go too far. Irenaeus is concerned, in 1.8.1 – 1.9.4, not with canon, but with exegesis, and his focus is to show that the Valentinian *hypothesis* simply preexisted their adaptation of

καὶ τὸ δὴ λεγόμενον, ἐξ ἄμμου σχοινία πλέκειν ἐπιτηδεύοντες, ἀξιοπίστως προσαρμόζειν πειρῶνται τοῖς εἰρημένοις, ἤτοι παραβολὰς κυριακὰς, ἢ ῥήσεις προφητικὰς, ἢ λόγους ἀποστολικοὺς, ἵνα τὸ πλάσμα αὐτῶν μὴ ἀμάρτυρον εἶναι δοκῇ·

and then, as the saying goes, applying themselves to braiding ropes from sand,[91] they attempt to fit to their opinions,[92] in a plausible manner, either the *parabolai*[93] of the Lord, or the sayings of the prophets, or the words of the apostles, in order that their creation may not seem to be without support.

τὴν μὲν τάξιν καὶ τὸν εἱρμὸν τῶν γραφῶν ὑπερβαίνοντες, καὶ, ὅσον ἐφ᾽ ἑαυτοῖς, λύοντες τὰ μέλη τῆς ἀληθείας.

Yet, they exceed[94] the arrangement and sequence of the Scriptures, and, as much as they can, dismember the body of truth.[95]

Μεταφέρουσι δὲ καὶ μεταπλάττουσι, καὶ ἄλλο ἐξ ἄλλου ποιοῦντες ἐξαπατῶσι πολλοὺς τῇ τῶν ἐφαρμοζομένων κυριακῶν λογίων κακοσυνθέτῳ σοφίᾳ.

By transferring, transforming, and making[96] one thing out of another, they deceive many through their ill-composed sophistry[97] of adapting the sayings of the Lord.

Scripture to its demonstration; beyond this, he is not concerned to establish whence their *hypothesis* came. Sometimes he will charge the Valentinians with deriving their myths from pagans (e.g. *Haer.* 2.14), while at other times he claims they invented them themselves quite recently (e.g. *Haer.* 2.28.8); but here their origins are not in view and are irrelevant to the current charge.

[91] Irenaeus uses this proverb here and at *Haer.* 2.10.1 (Latin: *de arena resticulas nectere*). A generation before Irenaeus, the famous orator, Aelius Aristides, uses this proverb, with slightly different wording (τὸ ἐκ τῆς ψάμμου σχοινίον πλὲκοντες), as one of several synonyms for a sophist's trick, in *Oratio III: To Plato: In Defense of the Four,* 672. See Aristides, *Opera Quae Exstant Omnia: Vol. I: Orationes I-XVI Complectens,* ed. Charles A. Behr (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 515; for trans. see Aristides, *The Complete Works: Vol. 1: Orations I-XVI,* ed. and trans. Charles A. Behr (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 275. Nowhere, however, is the metaphor explained. Perhaps it is straightforward: something impossible, it describes labor in vain (thus LSJ, 2018b). However, as a μίτος is a thread or strand, perhaps ἐξ ἄμμου σχοινία, "ropes from sand," is a pun for ἑξάμιτα σχοινία, "six-stranded ropes." While the latter would be strongly woven "cords," arguments that would hold up well in the face of disputation, the former would be the opposite. For ἑξάμιτος, see LSJ, 584a.

[92] Literally, "to the things they have said."

[93] The English word "parables" does not accurately capture the full range of meaning of the Greek and Latin cognates, and so I leave this word untranslated; see the discussion below.

[94] As with the first clause of this sentence, I translate this final clause, consisting of two nominative participles, as its own sentence. Harvey's punctuation here may even be wrong, as this μεν clause would nicely attach to the following sentence, which begins with a δε and contains its own nominative participles.

[95] Literally, "break up into pieces the members of the truth." Cf. *Haer.* 2.27.1., and *Epideixis* 1, "We are sending you, as it were, a summary memorandum, so that you may... understand all the members of the body of the truth..."; trans. Behr.

[96] After two dative participles (both of which are datives of means), Irenaeus shifts to a nominative participle. Although a third dative would be grammatically more appropriate in this list of three participles connected by ...δέ καί...καί..., he has agreement with the main verb (the very next word, ἐξαπατῶσι) already in view. This apparent slippage of agreement is not so uncommon; see Smyth, § 2148.

[97] To translate σοφίᾳ straightforwardly as "wisdom" here would do Irenaeus injustice: this is not only ironic, but also a pun, for σοφίᾳ may also mean "craft," emphasizing the artificiality of their exegesis. This meaning immediately spawns another pun, as their "craft" is an ill-composed (κακοσυνθέτῳ) one, meaning both that it is a poorly conceived craft, and that its business is to attempt to fit together things which ultimately do not fit well together.

In other words, through their senseless juxtaposition of scriptural passages, cherry-picking Christian Scriptures for appropriate material as needed, they buttress their own cosmological theories, which were not actually derived from Scripture but, rather, were preconceived notions. Their *hypothesis* is not a true one, but a πλάσμα, a word signifying not only a creation in a general sense, but a counterfeit or fiction. While a *hypothesis* of a text was imagined to be present in the text itself and thus undergird its correct interpretation, a *plasma* was a fictitious theme assigned for advanced students of rhetoric to argue as a classroom declamation exercise.[98] In addition, the verbs Irenaeus uses to describe the Valentinian technique – two verbs of adaptation or fitting (προσαρμόζειν and ἐφαρμόζειν) bracketing two verbs of transformation (μεταφέρω and μεταπλάσσω) – collectively mount a forceful charge of retrofitting Scripture to a pre-existing theory. His primary charge, then, is twofold: (1) by seeming to make Scripture conform to the meaning they apply to it externally, they are guilty of eisegesis, and (2) this eisegesis is the natural outcome of their disregard for the underlying unity of the Scriptures. Thus their incorrect "method" leads to an incorrect result.

Immediately following these straightforward claims of heretical eisegesis, Irenaeus uses the analogy of a mosaic of a king, which, after its artful composition, was set upon by a scoundrel who deceitfully rearranged the same tiles into a different mosaic, that of "a dog or a fox," and who then claimed this new mosaic faithfully represented the original king. Irenaeus then makes the same point with a different analogy, comparing the Valentinians to those ancient writers who composed Homeric "centos" by threading together genuine but unrelated Homeric verses in order to give the illusion that Homer had written the new narrative, one whose *hypothesis* would be recognizable as un-Homeric only to those who

[98] Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind,* 233; c.f. LSJ 1412a.

truly knew their Homer. As the latter analogy is more straightforward than that of the mosaic, I will discuss the latter before returning to a close reading of the former.

Irenaeus lampoons his opponents by parodying their method with a ten-verse cento he has come across, each verse taken from various places in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, bearing no original association with one another. The author, whoever he or she was, has cleverly selected the verses such that, being laid down one after another, they create a seemingly sensible story using only the words of Homer, as subjects of verbs are associated with antecedent subjects in convincing ways.[99] Irenaeus then asks,

> What simpleton would not be misled by these verses and believe that Homer composed them in that manner for that very *hypothesis?* One who knows his Homer will recognize the verses but not the *hypothesis,* since he knows that one of the verses speaks of Odysseus, another of Heracles, another of Priam, another of Menalaos and Agamemnon. If, however, he takes these verses and restores each one to its own *hypothesis,* he will make their fabricated *hypothesis* disappear.[100]

Although Irenaeus mocks his opponents at length with this comparison, the literary genre of the *cento* (a word that originally meant "patchwork cloak") was one actually engaged in by both pagans and Christians in late antiquity. Tertullian, whose critique of heretical exegesis in *Praescr.* 38-9 is very similar to that of Irenaeus' at this point, views these patchworker poets, *Homerocentones* as they were commonly called, just as disparagingly as the heretics with whom he compares them. Tertullian here also provides us with some of our earliest reports of this genre in Latin literature, which used verses from Virgil rather than Homer. Tertullian had a low opinion of this literary form (as did

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[99] Heinrich Ziegler, *Irenaeus der Bischof von Lyon* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1871), 17, had suggested that Irenaeus had composed the cento himself, while Jean Daniélou, *Message évangélique et culture hellénistique aux IIe et IIIe siècles* (Tournai: Desclée, 1961), 73-101, had proposed Valentinus as the author. As Robert L. Wilken has shown, from what Irenaeus himself tells us, there is no plausible reason to support either of these proposals: "Most likely the cento was composed by someone other than Irenaeus and Valentinus and was simply taken over by Irenaeus in this place." Wilken, "The Homeric Cento in Irenaeus, 'Adversus Haereses' I, 9, 4," *VC* 21 (Mar. 1967): 25-33 (29).

[100] *Haer.* 1.9.4. Trans. based on those of Grant and of Unger and Dillon.

nineteenth-century scholars of classics); he says of Hosidius Geta's centonic tragedy *Medea* that he "thoroughly sucked it out" *(plenissime exsuxit)* of Virgil. Yet the genre endured through late antiquity, eventually being adopted by Christians. One of the more remarkable examples of this literary form is a 694-line *cento,* composed in c. 360 C.E. by Proba, a Christian woman, from lines of Virgil but following a Christian *hypothesis.*[101]

As the *cento* was a late antique literary genre, in both Greek and Latin, familiar to Irenaeus' and Tertullian's readers, both of these heresiologists are able to make use of it as an analogy to vividly depict the "heretical" exegetical method. Just as these poets would reassemble odd verses from, e.g., Homer into a coherent, Homeric-sounding, yet simultaneously un-Homeric narrative, so too, Irenaeus and Tertullian charge, do heretical exegetes rearrange scriptural verses into a narrative that appears to have scriptural backing, but is, in fact, of their own creation.

As I said earlier, Irenaeus' example of the *cento* is the second analogy he uses in *Haer.* 1.8.1 – 1.9.4 to vividly characterizes his opponents' interpretive practices. The first is the memorable analogy of the mosaic, to which we now turn. Here is the text of the relevant part of *Haer.* 1.8.1 from Harvey's edition, with my translation.

Ὅνπερ τρόπον εἴ τις	Their manner is just as if someone,
βασιλέως εἰκόνος καλῆς	after a beautiful image of a king[102] has been
κατεσκευασμένης [ἐπιμελῶς] ἐκ	[carefully][103] constructed out of high
ψηφίδων ἐπισήμων ὑπὸ σοφοῦ	quality tesserae by a skilled artisan,
τεχνίτου, λύσας	should then shatter into pieces
τὴν ὑποκειμένην τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἰδέαν,	this same[104] form of the human being,

[101] For discussion of Proba's poem, see Elizabeth A. Clark, *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith: Essays on Late Ancient Christianity* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), 124-171. For the origin of the word "cento," see eadem, 125.

[102] I prefer "king" to "emperor" as a translation of βασιλεύς, in keeping with the biblical imagery that imagines God as a Near Eastern sovereign or king, especially as the LXX translation of *mlk.* Irenaeus' ancient Latin translator refers to God as king *(rex)* at, e.g., *Haer.* 4.13.2.

[103] Reconstructed by Harvey on the basis of the Syriac and Latin texts (1:67n1).

μετενέγκῃ τὰς ψηφῖδας ἐκείνας, καὶ μεθαρμόσοι, καὶ ποιήσει
μορφὴν κυνὸς ἢ ἀλώπεκος,
καὶ ταύτην φαύλως κατεσκευασμένην,
ἔπειτα διορίζοιτο, καὶ λέγοι
ταύτην εἶναι τὴν τοῦ βασιλέως ἐκείνην
εἰκόνα τὴν καλὴν,
ἣν ὁ σοφὸς τεχνίτης κατεσκεύασε,
δεικνὺς τὰς ψηφῖδας τὰς καλῶς ὑπὸ
τοῦ τεχνίτου τοῦ πρώτου εἰς τὴν τοῦ
βασιλέως εἰκόνα συντεθείσας,

κακῶς δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ ὑστέρου εἰς κυνὸς
μορφὴν μετενεχθείσας,
καὶ διὰ τῆς τῶν ψηφίδων φαντασίας
μεθοδεύοι τοὺς ἀπειροτέρους,
τοὺς κατάληψιν βασιλικῆς μορφῆς οὐκ
ἔχοντας, καὶ πείθοι ὅτι αὕτη ἡ σαπρὰ
τῆς ἀλώπεκος ἰδέα ἐστὶν ἐκείνη ἡ καλὴ
τοῦ βασιλέως εἰκών·

τὸν αὐτὸν δὴ τρόπον καὶ οὗτοι γραῶν
μύθους συγκαττύσαντες, ἔπειτα
ῥήματα καὶ λέξεις καὶ παραβολὰς ὅθεν
καὶ πόθεν ἀποσπῶντες, ἐφαρμόζειν
βούλονται τοῖς μύθοις αὐτῶν τὰ λόγια
τοῦ θεοῦ.

and should remove[105] these tesserae, and rearrange[106] them, and create
the outward form of a dog or a fox,
and a poorly constructed one at that,
and should then declare and declaim
this one to be that beautiful
image of the king,
which the skilled artisan had constructed,
[this same deceiver][107] pointing out the
tesserae that had been beautifully
assembled into the image of the king by the first artisan,
but which had been poorly transferred by
the latter one into the form of a dog,
and, through the illusion of the tesserae,
might deceive the less experienced,
those not having any grasp of the [true]
form of the king, and to persuade them
that this unwholesome form of a fox was
really that beautiful image of the king.

So,[108] in this same manner, these people also, having stitched together old wives' tales,[109] do then, by means of tearing away words, sayings, and parables from here and there, attempt to accommodate the words of God to their myths.

My analysis of this passage will proceed in phases: first, at the lexical level, we will pay attention to the particular words Irenaeus uses and their connotations; after this, we will

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[104] "This same" translates ὑποκειμένην; i.e., that which has previously been suggested and is now presupposed; "the form (ἰδέαν) under discussion."

[105] Note that μεταφέρω would mean to transfer the tesserae to a new and different mosaic, but also means to metaphorize; to reinterpret metaphorically

[106] *ANF*'s "rearrange," followed here, conveys the sense of "transposing their order," "altering them."

[107] My addition, to clarify the subject while retaining Irenaeus' periphrastic sentence structure.

[108] This δὴ introduces the apodosis expected since the εἰ at the beginning of the passage.

[109] "Old wives' tales" renders γραῶν μύθους, although γραΐς is literally an old woman. The Latin translator has rendered this as *anicularum fabulas,* old women's fables. These γραῶν μύθους are not the product of the heretics' stitching; rather, they are the raw materials from which the heretics make even more fabulous myths than the old women were capable of. Irenaeus here is one of the early exponents of a misogynistic discourse that links women to heresy, in which the heretics are discredited by being feminized; cf. 1 Tim 4.7, τοὺς δὲ βεβήλους καὶ γραώδεις μύθους παραιτοῦ (NASB: "But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women"). The discourse can easily function in the opposite direction, in which female leadership is discredited due to the supposed ease by which women may be led into heresy; cf. 2 Tim 3.6-7.

proceed to mapping the symbols onto referents in order to understand the analogy on Irenaeus' own terms; and finally, on the logical level, we will analyze the hermeneutic Irenaeus wishes to describe, and his own, implied hermeneutic.

We begin with the symbol whose meaning is most secure: the tesserae (τὰς ψηφῖδας). These are the small pieces of tile, glass or stone out of which a mosaic was assembled. Although a "mosaic" (τό ψήφισμα) is not specifically named, it is clear that the "image" (εἰκών) of the king, having been constructed from these tiles, is meant here.[110]

The tesserae themselves are beyond reproach; they are of high quality (ἐπισήμων). Since what is under discussion is the Valentinians' alleged predilection for "disregarding the order and connection of the Scriptures," and "transferring passages" in order to "destroy the truth," it is clear that the tesserae, which are being taken from one mosaic and rearranged to make a different picture out of the same components, are meant to stand for scriptural passages in the hands of the nefarious Valentinian exegetes. Irenaeus makes this apparent at the close of the passage, when he shifts from the analogy back to the Valentinians, who, "in the same manner," "attempt to accommodate the words of God to their myths" "by means of tearing away words, sayings, and parables from here and there."

If the association of tesserae with scriptural passages were not clear enough from the analogy itself, Irenaeus again explicitly makes this clear later on. At the close of his

[110] The English word tessera (pl. tesserae) for mosaic tiles comes through Latin from the Greek word for "four" (τέσσαρες; later Greek, τέσσερες), owing to their square shape. In Latin, *tessera* had a number of meanings, but its diminutive *tessella* came to be the common word for these tiles, from which we also get the English word describing such a pattern, "tessellated" (Latin: *tessellatus*). Despite the Greek origins of these terms, however, no form of the Greek word seems to have been used *in Greek* with this meaning. Instead, ἡ ψηφίς or, as in this case, the diminutive ἡ ψηφῖδος, "pebble," was the common term for the component pieces of a mosaic (Greek: τό ψήφισμα). The Latin translator of Irenaeus has rendered ἡ ψηφῖδος as *gemma* here and in 1.9.4, which may mean "pebble" but usually means "gem," and so *ANF,* influenced by the Latin, translates τὰς ψηφῖδας as "gems," which is misleading. "Tesserae" accurately translates into English what is meant: mosaic tiles.

application of his second analogy, that of the Homerocento, he returns briefly to the language of the first. (Here continues the previous quotation from 1.9.4):

> ...If, however, he takes these verses and restores each one to its own *hypothesis,* he will make their fabricated *hypothesis* disappear. In the same way, anyone who keeps unchangeable in himself the rule of truth received through baptism will recognize the names, the sayings, and the parables from the Scriptures, but will not recognize this blasphemous *hypothesis* of theirs. For, even if he identifies the tesserae (τὰς ψηφῖδας), he will not accept the fox for the image of the king. But when he has restored every one of the expressions quoted to its proper order, and has fitted it into the body of the truth, he will lay bare, and prove to be without any foundation, their fabrication.[111]

Thus, Irenaeus explicitly associates the tesserae of the mosaics not only with the scriptural passages, but with the passages of Homer from the second analogy.

Returning to the analogy of the mosaic, we find that when the second artisan dismantles it, he not only rearranges the tesserae but transfers them to a new and completely different mosaic. Irenaeus uses the verb μεταφέρω for transfer, which of course also means "to metaphorize, to reinterpret metaphorically."[112] Perhaps both meanings of the verb are implied: not only is the Valentinian exegete taking pieces of Scripture out of context in order to assemble an overall meaning that is incorrect, but he is interpreting each individual scriptural passage "metaphorically." If Irenaeus here, as elsewhere, does intend a pun, we should not press too hard to find a general attack on all metaphorical readings, but simply those that are inappropriate to the context, for as we have already seen and will see again, Irenaeus does not shy from metaphorical interpretation himself. The violence with which this artificer destroys (λύσας) the original mosaic implies the violence being done to the text. And it is "through the illusion of the tesserae" (διὰ τῆς τῶν ψηφίδων φαντασίας) that the Valentinian exegete is able to fool

[111] *Haer.* 1.9.4. Trans. based upon those of Grant and of Unger and Dillon.
[112] The latter meaning appears as early as Aristotle; LSJ 1118a.

the inexperienced, just as the Homerocento is able to fool those who don't know their Homer. The tesserae thus being clearly identified as scriptural passages, we now must consider what the mosaics represent. This identification is not as facile as it might seem, due to the ingenuity of Irenaeus' analogy.

The first mosaic is an "image of the king," an εἰκών βασιλέως.[113] That this is a faithful representation of the king is conveyed by the word εἰκών, and this emphasis is reinforced by its description as beautiful (καλῆς) and having been constructed by a skilled artisan (ὑπὸ σοφοῦ τεχνίτου). When this εἰκών βασιλέως is disassembled and the tesserae made into another picture, the resulting mosaic is not an εἰκών of a fox or a dog, but a μορφή, this word implying a similarity to what it represents in outward form only. Again, Irenaeus reinforces his word choice here by the further qualification that this μορφή is poorly constructed (φαύλως κατεσκευασμένην), and that the tesserae which had been beautifully assembled (καλῶς συντεθείσας) by the first artisan have now been poorly transferred (κακῶς μετενεχθείσας) by the second. The representation of "a dog or a fox" further erodes our confidence in the faithfulness of the new image to its model, as it might appear to be one or the other, owing to the lack of skill of the artisan who had created it. Irenaeus continues to refer to the new picture as first a dog, then a fox, seemingly not caring which it is, for it is wrong in any case. Furthermore, when the original εἰκών is broken into its component parts, it is described as an ἰδέα, the word used in Platonic philosophy for an ideal form. Thus, although the actual king should be the ἰδέα for its εἰκών, now the εἰκών itself becomes the ἰδέα for the heretics' μορφή, implying therefore that the latter is twice removed from the real thing, a copy of a copy. Finally, of course, the models themselves

[113] If the king represents or invokes the idea of God the Father, the εἰκών βασιλέως may recall Christ as the εἰκών τοῦ θεοῦ in 2 Cor. 4.4 However, Irenaeus also refers to Jesus himself as King at, e.g., *Haer.* 1.10.1, & 4.34.1, following a precedent found not in Paul but in the Gospels, Acts, and Revelation of John.

suggest differences: the fair nobility of the king being contrasted to the uncleanliness of the dog or the deceitfulness of the fox.[114] In the final comparison, of "this unwholesome form of the fox" (αὕτη ἡ σαπρὰ τῆς ἀλώπεκος ἰδέα) to "that beautiful image of the king" (ἐκείνη ἡ καλὴ τοῦ βασιλέως εἰκών), the adjectives might apply equally both to the mosaics and to those objects depicted by them.

What, then, do these two mosaics represent? Let us begin with the second, as it is more straightforward. I suggest that the mosaic of the fox (as I shall henceforth abbreviate the more accurate "fox/dog") is meant to stand, not for the Valentinians' *hypothesis,* but for their demonstration (*epideixis*) of their *hypothesis* via the use of Scripture. The fox whose form is represented in the mosaic is the *hypothesis* itself.

I believe this is suggested, albeit subtly, by the second sentence of the passage I quoted above ("So, in this same manner...").[115] I take the presence of the aorist participle, συγκαττύσαντες, on the one hand, and the present participle, ἀποσπῶντες, on the other, separated by ἔπειτα, to stress the temporal distinction that is crucial to Irenaeus here and earlier in 1.8.1: first the heretics stitched together (συγκαττύσαντες) their myths out of non-scriptural materials, and only later did they attempt to accommodate (main verb: ἐφαρμόζειν βούλονται) the words of God to these fables, by means of tearing away (ἀποσπῶντες) words, sayings, and parables from here and there in Scripture and reassembling them in the form of some kind of proof. If this understanding is not freighting the grammar of the sentence with more meaning than it can bear, then we may see that the reworked mosaic of the fox is not the myth itself. That is, according to Irenaeus, the Valentinian exegetes have not started with Scripture, rearranged it, and produced their

[114] Cf. *Haer.* 1.31.4, where Irenaeus compares Valentinus himself to a fox; and *Haer.* 4.41.3: "Speaking of Herod, too, [Jesus] says, "Go and tell that fox" (Luke 13.32), aiming at his wicked cunning and deceit."
[115] As I indicated in a previous note, this "sentence" is in fact a brief apodosis to the long protasis preceding it.

myth. Rather, Irenaeus says, their myth existed beforehand, and the rearranged Scripture, the mosaic of the fox, is a poorly constructed (φαύλως κατεσκευασμένην) demonstration of their myth. Not only is the myth itself fabulous (for it is in the form of a fox, whether depicted in a mosaic or not), but the Valentinians' sorry attempts to prove the myth from Scripture are exposed by the poor fit of the dressing, as the tesserae of the mosaic depicting that fox were not designed for this purpose. The mosaic of the fox points feebly to the actual fox, their myth, or *hypothesis,* which Irenaeus had described in 1.1-7. By "adapting the sayings of the Lord" to their own pre-conceived ideas,[116] they have cobbled together from scriptural passages a poor demonstration of their own *hypothesis;* that is, they have meagerly constructed, from various tesserae, an image of their fox.

This gives us the following mapping of symbols to referents.

fox : Valentinian *hypothesis*

mosaic of fox : demonstration of Valentinian *hypothesis*

tesserae : scriptural passages

So far the analogy "works"; that is, no troubling inconsistencies arise. From here, we might assume that the first mosaic represents nothing more than "Scripture" *in toto*. After all, it was the first mosaic whence the tesserae came, was it not? Furthermore, Irenaeus is accusing the Valentinians of "disregarding the order and connection of the Scriptures," and the analogy of the Homerocento points in this direction as well: whereas a Homerocento cuts apart and rearranges Homer (pagan "scripture") to produce something that is made from Homer but is not Homer, so, too, does the heretic cut apart and rearrange Scripture to produce something that sounds "scriptural" but is not. These

[116] *Haer.* 1.8.1; see above.

reasons suggest that the first mosaic does represent "Scripture," but this cannot be its only referent.

For there are problems with this identification. Were the first mosaic merely the "original" Scripture, then we would expect, owing to parallelism, that the second mosaic, the mosaic of the fox, should represent new "scripture" that the Valentinians have created. It is true that Irenaeus will later charge the Valentinians with creating new compositions, "boasting that they possess more Gospels than there really are."[117] There, in Book Three, in his proof of the fourfold gospel, Irenaeus takes as his representative example of Valentinian composition the *Gospel of Truth,* which he says "is totally unlike those which have been handed down to us from the apostles." However, at this point in his treatise it is not this charge he has in mind, but rather an all-out attack on Valentinian exegesis of Scriptures that they both share.

Furthermore, the charge of "mutilating" Scripture was the classic charge against Marcion, not the Valentinians. As I discussed previously in this chapter, Irenaeus himself makes this accusation against Marcion,[118] who he says is "the only one who has dared openly to mutilate the Scriptures,"[119] and with whose method he contrasts that of Valentinus, as we have seen above. Tertullian, also, in his lead-up to his own use of the Homerocento analogy, makes this distinction between Marcion and Valentinus quite clearly, as we have seen. Tertullian goes on to say that, if these parasitic poets, as he thinks of them, can fabricate their works out of Homer and Virgil, how much more may the Valentinian heretics do so when their raw materials are the Divine Scriptures, which "are

[117] *Haer.* 3.11.9.
[118] *Haer.* 1.27.2.
[119] *Haer.* 1.27.4.

more fruitful in resources of all kinds for this sort of facility."[120] Clearly, as I have indicated for Irenaeus, Tertullian analogously compares the Homeric corpus with Scripture. And yet it is interesting that, having drawn this sharp distinction between Marcion's and Valentinus' alleged methods, both Irenaeus and Tertullian apply the analogy of the Homerocento to the followers of Valentinus, not Marcion, even though a cento is nothing more or less than a patchwork of isolated passages cut out of a body of literature and rearranged to make something new. We can imagine how the comparison with the Homerocento, taken in isolation, might have been applied to Marcion, in an argument that was essentially about canon. Yet Irenaeus (and Tertullian, following him), has taken this analogy and put it to use in an argument not about Marcion's canon, but about Valentinian exegesis. The Valentinians are not charged with mutilating Scripture itself, or with creating new "scripture," but with badly interpreting the Scripture common to all Christians, due to their taking passages out of context and creating a fabulous new interpretation.

This distinction in the way these archetypal heretics are being defined suggests that Irenaeus intends the original Homer, as well as the original mosaic, to symbolize not only Scripture but also the correct *hypothesis* for understanding it. The elision between text and interpretation that is occurring here is part of the persuasive power of these analogies.

Furthermore, in making this analogy between Homer and Scripture, Irenaeus and Tertullian conceal a few differences. First, in antiquity "Homer" was imagined to be a single author, while it was never in doubt that "Scripture" has had many human authors. The claim that God is the ultimate author behind all of "Scripture" – a category that includes some widely used Jewish and Christian writings but not others – is part of what is being proved and yet is used as evidence for that proof, by appeal to the underlying

[120] *Praescr.* 38-39.

authorial intent of its unifying *hypothesis.* Second, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* being separate works, they each have their own *hypothesis,* and so the analogy between "Homer" and "Scripture" further masks the underlying disunity of *hypotheses* of "Homer." Nevertheless, once both of these problems with the analogy are masked, Irenaeus and Tertullian argue that just as the *hypothesis* of "Homer" is contained within "the work" itself, and therefore clear to the attentive reader, so, too, is that of "Scripture."

However, and rather paradoxically, Scripture is simultaneously unclear without the additional tool of the rule of truth. For, as we have seen (*Haer.* 1.9.4, quoted earlier), it is not mere Scripture, but the rule of truth, to which the average Christian must compare the false mosaic of the fox, in order to see through "the illusion of the tesserae" that the Valentinian exegete has fabricated. Irenaeus advises that the one who is equipped with this rule will be able to see through the duplicitous exegesis and be able to mentally refit the passages to their proper place in the body of truth (that is, the rule of truth, or catholic *hypothesis*), just as one might disassemble the cento or the fox mosaic to restore the Homeric passages or tesserae to their proper place in the original. It is significant that the Christian doing this evaluative work is not depicted as reassembling "Scripture," but mentally refitting the passages that are being used in some false *hypothesis* back into their correct place in the true *hypothesis,* the rule of truth. And thus the mosaic of the king must stand not only for Scripture itself, but also for the rule of truth that governs Scripture's proper interpretation and, as the "body of truth," is simultaneously the content of that interpretation, the catholic *hypothesis*. In the mosaic of the king, Irenaeus has elided text, meaning, and hermeneutic. Therefore Irenaeus would like us to understand the analogy as functioning in this way:

king	:	ultimate reality of God
mosaic of (human) king	:	1) Scripture; 2) rule of truth = catholic *hypothesis* 3) demonstration of catholic *hypothesis;* and, thus, 4) demonstration of ultimate reality of God;
fox	:	Valentinian *hypothesis*
mosaic of fox	:	demonstration of Valentinian *hypothesis*
tesserae	:	scriptural passages

Mapped out in this way, it becomes apparent how much work the mosaic of the king is doing. As I bring this analysis of the mosaic passage to a close, I will now identify the way in which this slight-of-hand occurs, and suggest a way of reading Irenaeus' analogy against the grain in order to arrive at a simpler and more precise mapping of symbol to referent.

This image of the fox, the Valentinians say, is meant to be a faithful depiction of the king. Apart from simply being something that is not a fox, the king, of which the first mosaic is an εἰκών, is God, and specifically, God as God truly is. But we begin to see here the ingenuity of the analogy. If the mosaic of the king is meant to represent Scripture, then the king cannot be said to have been invented by its writing. Rather, just as God existed before God was described in Scripture, so, too, did the king exist before his εἰκών was assembled. This distinction is easy to forget when the poorly constructed likeness of the fox is compared to the king's beautiful image in the first mosaic. The true comparison ought to be to the king himself, were such a comparison possible. Instead, Irenaeus has elided the true king with his εἰκών in order to imply that the first mosaic was always an accurate representation. But this is in fact part of what is under dispute.

The trouble with the analogy deepens when we realize that Irenaeus has casually introduced an extraneous term to describe the first mosaic: it is the form of the human being (τὴν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἰδέαν). It is easy to overlook the fact that the skilled craftsman, in attempting to render the ultimate reality of the king in mere stone, has chosen a human being for its form. Of course we usually imagine a king to have the form of a human being, so the substitution seems not to add any additional information. Yet the key term ἀνθρώπος alerts us to the fact that "king" is only a symbol in an analogy, and the ultimate reality of the king need not be in the form of the first mosaic simply because that mosaic depicts a human being. Perhaps the true king that is being depicted in these two mosaics is actually a fox king rather than a human king. To state this another way, if Irenaeus had chosen "fruit" in place of "king," and the first mosaic had represented a banana while the second a papaya, we would have no way of knowing which of these two fruits reflected the ultimate reality of the "fruit" of which they were mere εἰκόνες. However, by using the terms "king" and "human being" he enables the elision between the first, a true reality, and the second, a mere image.

This elision between the ideal form and the form in the first mosaic is reinforced when Irenaeus asserts that the ones responsible for the second mosaic "might deceive the less experienced, those not having any grasp of the [true] form (μορφῆς) of the king." This is the only time Irenaeus uses μορφή in reference to the king, perhaps because he is now speaking not of the εἰκών but of the actual form of the king, that which the artisan had depicted as an εἰκών. Thus those less experienced would be those who, although able to recognize scriptural passages, do not have true knowledge of God. There are two possibilities here. The first is that they recognize the scriptural passages from having once seen them in the first mosaic – that is, in Scripture itself – but do not remember it well

enough to see that in the second mosaic they are misplaced. With this mapping, we are back to the analogy of the Homerocento: the passages are recognized as being from Homer, and so the Homeric corpus stands on a par with the first mosaic, both representing Scripture itself. The true form of the king that they do not have a firm grasp of is the form seen in the first mosaic.

The second possibility is, rather, that the less experienced do not have a grasp of the ideal form. Again, they recognize scriptural passages, but when faced with these tesserae arranged in the mosaic of the fox, they cannot assess its validity because they have never seen the first mosaic with which to compare it. Here, Scripture is not the first mosaic; Scripture is the quarry of raw material out of which both mosaics have been constructed, and the first mosaic is the rule of truth that some have received in baptism. With this interpretation of Irenaeus' analogy, just as the mosaic of the fox is a demonstration of the Valentinian *hypothesis,* so too is the mosaic of the human being, to which it stands parallel, the demonstration of the catholic *hypothesis.* Thus we have:

king	:	ultimate reality of God
human king	:	catholic *hypothesis*
fox king	:	Valentinian *hypothesis*
mosaic of human king	:	demonstration of catholic *hypothesis*
mosaic of fox king	:	demonstration of Valentinian *hypothesis*
tesserae	:	scriptural passages
quarry	:	Scripture

By reading Irenaeus' analogy against the grain, we thus arrive at a simpler and more precise mapping of symbols onto referents, a solution that is, in the mathematical sense of

the word, more elegant than the one Irenaeus intended. We also expose Irenaeus' sleight-of-hand that makes the analogy seem so convincing. With this new mapping, we may see that both demonstrations, being εἰκόνες of the ideal form of the king, derive their support from Scripture in order to construct their own *hypotheses*. Just as Irenaeus is eliding the image of the man with the actual king (thus assuming the king is a human king, not a fox king), so too is he eliding the arrangement of Scripture with its orthodox interpretation. The mosaic analogy works because of this elision, this hidden step. In the process, he has managed to imply that the meaning of Scripture is both obvious and, absent the correct hermeneutical lens, obscure.

To summarize the implications of this section: Irenaeus develops the charge of Valentinian eisegesis through the use of two well-known analogies, those of the mosaic (*Haer.* 1.8.1) and the cento (*Haer.* 1.9.4). In each, a nefarious agent is imagined who either rearranges the tesserae of a mosaic into a new one, or composes a new poem using only verses of Homer; in each case, the agent attempts to pass off the resulting creation as the original. The implication is that, just as those who had seen the original mosaic or who knew their Homer could not be fooled, so, too, those who were familiar with both Scripture and the "rule of truth" by which to read it would likewise not be deceived by any heretical scriptural interpretation. These analogies work well rhetorically even though – and even because of the fact that – they rely upon two mutually exclusive theories about the clarity of Scripture. If the original mosaic, and the original Homer, are meant to represent Scripture, then the implication is that the one who knows Scripture cannot be deceived by the duplicitous artist who makes a new mosaic from the same tesserae, or a Homerocento from genuine Homeric verses, for the true meaning of Scripture will be clear to any who have read it. If, on the other hand, the original mosaic and original Homer in these

analogies stand for the catholic *hypothesis,* then "anyone who keeps unchangeable in himself the rule of truth received through baptism" (*Haer.* 1.9.4) will again recognize the false *hypothesis* that has been created, but for a different reason: because the rule of truth is a hermeneutic necessity that safeguards against false readings of a Scripture that is inherently ambiguous and open to interpretation. This analysis of Irenaeus' analogies of the mosaic and the cento therefore suggests that for Irenaeus, "clarity" is not a stable, objective descriptor when applied to Scripture. Rather, in line with the advice given in the ancient manuals on the rhetorical arts, he is able to take alternating positions on the clarity of Scripture depending on the thrust of the argument at hand. That is, depending on his underlying rhetorical aims, he will argue alternately for the clarity or obscurity of both Scripture as a whole and its attendant passages, its tesserae.

Having laid down these two vivid analogies with which he caricatures Valentinian exegesis as eisegesis, Irenaeus will return frequently to the issue of the clarity of the Scriptures throughout his opus. We now turn to yet another way in which Irenaeus adapts Greco-Roman rhetorical training to a Christian milieu of scriptural interpretation. For Irenaeus has inherited from his Christian predecessors a key concept for scriptural interpretation that he will bring to bear upon his theory of Scripture's inherent clarity or obscurity: the *parabolē,* or "parable."

5.3 THE UTILITY OF THE *PARABOLĒ*

The English word "parable" is defined as "a usually short fictitious story that illustrates a moral attitude or a religious principle."[121] And it is true that this definition more or less captures one of the meanings of the Greek term *parabolē* in the New

[121] *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary,* 10th ed. (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 2001).

Testament and other early Christian literature. BDAG offers a comparable definition for this meaning of *parabolē:* "a narrative or saying of varying length, designed to illustrate a truth especially through comparison or simile; *comparison, illustration, parable* [!]*, proverb, maxim.*"[122] This is what the word means when it appears in the Synoptic Gospels. The origins for this, relatively narrow meaning of the word would seem to be twofold:[123] (1) in the Septuagint, *parabolē* is almost always a translation of *mashal,* a proverb, wisdom saying, or similitude, and (2) via the Septuagint, these meanings were transferred to *parabolē,* which already had in secular Greek, as a technical term in rhetoric, the sense of one of the kinds of comparisons that one could make in service of an argument.[124] Early Christian authors certainly gave the word the resulting (yet still somewhat narrow) range of meaning as well, even when discussing enigmatic teachings of Jesus that did not appear in the received gospels: Eusebius, for example, says that Papias, the second-century bishop of Hieropolis, recorded "some strange *parabolai* and teachings of the Savior" whose authenticity Eusebius doubted since he knew of them from no other source.[125] But in any case, in its narrowest sense, *parabolē* in early Christian literature refers to those enigmatic teachings of Jesus that he gave during his incarnation.

However, this literature also attests broader meanings of this word. Dominical parabolic teaching need not be confined to the period of the incarnation: in the *Apocryphon of James,* Jesus teaches his disciples three new parables (in the narrow sense) when he appears to them 550 days after his resurrection.[126] Other early Christian texts describe dominical utterances given in post-resurrection appearances as *parabolai,* even

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[122] BDAG, 759.
[123] See Hauck, "παραβολή," *TDNT* 5:744-61, esp. 745-51.
[124] E.g., Aristotle, *Rhetorica* 2.20.
[125] *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.11.
[126] *Apocryphon of James* (NHC I,*2*), 6-7.

when they are not of the "parable" genre familiar from the Synoptics. For example, the Shepherd presents Hermas with *parabolai* in personal, post-ascension revelations; these are not always symbolic anecdotes, but puzzling illustrations, commandments, or teachings that by their nature demand detailed interpretations.[127] Likewise, in another post-resurrection appearance at the close of the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles,* Jesus gives the eleven remaining disciples two commandments that seem to them impossible to fulfill until he explains that these commandments were in the form of *parabolai,* which he then interprets for them.[128]

Early Christians wedded the memory that Jesus taught in *parabolai* to the centuries-old tradition of Jewish allegorical interpretation of Scripture, a product of Hellenistic, especially Alexandrian, Judaism, from the *Letter of Aristeas* (2nd cent. B.C.E.) to Philo. Philo was also influenced by pagan allegorical interpretation of Homer, an exegetical trajectory that was evolving along a timeline roughly parallel with Jewish and Christian developments.[129] It was, perhaps, the union of, on the one hand, the memory of Christ having taught by means of *parabolai,* and on the other, this long tradition of both "Greco-Roman" and "Jewish" allegorical interpretation of sacred texts, that resulted in a third, even broader meaning of *parabolē* common in early Christian literature, defined by BDAG as "something that serves as a model or example pointing beyond itself for later realization;

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[127] Although the *Shepherd of Hermas* is divided into "Visions" (1-25), "Commandments" (26-50), and "Parables" (51-114), even the first two sections are understood by the characters to contain *parabolai;* e.g., 11.2, 20.2, 40.3-4, 43.18.

[128] *Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles* (NHC VI,*1*), 10.24. The Greco-Coptic word ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲃⲟⲗⲏ is used here and in the *Apocryphon of James*.

[129] Greek allegorical interpretation of Homer was known to Philo, who defends Homer on this basis in *De providentia* 2.40-41. For an English translation of this passage, additional examples from the Philonic corpus, and more on the complex interaction between pagan and Jewish allegorical interpretation in Alexandria, see Robert Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 44-54. Lamberton concludes that it is Philo who is our oldest surviving source attesting allegorical exegesis of Homer. For a fresh investigation of this topic, see also Maren R. Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

type, figure." In other words, *parabolē* may be a synonym for *typos,* and what we normally refer to as Christian "typological" interpretation may be described by ancient authors as the interpretation of *parabolai.*

The word *parabolē* has this meaning in both of its only two occurrences in the New Testament outside of the Synoptics, in Hebrews. The author of that text, performing typological readings of the Hebrew Scriptures, says that the Holy of Holies may not be entered as long as the outer tent, which is a symbol (παραβολή) for the present age, is still standing.[130] The same author, describing the aborted sacrifice of Isaac, says that in effect, God *did* allow his sacrifice to occur, and recovered him back from the dead, *figuratively speaking* (ἐν παραβολῇ).[131] Likewise, Justin Martyr claims numerous times in the *Dialogue with Trypho* that the Holy Spirit spoke through the patriarchs or prophets "parabolically," which is why Trypho does not understand the true meaning of these utterances.[132] And the author of *Barnabas* writes that "the prophet [Moses] is speaking a *parabolē* of the Lord";[133] later this same author will say "if I should write to you about things present or things to come, you would not understand, because they are set forth in *parabolai.*"[134] Therefore it is apparent that early Christian exegesis in the second century was in the process of developing the idea that any "teachings" of Scripture, even those preceding the incarnation, might be labeled *parabolai,* thereby rendered enigmatic, and thus pressed for nonliteral interpretations.

It is imperative that we see Irenaeus' claims about Valentinian exegetical teaching in the preceding context. According to Irenaeus, his Valentinian interlocutors utilize this

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[130] Heb. 9.9.
[131] Heb. 11.19.
[132] E.g. *Dial.* 36.2, 52.1, 63.2, 68.6, 77.4, 78.10, as pointed out by Rousseau and Doutreleau, SC 263:189.
[133] *Barn.* 6.10: λέγει γὰρ ὁ προφήτης παραβολὴν κυρίου.
[134] *Barn.* 17.2: διὰ τὸ ἐν παραβολαῖς κεῖσθαι.

developing Christian concept of the *parabolē* in creative scriptural exegesis. When describing the version of the Valentinian cosmogony in his *grand notice,* Irenaeus digresses (*Haer.* 1.3.1) to explain that the Valentinians teach that:

> These things, however, were not declared openly, because not all are able to receive this knowledge. They were pointed out mystically by the Savior through *parabolai* to those who were able to understand them.[135]

This Valentinian exegetical technique of utilizing the notion of the *parabolē* as a hermeneutical key is framed by Irenaeus as "transmitting secret knowledge." But in fact this exegetical practice is thoroughly consistent with the emerging Christian hermeneutical tradition described above.

Irenaeus immediately goes on to say, "This has been done as follows." What follows (*Haer.* 1.3.1-6) are not only Valentinian exegeses of "parables" in the narrower sense, but allegorical interpretations of Scripture, including numerous numerological proofs taken from seemingly mundane facts of the life of Jesus: the thirty Aeons of the Pleroma were indicated by the thirty years of Jesus' life before his ministry began (but also from the numbers in the "parable of the Workers in the Vineyard" [Mt. 20.1-16]); the Duodecad by Jesus' age when he disputed with the teachers of the Law, and by the number of apostles; the passion of the twelfth Aeon by the apostasy of the twelfth apostle Judas, and by Christ's passion occurring in the twelfth month of his one-year ministry; the remaining eighteen

[135] *Haer.* 1.3.1: Ταῦτα δὲ φανερῶς μὲν μὴ εἰρῆσθαι, διὰ τὸ μὴ πάντας χωρεῖν τὴν γνῶσιν, μυστηριωδῶς δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ Σωτῆρος διὰ παραβολῶν μεμηνύσθαι τοῖς συνιεῖν δυναμένοις οὕτως· My trans., based on Unger and Dillon. *ANF* translate τοῖς συνιεῖν δυναμένοις / *iis qui possunt intelligere* as "to those *qualified* for understanding it." However, this translation introduces a charge of elitism that exceeds that which even Irenaeus intended to make. The language here may reflect an allusion to Matthew 19.11, Οὐ πάντες χωροῦσιν τὸν λόγον [τοῦτον], ἀλλ' οἷς δέδοται, "Not everyone can receive this teaching, but only those to whom it is given." If the allusion is intentional, it is unclear whether it originates with the Valentinians or with Irenaeus' report.

Aeons by the sum of the values of the first two letters of ΙΗΣΟΥΣ,[136] and also by a tradition among them that Christ conversed with his disciples for eighteen months after his resurrection.[137]

Although Irenaeus of course rejects these interpretations, he does *not* object to their being referred to as *parabolai,* nor does he reject the Christian understanding of *parabolai* in the broadest possible sense. On the contrary, in the Preface to Book Five, he will describe some of his efforts in the preceding books as "having clearly set forth many of those things which were said *and done* by the Lord by *parabolai (quae a Domino per parabolas et dicta sunt et facta).*"[138] Concerning the set of Valentinian parabolic proof texts in question in *Haer.* 1.3.1-6, Irenaeus readily acknowledges here that "*parabolai* and allegories" are found not only in the writings of the evangelists and apostles, but also in the Law and the Prophets, echoing the language of *Barnabas* and Justin.[139] Likewise, when he refutes these particular interpretations in Book Two (*Haer.* 2.20.1 – 2.26.3), he again says that "the prophets spoke many things in *parabolai* and allegories, and not according to the literal meaning of the words themselves."[140] Therefore, says Irenaeus, these things are open

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[136] See *Barn.* 9.8 for another example of the number eighteen being associated with the name of Jesus. Whereas for Irenaeus' Valentinians, the typology points from Jesus *backward* to the eighteen Aeons, for *Barnabas,* the 318 men whom Abraham circumcised (Gen. 14.14; 17.23) point *forward* to Jesus (ιη = 18) and the cross (τ = 300).

[137] The *Apocryphon of James* (NHC I,*2*) records that Jesus appeared to the disciples 550 days (which is almost exactly eighteen months) after his resurrection (2.19-20), and stayed with them for eighteen "more" days (8.3). It would thus seem to be another witness to the tradition Irenaeus reports, although without any explanation of the significance of the number.

[138] Compare the close of Book Four (*Haer.* 4.41.4), where Irenaeus proposes that in the fifth book he will arrange "the rest of the words of the Lord, which he taught concerning the Father not by *parabolai*, but by expressions taken in their obvious meaning." Trans. *ANF.*

[139] *Haer.* 1.3.6. This passage is corrupt in both the Greek and Latin texts; see the following note for context.

[140] *Quia enim prophetae in parabolis et allegoriis, et non secundum sonum ipsarum dictionum plurima dixerunt. Haer.* 2.22.1; trans. Unger and Dillon. This passage provides essential context for the translation of *Haer.* 1.3.6 (see previous note). Unger and Dillon's translation of *Haer.* 1.3.6 connects the two pairs of concepts – "the law and the prophets" and "*parabolai* and allegories" – ambiguously, but they suggest this closer connection in their notes (*Against the Heresies: Book One,* 150n35). With 2.22.1 in view, we may say that the sense of 1.3.6 allows for "the Law and the Prophets" to be counted as sources for "*parabolai* and allegories." *ANF* acknowledge the uncertainty of 1.3.6 but boldly translate as "the law and the prophets,

to misinterpretation. In the case of the Valentinians, he charges that they have misinterpreted Scripture intentionally: "that which is ambiguous they cleverly and deceitfully adapt to their fabrications by an unusual explanation."[141]

Irenaeus follows his refutation of Valentinian parabolic interpretations of Scripture (*Haer.* 2.20.1 – 2.26.3) with a more extensive discussion devoted expressly to the proper mode of scriptural exegesis (*Haer.* 2.27.1-3). Here, Irenaeus sets forth the hermeneutic principle that *parabolai* (i.e., any difficult passages of Scripture) ought not to be interpreted via the application of other things from Scripture which are neither clear nor evident in their own right; rather, the difficult passages are to be interpreted by means of those that are clear. To do otherwise, Irenaeus alleges, would be to build one's house on shifting sand instead of solid rock.[142]

Irenaeus here anticipates Augustine's extensive application of the principle of illuminating the obscure scriptural passages by means of those passages that are clearly

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which contain many parables and allegories," which exceeds the text but is nevertheless essentially correct, as will be seen. Rousseau and Doutreleau are more cautious in their translation, but effectively come to the same conclusion after analyzing the context of 1.3.3-6. In their analysis (SC 263:188-9), they point out that Irenaeus, in 1.3.4, has given Lk. 2.23 = Ex. 13.2 as an explicit example of a text from the Law that the Valentinians interpret parabolically. They further suggest that in 1.3.3, Irenaeus has given another example from the Prophets, in an oblique allusion to Lk. 4.18-19 = Is. 61.1-2, which was the text that was the source for the second-century belief, reported by Irenaeus of the Valentinians in 1.3.3, that Jesus' public ministry lasted only one year. This view was shared by many early Christians, including Clement of Alexandria, Julius Africanus, and Tertullian (Unger and Dillon, *Against the Heresies: Book One,* 147n17), although Irenaeus will argue against it at length in 2.22.1-6. In 2.22.1, Irenaeus cites Is. 61.2 explicitly as the Valentinians' proof text for this view. Irenaeus then rejects the idea that, *if* the "acceptable year of the Lord" of Is. 61.2 = Lk. 4.19 is taken to apply typologically to the duration of Jesus' earthly ministry, that it shall be read *literally* as indicating a year *of twelve months,* for, after all, "[the Valentinians] themselves admit that the prophets spoke many things in *parabolai* and allegories, and not according to the literal meaning of the words themselves." (Here I will parenthetically add that Irenaeus' exegetical method is quite complex: in the process of rejecting a particular Valentinian "parabolic" reading of Scripture [that the "acceptable year of the Lord" of Is. 61.1-2 pointed typologically to the duration of Jesus' earthly ministry, as evident from Lk. 4.18-19], Irenaeus accuses his opponents of overly literalizing their parabolic reading of "year," and failing to recognize that the prophet was speaking parabolically with regard to the exact timeframe as well!) In conclusion, Rousseau's and Doutreleau's analysis of 1.3.3-6, combined with the evidence from 2.22.1, suggests that Irenaeus meant to include "the Law and the Prophets" as sources for "*parabolai* and allegories" in the corrupt passage which is *Haer.* 1.3.6.

[141] *Haer.* 1.3.6, trans. Unger and Dillon, mod.

[142] *Haer.* 2.27.3, with an allusion to Mt. 7.24-27. Irenaeus reiterates the point shortly thereafter, at *Haer.* 2.28.3.

expressed.[143] But in establishing what might appear to be a rational exegetical principle, Irenaeus also adapts the Christian concept of the *parabolē* to a rhetorical commonplace already well known to anyone who had pursued an education in rhetoric. As I showed earlier, Cicero had stated the principle that the interpreter of a written document "who opposes the letter will profit greatly... by showing that it contains some ambiguity; then on the basis of that ambiguity he may defend the passage which helps his case."[144] In Irenaeus' hands, therefore, the *parabolē* becomes a flexible tool to argue either for or against a literal reading of Scripture, depending upon whether his *hypothesis* is better helped by an insistence that the text is ambiguous or clear.

5.4 The Clarity and Obscurity of Scripture

With these considerations in mind, we may more easily discern a variety of contradictory positions that Irenaeus takes on the clarity or obscurity of Scripture. These variegated emphases come to the fore at different times, depending on the thrust of the argument at hand.

The first two of these positions are exact opposites of one another.

On the one hand, as we have seen, Irenaeus sometimes maintains that Scripture is inherently obscure, which is why the Jews cannot understand it. Irenaeus develops this idea at length *Haer.* 4.26.1, where he claims that Scripture itself speaks of its own inscrutability, citing Jeremiah 23.20 and Daniel 12.4-7.[145] Irenaeus finds these proclamations, that the words of the books will be shut up and sealed until the last days, to be applicable not only to

[143] Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* 2.30-31; cf. 3.86.
[144] Cicero, *De inventione* 2.48.142.
[145] A more recent precedent for this formulation may be found in the Teacher of Righteousness of 1QpHab 7.1-8.

their respective prophecies, but to all of Scripture. Furthermore, Irenaeus is the first Christian exegete on record to mention, in any context, a passage that will become the *locus classicus* for the idea that Christ unlocked the Scriptures for the disciples: Jesus' post-resurrection appearances in Luke 24.13-49. Irenaeus reads this pericope literally and historically as an additional proof of the necessity of Christ as a hermeneutical key to Scripture. Although Luke is referring only to the Hebrew Scriptures, Irenaeus here, too, elevates the four gospels and other, apostolic texts, including them under the umbrella of "Scripture" that is pointed to by Jeremiah and Daniel's prophecies and expounded by Luke's Jesus. Irenaeus argues that, since to the current day the Jews still stand outside of the Christian interpretive tradition, "when the Law is read to the Jews, it is like a fable, for they do not possess the explanation of all things pertaining to the advent of the Son of God."[146] It is in this section as well where Irenaeus draws upon an image from the kingdom parable of Matthew 13.44 that I discussed earlier as a metaphor for the inherent inscrutability of Scripture: "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone discovered and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all he has and buys that field." Irenaeus claims that "the treasure hidden in the Scriptures was Christ, since he was pointed out by *typoi* and *parabolai.*" Having made this connection, Irenaeus goes on to explain that although the Jews cannot understand Scripture, "when it is read by the Christians, it is a treasure, hidden indeed in a field, but brought to light by the cross of

[146] Irenaeus also says the apostles were subsequently given "perfect knowledge" by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (*Haer.* 3.1.1), which he sees as a prerequisite to their being prepared to depart to the ends of the earth and preach the gospel. Here he seems to exceed the text of Acts 2; Luke represents the events at Pentecost as an isolated miracle and does not link it to the apostles' exegetical instruction. From Luke's point of view, this would be unnecessary, as they had already received the latter from the resurrected Jesus in Luke 24.

Christ." And just as the Jews could not (and cannot) properly read the Scriptures, because they lack(ed) the proper key to their understanding, the same is true for the heretics.[147]

On the other hand, a good rhetor will not ultimately argue that the textual evidence is unintelligible, but that in the end its meaning is perfectly plain. Thus, Irenaeus at times will emphasize the opposite, that in fact all of Scripture is inherently clear. For example:

> The sound and safe and religious and truth-loving mind will readily apply itself to the things God placed within the power of humankind and granted to our knowledge. It will make progress in them because by daily exercise it will make easy for itself the acquisition of knowledge... Since, therefore, the entire Scriptures, both the Prophets and the Gospels, clearly and unambiguously – so they can equally be heard by all, even though all do not believe that there is only one God to the exclusion of others – preach that through his own Word God made all things, (etc.)... those persons will seem very dull who blind their eyes in the face of such clear manifestations and refuse to see the light of the preaching. They put themselves in fetters, and each one of them thinks that, by obscure explanations of the *parabolai,* he has discovered his own god.[148]

In other words, since the Scriptures are inherently clear, the inability to grasp their meaning – manifested in a significantly different interpretation from Irenaeus' own – must be attributed to stupidity, lack of discipline, or ill will on the part of the heretical exegete. To make this case, Irenaeus deploys the rhetorical tropes of appeal to everyday language, by which it is maintained that we all know what words mean, and the *ad hominem* attack, for a fault in one's opponent's character might be sufficient explanation for his failure to agree with a reasonable proposition.[149]

Between these two opposite attitudes on the inherent clarity or obscurity of Scripture, Irenaeus develops at least two additional and complementary positions. Both of these grant some obscurity to Scripture while purporting to be objective hermeneutics for

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[147] The idea has New Testament roots; e.g., 2 Cor. 3.12-18; more generally, Gal 4.21-5.1; Heb 8-10. Irenaeus does not use these as proof texts, however.
[148] *Haer.* 2.27.1-2, trans. Unger and Steenberg, mod.
[149] Cf. Cicero, *De inventione* 2.40.116.

its correct interpretation. The third position resorts to the "rule of truth," a scriptural hermeneutic that "the church" allegedly possesses. The proposition that only some exegetes have the "rule of truth" accounts for the fact of differing scriptural interpretations within the *ekklēsia,* yet this argument introduces the problem that there is now an additional thing, external to Scripture, that is required for an orthodox interpretation. This argument is a two-edged sword: Irenaeus is faced with accepting for the orthodox side something he had charged the heretics with: "reading from things unwritten."

His main solution to this dilemma is to load the two hermeneutical keys with either positively or negatively charged descriptors. The orthodox have the "rule of truth," i.e., "that tradition which originates from the apostles, [and] which is preserved by means of the successions of presbyters in the churches,"[150] whereas the heretics have "their own *hypothesis,*" which they claim derives from "hidden mysteries."[151] Paradoxically, in thus reframing "heretical" claims to traditional interpretation, Irenaeus must temporarily set aside his own reliance upon the apostolic tradition, and assert that the Scriptures speak for themselves (position #2), while characterizing heretics as arguing that Scriptures lack inherent clarity (position #1), a position Irenaeus now distances himself from:

> Indeed, when they [the heretics][152] are exposed by means of the Scriptures, they turn round and make accusations against the Scriptures themselves, as if these were not correct, or were not authentic, *and stated things variously (et quia varie sint dictae),* and that the truth cannot be found in them by those who are ignorant of tradition. They claim the truth was not handed down by writings, but by a living voice...[153]

Steenberg's analysis of this argument indicates that by *et quia varie sint dictae,* Irenaeus means that the Valentinians argue that "the Scriptures state things 'variously'; that

[150] *Haer.* 3.2.2.
[151] E.g., *Haer.* 3.3.1.
[152] The reference is to heretics in general, as evident from the end of 3.1.2 and the remainder of 3.2.
[153] *Haer.* 3.2.1, trans. Unger and Steenberg.

is, they give a variety of opinions" and therefore lack an obvious harmony.[154] This being the case, harmony must be found, the heretics argue, in the "tradition" that they claim access to. Numerous readers of Irenaeus have failed to notice that this is exactly Irenaeus' own position (#3), save for the fact that he casts the tradition to which he lays claim as "a rule of truth faithfully handed down," while those of the "heretics" he represents as "secretly transmitted mysteries." Objectively, there is little to differentiate between the two kinds of "traditions" on this basis: the real difference lies only in their contents. However, by framing the appeals to tradition in two very different lights, and by finding scriptural justification for "the church's" apostolic tradition, he continues the elision of Scripture with hermeneutic that he had begun with the analogies of the mosaic and the cento. Furthermore, as we saw earlier, when we considered Irenaeus' intervention in the Quartodeciman controversy over the date of Easter, this third position that he articulates concerning the clarity of Scripture – that the inherently unclear Scriptures might be rendered clear by application of the rule of truth as guaranteed by the apostolic tradition – was not a position that he applied with complete consistency.[155]

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[154] Unger and Steenberg, *Against the Heresies: Book Three,* 124n1. *ANF* translate this phrase "and that they are ambiguous."

[155] In addition to framing their appeal to tradition in negative terms, Irenaeus continues by mounting two additional and related charges against them: that they themselves in fact claim to be innovators of tradition (3.2.1), and that they themselves disparage and cast doubt upon the apostolic tradition that is known to them (3.2.2). Both charges stand in some tension to the original charge that they claim to have received secret mysteries handed down to them. The second is a direct contradiction of this claim; the contradiction is resolved only if we refuse to grant the "tradition that is known to them" as faithfully apostolic, thus taking Irenaeus' rhetoric as historical description. As for the first charge, we have another textual issue. Although Harvey includes in his Latin text an *esse,* he notes (2:7n1) that "The Clermont copy [i.e., the manuscript that Harvey deems "the most ancient and valuable of all," 1:viii] omits *esse,* and the Greek would hardly require εἶναι." Harvey thus expresses severe reservations about the inclusion of the word. In fact, the sentence makes more sense without it, in which case we would read an implied conjugated form of εἶναι. Thus, in place of *ANF*'s "And this wisdom each one of them alleges *to be* the fiction of his own inventing..." we should read "...*being*..." (not "is"). Unger and Steenberg translate along the lines I suggest here. The upshot is that Irenaeus is charging them not with *alleging* to have innovated (an accusation that would hardly be persuasive) but merely with innovating, his usual charge.

Like this third position, Irenaeus' fourth position grants some obscurity to Scripture and also purports to be an objective hermeneutic, but in a different way. The fourth position is the admission that while some parts of Scripture are clear, others, indeed, are not; therefore, one must attempt to interpret the unclear – i.e., the *parabolai* – by means of the clear.

As we have seen, this basic exegetical principle is one that Greco-Roman rhetors on both sides of a legal case would claim they were doing with the written evidence upon which the case hinged. While the appeal to the "rule of truth" articulates a hermeneutical principle based on an external key vouchsafed by a succession of apostles, this last position proffers an appeal strictly to common sense, a general principle with which anyone might agree. As such, it is a powerful rhetorical weapon, although it concedes the inherent ambiguity of at least some passages of Scripture, even in the hands of "orthodox" interpreters. Irenaeus gives this principle full exposition here:

> For by the fact that they wish to explain ambiguous scriptural passages – ambiguous, however, not as if referring to another god, but with regard to the economies of God – they fabricated another God. And so, as we have said before, they braid ropes out of sand and add a bigger difficulty to a smaller one. But no mystery is solved by another that itself needs a solution, nor is one ambiguity resolved by another ambiguity by anyone who has sense, or one riddle by another greater riddle. But such difficulties are solved by things that are manifest and harmonious and clear.[156]

We notice that even as he concedes the ambiguity of some passages, he attempts to parenthetically constrain the extent of their ambiguity. What is lacking, however, is any attempt to outline a principle for determining which passages count as "ambiguous" and

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[156] *Haer.* 2.10.1. *Per hoc enim quod velint ambiguas exsolvere Scripturas (ambiguas autem non quasi ad alterum Deum, sed quasi ad dispositiones Dei), alterum Deum fabricaverunt; quemadmodum praediximus, de arena resticulas nectentes, et quaestioni minori quaestionem majorem adgenerantes. Omnis autem quaestio non per aliud quod quaeritur habebit resolutionem, nec ambiguitas per aliam ambiguitatem solvetur apud eos qui sensum habent, aut aenigmata per aliud majus aenigma; sed ea quae sunt talia ex manifestis et consonantibus et claris accipiunt absolutiones.* Trans. based on those of *ANF* and of Unger and Dillon.

"unambiguous." Rhetorically, it works in Irenaeus' favor not to commit to such a theory, but to simply claim the obvious clarity or obscurity of passages as needed, as he is simultaneously in the process of defining the very "rule of truth" by which to make these adjudications.

The principle of interpreting the unclear scriptural passages in light of the clear would become a fundamental axiom of Christian exegesis, due in large part to its systematic application by Augustine in Book Three of *De doctrina christiana.* Unlike Irenaeus, Augustine devotes careful attention to the question of what counts as "ambiguous" and "unambiguous," outlining in list fashion the various types of ambiguity that might arise for either "literal" or "figurative" passages, the proper methods for handling each type of ambiguity, and, further, the methods for determining when a passage is to be understood as "literal" or "figurative" to begin with. However, Irenaeus merely implies that, simply by reading, anyone might determine which is which. We must remember that by the time Augustine articulates his own criteria, he is able to take the *regula fidei* for granted, mentioning it only a few times in *De doctrina.* That he is able to be more systematic than Irenaeus about the clarity of Scripture is due in no small part to the debt he owes his predecessor. When we read Irenaeus, we must not read him through the lens of developed church tradition, but understand him as one of the early innovators of that tradition.[157]

[157] Augustine also devotes considerable energy explaining the necessity to resort to an additional principle, the double commandment of love. As he will famously write, "So anyone who thinks that he has understood the divine scriptures or any part of them, but cannot by his understanding build up this double love of God and neighbour, has not yet succeeded in understanding them." *De doctrina christiana* 1.86; trans. R. P. H. Green. This additional rule is necessary for Augustine, I suggest, due to his tremendous interest not only in theology but in Christian ethics. By contrast, Irenaeus' intent is to demonstrate the underlying plot of the narrative of Scripture, a drama of salvation history, to which ethical applications to Christian laity are largely irrelevant. Here I concur with Greer, who writes (*Early Biblical Interpretation,* 176), "Irenaeus says little about the meaning of scriptural interpretation for the Christian life."

6. Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to establish that the difference in exegetical method that Irenaeus claims between himself and the Valentinians is a rhetorical one, devoid of any objective fact. Rather, it is Irenaeus' framing of the debate in exegetical terms that allows him to demonstrate the superiority of his *hypothesis* to the one(s) he singles out as essential to the group he collectively designates as "Valentinians." To postulate a fundamental difference in orthodox and heretical exegetical method along the lines ingeniously argued by Irenaeus of Lyons is nothing less than a failure to see one's location within the exegetical tradition of which Irenaeus was one of the founding fathers.

This failure of perception has been a stumbling block for previous generations of scholars, one that has hitherto caused the Valentinian literature to be excluded from many quarters of the academic study of early Christianity, along with many other texts that, like the Valentinian corpus, have been retrospectively deemed heretical, or even non-Christian. This exclusion, in turn, has prevented a complete assessment of the social history of the early Christian movement. However, we are now seeing the field of study shifting onto a footing that better appreciates all of the available evidence. This dissertation represents a small contribution to that greater academic conversation.

At the conclusion of this analysis of Irenaeus' portrayal of Valentinian exegetical method, one question remains: If the exegetical differences between the Valentinian thinkers, on the one hand, and Irenaeus, and other retrospectively orthodox authors, on the other, were not what Irenaeus said they were, then what were they? It is this question to which I turn in the following chapters.

III. Soteriological and Paraenetic Interpretations of The Parable of the Lost Sheep

1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, we saw how both the Valentinians and Irenaeus of Lyons participated in the burgeoning Christian culture of allegorical and typological readings of Scripture. Together, they contributed to the development of these reading strategies in a number of ways, one of which, as we have seen, was the use of the *parabolē.* In that chapter I discussed the various meanings early Christian exegetes gave to the Greek word *parabolē* in order to interpret Scripture. There we saw how, due to the influence of the word's prior meaning, it was used as a broad term, from Hebrews and *Barnabas* to Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, to refer to enigmatic parts of Scripture, and even to understand parts of Scripture as enigmatic that were not obviously so. As Frank Kermode observed in *The Genesis of Secrecy,* just as the earliest generations of Christian exegetes could use the New Testament documents as hermeneutical controls on the Scriptures of the "Old" Testament in order to read the latter "parabolically," so, too, would there emerge in successive generations the notion of ecclesiastical tradition(s) that would control the meaning of the New Testament texts, allowing, when necessary, "parabolic" or "spiritual" readings of these later texts as well.[1] Likewise, R. P. C. Hanson, in his monograph *Allegory and Event,* remarks that "when the documents of the New Testament begin to be recognized as authoritative and normative, it is natural that Christian writers should begin to allegorize them too."[2] At what point does this innovation first occur?

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[1] Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), 19.

[2] R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture* (London: SCM Press, 1959), 125-6.

Hanson stated that Irenaeus was the first writer to allegorize the New Testament. Having duly noted the extensive allegorization of the Hebrew Scriptures by second-century Christian writers such as the author of *Barnabas,* Justin, and Theophilus of Antioch, and noting that, nevertheless, these authors never allegorize the texts that will become the New Testament, he goes on to say that "Irenaeus has no such reserve and will when the occasion arises (which is not very often) apply allegory to the text of the New Testament without restraint."[3] As an example, Hanson points to Irenaeus' allegorical interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan (*Haer.* 3.17.3), according to which the wounded man stands for humanity, Christ himself is the Samaritan, and the two denarii paid to the innkeeper contain "the image and inscription of the Father and Son."[4] While this allegory appears in embryonic form in Irenaeus, in Origen's *Homily on Luke* 34 it is greatly expanded: Jerusalem represents Paradise; Jericho is the world; the robbers are hostile powers; the man's wounds are Adam's disobedience; the donkey is Christ's body; the inn is the Church; and the Samaritan's promise to return is the Parousia.[5] Hanson, a priest and later bishop in the Church of Ireland, piously remarks that "the suggestion that this interpretation was one intention in our Lord's mind in his producing the parable of the Good Samaritan I cannot regard as worthy of serious consideration."[6]

As this example indicates, Christian thinkers in the generations after Irenaeus continued to apply allegorical interpretation to the New Testament. In particular, the Alexandrians Clement and Origen are quite comfortable with this hermeneutical development; and this practice became common and highly refined in the hands of

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[3] Hanson, *Allegory and Event,* 112-13.
[4] Hanson, *Allegory and Event,* 76n2. Irenaeus imports the language describing the denarii from Mt. 22.20.
[5] Hanson, *Allegory and Event,* 76n2.
[6] Hanson, *Allegory and Event,* 76n2.

numerous late antique Christian exegetes. Therefore, Hanson views Irenaeus as a pivotal figure in this development. Even more significantly, he explains Irenaeus' exegetical innovation on these grounds: "No doubt Irenaeus feels himself free to do this because he is among the first writers to treat the New Testament unreservedly as inspired Scripture."[7]

However, Hanson must have meant something like "Irenaeus was the first *retrospectively orthodox Christian* writer to allegorize the New Testament," for Irenaeus was not the first writer, or even the first Christian writer, to do so. Rather, by Irenaeus' own report, it was his Valentinian opponents who, in the second century, first extended allegorical interpretation of Scripture to the texts that in successive centuries would come to be key components of the New Testament corpus. Irenaeus' reports of this aspect of Valentinian exegesis are corroborated by the Nag Hammadi documents, some of which, depending upon how they are dated, may serve as independent witnesses to pre-Irenaean Christian allegorical interpretation of New Testament texts, and especially of the sayings of Jesus from the Synoptic Gospels. Moreover, if Hanson is correct that the willingness to allegorize a text says something about its perceived sacrality in the eyes of its interpreters, then we should understand Irenaeus' Valentinian opponents as among the earliest Christians to have elevated the Gospel of Matthew to the status of sacred Scripture.

In this chapter, we turn to a specific example of this development, the early reception history of the parable of the Lost Sheep. After the New Testament recensions, our earliest historical records of Christian interpretation of this parable that may be firmly dated are those Irenaeus provides of Valentinian exegesis, followed by his own. Not only does Irenaeus give four accounts of Valentinian exegesis of the parable of the Lost Sheep, but this parable also plays a fundamental role in the development of his own *hypothesis* of

[7] Hanson, *Allegory and Event,* 113.

Scripture at two points in *Adversus Haereses,* in Books Three and Five.[8] This parable also plays a key role in the *Gospel of Truth*, a Valentinian document found at Nag Hammadi and of uncertain date, that may well have been the same text as one by the same name to which Irenaeus refers.[9] Both Irenaeus and the Valentinian thinkers whom he opposed relied upon this parable at the center of their respective theologies. All of them, however, would interpret the parable allegorically in order to do so.

In light of the discussion of *parabolai* in the previous chapter, at this point we need to ask: what does it mean to interpret a parable, in the narrow sense of the word,[10] "allegorically"? Is this not a redundancy? That is, are not the parables found in the Synoptic Gospels and attributed to Jesus always meant as allegorical representations of something else?

They are not. At least, parables are not *intrinsically* allegories if we accept the distinction originating with Quintilian, and subsequently proposed by the eminent nineteenth-century scholar Adolph Jülicher, here outlined by C. H. Dodd:

> The typical parable, whether it be a simple metaphor, or a more elaborate similitude, or a full-length story, presents one single point of comparison. The details are not intended to have independent significance. In all

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[8] At one other point, Irenaeus reports an exegesis of this parable, not by Valentinians, but by the followers of Simon of Samaria (Simon Magus), who claim that the prostitute Helen, whom Simon had redeemed from her condition of slavery, had been prefigured as the lost sheep (*Haer.* 1.23.2). This last story is also reported by Tertullian, who follows Irenaeus' account so closely that it seems most likely he was working from his copy of *Adversus Haereses* at this point. Tertullian embellishes the tale with lascivious humor but adds no significant details (*De anima* 34). I note this here for the sake of completeness, but it does not seem to bear much relevance to the present investigation. It cannot even be certain that this "exegetical" attribution was anything more than a throw-away jab, related or invented by Irenaeus and exaggerated by Tertullian.

[9] *Haer.* 3.11.9. A dim echo of the parable is preserved in the Valentinian *Interpretation of Knowledge,* but the limits of space prevent me from adequately discussing it here. This text is highly lacunous and, more important for the purposes of the argument of this chapter, is difficult to date precisely. I discuss this text in connection with the parables of the Sower and of the Wheat and the Tares in Chapter 4. For a recent attempt to explicate the role of the parable of the Lost Sheep in this text, see Louis Painchaud, "L'utilisation des paraboles dans *L'Interpretation de la gnose (NH XI,1),*" *VC* 57:4 (2003): 411-436.

[10] For an explanation of "parable, in the narrow sense of the word," see Chapter 2. In brief, I mean the usual, English definition of the word, "a usually short fictitious story that illustrates a moral attitude or a religious principle" (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary,* 10th ed. [2001]), as opposed to the broader range of meanings of the Greek word *parabolē* that I surveyed in Chapter 2.

> allegory, on the other hand, each detail is a separate metaphor, with a significance of its own.[11]

The earlier example of Origen's extended allegorical interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan provides a good example of this distinction. The distinction is important when we recall that at times – albeit rarely – a parable may be interpreted allegorically even within the Synoptic text.[12] This occurs most significantly in Jesus' interpretation of the parable of the Sower, an interpretation that numerous commentators have suggested is redactional.[13] Dodd's analysis is typical:

> [T]he wayside and the birds, the thorns and the stony ground are not, as Mark supposed, cryptograms for persecution, the deceitfulness of riches, and so forth. They are there [only] to conjure up a picture of the vast amount of wasted labour which the farmer must face, and so to bring into relief the satisfaction that the harvest gives, in spite of all.[14]

I will take up the specifics of the parable of the Sower and its later interpretation in Chapter 4. The question of whether Jesus' allegorical interpretation of the parable of the Sower is a secondary redactional layer in Mark, while certainly a real possibility, need not concern us here. The example is pertinent to the present discussion only insofar as it usefully illustrates the distinction between an allegorical interpretation of a parable, in which every detail is essential, and a non-allegorical one, in which there is a single point of

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[11] C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), 7. Cf. Adolph Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1899-1910). This basic distinction is corroborated by, e.g., Joachim Jeremias, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1954); idem, *The Parables of Jesus,* trans. S. H. Hooke (New York: Scribner & Sons, 1954); and Hauck, "παραβολή," *TDNT* 5:744-61.

[12] In addition to the parable of the Sower, the only other examples in the Synoptics are the parables of the Wheat and the Tares (Mt. 13.36-43) and the Net (Mt. 13.49).

[13] Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu,* 2:514-538; Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus,* 77-79; Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2007), 243.

[14] Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom,* 8, 145-50.

comparison, and all other details only serve to flesh out a life-like picture in order to make that comparison more vivid.[15]

A final example, Mark's parable of the Wicked Tenants (Mk. 12:1-12), is worth discussing as it tests the usefulness of Jülicher's clear-cut distinction between a parable and an allegory. Numerous commentators, noting the affinities between Mk. 12:1 and Is. 5.1-7, argue that we are meant to think of the vineyard as Israel, its owner God, the tenants the Jewish leaders, and the messengers the biblical prophets. For Jülicher and Jeremias, the vineyard's owner's son, who is put to death by the wicked tenants, corresponds allegorically to Jesus himself.[16] The parable's apparently allegorical structure suggested to Jülicher that the entire parable must have been constructed by the early church, and Jeremias asserts that among the parables of Jesus this parable is utterly unique in its allegorical character.[17] Dodd dissents, arguing that "a climax of iniquity is demanded by the plot of the story... it is the logic of the story, and not any theological motive, that has introduced this figure [the owner's son]."[18] Dodd argues that even if Mark has deliberately placed this parable in a

[15] The meaning Mark gives to the parable of the Sower cannot be easily dismissed simply because it is supposed to be redactional. Even if the allegorical interpretation of the parable does originate with Mark, the themes of secrecy and misunderstanding that Mark uses this parable to highlight are major ones, running throughout his Gospel and controlling its meaning for the reader, as famously highlighted by William Wrede, and as was well understood as a literary feature of Mark even prior to Wrede's classic study. See Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien* (Göttingen:Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901); idem, *The Messianic Secret,* trans. by J. C. G. Greig (London: James Clarke & Co, 1971). For a more recent assessment of this question, see the essays collected in Christopher Tuckett, ed., *The Messianic Secret* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983). As B. B. Scott and others have observed, Dodd's form critical suggestions about the redactive layer of allegorical interpretation of parables in Mark were strengthened by the subsequent publication of the *Gospel of Thomas,* which contains the parables of both the Sower (log. 9) and the Wicked Tenants (log. 65), each lacking an allegorical application. B. B. Scott, *Hear, Then, the Parable* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 237-38. On the literary unity of Mark 4.1-5.2, see also Collins, *Mark,* 238-267.

[16] Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu,* 2:385-406. Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus,* 73: "There can be no doubt that in the sending of the son Jesus himself had his own sending in mind."

[17] Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus,* 70.

[18] Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom,* 100-101.

dramatic context designed to evoke an allusion to Jesus' death in the reader, "This is not allegory. It is a legitimate use of parable to bring out the full meaning of a situation."[19]

Finally, David Stern has argued that Mark's parable of the Wicked Tenants, given its immediate context, is intended by Mark as an allegory even on the level of the narrative – that is, Jesus' interlocutors are meant to understand the parable as an allegory to current events.[20] However, on this level, Stern argues that the owner's son who is put to death by the wicked tenants corresponds allegorically not to Jesus himself, but to John the Baptist. He determines this from the greater Markan context (Mk. 11:27-33): Jesus tells the parable in connection with his question about John's authority; it is John who has already been put to death, and whom Jesus' interlocutors should have recognized in the parable, especially given that Jesus had just reminded them that although John was recognized by the people as a true prophet, he had been rejected and killed by the Jewish leaders. The temple authorities whom Jesus addresses "realized that he had told this parable against them," an understanding they can only attain if they correctly identify the owner's son as John the Baptist, whose death has already occurred with their complicity.[21]

Stern observes that although the reader will associate the owner's son not only with John but with Jesus as well, there is a difference between these two significations: the allusion to John is explicitly allegorical, and would have been grasped by the characters in the narrative, whereas the simultaneous allusion to Jesus happens "only on the level of irony," as the parable foreshadows the death of Jesus for the reader only (after

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[19] Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom,* 102.
[20] David Stern, *Parables in Midrash: Narrative and Exegesis in Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 189-97. For a more detailed discussion of this parable, as well as a consideration of some important methodological difficulties, see idem, "Jesus' Parables from the Perspective of Rabbinic Literature: The Example of the Wicked Husbandmen," in *Parable and Story in Judaism and Christianity,* eds. Clemens Thoma and Michael Wyschogrod (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 42-80.
[21] Mark elides the temple authorities with the Herodian court in order to make this point.

understanding that the parable was directed against them, the temple authorities' immediate response is to desire to arrest Jesus *too*).[22] In other words, although Jesus tells an allegory that the temple authorities understand as such within the context of the narrative, Mark has built into his narrative a second layer of meaning, through his use of irony, that only the reader will understand.[23] In light of Stern's analysis, it seems clear that, according to the distinction Dodd outlines, this parable in its Markan form must be counted as allegory.

Through this example, we see that Jülicher's distinction between a parable and an allegory cannot hold as an inflexible rule as he, Dodd, and others have supposed. Rarely, Synoptic parables are also allegories, in which all of the details, or at least very many of them, signify additional referents. Despite these important exceptions, however, Jülicher's definition of allegory, as distinct from the parable form, is helpful in assessing early Christian interpretations of parables, for in most cases, we may agree with Jülicher that the Synoptic parable is *not* meant as an allegory, despite its subsequent allegorical interpretation by the early church.

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[22] Jeremias concedes that only the reader, not the temple authorities in the story, would have made this connection; this concession, however, complicates Jeremias' interpretation, which would then only be consistent with a pre-Wredeian view that the historical Jesus had actually spoken in parables in order to be misunderstood, as Mark alleged (Mk. 4.12) – an assumption that Matthew rejected (Mt. 13.13). For an analysis of the theological impact of Matthew's alteration of Mark's ἵνα to ὅτι, see Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy,* 29-34; I discuss the implications in Chapter 4.

[23] It is important to observe that this happens strictly on the literary level and has nothing whatsoever to do with the theory of parabolic instruction Mark outlines in his interpretation of the parable of the Sower at 4.11-12. Jesus, according to Mark, does not speak parabolically to the temple authorities here in order to be intentionally misunderstood. See Stern, *Parables in Midrash,* 189-97, and idem, "Jesus' Parables." On numerous points this is similar to Dodd's analysis, *Parables of the Kingdom,* 96-102. Although Dodd does not identify John the Baptist as the referent, he also finds that the parable works on multiple levels even when Jesus would have been understood as an important symbol. Dodd contends that, nevertheless, this is not allegory, a claim that would seem to be motivated by his attempt to preserve Jülicher's distinction between parable and allegory as much as possible, even as he allows that there may be "very few exceptions" (*Parables of the Kingdom,* 9) to this principle.

I have conducted this methodological discussion as an important preliminary to my analysis of the parable of the Lost Sheep in Valentinian exegesis, because I shall argue below that the parable, in both its Matthean and Lukan contexts, is not meant as allegory. Yet our earliest surviving interpretations of the parable – those of the Valentinians and Irenaeus – all deploy allegorical interpretation of this parable in order to utilize it as an important justification for their theologies. The parable is not referenced by Justin, Theophilus, or any of the texts generally classified as "Apostolic Fathers," despite the fact that 1 *Clem.* 46 knows Mt. 18.6 or parallels, and Ign. *Eph.* 5 knows Mt. 18.19.[24] Rather, as I said earlier, Christian interpretation of the parable makes its first appearance in the historical record in Irenaeus' reports of Valentinian exegesis, followed by his own.

Their shared impulse to allegorize the parable of the Lost Sheep was followed by subsequent Christian exegetes, both Valentinian and retrospectively orthodox. In order to see this process clearly, we necessarily must first consider the parable in its New Testament contexts.

2. Gospel Contexts

Among the canonical gospels, the parable of the Lost Sheep appears only in those according to Matthew and Luke. We might therefore assume it was a Q parable, although in fact, even if we were to assume the existence of the hypothetical Synoptic Sayings Source Q (which I do not), it remains an open question whether this parable may be counted among its contents. Given the numerous differences in contexts and language, it is perhaps even more plausible that the two evangelists each derived the parable from the oral

[24] The addition of the parable of the Lost Sheep to the *Gospel of Thomas* cannot confidently be dated prior to Irenaeus given the state of the evidence; for arguments, see below.

tradition rather than a shared written source.[25] Dodd observes that the moral of the parable differs from one gospel to another, as we shall see below.[26] The fact is that the parable of the Lost Sheep comes to us already redacted by the two evangelists in two strikingly different contexts. In what follows, I perform brief historical critical readings of the parables in those contexts, evaluating them independently.

2.1. The Parable in the Gospel of Matthew

In Matthew, the parable is situated in the midst of what numerous commentators on Matthew have termed the Discourse on Community (Mt. 18.1-35).[27] The discourse begins in a private conversation with the disciples, in which they ask Jesus, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (Mt. 18.1) Thus the stage is set for a teaching about jealousy within the *ekklēsia* that will thematically pervade the majority of the Community Discourse.

Jesus answers by presenting them with a child, and warning them that they must "become like children" to enter the kingdom of heaven, and that the greatest is the one who "humbles himself" (ταπεινώσει ἑαυτὸν) like a child (Mt. 18.2-5). Jesus warns about despising and placing stumbling blocks before "one of these little ones" with faith, and how radical measures, such as plucking out one's own eye, should be taken to avoid causing not only others but also oneself to stumble (Mt. 18.6-9). Thus those hearing the lesson are encouraged to think of themselves as a community of humble children. When Jesus repeats his injunction, "Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones" (Mt. 18.10), he now speaks not only of actual children but of all those with humble faith. Meanwhile, the

[25] For arguments, see Ulrich Luz, *Matthew,* 2:438-9.
[26] Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom,* 92.
[27] This discourse is the fourth of the five generally acknowledged that signal the division of Matthew's Gospel into five sections. See Luz, *Matthew,* 2:421-4, with extensive bibliography.

hearers are now encouraged to shift their perspective, and identify not with the faithful child, but with another who might despise such a one.

Jesus then shifts again, somewhat abruptly, to the parable of the Lost Sheep, which, according to the modern numbering, begins in verse 12. It is not immediately clear what the connection is between the two analogies, and the apparently absent transition has resulted in the interpolated verse 11 in the manuscript tradition, "For the Son of Man has come [to seek and] to save the lost." The interpolation is an attempt to supply a transition, breezily using a γάρ to introduce the new theme of "the lost," which is then taken up in the parable.[28] The interpolated line also identifies the shepherd with Jesus himself, thus exerting an influence on centuries of interpreters using the Majority text. The earliest important witnesses to Mt. 18.11 are from the fourth or fifth centuries,[29] and this verse probably became attached to the parable under the influence of the later exegetical tradition that identifies the parable's shepherd with Christ. However, I suggest that this identification is completely absent in Matthew's redaction of the parable.

Matthew's Jesus begins with a question:

> Τί ὑμῖν δοκεῖ; ἐὰν γένηταί τινι ἀνθρώπῳ ἑκατὸν πρόβατα καὶ πλανηθῇ ἓν ἐξ αὐτῶν, οὐχὶ ἀφήσει τὰ ἐνενήκοντα ἐννέα ἐπὶ τὰ ὄρη καὶ πορευθεὶς ζητεῖ τὸ πλανώμενον; καὶ ἐὰν γένηται εὑρεῖν αὐτό, ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι χαίρει ἐπ' αὐτῷ μᾶλλον ἢ ἐπὶ τοῖς ἐνενήκοντα ἐννέα τοῖς μὴ πεπλανημένοις.
>
> What do you think? Suppose someone has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say

[28] The interpolated verse is taken from Lk. 19.10, where it functions as the conclusion of the Lukan pericope of the contrition of Zacchaeus, a tax collector who promises to give half of his possessions to the poor. In that context, the Pharisees grumble amongst themselves about Jesus' sharing table fellowship with sinners such as Zacchaeus; this recalls the context of the *Lukan* version of the parable of the Lost Sheep, but does not explain why the verse was attracted to the Matthean version at this point. Moreover, in its new context, the verse doesn't really work as a logical conclusion of what has come before.

[29] Codices W (4th/5th centuries) and Q (5th century); see NA[27]. Verse 11 also appears in John Chrysostom's 59th *Homily on Matthew*, but not Jerome's *Commentary*.

> to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. (Mt. 18.12-13)

Among the differences we will find between Matthew's and Luke's versions, we should first direct our attention to the difference in description of the sheep: for Luke, the sheep is "[utterly] lost" (τὸ ἀπολωλὸς), while for Matthew, it is merely "gone astray, wandering" (τὸ πλανώμενον). This description corresponds to a difference in fault expressed by the main verbs: in Luke, as we shall see, it is the shepherd who has lost (ἀπολέσας) the sheep, just as, in the corresponding Lukan parable, the woman has lost her coin. However, in Matthew, the sheep has gone astray of its own accord (πλανηθῇ), and is contrasted with the ninety-nine that have not (μὴ πεπλανημένοις). Furthermore, Matthew's parable shares with Luke's the theme of rejoicing, but in Matthew the shepherd does not call others to share in his joy. Whereas that detail will be important for Luke, in Matthew Jesus immediately follows up with a different interpretation:

> οὕτως οὐκ ἔστιν θέλημα ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς ἵνα ἀπόληται ἓν τῶν μικρῶν τούτων.
>
> So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost. (Mt. 18.14)

In verse 14 Matthew now uses the verb ἀπόληται, to become lost, or to perish. A sheep that is πλανώμενον is not yet ἀπολωλός, although it may become so; Matthew's distinction between the two states suggests that we should take the latter as a more severe, permanent state, probably occurring at the final judgment.[30] Here, in verse 14, Matthew himself supplies the missing connection that scribes had attempted to correct with the addition of verse 11, but Matthew's connection is a much richer one: Jesus likens the lost sheep to the "little ones," who, as we have seen, are those who have pure humble faith.

[30] Luz, *Matthew,* 2:444.

Thus the parable must be read with what has come immediately before. The implication is that if any member of the *ekklēsia* places stumbling blocks before another, that one may cause his fellow to stray from the community, either spiritually, or in physically separating oneself, and, henceforth, may become lost (ἀπολωλός).

But what are "stumbling blocks" in this context? The contextual meaning of the parable of the Lost Sheep in Matthew is further clarified by what follows immediately thereafter: step-by-step instructions on how to respectfully chastise another member of the *ekklēsia:* first speak to the individual in private, then again with one or two witnesses, and only then bring the complaint to the entire *ekklēsia* (Mt. 18.15-20). This is followed by a brief teaching on the necessity of forgiveness (Mt. 18.21-2), and the parable of the Unmerciful Servant, which further reinforces the Father's commandment to forgive in no uncertain terms (Mt. 18.23-35). Thus in Matthew the parable of the Lost Sheep is best understood as a directive to right relations among the close-knit members of an *ekklēsia*. Whereas erecting stumbling blocks, in the form of unyielding judgment over perceived violations, might cause one's fellows to "go astray" and ultimately to become "lost," by seeking out and lovingly communicating with members with whom one has quarreled, one might heal the rift and return them to the fold of the spiritual community. The parable in its Matthean context thus elaborates upon two elements of the Lord's Prayer: the hope that the will of the Father in heaven be done on earth, and the injunction to forgive (Mt. 6.10, 12).

Because of these features, some modern interpreters of Matthew, with whom I concur, have found that a paraenetic interpretation of the parable is inseparable from the parable in its Matthean context. This makes Matthew the earliest exponent of the

paraenetic interpretation of this parable.[31] Its moral is an exhortation to the hearer of the parable to behave as the shepherd would in the hypothetical narrative. The essential points of comparison for the hearer – shepherd, flock, lost sheep – do not make this an elaborate allegory; the details of the mountain, the shepherd's descent, and the number of sheep do not play any role in the Matthean meaning of the parable, although later allegorical interpreters would seize upon these details as essential for their exegesis. Nor, unlike the parable of the Wicked Tenants, should the hearer assign the role of the shepherd to Jesus in this telling, either on the level of the narrative itself, or on the level of irony, for here there is none. Rather, the hearer is encouraged to identify with the shepherd as an ethical exemplar and to behave likewise.

2.2. The Parable in the Gospel of Luke

In Luke, the context is rather different. The immediate context prompting the parable is not a question from within, but the mumbling of the Pharisees and scribes over Jesus' admission of sinners to table fellowship (Lk. 15.1-2). The latter is a frequent theme in Luke, for whom meal scenes are often opportunities to introduce the subjects of sharing, celebrating, inviting, and the suspension of conventional boundaries.[32] In this case, Jesus responds to the challenge by telling three parables – those of the Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, and Lost Son – each of which expresses the theme of rejoicing at the finding of the lost, and which together represent a cumulative response to the Pharisees.[33]

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[31] Luz, *Matthew,* 2:444.
[32] Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 541. E.g., Lk. 5.27-32; 7.36-50; 10.38-42; 14.1-24.
[33] Green, *Luke,* 568.

Therefore, the Lukan context already suggests that the main character of the three parables should provide a behavioral model for Jesus' table fellowship, thus answering the Pharisees' question with three illustrations.[34] So we are initially encouraged to read Jesus into the role of the shepherd, but also those of the woman and the father. Moreover, the situation is somewhat more complex.

Jesus does not begin this parable with Luke's common parabolic formula "There was a man who..." (ἄνθρωπός τις).[35] Rather, he begins his reply, as he did in Matthew, with a question:

> Τίς ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ὑμῶν ἔχων ἑκατὸν πρόβατα καὶ ἀπολέσας ἐξ αὐτῶν ἓν οὐ καταλείπει τὰ ἐνενήκοντα ἐννέα ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ καὶ πορεύεται ἐπὶ τὸ ἀπολωλὸς ἕως εὕρῃ αὐτό; καὶ εὑρὼν ἐπιτίθησιν ἐπὶ τοὺς ὤμους αὐτοῦ χαίρων, καὶ ἐλθὼν εἰς τὸν οἶκον συγκαλεῖ τοὺς φίλους καὶ τοὺς γείτονας λέγων αὐτοῖς, Συγχάρητέ μοι, ὅτι εὗρον τὸ πρόβατόν μου τὸ ἀπολωλός.
>
> *Which one of you,* having a hundred sheep and losing one, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.'
> (Lk. 15.4-6)

Luke then signals his interpretation of the parable with "just so" (οὕτως):

> λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι οὕτως χαρὰ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἔσται ἐπὶ ἑνὶ ἁμαρτωλῷ μετανοοῦντι ἢ ἐπὶ ἐνενήκοντα ἐννέα δικαίοις οἵτινες οὐ χρείαν ἔχουσιν μετανοίας.
>
> Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.
> (Lk. 15.7)

Luke follows the parable of the Lost Sheep immediately with two other parables unique to his Gospel, which together work to control the meaning of the first and serve as a

[34] "The special biographical situation that Luke created for the parable in 15:1-2 in which Jesus defends his own activity against the Pharisees also portrays the relation between the parable and its narrator." Luz, *Matthew,* 2:440.
[35] Cf. Lk. 10.30; 14.2; 14.16; 15.11; 16.1; 16.19; 19.12; 20.9.

further answer to the challenge of the Pharisees. The second in the group is the parable of the Lost Coin, in which a woman, having ten drachmae and losing one of these, immediately lights a lamp and sweeps her house to find it. Once again the woman might be anyone: "Or what woman (ἢ τίς γυνὴ), having ten drachmae..." The genders of the owners of the lost sheep and coin need not imply anything about the gender of the intended referent: either character might point outside the parable to a referent of any gender. In Luke's interpretation of the parable of the Lost Coin, there is no comparison to the nine coins that were not lost, only the conclusion, "Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents." (Lk. 15.8-10) Nevertheless, the focus is on the joy of recovering that which was lost, and Jesus gives even more detail to a description of the woman's actions: lighting a lamp, sweeping the house, and searching carefully.[36] If we agree with Joel Green that the woman is depicted as a peasant and the ten coins represent her life savings, then the loss of one of these ten represents a further escalation of the stakes from the first parable, in which a man wealthy enough to own a hundred sheep has lost one of them.[37]

In each of these two parables, Jesus identifies the lost sheep or coin with the sinner, and, by implication, the recovery of what was lost with the sinner's repentance.[38] But we must remember that the original question was about table fellowship, so the repentance must be accomplished by the practical ethical activity of the inclusion within the *ekklēsia* of anyone, regardless of their imagined or real faults. These two parables are nearly identical in structure, and are closely connected to each other by ἤ, and so "the second is little more

[36] Green, *Luke,* 576.
[37] Green, *Luke,* 576.
[38] Green, *Luke,* 573.

than an alternative way of saying the same thing as the first."[39] By reference to the responses "in heaven" and "in the presence of the angels of God," Luke clearly indicates the divine response to the recovery of the lost that is being described, and so the audience is now encouraged to identify God as both a wealthy shepherd and a peasant woman who rejoices at what he or she has found.[40] Luke thus characterizes "Jesus' table fellowship with toll collectors and sinners as an expression of the divine celebration accompanying the recovery of the lost."[41]

However, the hearers of these parables are simultaneously encouraged to self-identify with the shepherd and woman as divine agents who bring about the recovery of God's property. This is suggested by the "which one of you" (τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν) construction, which inclines the hearers towards identifying with the shepherd at the outset of Jesus' response to the Pharisees.[42] With this identification, Jesus stresses "the appropriateness of calling together a celebration in the event of the restoration of what was lost."[43] By analogy, the implied audience of Luke's Gospel, for whom table fellowship within the *ekklēsia* was a live issue, are encouraged to act inclusively, modeling their behavior on Jesus, not the Pharisees, who may stand archetypically for "any persons among Luke's readers whose practices of table fellowship are similarly closed."[44]

Thus, although in Luke's redaction of these parables, they imply something about the redemptive economy of God, so too do they contain a paraenetic exhortation to act likewise. The Lukan version of the parable of the Lost Sheep portrays Jesus is a

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[39] Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Luke,* 7th ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), 367.
[40] Green, *Luke,* 573; cf. Plummer, *St. Luke,* 371.
[41] Green, *Luke,* 576.
[42] For other examples of the τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν formula in Luke, cf. 11.5; 12.25; 14.5.
[43] Green, *Luke,* 574.
[44] Green, *Luke,* 572.

straightforward ethical exemplar of correct table fellowship; it does not allegorically depict Jesus performing a unique and inimitable act of salvation. The paraenetic interpretation is still present in Luke's version, although it has arrived in different dress.[45]

The third and longest parable, that of the Lost Son (Lk. 15.11-32), closely parallels and reinforces the internal meaning of the first two parables, and the escalation of the value of the thing lost continues, from one of a hundred sheep, to one of ten coins, to one of two sons.[46] The parable narrates the younger son's disregard for family, fall into destitution, and repentance. The climax comes when the father's reaction to the return of his wayward, younger son is challenged by the older son, who cries unfairness:

> Listen, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf! (Lk. 15.29-30)

The father's answer serves as the moral of this parable:

> Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But it was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this brother of yours was dead, and is now alive; he was lost, and is found. (Lk. 15.31-32)

Unlike the first two parables, here there is no dominical interpretation; i.e., Jesus himself does not render an explicit interpretation, but it is evident from the expanded narrative itself: the plot and speaking parts of the third and longest parable in the group repeat and underscore Jesus' truncated interpretation of the parables of the Lost Sheep and Coin: that which is lost and then found produces more joy than that which is already had. Meanwhile the explicit interpretations of the first two parables, that they are about

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[45] Green, *Luke,* 575n215, notes that the parable may be read christologically only insofar as it depicts Jesus "fulfilling the role of Yahweh in caring for the lost sheep, then inviting others to share his joy in its recovery" – but this is done on Earth, through modelling correct table fellowship.

[46] Green, *Luke,* 579. This parable is commonly known as the Prodigal Son, although this title shifts focus onto the actions of the son and away from the father, who, like the shepherd and the woman, is the ethical exemplar in the story.

repentant sinners, control the meaning of the third, in which that which is lost is not explicitly given a referent. Furthermore, this third parable closes with an open invitation of the father to the elder son, to likewise rejoice at the return of the wayward son to the family and to join the feast in his honor. This invitation, absent in the first two parables, should be seen as a pointed invitation to the Pharisees to act likewise: to participate in the divine economy of redemption not only by rejoicing at the inclusion of the repentant sinners to the table, but even by joining them.[47] Together the three parables answer the Pharisees' challenge regarding the presence of "sinners" at table and in the *ekklēsia*.

The parable of the Lost Sheep in Luke, then, functions within the narrative framework as a justification to outsiders for the inclusiveness of Jesus' ministry, in which the marginalized are specifically sought out. Pedagogically, however, these parables are aimed by the author of Luke's Gospel at insider readers a generation after Jesus' death who are uncomfortable with a diverse *ekklēsia,* marked by the presence of "impure" sinners. This interpretation is suggested by Luke's way of beginning the first two parables: "Which one of you... / Or what woman... [would not behave likewise in this situation]?" The *dramatis personae* of the shepherd, the woman, and the father, while initially representing Jesus in his response to the Pharisees concerning their question, are further meant to represent members of the *ekklēsia* and to model communal behavior of reconciliation. In Luke, then, unlike Matthew, we have what we might call a "What Would Jesus Do?" context for the parable, in which Jesus' actions are justified and imitable as ethically exemplary.

[47] Green, *Luke,* 569, 586; Plummer, *St. Luke,* 379.

2.3. Gospel Contexts: Conclusions

Therefore, in both Luke and Matthew, the parable of the Lost Sheep is contextualized in ways that encourage the reader to think of the *ekklēsia* as a group whose aim is to include rather than to exclude. Luke encourages the reader to imagine the situation of one already presumed to be excluded on some basis, and argues for reconciliation. Although forgiveness on the part of the *ekklēsia* is not explicitly mentioned in Luke's parables of the Lost Sheep and Coin, it is implied as the driving virtue by the third parable in this group, that of the Lost Son. Matthew also makes this meaning explicit, showing how forgiveness is an essential component of *ekklēsia* membership: the correct response to one who gives offense (especially when the offense was given unintentionally, as a child might) is a measured one, in order that the response might not constitute an additional stumbling block for the straying offender, who may then become lost.

Although the immediate interpretive contexts are quite different, then, the Matthean and Lukan meanings, as contextualized by these evangelists, are paraenetic. In Matthew's version, there is no association of Jesus with the shepherd. Although Luke makes this association, he likewise makes the same association with the woman and the father of the other two parables, and the point is to illustrate that Jesus' behavior that aroused the ire of the Pharisees is meant to be an ethical model for the members of the *ekklēsia* in their relationships towards one another.

This analysis notwithstanding, the identification of Christ as the shepherd in the Lukan version of the parable, and in the interpolated verse 18.11 in the Matthean version, is a fundamental step in the development of what I shall call the soteriological interpretation of the parable in subsequent Christian exegesis. By "soteriological interpretation," I mean any interpretation that sees this parable as referring to a cosmic drama of salvation in which

Christ plays the central role through the performance of a unique and inimitable act. Although there may be differences among individual interpretations within this general class, they are all bound together by this central hermeneutic element.

The soteriological interpretation stands in contrast to the paraenetic interpretation, one that exhorts members of the *ekklēsia* to model their behavior towards one another on that of the shepherd. I have argued that the paraenetic interpretation is to be found in both of the Synoptic contexts, while the soteriological interpretation is not. From these definitions, it follows that any soteriological interpretation must also be allegorical, whereas a paraenetic interpretation may or may not be allegorical. Moreover, the soteriological and paraenetic interpretations may be combined in later reception. Therefore, it is useful to distinguish them as separate exegetical elements, in order to see how Irenaeus, the disciples of Ptolemy and Marcos known to him, and the author of the *Gospel of Truth* participate in a shared exegetical tradition.[48]

[48] Since I often rely on Ulrich Luz's magnificent commentary on Matthew throughout this dissertation, it is necessary at this point to distinguish my terminology from his concerning the reception of the parable of the Lost Sheep. Luz finds three traditions of interpretation (*Matthew,* 2:444-445): the "Gnostic," the "Church's Allegorical," and the "Parenetic." Luz groups together as "Gnostic" Irenaeus' Ptolemaeans (Luz: "Valentinians"), Marcosians (Luz: "Mark, the Gnostic"), an additional reference by Irenaeus to Simon Magus (*Haer.* 1.24.2), and *Gospel of Thomas* logion 107; to these he appends the *Gospel of Truth* in a footnote. Luz characterizes the "Gnostic" interpretation as allegorical. With regard to the Ptolemaeans, Marcosians, and the *Gospel of Truth,* I agree. I treat the *Gospel of Thomas* immediately below, and I am less optimistic that the reference to Simon Magus constitutes a serious piece of exegetical work, as I discussed in a previous note in this chapter. In both of the latter cases I also find grouping them with the Valentinian exegetes to be an example of how the term "Gnostic" only introduces confusion. This is seen especially in the fact that Luz distinguishes the "Gnostic" allegorical interpretation from the "Church's Allegorical" interpretation, even while noting that they both have to do with soteriology. However, Luz also observes that "[t]he church's allegorical interpretation, which later came to dominate, both appropriated and rejected the gnostic interpretation" (444); I am indebted to this passing observation, which I develop at length in this chapter. Finally, Luz differentiates the "[Church's] Parenetic" interpretation from the previous two. Here he does not recognize that a "gnostic" might have a paraenetic interpretation, or that an interpretation might be both allegorical and paraenetic, or both soteriological and paraenetic. All of the latter situations pertain to the *Gospel of Truth,* and my work on this text, below, necessitated the development of more robust categories than Luz's. Nevertheless, the work in this chapter was greatly aided by Luz's insights, which so far as I know have not been developed in any subsequent scholarship.

2.4. EXCURSUS: THE LOST SHEEP IN THE *GOSPEL OF THOMAS*

A version of the parable of the Lost Sheep is preserved in logion 107 of the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas* from Nag Hammadi (NHC II,*2*). Since its discovery, some scholars have treated the *Gospel of Thomas* as a source, independent of the four canonical gospels, for the sayings of Jesus – whether this means the historical Jesus or merely the sayings tradition.[49] Meanwhile, others have sought to establish its dependence on one or more of the canonical gospels as written sources (or vice versa). The question then arises, in a study of reception history such as this, whether the *Gospel of Thomas* should be thought of as a source: either as a possible written source known to the Valentinians or retrospectively orthodox authors, or as evidence for an oral tradition that the latter thinkers might have been aware of. Before turning to the development of the soteriological interpretation of this parable, then, it is worth briefly discussing *Thomas* logion 107. My aim here is to bracket this entire debate by arguing that in this particular case, logion 107 may not be used as solid evidence of the parable of the Lost Sheep in any version of the *Gospel of Thomas* that predates Nag Hammadi Codex II (circa 350 C.E.), and so the *Gospel of Thomas* need not be considered as a source in this study.

First, let us examine logion 107, which preserves an abridged version of the parable of the Lost Sheep as a kingdom saying. Logia in the *Gospel of Thomas* admit a much greater range of interpretations than their canonical parallels, even when one restricts oneself to historical and literary criticism, as I have done in my exegeses of the Matthean and Lukan parables. This is because of their free-floating nature that deprives them of extensive literary context. The entire logion is as follows:

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[49] E.g. Luz entertains the possibility that the *Gospel of Thomas* may be useful in reconstructing the earliest attainable form of shared material; however, he rejects *Thomas*'logion 107 as secondary to Matthew's and Luke's redacted parables on form critical grounds; see *Matthew,* 2:439.

> Jesus said, "The kingdom (ⲧⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲣⲟ) is like a shepherd (ⲉⲩⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲛ̄ⲯⲱⲥ) who had a hundred sheep. One of them, the largest/greatest, went astray [or, became lost] (ⲁⲟⲩⲁ ⲛ̄ⲯⲏⲧⲟⲩ ⲥⲱⲣⲙ ⲉⲡⲛⲟⲩ ⲡⲉ). He left the ninety-nine and looked for that one until he found it. When he had gone to such trouble [or, when he had tired], he said to the sheep, 'I care for you more than the ninety-nine.'"

As with other logia in the *Gospel of Thomas,* this one compares a situation to the kingdom. "The kingdom is like a shepherd who... (etc.)" means: "The kingdom is like the following situation: There is a shepherd who... (etc.)" This is how numerous kingdom logia in *Thomas* seem to make the most sense. This is particularly true when we recognize that ⲧⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲣⲟ / βασιλεία is more properly translated not as "kingdom" but "kingship," "reign," "rule," or "sovereignty," signifying a "specific aspect, attribute or activity of God."[50] In this case what is being emphasized by the logion is primarily the relationship between God and God's subjects.[51]

When comparing the *Thomas* logion to the Matthean and Lukan redactions of the parable, some commentators have concluded that the version in *Thomas* is later, and that it relies either upon the Synoptic versions or the oral tradition,[52] while others have found that *Thomas* preserves at least some elements of the earliest attainable version of the parable.[53] Many of these earlier debates were conducted under the assumption that the *Gospel of Thomas* was a "gnostic" text, and in the wake of this assumption's passing, much of this work is in the process of being reexamined.[54]

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[50] Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom,* 21. Cf. BDAG, 168-9; W. E. Crum, ed., *A Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), 299b.

[51] If, however, the emphasis on relationships may be extended to those *among* the subjects, then the logion admits an interpretation closer to those of the canonical gospels.

[52] Franz Schnider, "Das Gleichnis vom verlorenen Schaf und seine Redaktoren: ein intertextueller Vergleich," *Kairos* 19:2 (1977): 146-154; Luz, *Matthew,* 2:439.

[53] William L. Petersen, "The Parable of the Lost Sheep in the Gospel of Thomas and the Synopics," *NovT* 23 (1981): 128-47.

[54] E.g., Petersen resists the scholarly trend of his day to label as a "gnostic expansion" one detail unique to the *Thomas* version of the parable – that the sheep which was lost was the "largest" or "greatest." See Petersen, "The Parable of the Lost Sheep," 130, for a summary of the scholarship on this point from the 1950s to the

Even without engaging in these debates, however, it is possible to advance an argument that precludes the certainty of an early dating of logion 107: the tendency of the *Gospel of Thomas* to attract additional sayings to itself in the process of ongoing redaction and transmission. April DeConick describes the *Gospel of Thomas* as an "aggregate text" or "rolling book" that accumulated traditions and sayings over the course of the text's life within a community of readers.[55] Sayings collections encourage this sort of accretion in general,[56] and with *Thomas* in particular a comparison of the fourth-century Coptic version with the second- or third-century Greek fragments from Oxyrhynchus conclusively shows that some development has occurred, although not always in a linear, aggregative direction. For example, P.Oxy. 1 contains logia 30, 77b, and 31 from the Coptic text in consecutive order, showing that the order of the various sayings was not stable. In addition, two of the Oxyrhynchus fragments' logia – logion 5 from P.Oxy. 654, and logion 36 from P.Oxy. 655 – are each significantly longer than their parallels in the Coptic text. These examples show that the instability of the text cannot be described as a mere aggregation. Rather, as Stephen Patterson points out, sayings would have been not only added but "sloughed off,

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1970s. Although Petersen's overly optimistic case for an alternative explanation fails to persuade in all respects, he has perceptively noticed the affinity between this detail and the location of the Matthean parable in the context of a discussion amongst who is the "greatest in heaven." Since the detail of the lost sheep being the greatest is lacking in Matthew's (as well as in Luke's) version, Petersen suggests that it was this original detail, native to Q, that caused Matthew to connect this parable with the preceding discussion of the "greatest in heaven" even as he erased this detail (136n21). This would make *Thomas* a witness to the earliest version of the parable, in this one respect, and would suggest a reconstruction of the Q parable with this detail added. Matthew's apparent decision to erase the connecting detail is problematic, however. Petersen's argument, although plausible, is no more or less likely than one that would situate the logion, as preserved in the *Gospel of Thomas,* in a later trajectory that is influenced by the soteriological interpretation of the parable by the early church as outlined in this chapter. For a recent assessment of the dating problem with particular attention to methodology, see Joshua W. Jipp and Michael J. Thate, "Dating *Thomas:* Logion 53 as a Test Case for Dating the *Gospel of Thomas* within an Early Christian Trajectory," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 20.2 (2010): 237-56.

[55] April DeConick, "The Gospel of Thomas," *The Expository Times* 118:10 (July 2007): 469-79. Cf. eadem, *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas: A History of the Gospel and its Growth* (London: T&T Clark International, 2005).

[56] As numerous scholars have recognized; e.g., Stephen J. Patterson, "Understanding the Gospel of Thomas Today," in *The Fifth Gospel: The Gospel of Thomas Comes of Age,* eds. Stephen J. Patterson and James M. Robinson (Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity, 1998), 33-75 (35-6).

expanded, contracted, or shifted around as usefulness dictated." Patterson thus suggests "There may have been many versions of the *Gospel of Thomas* at one time or another."[57] This latter possibility is further supported by AnneMarie Luijendijk's recent argument that the longer Greek version of logion 5 (from the third-century P.Oxy. 654) represents a later, exegetical expansion of an earlier, shorter version that would more closely resemble what is now preserved only in Coptic translation in the fourth-century version from Nag Hammadi Codex II.[58]

Given these circumstances governing the transmission of the *Gospel of Thomas,* it is dangerous to assume any particular logion found in NHC II,*2* entered the text at an earlier point in time without support either from the Greek *Thomas* fragments or a patristic citation.[59] We have neither kind of evidence for logion 107. These circumstances do not completely rule out the possibility that logion 107 of the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas* represents an independent, first-century gospel source for the parable of the Lost Sheep, but they also suggest some other options. Logion 107 might well be a cryptic reinterpretation of the Synoptic parable as a kingdom saying. Or, an editor of *Thomas* may have derived the saying from the oral tradition in either "parable" or "kingdom saying" form. In addition, the unique detail of the *Thomas* logion, the size of the sheep, could have been added to a copy of *Thomas* whose version of the logion otherwise matched the Synoptic versions more closely. It is difficult to adjudicate among these possibilities.

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[57] Patterson, "Understanding the Gospel of Thomas Today," 36.
[58] AnneMarie Luijendijk, "'Jesus says: "There is Nothing Buried That Will Not Be Raised".' A Late-Antique Shroud with Gospel of Thomas Logion 5 in Context," *ZAC* 15:3 (2011): 389-410.
[59] E.g., Luijendijk argues persuasively that Origen in his homilies twice quoted *Thomas* logion 82. Luijendijk, "Reading the *Gospel of Thomas* in the Third Century: Three Oxyrhynchus Papyri and Origen's *Homilies,*" in *Reading New Testament Papyri in Context,* eds. Claire Clivaz and Jean Zumstein (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 241-67.

Therefore, I do not wish to speculate any further on the value of the *Gospel of Thomas* within the trajectory between Jesus and second- to third-century exegetes of the parable of the Lost Sheep. Although the date of composition of this logion might well be a few hundred years prior to its appearance in a fourth-century Coptic translation, our uncertainty about when the logion was first incorporated into the text of the *Gospel of Thomas* places severe limitations upon its application within the present study. We therefore must set it aside, and return to the development of the soteriological interpretation of the parable.

3. Crossbreeding Passages, Parables, and Pictures

We have seen that neither of the canonical gospels contain what I have called the soteriological interpretation of the parable of the Lost Sheep, that takes the parable to refer to a cosmic drama of salvation in which Christ, as the shepherd, plays the central role. However, because of the variety of sheep metaphors in both Testaments that were available to early Christian exegetes, it is perhaps no surprise that they were intermingled, or crossbred, to produce, by the end of the second century, a widespread understanding that the parable of the Lost Sheep was a self-referential allegory told by Jesus about himself and his own salvific activity in the world.

Owing to Israel's nomadic history and the centrality of herding to its economy, sheep metaphors are scattered throughout the Hebrew Bible like a flock dispersed in the wilderness, and the good exegete may easily gather them together in various combinations. Perhaps most memorable are those passages in which the LORD, later understood as Christ, is likened to a heavenly shepherd who faithfully watches over his flock, as in the twenty-third Psalm, or Is. 40.11, the only verse in the Hebrew Bible depicting a shepherd

carrying his sheep. Other passages liken the people of Israel to straying sheep that have either individually or collectively turned from God's commandments, as in Ps. 119.176 and Is. 53.6. Elsewhere, the people are represented as sheep belonging to God, but who had been placed under the care of absent or negligent earthly shepherds and thus became scattered (Num. 27.17; 2 Sam 24.17; 1 Kings 22.17; Ps. 44.11,22; Jer. 50.6 [LXX 27.6]; Zech. 10.2, 13.7). These images are combined in Ezekiel 34, where God declares, "Because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep... Behold, I am against the shepherds"... "I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep... I will seek out the lost (τὸ ἀπολωλὸς), and I will bring back the strayed (τὸ πλανώμενον)..." (Ez. 34.1-16).

The author of the Gospel of Matthew draws upon this tradition when he has Jesus instruct his disciples, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep (pl.) of the House of Israel" (v. 10.6). Later in the same gospel (v. 15.24), Jesus states, "I was sent only to the lost sheep (pl.) of the House of Israel" (εἰς τὰ πρόβατα τὰ ἀπολωλότα οἴκου᾽Ισραήλ). Both verses appear only in Matthew, the latter as a clarifying addition to Mark's pericope of the Syro-Phoenician (Mt: Canaanite) woman.[60] In both contexts, the genitive is epexegetical, not partitive, meaning that the lost sheep are to be identified with the entire Jewish nation, not just an errant portion of them; Matthew uses this phrase as a signifier for potential Jewish, as opposed to Gentile, converts and movement joiners.[61]

The same distinction forms the context for John 10, in which, in one of his *ego eimi* declarations, Jesus identifies himself as "the good shepherd." The context, John 10.1-18, is a figurative discourse in which Jesus depicts himself as both the shepherd of the flock and

[60] Also Mt. 9.36: "they were harassed and helpless like a sheep without a shepherd." = Mk. 6.34.
[61] Luz, *Matthew,* 2:73 and 2:339n45.

the gate by which they enter the (spiritual) sheepfold, which they had not been able to enter before the true shepherd arrived. In this discourse, the sheep are not carried but led. Nor are they lost; they are arrayed in their (earthly) sheepfold, patiently awaiting the arrival of the true shepherd, whom they immediately recognize. Jesus here also says "I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, and one shepherd." (Jn. 10.16) By these other sheep, Jesus means the Gentiles, the present flock being identified as his Jewish followers.[62] A final, crucial element of the Johannine discourse is that Jesus also says "I lay down my life for the sheep," referring to his voluntary (according to John) suffering and death on the cross. This saying, embedded in the discourse, controls the meaning of the "good shepherd" for the reader and, once harmonized with the Synoptic parable, would color its interpretation along soteriological lines.[63]

Collectively these scriptural resources presented a wealth of imagery to draw upon, numerous *tesserae* to be mixed and matched at will, just as Irenaeus had warned about – although his own exegesis is no less radical than that of his opponents, as we shall see. Yet there is one additional exegetical resource that we must consider.

In Greco-Roman art, we find the common motifs of the ram-bearer *(kriophoros)* or calf-bearer *(moschophoros)*. These motifs depict a man bearing a ram or calf upon his shoulders on the way to making a sacrifice, as with a well-known example of this type found at the Acropolis, inscribed with the votary's name. The *kriophoros* motif also had a long history in Greco-Roman art in pastoral imagery, and *Kriophoros* became an epithet of

[62] J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John,* 2:363.
[63] I suspect it is this Johannine element that has generated, in twentieth- and twenty-first-century popular Christian art, depictions of a shepherd seemingly *risking* his life by rescuing the Synoptic "lost sheep" from terrain whose hazardous nature approaches the surreal.

Hermes, associated with him in his role as a god of compassion.[64] The motif was also used to depict Hermes Psychopompus, the leader of souls to the underworld.[65] This image must have reminded early Christians of the detail from the Lukan parable of the shepherd bearing a sheep back to the flock upon his shoulders. Christians adopted this Greco-Roman artistic motif, sometimes embellishing it by adding sheep at the shepherd's feet, thus clarifying that the shepherd is returning the lost sheep to the flock, rather than bringing it to a sacrificial altar. We find this shepherd motif in a definitively Christian milieu, the baptistery of the house church of Dura-Europos, among numerous other wall paintings depicting biblical scenes from both Testaments. These wall paintings are among our earliest surviving Christian art, with a *terminus ante quem* of 256 C.E.[66]

This motif also appears in about 120 wall paintings, in fresco or tempera, in the Roman catacombs beginning in the early third century,[67] and in relief engravings on our earliest Christian sarcophagi of the late third century.[68] In funerary contexts, these isolated images may appear to be nothing other than Greco-Roman pastoral scenes, and we should not rush to identify shared late antique artistic motifs as Jewish, Christian, or pagan.[69] In the case of early Christian decoration of sarcophagi and tombs, the artisans employed for

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[64] Robert Milburn, *Early Christian Art and Architecture* (Aldershot, England: Scolar Press, 1988), 30.
[65] Dale Kinney, "Instances of Appropriation in Late Roman and Early Christian Art," *Essays in Medieval Studies* 28 (2012): 1-22 (10).
[66] Clark Hopkins, *The Discovery of Dura-Europos* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 269-71.
[67] Milburn, *Early Christian Art and Architecture,* 22-23, 30-31. The Catacomb of Domitilla is perhaps the oldest. The Roman catacombs had once been dated earlier; for discussion, see Milburn, 19-57.
[68] Milburn, *Early Christian Art and Architecture,* 59. See also Anastasia Lazaridou, ed., *Transition to Christianity: Art of Late Antiquity, 3rd-7th Century AD* (New York: Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation, 2011), 151.
[69] On the methodological problems of designating late antique images from the Roman catacombs as Jewish, Christian, or pagan, see Leonard Victor Rutgers, *The Jews in Late Ancient Rome: Evidence of Cultural Interaction in the Roman Diaspora* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 77-79; idem, *The Hidden Heritage of Diaspora Judaism,* 2nd ed. (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 45-96. For an overview of these debates, see Jas Elsner, "Archaeologies and Agendas: Reflections on Late Ancient Jewish Art and Early Christian Art," *Journal of Roman Studies* 93 (2003): 114-24; and Laura Salah Nasrallah, *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture: The Second-Century Church Amid the Spaces of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 218-225.

the task were not necessarily Christians themselves; rather, they utilized a number of suitable images for their Christian clients that were already part of their artistic repertoire as professional wall painters or marble carvers.[70] These motifs represented figurally the abstract notions of "earthly well-being and achievement, eternal repose and blessed afterlife."[71] The Christian viewer thus granted the appropriated motifs Christian meanings solely through projection and context.[72] The location of the *kriophoros* motif in wall paintings and sarcophagi alongside other biblical scenes that to early Christians suggested redemption or resurrection, such as Jonah and the great fish, indicates that it should be interpreted along Christian lines – even as these other biblical scenes are themselves additional instances of Christian appropriation of common Greco-Roman imagery.[73]

Which biblical scene, or scenes, did early Christians think the Christianized *kriophoros* was depicting? Although art historians universally refer to this motif as the "good shepherd," there is nothing about it that indicates it is referring to the Johannine discourse; rather, all salient details point to the Lukan parable of the Lost Sheep. We might, then, assume the art historians have done some *tesserae* rearrangement of their own, and perhaps we should prefer to tag it as a "Christian *kriophoros*" rather than a "good shepherd." However, the art historians will receive support for their label from a most unlikely source.

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[70] Kinney, "Appropriation," 9-12.
[71] Kinney, "Appropriation," 10.
[72] Kinney, "Appropriation," 10.
[73] For example, a sarcophagus from Santa Maria Antiqua, Rome, dated to ca. 270 CE, depicts Jonah, the Good Shepherd, and other figures in relief. The representation of Jonah is a repurposed "readymade" motif originally created to depict Endymion, whom the moon goddess Selene put into an eternal sleep so that she could possess him. Its visual incongruity with the biblical episode in which Jonah rests briefly under a vine subverts the moral of the biblical story even as it supports Christian appropriation of Jonah as a *typos* for the resurrection. Kinney, "Appropriation," 11-12; Milburn, *Early Christian Art and Architecture,* 62-64.

Writing around 210 C.E., Tertullian quarrels with some other North African Christians about repentance of sins in his treatise *On Modesty*. As evidence for his rigorist position he refers them to cups *(calices)* that they had, and which they may have used for the eucharist. These cups were adorned with paintings *(picturae)* which, he says, depict the parable of the Lost Sheep, and portray the Lord bearing the lost sheep upon his shoulders.[74] He summarizes their interpretation of the parable:

> But [you say] a "sheep" properly means a Christian, and the Lord's "flock" is the people of the Church, and the "good shepherd" is Christ, and hence in the "sheep" we must understand a Christian who has strayed from the Church's flock.[75]

This interpretation is not Tertullian's own view, but one that he will argue vehemently against. I shall discuss Tertullian's interpretation below. For the moment, it is significant that his interpretation of the artistic motif depicting a shepherd bearing a sheep upon his shoulders already used the language of the "good shepherd," imported from the Johannine discourse; on this point, Tertullian and his interlocutors are in agreement. We thus have evidence that the sheep from the Synoptic parable and the Johannine discourse had been crossbred in the Christian imagination no later than ca. 210 C.E.[76]

As the artistic motif Tertullian knew was a pre-existing Greco-Roman one, however, we may easily assume that Christians had reinterpreted it much earlier. Thus the possibility

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[74] *De pudicitia* 7.1: *ipsae picturae calicum vestrorum,* "the very paintings on your cups"; *Pud.* 10.12: *pastor quem in calice depingis,* "the shepherd whom you depict on your cups." *Picturae* are probably paintings, but could also be relief carvings. *Depingo*, to depict or portray by some means, also usually means to paint. However, Milburn speculates that these vessels were engraved glass. Milburn, *Early Christian Art and Architecture,* 32.

[75] *De pudicitia* 7.1., trans. *ANF.*

[76] The difficulties of dating Tertullian's corpus are taken up in detail by Timothy D. Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), in which he provides an analysis and rough chronology (30-56), which he subsequently updates in the postscript to his revised edition (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 325-9. Some of Tertullian's treatises bear evidence that he embraced his more rigorist stances only later in life, one of which is the treatise under discussion. In *De pudicitia* 1.10, he is visibly at pains to justify his reversal of opinion on the issue of readmittance to the church. Barnes dates *De pudicitia* to ca. 210/211 (1971:55; unmodified in his postscript of 1985).

exists that the artistic representation of the parable would itself become an exegetical resource for that parable's subsequent interpretation. As Christians began to appropriate the common artistic motif of the *kriophoros* as a visual representation of the Lukan parable, they may well have read the high Christological language from the Johannine Gospel into the image when they encountered it, thus coloring their interpretation of the Synoptic parables themselves. In the process, the shepherd's symbolic function may have been transformed from the Lukan and Matthean ethical exemplars to the Johannine otherworldly Savior.

The exact role of early Christian art in the development of the soteriological interpretation of the parable of the Lost Sheep is necessarily speculative. What is certain, however, is that already by the time of Irenaeus and his Valentinian opponents, the soteriological interpretation existed in diverse forms.

4. A Spectrum of Early Christian Interpretation

With the paraenetic and soteriological interpretations of this parable thus distinguished, we may see in the history of its reception a spectrum of interpretation that incorporates aspects of each, and, in so doing, combines various Matthean and Lukan details. Since I am taking care to deconstruct the obvious meaning of this parable, so that we may see the Irenaean and Valentinian interpretations more clearly, before turning to these it will be useful to get a sampling of the rich variety of interpretations that existed in late antiquity.

The paraenetic impulse of the Synoptic parables is preserved in the hands of two fourth-century exegetes, John Chrysostom and Theodoret. Chrysostom interprets the parable as follows in his *59th Homily on Matthew:*

> Let us also then not be satisfied with our own salvation only, since else we destroy even this. For in a war too, and in an engagement, the soldier who is looking to this only, how he may save himself by flight, destroys the rest also with himself; much as on the other hand the noble-minded one, and he who stands in arms in defense of the others, with the others preserves himself also.[77]

For Chrysostom, the shepherd in the parable stands for each individual member of his congregation. Theodoret likewise summarizes the Matthean pericope as meaning "It is not enough to be satisfied with your own salvation."[78]

Other early Christian exegetes see the primary impulse of the parable to be paraenetic, while understanding the paraenesis to apply mainly or only to the leaders of the church. For example, the *Didascalia Apostolorum* exhorts:

> "So be thou also obedient, O bishop, and search out him that is lost, and seek him that is gone astray, and bring back him that is holding aloof. For thou hast authority to forgive sins to him that offendeth, for thou hast put on the person of Christ."[79]

This author fits the reference to the parable into the growing Christian tradition of using a flock and shepherd (i.e., "pastor") as a metaphor for an *ekklēsia* and its leader(s).[80] Likewise, Origen explicitly identifies the shepherd in the parable as Jesus in order to argue for imitation of his ethical example, exactly as Luke had. In his *Seventh Homily on Joshua,* he reads this parable through the lens of the Pauline conception of the body of Christ. Origen exhorts the leaders of the church, who are "the eye of Christ's body," to be on the lookout for sick members, lambs standing on the edges of precipices, and to "follow the

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[77] Chrysostom, *59th Homily on Matthew,* trans. *NPNF1*.
[78] Quoted in Luz, *Matthew,* 2:445.
[79] *Didascalia Apostolorum* 7, trans. Connolly.
[80] This metaphor is already present in the New Testament (Jn. 21.16; Eph. 4.11; 1 Pt. 5.2; Acts 20.28) and is developed by Ignatius of Antioch (Phld. 2.1; Rom. 9.1) and successive Christian thinkers. A Qumran parallel is found in CD 13.9, on the Rule for the Guardian of the Camp: "He shall love them as a father loves his children, and shall carry them in all their distress like a shepherd his sheep," trans. Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (New York: Penguin, 1997). See also Jeremias, "ποιμήν, etc.," *TDNT* 6:485-502. The transition from metaphor to expanded semantic range occurs in Latin (e.g. Vulgate Jn. 10.11: *ego sum pastor bonus*).

example of the master shepherd," and reunite the one with the ninety-nine by means of constructive confrontation as advocated in Mt. 18.15-17: first privately, then with witnesses.[81] Origen thus combines elements from the Matthean and Lukan versions to provide a thoroughly paraenetic interpretation.

Cyprian, too, makes use of a paraenetic interpretation in an epistle written in the wake of the Decian persecution of 250-1. Cyprian advocates the readmission to the church of the lapsed, those lay Christians who made pagan sacrifices. He creatively combines a paraenetic interpretation of the parable of the Lost Sheep with the biblical injunction to treat the "wounded" found in the Lukan parable of the Good Samaritan: those that were killed by the persecution are truly "dead," but the lapsed were only "wounded" by it, and so should be thought of as those in need of healing. Thus, he argues, if the clergy do not seek after the "wounded sheep," then

> [T]hose whom a hateful persecution has not destroyed, we ruin by our hardness and inhumanity... We ought to give our assistance, our healing art, to those who are wounded; neither let us think them dead, but rather let us regard them as lying half alive.[82]

As with Origen, Cyprian's purpose in identifying the shepherd in the parable as "the Lord" is to strengthen the argument for imitation of Jesus' ethical example. Finally, Tertullian, as well, makes use of this parable, together with those of the Lost Coin and Lost Son from Luke, to demonstrate the "profusion of God's clemency," dispensed through the officials of the church, in his treatise *On Repentance*.[83]

Within approximately ten years of writing this treatise, however, Tertullian had reversed his position. In *On Modesty*, the treatise of his we considered earlier, he now

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[81] *Hom. Josh.* 7.6, trans. Bruce.
[82] Cyprian, *Ep.* 55.15-16, trans. *ANF.*
[83] *De paenitentia* 8. His position is similar, although much abbreviated, in *Adversus Marcionem* 4.32.

writes against those Christians who subscribe to a view he had once held. Now, under the influence of the ethical rigorism of the New Prophecy movement, he denies that the church should ever, under any circumstances, readmit Christians who have committed the sins of adultery or fornication. As his opponents in this matter rely upon the ethical exemplar of Christ in the parables of the Lost Sheep, Coin, and Son, Tertullian refutes this exegesis through the use of a soteriological interpretation, combined with what comes close to historical-critical grounds. The "flock," in Jesus' original telling, could not refer to Christians, "who up to that time had no existence"! Rather, the flock must be "Israel," the parables of the Lost Sheep, Coin, and Son are about conversion, the Pharisees in Luke must be questioning Jesus about sharing table fellowship with Gentile "tax collectors and sinners," and so the lost sheep is this or that pagan who, having existed in a state of separation from Israel, was now sought out and reunited to it by Christ's activity. This salvific activity is that which produces Christians; that is, Gentiles brought into the house of Israel. The soteriology described here, by which gentiles are reunited with Israel one by one in accordance with a cosmic plan, is remarkably similar that of Romans 9-11, although Tertullian does not quote Paul here. The parable thus says nothing about Christians who then choose to leave the flock through their own acts of sin, Tertullian argues, and so it should not be used to justify readmission into the church. Rather, the implication is that, just as Jesus historically gathered Gentiles into the flock of Israel, so now does Christ stand always ready to admit new Gentile converts. Tertullian's interpretation thus has two levels of salvific activity by Christ: once historically in the incarnation, and a second in the eternal present. This understanding is close to that of Irenaeus, who, like Tertullian, does not admit that the parable has any application to forgiveness within the contemporary church.[84]

[84] In addition to the clear allusions to the parable of the Lost Sheep described in the patristic writings in this

5. IRENAEUS' INTERPRETATIONS OF THE PARABLE

The preceding background should allow us to see the exegetical contributions of Irenaeus and the Valentinians more sharply. Irenaeus incorporates this parable into a cosmic narrative of salvation. Familiar though this narrative will sound from the perspective of modern Christianity, his use of the parable of the Lost Sheep in it may perhaps begin to seem strange given the preceding discussion, for it is a radical departure from the paraenetic interpretation found in the Synoptic Gospels and remembered by so many later exegetes.

5.1. THE SALVATION OF ADAM IN *HAER.* 3.18-23

The primary use of this parable for Irenaeus comes at the conclusion of Book Three of *Adversus Haereses*, as part of a long, sustained argument aiming to show that the function of Christ's work in the incarnation, death and resurrection was to reverse and undo the work of Adam's disobedience (*Haer.* 3.18-23).[85] Foundational to Irenaeus' thought here is Paul's argument in Romans 5. Paul reads the death that came to humanity due to Adam's disobedience not as mere mortality but as sin. For Paul, "in contrast to intertestamental discussions of Adam, both death and sin appear to function here as cosmic forces under which all humans are in bondage."[86] Further, Paul finds grounds for "a social theory of sin... in which the actions of forebears determine those of their descendants."[87] The kernel of his argument is found in Rom. 5:

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section, there may be an allusion to the lost sheep in the Sethian text *The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit (The Gospel of the Egyptians)* of NHC III,*2* and NHC IV,*2*. See discussion in Louis Painchaud, "L'utilisation,"432n56.

[85] Irenaeus summarizes this interpretation in *Epid.* 31-33.

[86] Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 374.

[87] Jewett, *Romans,* 374-5. It is beyond the scope of this project to trace this theory's history. One near contemporary of Paul, the author of 2 *Baruch*, briefly outlines a similar theory (2 *Bar.* 54.15). For a fresh

> 12. Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned –... 18. Therefore, just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. 19. For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. (Rom.12 & 18-19, NRSV)[88]

Thus Paul establishes a typology of opposition between Christ and Adam, upon which Irenaeus will build, as Unger and Steenberg have shown.[89] According to Eric Osborn, "Irenaeus is the first [Christian thinker] to make Romans 5.12 central to his anthropology."[90] In doing so, Irenaeus does not articulate a doctrine of original sin as Augustine and later theologians would understand it. Nevertheless, Irenaeus' description of the divine economy will become the influential precursor to the doctrine of original sin later developed, articulated and championed by Augustine. The essential elements of this economy are as follows.[91]

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survey of theories of sin in Second Temple Judaism, see Miryam T. Brand, *Evil Within and Without: The Source of Sin and Its Nature as Portrayed in Second Temple Literature* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2012).

[88] The NRSV translation is, of course, an interpretation, one which attempts to make sense of the ambiguous ἐφ᾽ ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον of 5.12d, rendered here as "because all have sinned." The debate on the translation of this phrase, and therefore Paul's doctrine of sin, is vast, and it is not my intention to find a correct interpretation of Paul; for more information, see Jewett, *Romans,* 372-6. My only claim is that Irenaeus takes up and develops a Pauline doctrine of sin that argues that sin entered the world through the disobedience of Adam. The NRSV is perfectly adequate for this purpose.

[89] Unger and Steenberg, *Against the Heresies: Book Three,* 176n48.

[90] Eric Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons,* 218n24.

[91] Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons,* 216-9, anachronistically labels Irenaeus' anthropology a doctrine of "original sin," a position that, in my view, exceeds the evidence. Of course, the disobedience of Adam and Eve is not characterized as sin in Genesis. Sin makes its first appearance in Gen. 4.7, in the person of Cain. It is clear to numerous commentators that Paul does not understand Adam's transgression as sin, either, even though it was by this means, Paul claims, that sin was brought into the world. It is more difficult to determine Irenaeus' position. Osborn reads the doctrine of original sin into Paul (*Irenaeus of Lyons,* 217n21), so it is not surprising that he should find Irenaeus in agreement. However, a close reading of Irenaeus' discussion of Gen 2-3 in Books Three and Five suggests that for Irenaeus, Adam's transgression was not itself sin, even though it was the knowledge of good and evil that immediately made him a sinner; that is, one capable of sin. It must not be a coincidence that Irenaeus encloses the discussion of Cain's "sin" (*peccatus*) within two descriptions of Adam's "transgression" (*transgressio*), thus distinguishing these actions with different words in close proximity to one another (*Haer.* 3.23.2-5). Note that *ANF,* at least twice, translates Adam's *transgressio* as "sin" (3.23.5, 5.28.2), thus reinscribing a doctrine of original sin back into Irenaeus' thought. For the victory of Augustine's doctrine, see Elaine Pagels, "The Politics of Paradise: Augustine's Exegesis of Genesis 1-3 Versus That of John

According to an interpretation of Gen. 2-3 widespread in late antique Judaism (and, indeed, a fair literary reading of Genesis itself), Adam's transgression transmitted the curse of mortality to all of his descendants, an alteration of humanity's original, immortal state (Gen. 2.17; 3.19, 22-24). To this general assumption, Irenaeus adds the Pauline position that the salvation that Christ provides to humankind is the reclamation of that lost immortality: eternal life after death in bodily form. Irenaeus accepts and expands upon Paul's innovation, the introduction of Christ as an agent necessary to individuals' participation in the general resurrection. Human beings may regain immortality by becoming reunited with God, and the agent able to accomplish this reunification must be both divine and human in nature (*Haer.* 3.18.1-2). To make this argument, as I said earlier, Irenaeus develops a typology of opposition between Christ and Adam, building upon the typology that Paul had outlined in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15. In Irenaeus, the clearest statement of this typology, or, to use Irenaeus' language, this "recapitulation," is found at the close of *Haer.* 3.18.7. Here I show Irenaeus' typology in two columns, with the elements from Rom. 5.19 in italics:

For, just as	*so* it was fitting also
through the disobedience of the one man	*through the obedience of the one man,*
who was fashioned first	who was born first
from untilled earth	of the Virgin,
many were made sinners	*that many be made just*
and lost life,	and receive salvation.[92]

Shortly after establishing this typology, Irenaeus then introduces the parable of the Lost Sheep. Alluding to the prophecy to Ahaz in Isaiah 7.10ff, Irenaeus writes:

Chrysostom," *HTR* 78:1-2 (Jan.-Apr. 1985): 67-99; and eadem, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Random House, 1988), 98-126.

[92] Adapted from Unger and Steenberg, *Against the Heresies: Book Three,* 176n48.

> For this reason the Lord Himself gave us a sign in the depths below and in the heights above. Man / the man did not ask for that [sign] *(Quod [signum] non postulavit homo),* because he did not hope *(speravit)* that a virgin, as a virgin, could become pregnant, or that she could also give birth to a son, or that this child could be "God with us," or that He could descend into the lower parts of the earth, searching for the sheep that was lost (which really was His own handiwork), or ascend to the heights above, there offering and recommending to the Father the man/humanity *(hominem)*[93] who was found... (*Haer.* 3.19.3)[94]

The masculine singular subject *homo* and verbs *postulavit and speravit* initially refer only to Ahaz (i.e., "the man"), yet by the time we reach "or that He could descend," we see that Irenaeus has transitioned the historical Ahaz into a typology for all of humanity (i.e., "Man").[95]

This transition is aided by a detail in the Matthean version of the parable of the Lost Sheep, in which the shepherd leaves the remaining sheep on the mountain (ἐπὶ τὰ ὄρη) to go and look for the lost one, whereas in Luke, the flock is left in the wilderness (ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ). Thus in Matthew's parable, the search for the lost sheep involves a spatial descent, which for Irenaeus suggests a further allegorical detail in his interpretation of the parable and which he uses to interpret the prophecy to Ahaz. In his typology, Irenaeus recalls the detail from Isaiah 7.11, in which God, encouraging Ahaz to ask for a sign, allows that it may be "deep as Sheol or high as heaven." These words, a mere figure of speech for divine generosity, Irenaeus takes as an additional, encoded elaboration of God's own description of the sign God himself will give in Is. 7.14-16. In Irenaeus' reading of Isaiah,

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[93] See previous note. Again, the *hominem* who was found may signify both Adam and humanity more generally.

[94] Trans. Unger and Steenberg, mod. *Quod [signum] non postulavit homo, quia nec speravit virginem praegnantem fieri posse quae erat virgo, et parere filium, et hunc parum Deum esse nobiscum, et descendere in ea quae sunt deorsum terae, quaerentem ovem quae perierat (quod quidem erat proprium ipsius plasma), et ascendere in altitudinem, offerentem et commendantem Patri eum hominem qui fuerat inventus.*

[95] Therefore I preserve Unger and Steenberg's translation of *homo* (i.e., ἄνθρωπος) as "Man" here, as other, gender-neutral translations such as "humankind" and "humanity," which I utilize whenever I can elsewhere in this section, here would obscure Irenaeus' intentional polyvalence of the typology.

he finds that that sign was given "in the depths below and in the heights above," and that the prophecy was fulfilled in Christ's activity of descending first to earth as the divine Logos, and then into hell, and henceforth reascending into heaven, bearing that which he had there recovered, the lost sheep, or humanity. Just as the first *homo* in this passage clearly refers both to Ahaz and humanity more generally, so the *hominem* signified by the lost sheep represents both Adam and either all, or some part of, humankind – a point that will be clarified later on.

Immediately after this passage, Irenaeus argues along standard Pauline lines that Christ's resurrection is proof of the general resurrection to come; yet he goes even further: the resurrection of Christ is an additional proof of the fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah. Irenaeus thus utilizes the parable of the Lost Sheep to interpret Christ as the sign promised to Ahaz, not only due to his virgin birth, but also because of his death, descent, resurrection, and ascent. The extended discussion in *Haer.* 3.19-24 will further connect the descent of Christ with the redemption of Jonah, recalling the previous discussion of the numerous Christian sarcophagi and catacomb paintings that depict the images of the Good Shepherd and Jonah in close proximity.

Irenaeus continues the discussion of his divine economy in *Haer.* 3.20-23. The purpose of this plan of salvation (*adinventionem salutis* [*Haer.* 3.20.1]; *dispositio salutis* [*Haer.* 3.23.1]), in which God "patiently suffered" in the time between Adam and Christ, was for the cultivation in all of humankind of a state of gratitude to God, a gratitude that is possible when God is revealed as the giver of the gift of imperishability that frees the human race from the death to which it had long become accustomed.[96] However, Irenaeus argues, it would be unjust to liberate the children of slaves begotten in captivity but not the person

[96] *Haer.* 3.20.2.

originally captured.[97] Therefore those already dead, in all the generations from Christ back to Adam himself, must be liberated from death by this plan.[98] This is not only a matter of God's justice but also God's power: in order for God to truly prevail over the serpent, Adam himself must be saved.[99]

Against the backdrop of this plan of salvation, Irenaeus returns to the parable of the Lost Sheep, now clarifying that this sheep is Adam:

> It was necessary, therefore, that the Lord, when coming to the lost sheep and making a recapitulation of so great an economy, and seeking out his handiwork (*suum plasma requirentem*), should save the very person (*hominem*) who had been made according to his image and likeness; that is, Adam, who was filling out the time of his punishment, which had been imposed because of his disobedience. (*Haer.* 3.23.1)[100]

Although here, in the midst of the argument, the sheep is specifically identified as Adam, Irenaeus' logic dictates that we simultaneously understand this lost sheep to be all of humanity as well, for "we are all from him, and as we are from him, therefore have we all inherited his name (*appellationem*)."[101]

In concluding this argument, Irenaeus explicitly brings together Adam, humankind, and the lost sheep:

> Now Adam had been conquered, and all life had been taken from him. Consequently, when the enemy was again conquered, Adam received life. 'And the last enemy to be destroyed is death,'[102] which had first taken possession of humankind. Wherefore, when humanity has been freed, 'shall come to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory.

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[97] *Haer.* 3.23.2.
[98] *Haer.* 3.23.1-8, with some exceptions for those who were truly as wicked as Cain (*Haer.* 3.23.3-4).
[99] *Haer.* 3.23.1. Irenaeus specifically names Tatian as one of those who denied the possibility of Adam's salvation (*Haer.* 3.23.8), and the fact that Irenaeus argues against this view at some length suggests that it must have been widely held.
[100] Trans. Unger and Steenberg, mod. *Necesse ergo fuit, Dominum ad perditam ovem venientem, et tantae dispositionis recapitulationem facientem, et suum plasma requirentem, illum ipsum hominem salvare, qui factus fuerat secundum imaginem et similitudinem ejus, id est, Adam adimplentem tempora ejus condemnationis, quae facta fuerat propter inobedientiam.*
[101] *Haer.* 3.23.2.
[102] 1 Cor. 15.26.

> O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting?"' [103] This could not have been said justly if he had not been freed over whom death first had dominion. For his salvation is death's destruction. So when the Lord gave life to humanity, that is, to Adam, death was destroyed. All are liars, therefore, who deny salvation to Adam.[104] These exclude themselves from life forever, because they do not believe that the sheep that had been lost was found. (*Haer.* 3.23.7-8)[105]

Therefore, in Book Three, Irenaeus uses the parable of the Lost Sheep in a purely soteriological way, reading the parable of Jesus as a self-referential allegory of his own cosmic act of salvation of the entire human race in the generations between Adam and Christ. The focus here is the history of humanity from creation to redemption, the totality of Christ's action, and the justice and power of God that are thereby demonstrated. Individual Christians in the present day, however, are out of the spotlight. This salvific action of Christ is not automatically applied to everyone living *after* Christ. For these, the communion with Christ is achieved through membership in the Church.[106] In describing this latter process in Book Five, however, Irenaeus will make a complementary application of the parable of the Lost Sheep to individual Christians.

5.2. Salvation in the Eternal Present in *Haer.* 5.9-12

A major theme of Book Five is a proof of the bodily resurrection. In *Haer.* 5.9-12, Irenaeus addresses an apparently well-known argument against the bodily resurrection that

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[103] 1 Cor. 15.54-5.

[104] As I mentioned in a previous note, the main opponent in view here is Tatian, who is named immediately after this quotation in 3.23.8. For a survey of scholarship on Irenaeus' views of the relationship between Tatian and the Valentinian opponents in *Adversus Haereses,* see E. J. Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century: The Case of Tatian* (London: Routledge, 2003), esp. 20-36.

[105] Trans. Unger and Steenberg. *Victus autem erat Adam, ablata ab eo omni vita: propter hoc victo rursus inimico recepit vitam Adam; "novissima autem inimica evacuatur mors," quae primum possederat hominem. Quapropter liberato homine, fiet quod scriptum est, "Absorpta est mors in victoria. Ubi est mors victoria tua? Ubi est mors aculeus tuus?" Quod non poterit juste dici, si non ille liberatus fuerit, cui primum dominata est mors. Illius enim salus, evacuatio est mortis. Domino igitur vivificante hominem, id est Adam, evacuata est et mors. Mentiuntur ergo omnes qui contradicunt ejus saluti, semper seipsos excludentes a vita, in eo quod non credant inventam ovem quae perierat.*

[106] *Haer.* 3.24.1.

relied upon 1 Cor. 15.50, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven." Irenaeus argues that by "flesh," Paul does not mean the body per se, but one who has turned to "works of the flesh,"[107] as Paul lists them in Gal. 5.19-21, and which are to be distinguished from spiritual actions, which Paul lists immediately following (Gal. 5.22-23). He has already established that there are two types of persons, carnal and spiritual, who are both known by their works and determined by them:

> Those persons, then, who possess the earnest of the Spirit, and who are not enslaved by the lusts of the flesh, but are subject to the Spirit, and who in all things walk according to the light of reason, does the apostle properly term "spiritual," because the Spirit of God dwells in them. Now, spiritual people shall not be incorporeal spirits; but our substance, that is, the union of soul and flesh receiving the Spirit of God,[108] makes up the spiritual person. But those who do indeed reject the Spirit's counsel, and are the slaves of fleshly lusts, and lead lives contrary to reason, and who, without restraint, plunge headlong into their own desires, having no longing after the Divine Spirit, do live after the manner of swine and of dogs; these people does the apostle very properly term "carnal," because they have no thought of anything else except carnal things. (*Haer.* 5.8.2)[109]

According to Irenaeus, this binary of carnal and spiritual personhood works upon the tripartite human body, which is composed of three substances, flesh, spirit, and soul, the latter of which "sometimes indeed, when it follows the spirit, is raised up by it, but sometimes it sympathizes with the flesh, and falls into carnal lusts."[110] Those persons who "fear God and trust in his Son's advent, and who through faith do establish the Spirit of God in their hearts," are to be called "spiritual" and "living to God," while those who do not are called "flesh and blood," and also "dead."[111] Irenaeus suggests that "flesh" in and

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[107] *Haer.* 5.11.1.
[108] *Id est, animae et carnis adunatio assumens Spiritum Dei.* Remarkably, *ANF* has "the union of flesh and *spirit,* receiving the Spirit of God." However, the Latin translator has consistently used *spiritus* for πνεύμα and *anima* for ψυχή, and Irenaeus makes clear elsewhere that the flesh, soul, and spirit are the three components of the human body, as at *Haer.* 5.9.1.
[109] Trans. *ANF,* mod.
[110] *Haer.* 5.9.1.
[111] *Haer.* 5.9.1-2.

of itself is not bad, for it is capable of both corruption and incorruption.[112] Rather, the "works of the flesh," if indulged in, can "bring death" upon the person, just as the "spiritual actions" can vivify a person.[113]

What is at stake here seems to be an argument against an anthropological position that there are two (or three) predetermined categories of persons, a position that Irenaeus had accused the Valentinians of holding.[114] On the contrary, says Irenaeus, there is no predeterminism in play. All have the ability to choose to be a spiritual person, on the basis of one's ethical behavior and faith in the Church, which for Irenaeus go hand in hand.[115]

It is this context, at the climax of the argument, into which Irenaeus now deploys the parable of the Lost Sheep in a new but complementary way:

> For it is not one thing which dies and another which is quickened, as neither is it one thing which is lost and another which is found, but the Lord came seeking for that same sheep (sg.) which had been lost. What was it, then, which was dead? Undoubtedly it was the substance of the flesh; the same, too, which had lost the breath of life, and had become breathless and dead. This same, therefore, was what the Lord came to quicken, that as in Adam we do all die, as being soul-like (ψυχικοὶ / *animales*), in Christ we may all live, as being spiritual (πνευματικοὶ / *spiritales*)... (*Haer.* 5.12.3)[116]

Despite the passing reference to Adam, this is not the same kind of cosmic-historical salvific action that we saw above in Book Three. Here, Irenaeus is not referring to the entirety of humanity between Adam and the advent of Christ. Rather, the discussion is still on the subject of the status of each and every individual person, in the eternal present, who

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[112] *Haer.* 5.12.1.
[113] *Haer.* 5.11.1-2.
[114] *Haer.* 1.7.5.
[115] Valentinian anthropology is not a subject taken up in this dissertation, but it is worth noting here that the notion of Valentinians, and Gnostics more generally, as predeterministic elitists who believed in three biologically determined races (sometimes understood to have descended from Cain, Abel, and Seth), is due in large part to Irenaeus' characterization of them. On the question of whether the Valentinians thought anyone could become a pneumatic, the scholarly literature is quite large. A good entry point is Michael Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism",*189-212; a landmark study challenging this view is Michel Desjardins, *Sin in Valentinianism.*
[116] Trans *ANF,* mod.

faces death. Although Christ has descended once in historical time in the person of Jesus, he is nevertheless always already descending to seek out the carnal person who, enslaved to the works of the flesh, is in need of vivification. As this enslavement to the flesh is a constant danger, the Church stands as an ever present resource with which the soul might be strengthened and turned toward the things of the spirit.

Irenaeus thus associates the shepherd with Christ in either a cosmic salvific role or in his ongoing function through the Church as the body of Christ. This, then, is the classic soteriological interpretation of the parable of the Lost Sheep that I outlined earlier. In Irenaeus it finds its first articulation among patristic authors.

As we saw earlier, numerous late antique Christian exegetes will preserve the paraenetic thrust that the parable comes equipped with in the Synoptic Gospels. Some, such as Cyprian, Origen, the author of the *Didascalia,* and the early Tertullian, will apply the paraenesis to the clergy, exhorting them to act in a compassionate manner in imitation of Christ's ethical exemplar of inclusivity and forgiveness. Other exegetes, such as Chrysostom and Theodoret, apply the paraenetic interpretation to the laity as well. Irenaeus does neither.

However, Irenaeus is not the first Christian thinker to develop a soteriological interpretation of this parable. The first in the historical record to do so are the Valentinians known to Irenaeus: the author of the *Gospel of Truth,* and the followers of Ptolemy and Marcos, to whom we now turn. These exegetes, Irenaeus claims, interpret the parable incorrectly, yet they, too, interpret it on soteriological grounds. This analysis will show that Irenaeus' interpretation has more in common with these Valentinian exegetes he opposes than other retrospectively orthodox exegetes who follow him.

6. The Fallen Sophia of the Ptolemaeans in *Haer.* 1.1-8

Irenaeus describes his Valentinian opponents' use of the parable of the Lost Sheep a total of four times in *Adversus Haereses.* In two sections of Book One he introduces the exegesis of the parable by first the followers of Ptolemy and then the followers of Marcos; then, in Book Two, he briefly reintroduces their use of the parable before giving his refutation of each of their interpretations, again in the same order. Therefore, I will consider each pair of passages, first those describing the exegesis of the Ptolemaeans, and then those describing that of the Marcosians.

6.1. Some Questions of Framing

It is difficult to know precisely when Irenaeus is reporting Valentinian beliefs and scriptural interpretations accurately, and when he introduces misrepresentations, whether intentionally or not. At times he may be accurately passing on information about the Valentinians that he has gleaned, in whole or in part, from intermediary sources that themselves are inaccurate to a greater or lesser degree. In what follows, therefore, I will temporarily set aside the question of historical accuracy in order to first assess the Ptolemaeans as reported by Irenaeus, but I will nevertheless return to the former question after performing that analysis.

A related question is whether Irenaeus understood the beliefs described in his so-called *grand notice* (*Haer.* 1.1.1 – 1.8.5) to have originated with the students of Ptolemy or with Ptolemy himself. This "model system"[117] is Irenaeus' first, longest and most comprehensive treatment of any heretical group or teacher. There are textual difficulties at

[117] This phrase Thomassen prefers to Sagnard's "*grand notice*." Although Thomassen's phrase is more accurate, Sagnard's is more customary, so I retain it in the present discussion.

both the beginning and ending of this lengthy section, resulting in some ambiguities surrounding Irenaeus' views of the role of Ptolemy himself.

We first turn to the following ambiguous statement that Irenaeus makes in the Preface. I do not believe any of the modern translations have accurately captured Irenaeus' meaning here, so I here offer a fresh translation, along with Harvey's Greek:

Καὶ, καθὼς δύναμις ἡμῖν,	And, to the best of my ability,[118]
[ ]	I will relate to you, concisely and clearly,
τήν τε γνώμην αὐτῶν τῶν νῦν παραδιδασκόντων, λέγω δὴ τῶν περὶ Πτολεμαῖον, ἀπάνθισμα οὖσαν τῆς Οὐαλεντίνου σχολῆς,	the doctrine of those people who are at present spreading false teaching – I mean the disciples of Ptolemy – it [their doctrine] being an offshoot of the school of Valentinus,
συντόμως καὶ σαφῶς ἀπαγγελοῦμεν,	[ ]
καὶ ἀφορμὰς δώσομεν κατὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν μετριότητα, πρὸς τὸ ἀνατρέπειν αὐτὴν, ἀλλόκοτα καὶ ἀνάρμοστα τῇ ἀληθείᾳ ἐπιδεικνύντες τὰ ὑπ᾽ αὐτῶν λεγόμενα...	and I will also give you[119] the means, to the best of my modest ability, for refuting it, by demonstrating how strange, and how incongruous with the truth, their statements are...

This passage contains three ambiguous phrases. The first is τῶν περὶ Πτολεμαῖον, a literal translation of which, "those around Ptolemy," would seem to exclude Ptolemy himself. Irenaeus' ancient Latin translator did, in fact, render this literally, as *eorum qui sunt circa Ptolemaeum.* Likewise, both *ANF* and Unger and Dillon translate the key phrase as "the disciples of Ptolemaeus." Despite their own translation, however, Unger and Dillon claim that "The Greek expression *hoi peri tina* customarily designates a

[118] In this passage, Irenaeus refers to himself with both first person singulars and plurals; I have converted them all to singulars.
[119] Or, "I will both (τε) relate to you... and (καὶ) I will give you..."

circle of a person with this person himself or herself. It is a matter, then, of Ptolemaeus and his school."[120] Grant translates the phrase as "Ptolemaeus and his followers."[121] This distinction is important for attempting to determine whether Irenaeus attributed this teaching to Ptolemy himself as opposed to merely his students, but it does not seem that it may be resolved here. For now all we can say is that Irenaeus reports that the teaching was current with Ptolemy's followers, if not Ptolemy himself, and so I have translated the phrase conservatively as "the disciples of Ptolemy." However, I will return shortly to the distinction between the ideas of Ptolemy and those of his followers.[122]

The second ambiguity here is what Irenaeus means by τῆς Οὐαλεντίνου σχολῆς, "the school of Valentinus." The ambiguity here is not grammatical but historical: numerous scholars have been concerned about the historical accuracy of Irenaeus' characterization of the Valentinian movement as a philosophical school.[123] But this historical question is related to the third ambiguity, again one of grammar: what is the subject of the feminine accusative singular participle οὖσαν? The *ANF* translation assumes an implied Ptolemaean σχολήν, which gives them "...whose school may be described as a bud from that of Valentinus." The ancient Latin translator preserves the feminine referent with *quae est,* but except for the addition of *velut,* "like," renders the rest of the phrase literally without supplying a referent, as *qui sunt circa Ptolemaeum, quae est velut flosculum Valentini scholae*. Unger and Dillon hedge by not supplying a missing referent,

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[120] Unger and Dillon, *Against the Heresies: Book One,* 129n19, discussing the argument made by Rousseau and Doutreleau (SC 263:171; SC 264:23n3).
[121] Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons,* 58.
[122] There are, in fact, good reasons to assume that the *grand notice* does not go all the way back to Ptolemy himself. See Markschies, "New Research on Ptolemaeus Gnosticus," *ZAC* 4:2 (2000): 225-254 (249-252), and especially Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed,* 17-22. I also discuss this further below.
[123] The debate is well represented in the subtitles of Thomassen's and Dunderberg's recent monographs: Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the 'Valentinians'* (2006) and Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus* (2008).

so their translation is as vague on this point as the Latin: "...the disciples of Ptolemaeus, an offshoot of the Valentinian school." Likewise, Einar Thomassen translates as "I refer to the followers of Ptolemy, an offshoot of the school of Valentinus," again leaving the referent unstated.[124] All three of these translations are grammatically flawed because that which is an offshoot of the Valentinian school is in the singular, so it cannot be "those around Ptolemy," who are plural. (And it cannot be Ptolemy, who is masculine.) Thus they encourage the reader to imagine a "school of Ptolemy," as in the *ANF* translation.

All of these translations are obscured by their attempts to break up Irenaeus' lengthy periphrastic sentences into more English-friendly morsels. Paying attention to the greater sentence structure helps us realize that a feminine accusative singular noun has recently been mentioned, their doctrine (τήν γνώμην). What is more, this object is still in view after the parenthetical interruption concerning those around Ptolemy, for Irenaeus, completing a τε...και... clause with a second verb (δώσομεν), promises to give his addressee the means of refuting "it" (αὐτὴν) – another feminine singular object. The abbreviated sentence runs as follows: "I will relate to you the doctrine... and I will also give you the means for refuting it" (τήν τε γνώμην... ἀπαγγελοῦμεν, καὶ ἀφορμὰς δώσομεν... πρὸς τὸ ἀνατρέπειν αὐτὴν). Therefore, it seems clear that what is described as a "bud" or "flower" of Valentinus' school in between the two parts of this τε...και... clause is not a Ptolemaean school, but their doctrine or teaching.[125] Hence I have supplied "[their doctrine]" in the above translation, and I have punctuated it accordingly.[126]

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[124] Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed,* 10.
[125] As recognized only by Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons,* 58, and Rousseau and Doutreleau (SC 264:23).
[126] The translations are collected here. Latin: *qui sunt circa Ptolemaeum, quae est velut flosculum Valentini scholae. ANF:* "the disciples of Ptolemy, whose school may be described as a bud from that of Valentinus." Unger and Dillon: "the disciples of Ptolemaeus, an offshoot of the Valentinian school." Thomassen: "the followers of Ptolemy, an offshoot of the school of Valentinus." Grant: "Ptolemaeus and his followers, whose

So Irenaeus does not here attribute a school to Ptolemy, only to Valentinus. If this is meant to convey any historical information (and it is not clear that it is), it may mean that those who claimed to be followers of Ptolemy appeared to others to be somewhat more loosely organized than the previous generation. Perhaps this points to a diachronic change in Valentinian social organization. Valentinus may well have appeared to have had a "school" while in Alexandria, and this may well have persisted after his departure to Rome so that Clement could have described it as such. Likewise, Valentinus may well have styled himself a Christian philosopher upon arriving in Rome, like his contemporary Justin, who himself may have had a "school" of students. Meanwhile, Valentinus' disciple Ptolemy may well have taken the "school" in a different direction, so that it was no longer recognizable as such. The Ptolemaeans known to Irenaeus seem much more integrated into the "church," whereas the Marcosians seem to have been much more modeled after a mystery cult.[127] I suspect that a failure to understand Irenaeus' implications here may be the key to the difficulties scholars have had in specifying Valentinian social organization. My grammatical analysis of this passage provides support for Thomassen's view that there were multiple Ptolemaean communities, all describing themselves as followers of Ptolemy, and which lacked a single, canonical system, but were rather characterized by "a degree of non-fixity, maybe even liberality, of doctrine."[128] In the following discussion of the *grand notice,* I use "Ptolemaeans" to refer only to the group that produced this document.

Another ambiguous passage in the text of Irenaeus comes at the close of the *grand notice*. The final sentence of the Latin version of *Haer.* 1.8.5 informs the reader, *Et*

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doctrine is the 'flower' of the school of Valentinus." Rousseau and Doutreleau: "Ptolémée et des gens de son entourage, dont la doctrine est la fleur de l'école de Valentin."

[127] Although his subtitle may be misleading on this point, Dunderberg outlines these options nicely in the first chapter of his book, *Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus.*

[128] Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed,* 21-22. Thomassen makes this claim for Valentinians in general, which is also probably true, but it is especially true of the Ptolemaeans whom Irenaeus knew.

Ptolemaeus quidem ita ("Such are the views of Ptolemy"). We now return to the question of the differentiation between the doctrines of Ptolemy and those of his disciples. This line does not appear in the Greek, although it must be remembered that for this section of the Greek we are reliant upon Epiphanius, and thus we enter a vigorous scholarly debate over Irenaeus' intention. Did he think that these views went all the way back to Ptolemy himself, or did he mean to attribute the system in the *grand notice* only to followers of Ptolemy, who may have modified what they received from their teacher?

The ancient Latin translation stems from the fourth or early fifth century,[129] and so is roughly contemporaneous with Epiphanius' late fourth century transcription. The Latin translation is not only generally faithful but, when it differs from the surviving Greek, is as often as not a superior witness to Irenaeus' text, as may be deduced in numerous instances; for one example, see my notes on the translation of *Haer.* 1.8.1 in my Chapter 2; for another, see my note on the translation of parable of the Lost Sheep passage in *Haer.* 1.8.4, below. The primary argument for viewing the Latin sentence as secondary is that the attribution to Ptolemy in the singular is at odds with Irenaeus' previous, multiple plural attributions throughout 1.1.1 – 1.8.5 (to take just two significant examples, λέγουσι, the first word of 1.1.1, and διδάσκουσι... λέγοντες, in the opening sentence of 1.8.5). These plurals are consistent with Irenaeus' claim in the Preface to Book One that he will be discussing the opinions of "certain people"; "the disciples of Valentinus"; and "the disciples of Ptolemy."

Some commentators have suggested that the Latin sentence should be retained as accurate. Rousseau and Doutreleau argue that Epiphanius deleted the sentence deliberately so that he could fit Irenaeus' *Haer.* 1.1.1 – 1.11.1 into his section on

[129] Behr, John, *St. Irenaeus of Lyons: On the Apostolic Preaching,* 4.

Valentinians in *Pan.* 31, rather than his chapter on Ptolemy and his followers, *Pan.* 33 – which in fact is what Epiphanius has done.[130] Another argument, more sympathetic to Epiphanius, is that he believed the attribution to Ptolemy himself to be incorrect, and so deleted it. This is essentially a text critical argument in favor of preserving the *lectio difficilior,* which in this case happens to be preserved in Latin translation only.

Harvey had suggested that the Latin sentence should be retained for a different reason, because it referred not to the entire *grand notice* but only to *Haer.* 1.8.5, this being a quotation from Ptolemy's lost commentary on John.[131] That 1.8.5 is a quotation is indicated by the opening formula αὐταῖς λέξεσι λέγοντες οὕτως.[132] This position removes the conflict with all of the preceding plurals except the one at the beginning of 1.8.5, which would be Irenaeus' (and perhaps his source's) introductory remark. The advantage of Harvey's position is that it resolves the apparent contradiction within Irenaeus, and it gains support from Thomassen's analysis showing that *Haer.* 1.8.5 comes from a different Valentinian source than the rest of the *grand notice.*[133] However, Thomassen's argument also allows that 1.8.5 may not go back to Ptolemy either, and so the question of the text of Irenaeus must be distinguished from that of the historical accuracy of the Latin sentence. The result of the discussion thus far is that there are arguments for retaining the problematic Latin sentence in our earliest attainable text of Irenaeus even if it is historically unfactual. In this case, Epiphanius' decision to eliminate it on those grounds would be vindicated.

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[130] SC 263:83-5 and 218. Rousseau and Doutreleau add καὶ ὁ Πτολεμαῖος οὕτως to their reconstructed Greek text (SC 264:137). Unger and Dillon retain the sentence in their translation, referring the reader to Rousseau and Doutreleau for justification. See also the discussion of Rousseau's speculations in Charles E. Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 214-16.
[131] Harvey, 1:79n5.
[132] Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed,* 213.
[133] Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed,* 213-18.

Another line of argument that would seek to either corroborate or invalidate either the originality of the Latin sentence to Irenaeus' text, or its historical accuracy, or both, involves comparing the theologies of the *grand notice* to what we find in Ptolemy's *Epistle to Flora.* These attempts are complicated by Ptolemy's parting words to Flora, in which he promises her future instruction about the "origin and generation" (καὶ τὴν ἀρχήν τε καὶ γέννησιν) of the three "natures" (φύσεις) that the letter has demonstrated. On the basis of his closing assurance, many commentators believe the discrepancies between his letter and the protology of the *grand notice* may be resolved by assuming that the letter represents "exoteric" teaching, to be followed by more "esoteric" teaching of the type described in Irenaeus' *grand notice*.[134] However, this position by itself cannot distinguish those parts of the *grand notice* original to Ptolemy and those innovations that ought to be attributed to his followers.

Christoph Markschies, while affirming the *Epistle's* exoteric nature, has argued that the entire system of the *grand notice* is derived not from Ptolemy, but from "the gifted and imaginative thinkers among their followers of whom we do not know the names,"[135] and that any reconstruction of the thought of the historical Ptolemy must be based solely on the evidence from the *Epistle.* Winrich Löhr and Einar Thomassen, meanwhile, both come to the conclusion that the hints of cosmogony we find in the *Epistle* are incompatible with the system described in *Haer.* 1.1-8. However, Thomassen admits that we need not explain this difference on the basis of attributing further innovations to Ptolemy's students, as

[134] Pagels, *Johannine Gospel,* 18; Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries,* trans. Michael Steinhauser (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 296-7. See Markschies, "New Research," 231, for additional bibliography.
[135] Markshies, "New Research," 252.

Markschies suggests, for it could also be explained by a maturation of Ptolemy's own views later in his life, as Löhr had proposed.[136]

Thomassen concludes that both questions raised by the Latin sentence – that of the text of Irenaeus, and that of the sentence's historical accuracy – cannot be answered given the state of the evidence.[137] Indeed, at present these questions remain unresolved. In this project I bracket the question of Irenaeus' attribution of these views to Ptolemy himself, and assume only that Irenaeus is describing at least the views of his followers. On this point, at least, all commentators agree.

What remains, however, is the question I raised earlier, that of the historical integrity of Irenaeus' account of a belief system held by students of Ptolemy. That is, granted that he is describing at least one cosmological system that he obtained from Ptolemy's disciples (henceforth "Ptolemaeans"), how much did he understand and accurately report? With this question in mind, we now turn to a close reading of his report of their exegesis of the parable in question.

6.2. The Black Sheep of the Family

According to Irenaeus, the Ptolemaeans cite the parable of the Lost Sheep as proof of their cosmogonic system, one of many variants on the primordial myth of a fallen Sophia that, for both ancient heresiologists and modern scholars, is one of the identifying characteristics of the "Valentinians." Irenaeus writes the following:

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[136] Winrich A. Löhr, "La doctrine de Dieu dans La lettre à Flora de Ptolémée," *RHPR* 75:2 (1995): 177-191 (191); see also Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed,* 128-29. The latter possibility would seem to be precluded if we accept the arguments of Harnack, Lüdemann, Lampe, and most recently Moll, that Ptolemy had been martyred by 152 C.E. However, this one-hundred-year-old debate remains inconclusive. See my discussion of this question in Chapter 5.

[137] Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed,* 129, 215n30.

> Moreover, that Achamoth wandered beyond the Pleroma, and was formed by Christ, and was sought after by the Savior, they say that he indicated by his statement that he had come after the sheep (sg.) which was gone astray.[138] For they explain the wandering sheep to mean their mother, by whom they hold that the church here has been sown. The wandering itself denotes her stay outside of the Pleroma in a state of varied passion, from which they maintain that matter derived its origin. The woman, again, who sweeps the house and finds the piece of money, they declare to denote the Sophia above, who, having lost her desire (ἐνθύμησις), afterwards finds it, everything having being purified by the advent of the Savior. (*Haer.* 1.8.4)[139]

That the sheep is singular here suggests that we are dealing with an exegesis of the parable rather than the "lost sheep (pl.) of the house of Israel," to whom Jesus says he has been sent in Matthew 15.24; we may be even more certain of this due to the accompanying reference to the parable of the Lost Coin from Luke 15, even as the description of the sheep as "wandering" or "having gone astray," πεπλανημένον, uses language from the Matthean parable: the sheep in the Lukan parable is not πεπλανημένον but ἀπολωλός, "lost," as are the sheep of the House of Israel of Mt. 15.24.[140]

In the second passage dealing with the Ptolemaeans' use of this parable, *Haer.* 2.5.2, Irenaeus briefly reprises this interpretation. We may be certain that in the second passage he is referring to the same Ptolemaeans discussed in the first, for this is the only group he describes who speak of a being named Achamoth, i.e., "their mother." We shall consider this second passage in more detail below.

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[138] Greek: ἐπὶ τὸ πεπλανημένον [πρόβατον]; Latin: *ad eam quae errasset ovem.* Πρόβατον, while missing in the Greek here, may be reliably supplied on the basis of the Latin, and from the next sentence, which begins with Πρόβατον μὲν γὰρ πεπλανημένον; thus the omission in Epiphanius' Greek was probably an intentional one on the part of a scribe who incorrectly thought he had detected a dittography. This is but one of many examples that validates the ancient Latin translation as at times a more faithful witness to the text of Irenaeus than Epiphanius' Greek transcription.

[139] Trans. based on those of *ANF* and Frank Williams' translation of the *Panarion.* The force of the participle καθαριστέντων πάντων διὰ τῆς τοῦ Σωτῆρος παρουσίας would seem to be both temporal and causal, so I have left it ambiguous in the translation.

[140] We cannot be certain whether it is the Valentinians or Irenaeus who are doing the conflating here. Also, this distinction will break down in Coptic, as ⲥⲱⲣⲙ̄ (e.g., *Gos. Truth* 32.1-3) comprises both of these meanings.

Although Irenaeus will attempt to refute the Ptolemaean exegesis, their allegorical interpretation shares with his the assignment of Christ, or a Christ-like figure (here, the "Savior") to the role of the shepherd. Like Irenaeus, the Ptolemaeans rely upon a detail from the Matthean version of the parable: the shepherd leaves the remaining sheep on the mountain in order to go and look for the lost one, from which the Ptolemaeans infer that the search involves a spatial descent. The vertical dimension of space found in this reading of the Matthean account supports the idea that Christ, as the shepherd, would have descended outside of the Pleroma into a realm that, being lower ontologically, is also imagined to be lower spatially, as, for example, when the Sophia who has been restored to the Pleroma is referred to as "the Sophia above" (in the passage just cited), or as "that Sophia who dwells above" (*Haer.* 1.4.1, etc.), to distinguish her from the lower Sophia, who is termed Achamoth. This vertical dimension is made explicit in Irenaeus' interpretation of Christ's descent, and seems to be functioning implicitly here as well. On these points, Irenaeus and his Ptolemaeans agree. Yet while Irenaeus' allegorical interpretation of the parable points to Christ's present and future activity, the Ptolemaeans read the parable as pointing into the primordial past, as an allegory indicating the role of a Christ-figure in their version of the myth of Sophia's separation from and restoration to the Pleroma.

As Einar Thomassen has pointed out,[141] the version of the Sophia myth described by Irenaeus' Ptolemaeans in *Haer.* 1-8 is more complex than most other Valentinian versions of this myth. The versions found in *Haer.* 1.11.1, *Exc.* 23.2 and 32-33, *Val. Exp.,* and (substituting the name "Logos" for "Sophia") *Tri. Trac.* all have only one Sophia, who, representing the culmination of the tension between the unity of the Pleroma and the

[141] Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed,* 248-62.

multiplicity of aeons within it, breaks away from the Pleroma or is ejected from it. In these versions, Sophia then gives birth to a male being usually identified as Christ and/or her son, who returns to the Pleroma, leaving Sophia outside in a weakened, deprived, or imperfect state. While numerous differences amongst these versions exist, Thomassen nevertheless helpfully observes that in all of them,

> [T]he rupture that takes place with the last aeon is described as a division whereby the more perfect part of the aeon is separated and is reintegrated in the Pleroma, while the aeon's deficient part is left outside, together with its passions, in a state of abandonment and deprivation. The ascended part is named Christ and is described as Sophia's son, whereas the part that is left behind is Sophia "herself."[142]

In this, single-Sophia version of the myth, Christ will then later return to Sophia and restore her to the Pleroma, but only after she has, in her imperfect state, spawned the Demiurge. In the single-Sophia version we might easily imagine an application of the soteriological interpretation of the parable of the Lost Sheep: Christ (the shepherd) would descend from the Pleroma (the mountain), leaving the aeons (the flock) behind, in order to rescue Sophia (the lost sheep) and restore her to her rightful place within it. However, in none of the variants of the single-Sophia version of the myth do we find any use of this parable. Instead, the parable appears in the double-Sophia version reported by Irenaeus in *Haer.* 1-8, to which all variants of the single-Sophia version may be contrasted *en bloc.* In the Ptolemaean version of *Haer.* 1-8, there are two Sophias, a higher and a lower.

In this version, the division taking place within the last aeon results in the splitting off of Sophia "herself" from her desire (ἐνθύμησις) and her passion (πάθος). While Sophia "herself" *remains within* the Pleroma, where she "dwells above," her desire, henceforth termed "Achamoth," is "laid aside" and "expelled" from the Pleroma, along

[142] Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed,* 257.

with her passion.[143] Although Thomassen has it that "Sophia herself is caught up by the Limit and *restored* to the Pleroma, while her deficient emotion is removed and *remains* outside,"[144] Irenaeus clearly states that the division takes place *within* the Pleroma,[145] that Sophia herself "*remained within* the Pleroma, but her desire, with its passion, was separated from her by Horos, fenced off, and expelled from that circle";[146] or, again, that Achamoth was "*removed* from the Pleroma, together with her passion."[147]

Then, a new syzygy, comprised of Christ and Holy Spirit, is generated within the Pleroma; Christ, "dwelling on high, took pity on her," and descends to give Achamoth "form with regard to substance only, not with regard to knowledge" (μόρθωσιν τὴν κατ᾽ οὐσίαν μόνον, ἀλλ᾽ οὐ τὴν κατὰ γνῶσιν), and then reascends. Thomassen points out[148] that this addition to the narrative brings us, via a detour, to where we were in the simpler narrative, where Sophia (here, Achamoth) has been abandoned by Christ outside the Pleroma; now, in her impassioned state of "desiring to return to him who gave her life," she becomes "the substance of the matter from which this world was formed."[149] However, there is an important difference: in the single-Sophia versions, at the point Sophia has been abandoned by Christ, "Sophia herself" is still outside the Pleroma, and thus the Pleroma itself has not yet been restored by the reintegration of the last aeon. However, in the double-Sophia version reported by Irenaeus, it is the lower Sophia (i.e., Achamoth) who is left yearning for Christ, while "Sophia herself" was "reintegrated" (never having left) from the moment Achamoth was expelled. Thus the Pleroma is already restored, while

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[143] *Haer.* 1.2.2-3; 1.4.1.
[144] Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed,* 257.
[145] *Haer.* 1.3.1.
[146] *Haer.* 1.2.4.
[147] *Haer.* 1.4.1.
[148] Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed,* 259.
[149] *Haer.* 1.4.2.

Achamoth is left as a by-product of the entire process.[150] This suggests to Thomassen that this version of the cosmogony supports a more deterministic, less participatory soteriology than the single-Sophia model, a point that will become important below.[151] After Achamoth is left in "a varied state of passion" then Christ, "having returned to the Pleroma, and being probably unwilling again to descend from it, sent forth to her the Paraclete, that is, the Savior."[152] This second figure Irenaeus had previously described as "a second Christ – whom they also style Savior."[153] This Savior "then imparted to her [i.e., Achamoth] form with regard to knowledge, and brought healing to her passions, separating them from her,"[154] after which time they became hypostasized as unorganized matter.

This analysis of the Ptolemaeans' double-Sophia model should help us unpack their use of the parable of the Lost Sheep in our main passage above, *Haer.* 1.8.4. We may now see more clearly that the Ptolemaeans must have invoked the parable of the Lost Sheep to describe not one, but two descents to Achamoth. Although Irenaeus reports two descents in *Haer.* 1.4.5, he condenses them into one when describing their use of the parable. Returning to the first sentence of the quotation of *Haer.* 1.8.4 I cited earlier, we may code it as follows in order to align it with *Haer.* 1.4.5:

[before either descent:]	Achamoth wandered beyond the Pleroma,
[first descent:]	and was formed by Christ,
[second descent:]	and was sought after by the [Paraclete or] Savior.

[150] Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed,* 261.
[151] Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed,* 260-61.
[152] *Haer.* 1.4.5.
[153] *Haer.* 1.3.1.
[154] *Haer.* 1.4.5.

Although Irenaeus condenses the two descents in the latter passage when he introduces the lost sheep, his nomenclature (first Christ, then Savior) is consistent with his earlier description of their version of the double Sophia myth with two descents to Achamoth, the first by Christ and the second by the Paraclete/Savior.

We find further evidence for two descents in a careful reading of Irenaeus' refutation of the Ptolemaeans' exegesis, in *Haer.* 2.5.2:

> If they explain being within and without the Pleroma as implying knowledge and ignorance respectively... then they must of necessity grant that the Savior himself... was in a state of ignorance. For they maintain that, on his coming forth outside of the Pleroma, he imparted form to their mother [Achamoth]. If, then, they assert that whatever is outside [of the Pleroma] is ignorant of all things, and if the Savior went forth to impart form to their Mother, then he was situated beyond the pale of the knowledge of all things; that is, he was in ignorance. How, then, could he communicate knowledge to her, when he himself was beyond the pale of knowledge? For we, too, they declare to be outside the Pleroma, inasmuch as we are outside of the knowledge which they possess. And once more: If the Savior really went forth beyond the Pleroma to seek after the sheep that was lost, but the Pleroma is knowledge, then he placed himself beyond the pale of knowledge; that is, in ignorance... (etc.)[155]

Although Irenaeus only describes one descent here, we observe that it is a descent that "imparts form" and "communicates knowledge" to Achamoth; this is another way of saying it "imparts form with respect to knowledge," as he had reported earlier (q.v. *Haer.* 1.4.5). This, then, must be the second of the two descents. This conclusion is affirmed by the name of the descending figure, which here is the Savior, not Christ, a detail that is consistent with his presentation of the two descents in Book One.

The preceding analysis raises the following question: as Irenaeus worked through his source material in order to describe their allegorical application of the parable to this complex myth, how accurately did he report it? I believe a clue may be provided once we

[155] Trans. *ANF.*

pause to consider that this is a strange use of the parable, for a reason that Irenaeus does not detect. For in the double-Sophia model, Achamoth, the lost sheep, is never restored to the rest of the flock! If the parable of the Lost Sheep had been used by Valentinians in any of their single-Sophia models, in which Sophia is expelled from the Pleroma, sought after by Christ, and then is eventually reintegrated back into it, then we would have a clear-cut Valentinian allegorization of the parable. But this is the opposite of what our literature shows. Christ or the Savior playing the shepherd to Sophia's lost sheep only appears in the double-Sophia model, precisely the model in which the parable does not cleanly fit: there are two Sophias, one of which, the higher Sophia, never leaves the flock; there are two descents, both to the lower Sophia or lost sheep; and neither descent results in the lost sheep being restored to the flock.

Furthermore, if we were to attempt to allegorically fit the parable of the Lost Sheep more cleanly to the double-Sophia version of the myth, we would have to stretch the terms of the allegory to absurd lengths: The shepherd would descend from the mountain to find the sheep (Achamoth), pet it (i.e., give her form with regard to substance only), then leave it alone for a while, greatly upset that it was about to be rescued, but was not (and is now left in a state of passion); then another, different shepherd would return, shear the sheep (i.e., give her form with regard to knowledge, resulting in the separation of her passion from her), and depart a second time, leaving the shorn sheep and a pile of wool (the passion); the sheep would rejoice that it had been separated from its burdensome fleece, but it would still be far from the mountain and the rest of the flock.

Given these problems, it is unclear whether the Ptolemaeans' exegesis – at least, as reported by Irenaeus – corresponds to a soteriological interpretation at all, even if the shepherd is identified with Christ. Achamoth is not saved, nor is the Pleroma restored,

through the actions of the shepherd of this parable; rather, the actions assigned to Christ/Savior as "shepherd" in this use of the parable serve only to further the narrative leading to the creation of the Demiurge and of the matter from which he created the cosmos.

Yet although Irenaeus had a splendid opportunity to denounce the Ptolemaeans for their inappropriate exegesis, he missed it. Irenaeus elsewhere, however, pays close attention to his opponents' theologies and criticizes them whenever he can. We can explain Irenaeus' failure to catch them out on this in one of three ways. We might choose to maintain that Irenaeus meant to imply that Achamoth was reintegrated into the Pleroma after her second encounter with the shepherd (the Savior), and simply failed to present this clearly. However, this choice risks doing violence to Irenaeus' presentation, and undermines his credibility as a source for Valentinian doctrine. Alternately, we might assume that in the Ptolemaeans' system, Achamoth, again, really was reintegrated into the Pleroma, and that Irenaeus did not tell us this because he failed to recognize from his source that this was the case. This would tell us that Irenaeus did not fully understand what he was reporting. Finally, we might assume that Irenaeus reported the system accurately, and that the inconsistency described above was actually a feature of it. In this case, though, we again find that Irenaeus failed to understand what he was reporting, since then he missed out on a golden opportunity to excoriate them for their lack of sense. Thus all three options result in either Irenaeus failing to present an important aspect of the system, or misunderstanding what he was presenting, or both.

The results of the preceding analysis are the following. Were the latter case to be the correct explanation, then it would seem that the Ptolemaeans have applied the parable of the Lost Sheep to allegorically describe a cosmogonic system that is, relative to other

known Valentinian cosmogonies, ill-suited to an application of that parable. This suggests that this application of the parable is a vestigial survivor from an earlier form of Valentinian pleromatology that has since evolved into the one reported by Irenaeus in *Haer.* 1.1-1.8. This would support Thomassen's assessment, made on other grounds, that the double-Sophia system develops chronologically subsequent to, and is derivative from, the single-Sophia system.[156] For this to be the case, however, there must have been a single-Sophia system that utilized the parable of the Lost Sheep, even though such a system has not survived in the historical record. Therefore, we can modify Thomassen's evolutionary stemma of Valentinian cosmogonic systems[157] by inserting this lost system that we can deduce must have existed.

On the other hand, if the Ptolemaeans actually did have Achamoth restored to the Pleroma, and Irenaeus has either failed to state this clearly or has gotten their system wrong on this point, then Thomassen's explanation for their evolving the system in this direction – having to do with revising the participatory soteriology pointed to by the earlier system to a soteriology that is much more predeterministic – would need to be completely reassessed.[158]

Further research in this area is needed, and the scope of Thomassen's work suggests that the likely solution to the above problem is a small addition to his conclusions rather than a radical revision of a good portion of them. However, we cannot rule out the possibility that Irenaeus has not completely understood the cosmogonic systems on which he was reporting, for as we turn to a close reading of his report of another Valentinian group, the Marcosians, and their unique application of the parable of the Lost Sheep, we find even more secure indications that Irenaeus has left out some key information.

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[156] Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed,* 259-61.
[157] Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed,* 267.
[158] Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed,* 260-61.

7. Counting Sheep: Marcosian Gematrical Speculations in *Haer.* 1.13-22

The Marcosians, or followers of Marcos, are another group of Valentinians about whom we are primarily reliant upon Irenaeus for information (*Haer.* 1.13-22). Irenaeus describes their cosmogony as one that is expressed via numerological speculation and gematria; yet Irenaeus assumes that a Sophia myth lies beneath and explains this system. Indeed, we risk reading too much into their system by presupposing it is a gematrical version of the myth of the fallen and restored Sophia, but in this case it seems that Irenaeus got this right, for it is difficult to make sense of it in any other way. Within this system, the Marcosians deploy allegorical interpretations of the parables of the Lost Sheep and Coin.

Here, the lost sheep is explicitly associated with the twelfth aeon of the Duodecad, presumably Sophia. "A defection occurred in regard to the number twelve. The sheep skipped off and went astray."[159] Likewise, they say, this same defection is indicated by the woman who lost her coin – although it is not immediately clear to the reader of Irenaeus why they should assert this, as the woman in the parable lost one coin from ten, leaving nine. Yet these numbers are specifically those that are utilized:

> When the numbers that are left over – namely, nine in reference to the coins and eleven in reference to the sheep [i.e., the eleven aeons remaining after Sophia's departure] – are multiplied by each other, the number ninety-nine is the result, because nine multiplied by eleven makes ninety-nine. And for this reason, they say "Amen" contains this same number.[160]

Although the gematrical value of ἀμήν is indeed 99 (1+40+8+50), it is not really clear from Irenaeus' report how they justify this procedure to arrive at it. Likewise, it is not clear what is meant by "eleven in reference to the sheep." Unger and Dillon point out that this detail is not in the Synoptic parable, and suggest that it was in the Marcosians' version

[159] *Haer.* 1.16.1, trans. Unger and Dillon.
[160] *Haer.* 1.16.1, trans. Unger and Dillon, mod.

of the parable.[161] On the other hand, it seems more reasonable to assume that Irenaeus simply left out the fact that there were not eleven, but ninety-nine sheep that were left on the mountain in the Matthean parable. Perhaps Irenaeus assumes his readers will remember the number of sheep left on the mountain. One suspects that this missing piece of information is, in fact, of major importance. What we should have is that the number of remaining coins, multiplied by the number of remaining aeons, makes the number of remaining sheep: this explanation, were it given, would approach some kind of numerological proof that the lost coin and the lost sheep were meant to represent Sophia, the lost aeon, as well as producing the gematrical value of ἀμήν. But the crucial piece of information is missing in Irenaeus' retelling.

The Marcosians arrive at the number ninety-nine a second way, by further making use of the alphabetic numeral system by which Greeks used letters to indicate numerals, a knowledge of which is essential for understanding the Marcosian exegesis of the parable of the Lost Sheep.[162] According to this system, each letter in the Greek alphabet had a numerical value. In order to create a base-ten digital system, twenty-seven letters would be needed: nine for the digits, nine for the tens, and nine for the hundreds. However, by the time this system was invented (the fifth century B.C.E, although it did not prevail in conservative Athens until the first century B.C.E.), the Greek alphabet only had twenty-four letters. Therefore, "three disused letters were pressed into service, one in each group,"[163] to join those already on active duty, as it were. One of these plays an important role in the Marcosians' system: the letter used for the number six, which was variously called the Digamma, Stigma (from which its morphology [ϛ] is derived, being a ligature of

[161] Unger and Dillon, *Against the Heresies: Book One,* 215n7.
[162] The following brief explanation is taken from Smyth, § 348A.c.
[163] Ibid.

ϛ + τ), or Episēmon, Irenaeus' preferred term. The existence in the sequence of letters of one letter that may justifiably be either counted or not counted produces for Marcosian gematrics a flexibility that they are able to exploit in dazzling variety. We will concern ourselves only with their fascination with the Episēmon that bears upon their interpretation of the parable of the Lost Sheep.

We first return to the section quoted earlier, when the sheep is first introduced, and examine it in more detail:

> These men associate the origin of their Aeons with the straying and finding of the sheep, as they make it into one thing and endeavor to explain it in a more mystic manner by reducing all things to numbers. They assert that all things consist of monads and dyads. They add up the numbers from one to four and thus beget the Decad. In fact, one, two, three, and four added up bring forth the number ten of the Aeons. Again, when the Dyad proceeded [by twos] from itself up to the Episēmon [i.e., six], that is, two plus four plus six, it manifested the Dodecad. Further, if in the same way we add up the numbers [by twos] from two until ten, the number thirty is manifested, in which are contained the Ogdoad, Decad, and Dodecad. But the Dodecad they call passion because it[164] contains the Episēmon which accompanies it.[165] For that reason a defection occurred in regard to the number twelve. The sheep skipped away and went astray. Then, they assert, the apostasy from the Dodecad took place. In the same way, they divine one Power perished when it defected from the Dodecad.[166]

Here the Marcosians are playing upon the liminal nature of the Episēmon (the number six). As the letter is both in the alphabet and not in it, it is considered defective. The defective letter is then associated with the sheep that went astray, and departed from the Duodecad, which "contains" the number six. Presumably the Duodecad "contains" the number six because, as Irenaeus has just related, it is the sum of 2 + 4 + 6. But what does the sixth letter have to do with the defective aeon, which is presumably the twelfth? Perhaps it is actually this letter, standing for the number six, along with the sixth aeon, that

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[164] I.e., the Dodecad.
[165] The referent is ambiguous here; Unger and Dillon add "[the Dodecad]", while *ANF* supply "the passion".
[166] *Haer.* 1.16.1, trans. Unger and Dillon, mod.

the Marcosians associate with the aeon Sophia. This would be odd, as in Valentinian cosmogony, Sophia is typically the final aeon in the sequence, and Irenaeus does say later that the twelfth aeon was the one that defected (*Haer.* 1.16.2). However, clues in Irenaeus' telling may suggest that it was actually the sixth aeon that defected.

According to Irenaeus (*Haer.* 1.16.2), the Marcosians assign each of the twelve aeons a letter, from Alpha to Mu, and omitting the Episēmon. Lambda is thus the eleventh letter, as in the "active duty" Greek alphabet. Irenaeus writes, "since from Alpha, omitting the Episēmon, until Lambda, the sum of the letters in immediate succession, adding also the Lambda, is ninety-nine."[167] In other words, the sum of the first eleven letters from Alpha through Lambda, or the sum of the numbers 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 7 [sic!] + 8 + 9 + 10 + 20 + 30 produces, remarkably, ninety-nine. Irenaeus does not tell us how the Marcosians can justify omitting Episēmon from their reckoning, although they must do so in order for the math to work out. But a justification may be found if we assume that the Episēmon was Sophia, the defective aeon that has departed. In that case, we are counting the sum of the eleven letters that remain after Sophia's fall, but before her reintegration. Therefore we arrive at a second gematric explanation that equates the eleven aeons remaining in the Pleroma after Sophia's departure with the ninety-nine sheep remaining upon the mountain.

Irenaeus then describes the subsequent search for the lost sheep that occurred. His description at this point is fairly straightforward, if somewhat startling:

> It is quite clear from the very shape of the character of the Lambda, which in point of order is in the eleventh place, that it descended to search for one like itself in order to complete the number twelve; and having found it, it was completed. For the Lambda, as it were, having gone in search of the character like itself, and having found it and snatched it to itself, filled up the

[167] Trans. Unger and Dillon.

> place of the number twelve, since the Mu (Μ) is composed of two Lambdas (ΛΛ).[168]

Lambda is described as being engaged in a search for the twelfth, lost aeon, now signified by Mu. Lambda is thus implicitly associated with the shepherd, but this aeon is given no other signifying names, such as the Ptolemaeans' Christ/Savior. Furthermore, Lambda is described, not as seeking one that had previously left the Pleroma, but as seeking for one like itself in shape. This suggests that what is found need not be the same as what had departed beforehand. This observation supports my earlier hypothesis that the imperfect aeon, Sophia, was represented by the imperfect letter, Episēmon – the latter being imperfect on account of its liminal status within the alphabet. By contrast, what was found was a more perfect being, one that resembled Lambda. Thus this cosmogonic myth reads like a Rudyard Kipling "Just So Story," explaining why there is now a Mu, but no longer an Episēmon, in the Greek alphabet.[169] The Mu now stands as the twelfth letter in the Greek alphabet, and represents the twelfth aeon in the restored Pleroma, where before there had only been a defective Episēmon, at position number six. This may suggest that, in a part of the mythic explanation that Irenaeus has perhaps omitted, the Episēmon was somehow altered, by contact with the shepherd, in a way that allowed its restoration as a Mu (much as Kipling's Elephant's Child was transformed, via contact with the Bi-coloured-Python-Rock-Snake, into a superior version of himself).[170] The suspicion that this information may be missing from the myth recalls the Ptolemaeans' double-Sophia version, in which there was a higher and lower Sophia, and yet the lower Sophia was never restored, even though Christ/Savior altered her by giving her substance and knowledge.

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[168] Trans. Unger and Dillon.
[169] Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories* (New York: Doubleday, 1907), contains a number of imaginative origin stories. Most apropos here is "How the Alphabet Was Made," 145-70.
[170] Here I refer to Kipling's more well-known tale, "The Elephant's Child," in ibid., 65-86.

Once again, with the Marcosians, we may see a hint that Irenaeus has left out important information, that perhaps he did not fully understand, that would allow this myth to cohere somewhat better than it does. While we may not be certain, this reading – that the Episēmon did not just symbolize the twelfth aeon (which would have been Lambda, prior to Episēmon's departure), but was in fact the defective aeon itself, to be replaced by a new aeon in the twelfth position, Mu – seems to make better sense of Irenaeus' report, although it is not clear that he understood this.

This idea of completing the imperfect Pleroma by the addition of one more being is expressed in yet another way, that combines the numbers from the parable of the Lost Sheep with a reference to the ancient Roman method of finger counting, with which Irenaeus' audience would have been familiar. Irenaeus continues:

> Wherefore also they, by means of their "knowledge," avoid the place of ninety-nine, that is, the defection – a type of the left hand – but endeavour to secure one more, which, when added to the ninety-nine, has the effect of changing their reckoning to the right hand.

The system of finger counting referenced here was an ingenious method of visually representing a base-ten system of numbers from 1 to 9,999 with only ten fingers, although a great deal of dexterity was required. Numerous classical references to the system are to be found, but it was evidently so commonplace in antiquity that no one bothered to write down a comprehensive manual endeavoring to teach how it worked. This changed in the Middle Ages, when the system fell out of common use and was preserved, and taught, only by scholars. The system is preserved for us with detailed instructions on how to form all of the numbers in a work by the Venerable Bede (d. 735 C.E.) entitled *De computo vel loquela digitorum,* "On Calculating and Speaking with the Fingers," which forms the introduction to his work on chronology, *De temporum ratione,* "On the Computation of the Times."

Western medieval sources from Spain, Italy, and Germany preserve Bede's system, often with illustrations of the finger positions, and independent testimonies to the system's universal reach in Mediterranean antiquity appear in Byzantine, Arabic, and Persian sources.[171]

The system is positional: the units, tens, hundreds, and thousands are each made with four different sets of fingers. The digits from one to nine are represented by the middle finger, ring finger, and little finger of the left hand, while, simultaneously, the tens are indicated by the positions of the index finger and thumb. On the right hand these latter two digits represent the hundreds, and the remaining three fingers, the thousands. Thus both hands can represent the numbers from 1 to 9,999 in a positional notation that may be read by the signer's interlocutor from their left to right, just as we do today.

When counting sequentially, the right hand is brought into use for the first time as the transition from 99 to 100 occurs. We find a reference to this moment in finger counting when Juvenal relates that since Nestor (at the siege of Troy) had happily lived to over 100 years old, he was able to count his years upon his right hand.[172] Playing on ancient notions of left- and right-handedness, the Marcosians associate the restoration of the one lost sheep to the ninety-nine, and thus the restoration of the Pleroma to its full number and perfection, with the transition away from the imperfection of the left to the perfection of the right. Our understanding of this passage may be further illuminated by comparison with the *Gospel of*

[171] For Bede's description and a survey of ancient, medieval, and Renaissance evidence for the Roman practice, see Karl Menninger, *Number Words and Number Symbols,* trans. Paul Broneer (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1969), 201-17.
[172] Juvenal, *Sat.* 10.247-50.

Truth, which I will discuss below and which shows affinities with this Marcosian exegesis of the parable of the Lost Sheep.[173]

There is one additional detail in the account of the Marcosians worth considering, not obviously connected to the gematria of their pleromatology, that occurs earlier (*Haer.* 1.14.1-2). This is the role of the sounds or voices that the aeons, as letters, produce when they are created.

> This teacher declares that the restitution of all things will take place, when all these, mixing into one letter, shall utter one and the same sound. He imagines that the emblem of this utterance is found in *Amen*, which we pronounce in concert. The diverse sounds (he adds) are those which give form to that aeon who is without material substance and unbegotten and these, again, are the forms which the Lord has called angels, "who continually behold the face of the Father." (Mt. 18.10)

What we have here, albeit preserved by Irenaeus in inchoate form, is the confluence of numerous exegetical elements: a detail from Mt. 18.10 that immediately precedes the parable of the Lost Sheep in Matthew, the word *Amen*, which has the gematrical value of 99, the same as the number of remaining sheep, etc., and the idea that sounds are produced by the aeons. I believe this may help shed light on the *Gospel of Truth*, where these details are again reproduced in somewhat different relation to one another.

8. We Are the Ninety-Nine: Participatory Soteriology in the *Gospel of Truth*

In the Valentinian text the *Gospel of Truth* (NHC I,*3*), we have a clear reference to the parable of the Lost Sheep. Numerous elements identify the parable in question: the shepherd who goes searching for the one that had gone astray, the ninety-nine sheep that

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[173] The connection between the Marcosians and *Gos. Truth* has been noted before; see W. C. Van Unnik, "The Recently Discovered 'Gospel of Truth' and the New Testament," in *The Jung Codex: A Newly Recovered Gnostic Papyrus,* trans. and ed. by F. L. Cross (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1955), 79-129; and Jacques Ménard, *L'Évangile de vérité* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 150.

are left in search of the one, and the shepherd's rejoicing upon its discovery. Like the Marcosians, the author of this text interprets the parable with the aid of the ancient method of finger counting discussed above, although here this fact is more recognizable. The parable is introduced within a discussion of "the beloved Son," who "appeared instructing them about the Father." The text reads as follows; the underlined verbs will be discussed immediately following:

> He became a way for those who were gone astray and knowledge for those who were ignorant, a discovery for those who were searching, and a support for those who were wavering, immaculateness for those who were defiled. He is the shepherd who left behind the ninety-nine sheep that were not lost. He went searching for the one that had gone astray. He rejoiced when he found it, for ninety-nine is a number that is in the left hand that holds it. But when the one is found, the entire number passes to the right (hand). As that which lacks the one – that is, the entire right (hand) – draws what was deficient and takes it from the left-hand side and brings (it) to the right, so too the number becomes one hundred. It is the sign of the one who is in their sound [or, voice]; it is the Father. Even on the Sabbath, he labored for the sheep which he found fallen into the pit. He gave life to the sheep, having brought it up from the pit in order that you might know interiorly – you, the sons of interior knowledge – what is the Sabbath, on which it is not fitting for salvation to be idle, in order that you may speak from the day from above, which has no night, and from the light which does not sink because it is perfect. (*Gos. Truth* 31.28-32.30)[174]

8.1. Literary Dependence Upon the Gospel of Matthew

It is now certain that the *Gospel of Truth* displays a literary dependence upon the Gospel of Matthew with regard to its use of this parable, as opposed to deriving it from the Gospel of Luke or the oral tradition. The sheep that is lost is elided with the one who had fallen into a pit and which should be rescued even on the Sabbath, familiar from the parable that Jesus tells on the occasion of his healing the man with the withered hand at

[174] Trans. Harold W. Attridge and George W. MacRae, *Coptic Gnostic Library,* vol. 1. In this chapter I follow this translation of the *Gospel of Truth* unless otherwise indicated.

Mt. 12.11; Luke's parallel has "a child or an ox" in place of a sheep, while Mark's version of this healing lacks the parable altogether. This creative joining of these two sheep from two different parables is, in turn, enabled by a detail found only in Matthew's version of the parable of the Lost Sheep and that was discussed above; namely, that the shepherd leaves the flock *on the mountain*. This detail suggested to numerous ancient interpreters that the one that was lost lies in a lower geometrical or ontological realm, here further typified by the pit of the second parable. Meanwhile, the Lukan version of the parable of the Lost Sheep contains unique elements which do not appear in *Gos. Truth:* the laying of the sheep upon the shoulders of the shepherd, and the shepherd's rejoicing in the company of his friends. The absence of these details from *Gos. Truth* provides additional evidence that Luke was very likely not a literary source for *Gos. Truth.*

W. C. Van Unnik drew early attention to New Testament allusions in the *Gospel of Truth,* and favored the Gospel of Matthew as a source for the parable of the Lost Sheep, partially on the basis of some of the verbal forms.[175] Cullen Story, in his analysis of this passage in *Gos. Truth,* has found even firmer evidence for a literary dependence upon the Gospel of Matthew. Story observed that "The five Coptic verbs (four in the perfect, one in the temporal tense) of which the shepherd is the subject, parallel exactly the verbal forms used in Matt. 18:12-14, including their order (ἀφήσει, πορευθείς, ζητεῖ, εὑρεῖν,

[175] In addition to noticing the Matthean verbs ἀφήσει and ζητεῖ, discussed below, W. C. Van Unnik had observed that the *Gos. Truth* contains references to "the little ones" of Mt. 18.6, 10, 14, and "the will of the Father" of Mt. 18.14, which form the immediate context of the parable of the Lost Sheep in Mt. 18.12-13. Van Unnik, "Gospel of Truth," 112-13. Tuckett, however, points out that these latter allusions are at some remove from the parable in *Gos. Truth* (19,27; 37,21). Tuckett, "Synoptic Tradition in the *Gospel of Truth*," 133n11. As I indicated above in the discussion of the Ptolemaeans known to Irenaeus, we may not use the terms describing the sheep to distinguish between reliance upon Matthew (πλανώμενον) or Luke (ἀπολωλός), as the Coptic ⲥⲱⲣⲙ̄ comprises both of these meanings: ⲛ̄ⲉⲥⲁⲩ ⲉⲧⲉⲙ̄ⲡⲟⲩⲥⲱⲣⲙ̄, "the sheep which had not gone astray / were not lost" (32,1); ⲡⲉⲉⲓ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϥⲥⲱⲣⲙ̄, "the one which had gone astray / become lost" (32,2-3).

χαίρει)."[176] I have underlined these verbs in the text above. Story's observation is essentially correct, although the five Coptic verbs are not exactly in the same order as in Matthew's parable; the final two (εὑρεῖν and χαίρει) are reversed, a point that previous commentators relying on Story have overlooked.[177] Nevertheless, the similarity is striking.

Story further observed that the four Matthean verbs in the active indicative or active participle forms appear translated into "perfect" ("past") Coptic verbs in *Gos. Truth,* while the fifth, the subjunctive plus infinitive (ἐὰν γένηταί εὑρεῖν αὐτό, "if he should happen to find it"), is translated into a "temporal" ("precursive") form (ⲛ̀ⲧⲁⲣⲉϥϩⲓⲛⲉ ⲙ̀ⲙⲁϥ, "when he found it").[178] This retention, in Coptic translation, of tense distinctions between four verbs on the one hand and the fifth on the other is all the more striking given that the author of the *Gospel of Truth* has converted the present conditional structure of Matthew's parable into a narrative about the good shepherd occurring in the past. These correspondences indicate that the Gospel of Matthew must have been a literary source for the parable in the Greek version of the *Gospel of Truth.*

[176] Cullen Story, *The Nature of Truth in "The Gospel of Truth",* 21.
[177] Tuckett, "Synoptic Tradition in the *Gospel of Truth,*" 133n11; Jacqueline A. Williams, *Biblical Interpretation in the Gnostic Gospel of Truth from Nag Hammadi* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 122n65.
[178] "Perfect" and "temporal" conjugations, terms used by Lambdin, correspond to Layton's "past" and "precursive" conjugation bases, respectively. Thomas O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Sahidic Coptic* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1983); Bentley Layton, *A Coptic Grammar,* 2nd ed. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004).

Matthew 18.12-13		
ἀφήσει	fut. act. ind.	leave[179]
πορευθείς	aor. act. part.	going[180]
ζητεῖ	pres. act. ind.	search
γένηταί + εὑρεῖν	pres. mid. subj. + aor. inf.	happen + to find
χαίρει	pres. act. ind.	rejoice

Gos. Truth (NHC I,*3*), 31.35 – 32.4		
ⲁϩⲕⲱⲉ	past	left
ⲁⲣⲉⲓ	past	went
ⲁⲣⲯⲓⲛⲉ	past	searched
ⲁⲣⲣⲉⲯⲉ	past	rejoiced
ⲛⲧⲁⲣⲉⲣⲥⲱⲛⲉ	precursive	when he found

Luke 15.4-6		
καταλείπει	pres. act. ind.	leave
πορεύεται	pres. mid. ind.	go
εὕρῃ	aor. act. ind.	find
εὑρὼν	aor. act. part.	finding
ἐπιτίθησιν	pres. act. ind.	lay
χαίρων	pres. act. part.	rejoicing
ἐλθὼν	aor. act. part.	coming
συγκαλεῖ	pres. act. ind.	summon
λέγων	pres. act. part.	saying

Table 3. Verbs in the Parable of the Lost Sheep

When we compare the verbs for which the shepherd is the subject in the parables of the Lost Sheep of Matthew, Luke, and *Gos. Truth* (NHC I,*3*), Story's implications become explicit (Table 3). This list also shows that the Gospel of Luke *cannot* have been a literary source for *Gos. Truth.* Luke's version contains twice the number of verbs, lacks the key

[179] Although future active in form, ἀφήσει is regularly translated (e.g., KJV, NASB, NRSV) as present active, as it is the first verb in the apodosis of a present general conditional sentence, and the remaining verbs are all either aorist or present.

[180] Technically πορευθείς is an aorist passive participle, but πορεύομαι is a deponent verb, passive in form but active in meaning.

verb ζητεῖν (to search or to seek), and does not show the correspondence of tenses with *Gos. Truth* that Story had observed for Matthew's version.[181]

8.2. Interpretation

The preceding analysis is significant because it shows that, like Irenaeus, the author of the *Gospel of Truth* had access to the Gospel of Matthew and drew upon it as a literary source even as he introduced a soteriological interpretation foreign to Matthew's idiom. Nevertheless, this interpretation, like Matthew's and unlike that of Irenaeus, is also paraenetic, as it exhorts the reader to identify with the shepherd and behave likewise. In addition, however, the *Gospel of Truth* simultaneously encourages the reader to self-identify with the ninety-nine sheep who remain upon the mountain, even as they strain with the shepherd towards the reassimilation of the lost one. We now turn to closer look at this interpretation and its context within the *Gospel of Truth.*

The author of this text differs from the Ptolemaeans and Marcosians with regard to the identification of the shepherd. Whereas those exegetes understood the shepherd to

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[181] The *Gospel of Truth* appears not only as the third tractate of Nag Hammadi Codex I but in fragmentary form in Codex XII, and a portion of the parable of the Lost Sheep occurs within one of the few Codex XII fragments, but there is little to work from there. The fragment in question is quite lacunous and breaks off shortly after the parable is introduced. From what remains, the only significant difference in the fragment's allusion to the parable is the (reconstructed) absence of a verb corresponding to "he went": whereas Codex I reads ⲁϥϵⲓ ⲁϥϣⲓⲛϵ, "he went and he sought," Codex XII probably has merely ⲁϥϣⲓⲛϵ, "he sought". The grammatical construction in Codex I, in which two main clauses in the past tense occur without any linking conjuction, is one that Bentley Layton terms "asyndetic linkage," and is a common Coptic method of translating a Greek participle followed by an indicative – in this case, πορευθείς ζητεῖ of Mt. 18.12. For discussion and numerous New Testament examples, see Layton, *A Coptic Grammar,* 182-3. If the proposed reconstruction is correct, therefore, Codex I's version is more faithful to the Matthean text than Codex XII's. All of the verbs in the fragment's allusion to the parable fall within lacunae, so there is no way to know for sure; in this particular instance we cannot entirely rule out a reconstruction such as ⲁϥϭⲓⲛϵ, "he found," which would represent an even further truncation of the Matthean parable in Codex XII than has been generally assumed. As Einar Thomassen has observed, "Unfortunately, the fragments are so small that a systematic study of the relationship between the two versions does not seem possible (and has, indeed, never been attempted)." (Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed,* 147.) For these reasons, therefore, we must set aside the Codex XII fragment, and for the present purpose I shall be working entirely from the Codex I text. For the fragments, see *Coptic Gnostic Library,* vol. 5, 2:329-47. I am grateful to my colleague Geoffrey Smith for numerous discussion of these issues.

signify a primordial being, in the *Gospel of Truth,* as with Irenaeus, the shepherd is clearly Jesus of Nazareth, the individual acting in historical time. This person is the one who "came by means of fleshly form" (31.4-6), taught in schools, confounded men who esteemed themselves to be wise and who tested him, taught the little children (19.17-30), and finally was "nailed to a tree" and "published the edict of the Father upon the cross" (18.24; 20.25-7). He is identified as "the hidden mystery, Jesus, the Christ" (18.15-6), "the beloved Son" (30.31-2), "the Word [of the Father]" (26.5; 23.33-4), and the Name of the Father (38.7ff). As the shepherd who came – in the past tense – in search of the lost one, we are very close to the cosmological drama of Christ as the Savior who acted in a decisive moment in historical time, as Irenaeus outlines in Book Three.

Yet this text also tells us that the shepherd acts in the eternal present through the agency of the *ekklēsia*; with the one lost sheep being any particular individual, an interpretation with some similarities to Irenaeus' presentation in Book Five. This interpretation is initially signified by the reference to the method of counting with one's hands, where the count switches from the left to the right hands between ninety-nine and one hundred. As I discussed earlier, Irenaeus records a garbled version of this association in his report of the Marcosian interpretation of this parable, while here it is more explicit and easily understood, with the left being understood as deficient and the right as complete.[182] Whereas in Irenaeus' view, Christ's ongoing agency through the *ekklēsia* occurs in the person of the bishop or presbyter, this text's inscribed readers are exhorted to participate in Christ's salvific activity, more along the lines of those members being exhorted by Chrysostom and Theodoret in their interpretations that I discussed earlier.

[182] Early discussions of the finger counting method in this text include Van Unnik, "Gospel of Truth," 96-7; and Grobel, *Gospel of Truth,* 129-131.

To unpack this, let us start at an earlier portion of the text, *Gos. Truth* 21.25ff:

> Those whose name he knew in advance were called at the end, so that one who has knowledge is the one whose name the Father has uttered. For he whose name has not been spoken is ignorant. Indeed, how is one to hear if his name has not been called?

Scholars have identified several possible scriptural allusions here, but this seems best explained as a combination of Rom. 8.29-30 ("For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son... and those whom he predestined he also called...") with John 10.3-4: "The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out... the sheep follow him, for they know his voice," and John 10.14: "I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me."[183] I find these particular identifications persuasive because of the important roles of the voice together with knowledge throughout the text. This means the metaphor of sheep is introduced at an early stage; this section of *Gos. Truth* is followed immediately by: "If he is called, he hears, he answers, and he turns to him who is calling him, and ascends to him. And he knows in what manner he is called. (etc.)" Although the sheep who are ontologically connected to the shepherd are only implicit here, they become explicit with the introduction of the allusion to the parable of the Lost Sheep on page 32 of the tractate.

The parable of the Lost Sheep comes, in my view, at the climax of the text, at the moment it switches from primarily descriptive prose about the prevailing situation to an exhortation to the reader to go out and spread the gospel. The parable functions as the turning point by encouraging the reader to identify as part of the ninety-nine sheep. Previously in this text, Jesus is described as not only the Word of the Father that came forth from the Pleroma (16.34-5), but the one who brings forth that very Word of the Father by

[183] Van Unnik, "Gospel of Truth," 118; Jacqueline Williams, *Biblical Interpretation,* 62-75, 121.

means of instruction that he gives in fleshly form (31.4-15). The very sound of his voice was revelatory (31.13-20), and when this Word enters the hearts of those who are his, they utter the Word, and the sound (ⲟⲩϩⲣⲁⲩ) these believers make is so significant that it represents a re-appearance of the Word, so that the sound may be described as a body that disturbs Error (26.4-8). The Word of the Father, then, spoken by the enlightened insiders, is the knowledge and the power that destroys and confounds those punishments and tortures which were leading some sheep astray (31.20-35). Each time a strayed one is found, this Word takes what was deficient and, by restoring it to the fold, makes both the individual and the *ekklēsia* complete, signified by the right-handed number one hundred.

Thus we may understand a cryptic line that has proved troubling for numerous interpreters – "It is the sign of the one who is in their sound/voice; it is the Father" (32.16-17) – as follows:

ⲡⲓⲙⲁⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲧⲛ̄ ⲡⲟⲩϩⲣⲁⲩ ⲡⲉ	It (the number 100) is the sign of the one (the lost one) who is (now) in (among) their (the 99's) sound/voice;
ⲡⲓⲱⲧ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲉⲉⲓ	it (the number 100) is the Father.

In other words, the enlightened insiders, or the ninety-nine, are those who have the Word within their hearts, and who utter it (cf. 26.5-6), and when they do so, they bring the one into the fold, thus doing the will of the Father.

That these insiders are to utter the Word, that is, the teaching, is shown immediately following this parable, when the text shifts from the third person to the second, and exhorts the reader to "Speak of the truth with those who search for it, and of knowledge to those who have committed sin in their error. Make firm the foot of those who have stumbled and stretch out your hands to those who are ill." (32.35-33.4) The

exhortations themselves may reflect influence from Matthew's Sermon on the Mount.[184] But what follows is also an exegesis of Mt. 18, the broader Matthean context of the parable of the Lost Sheep that I discussed above. Here the reader is encouraged to seek out the lost, to participate in the salvific activity of the Savior by drawing lost insiders back into the community. The final conclusion of this paraenetic section implores the reader: "So you, do the will of the Father, for you are from him." (*Gos. Truth* 33.32) This recalls again the Matthean closing of the parable, "So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." (Mt. 18.14)

Thus we have in *Gos. Truth* a combination of the soteriological and paraenetic interpretations of the parable. The inscribed readers are challenged to participate in the drama of salvation through their ministry to others, by self-identifying with both the shepherd and the ninety-nine sheep. This interpretation of the parable of the Lost Sheep preserves the paraenetic impulse of the parable as it appears in the Gospel of Matthew, on which it is dependent. Yet, by allegorizing the parable to read the shepherd as Christ, it has nevertheless produced as well a soteriological meaning. This move, in turn, paves the way for later, "orthodox" interpretations, such as that of Irenaeus, in which the new, comforting meaning of the parable becomes Christ's unique salvific activity and in which the paraenetic meaning from the canonical gospels is largely or entirely forgotten.[185]

My reading of the parable of the Lost Sheep in the *Gospel of Truth* supports two of Philip Tite's conclusions in his recent book on *Valentinian Ethics and Paraenetic Discourse,* in particular his insightful analysis of the paraenetic section of the *Gospel of Truth*

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[184] Desjardins, *Sin in Valentinianism,* 80; Jacqueline Williams, *Biblical Interpretation,* 119-28; Tite, *Valentinian Ethics,* 235-6.

[185] Implicit here is the assumption that the *Gospel of Truth* known from Nag Hammadi is the same text referred to by Irenaeus at *Haer.* 3.11.9. For a reasonable defense of this consensus view, see Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed,* 146-148.

immediately following the parable.[186] First, we have seen that this text uses the parable as a pivot point, from a description of the general situation in which members of the *ekklēsia* are lost in error and in need of knowledge, to the exhortation to the inscribed readers that they seek out the lost and be the source of that knowledge. These enlightened insiders may not rest easy; rather, having already been called out of error, they are exhorted to a "missionary function."[187] This shows that, as Tite has argued, we must read the paraenetic section as legitimate exhortation to moral activity rather than explaining it away as metaphor.[188] Second, it supports his conclusion that the intended audience of this text are not outsiders, such as members of the "orthodox" church, but rather enlightened insiders who once possessed the status of the lost sheep but are now within the fold; they are the ninety-nine. On this point I agree with Tite against the view of Harold W. Attridge, who has argued that *Gos. Truth* was an "exoteric text" designed to draw outsiders into the Valentinian community.[189]

9. Conclusion

It should be clear from this study of the parable of the Lost Sheep in Valentinian exegesis that Valentinian exegetes were full participants in the culture of early Christian

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[186] Philip L. Tite, *Valentinian Ethics and Paraenetic Discourse: Determining the Social Function of Moral Exhortation in Valentinian Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 233-84. The preceding discussion, as does Tite's analysis, builds upon the grammatical and structural analysis of Cullen Story, *Nature of Truth,* 21-23; however, Story's conclusions are nevertheless clouded by his assumption that the text was "Gnostic."
[187] Tite, *Valentinian Ethics,* 235.
[188] Tite resists Kendrick Grobel's earlier, metaphorical reading of this section of the *Gospel of Truth,* which was necessary in order for him to align the obvious paraenesis in the text with the commonplace that "Gnostics are generally held to have been devoid of ethical concern" (Grobel, *Gospel of Truth,* 141; see Tite, *Valentinian Ethics,* 234). As I stated in Chapter 1, these kinds of assumptions about "gnostics" are unhelpful; in cases like this they actually introduce more confusion and obscure our readings of the ancient sources.
[189] Harold W. Attridge, "The Gospel of Truth as an Exoteric Text," in *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and Early Christianity,* ed. Charles W. Hedrick and Robert Hodgson, Jr. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1986), 239-55. See also Harold W. Attridge and George W. MacRae, "The Gospel of Truth: Introduction," *Coptic Gnostic Library,* vol. 1, 1:55-81 (79-81).

interpretation of Scripture. The variety of interpretations of this parable among Valentinians and retrospectively orthodox exegetes surveyed here has demonstrated that it is very difficult indeed to isolate measurable criteria for constituting an "orthodox" versus "heretical" interpretation of this parable, because the constituent elements of its various interpretations do not line up according to this distinction. On the contrary, by remaining faithful to the paraenetic thrust of this parable from Matthew, the interpretation in the *Gospel of Truth* might well be said to be more "orthodox" than that of either Irenaeus or the other Valentinians that Irenaeus reports about.

More importantly, we have seen that the Valentinians were the first exegetes on record to allegorically interpret the parable of the Lost Sheep so that it pointed to Christ's unique salvific activity, in what I have called the soteriological interpretation. This interpretation is distinct from both Luke's use of the parable to indicate Jesus' role-modeling of ethical behavior, and the paraenetic interpretation that exhorts all members of the *ekklēsia* to ethical behavior as in both Luke and Matthew. The allegorical, soteriological interpretation of this parable was innovated by the Valentinians and, soon thereafter, was adopted by Irenaeus. By the late second century, the Valentinians must have been important conversation partners with Irenaeus and other Christians who were not only working out theological matters, but developing new reading strategies for the apostolic texts that were quickly coming to have the same authority as the Hebrew Scriptures. Although we cannot prove beyond a certainty that Irenaeus first learned of this exegetical method from them, it nevertheless seems quite likely: we have his own testimony that they used it before he did, we know that he was in personal contact with them, and we do not know of allegorical interpretation of the apostolic texts from any other source in the historical record prior to Irenaeus.

As I concluded the previous chapter, I raised the question: if the difference in exegetical method between Irenaeus and his Valentinian opponents was not what he said it was, then what was it? Perhaps their utilization of "spiritual" reading strategies, hitherto applied only to the Hebrew Scriptures and now turned upon the teachings of Jesus, was part of what first drew Irenaeus' attention to the Valentinians. If, behind all of Irenaeus' rhetoric, he sees a bona fide exegetical difference between Valentinian Christians and all previous Christian interpreters, perhaps this is it. However, he nevertheless appropriates this move in his own exegesis, making his own allegorical interpretations of the parable of the Lost Sheep, as well as numerous other pericopes from the four gospels and other texts that were in the process of being canonized into a New Testament. Therefore, as I demonstrated in the last chapter, his criticism of their methodology cannot but run aground on the shoals of inconsistency.

Previous scholarship, as I indicated at the beginning of this chapter, has credited Irenaeus with the innovation of allegorization of the Gospel of Matthew and other New Testament texts. What has gone unrecognized, due to the exclusion of Valentinians and other "Gnostics" from the study of church history, is that Irenaeus was not the first Christian thinker to do so. Rather, his predecessors in this way of thinking exegetically, and most likely his own inspiration for this exegetical move, are none other than the Valentinian thinkers whom he so roundly denigrates in his polemical treatise as "wicked interpreters of well-said words."[190] Therefore, the case of the parable of the Lost Sheep shows that we ought to bring the Valentinian writings more thoroughly into the study of early Christian history not merely because they are lost voices. They are that, but much more: rather than representing a later, heretical deviation from an early and pure orthodox hermeneutical

[190] *Haer.* 1.prf.1; c.f. my Chapter 2.

tradition, on the contrary, the Valentinians turn out to be an important step on the road toward an "orthodox" exegesis of Scripture.

IV. Pure and Hybridized Strains of the Parable of the Sower

1. Introduction

Unlike the parable of the Lost Sheep of the previous chapter, and, indeed, most of the parables in the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus himself provides the disciples with an interpretation of the parable of the Sower soon after telling it. Despite the presence of a dominical interpretation that is virtually identical in its Matthean, Markan, and Lukan versions, however, this parable would, in the second century, give rise to multiple exegetical traditions. In the first section of this chapter, I analyze the parable within its Synoptic Gospel contexts in order to shed light on why this may have been the case. I suggest that an ambiguity contained in the Synoptics' dominical interpretation on a key point – whether the hearers of the word are meant to be the soil, or the seed – not only failed to close down exegetical options, but, in fact, contributed to their variety.

I then turn to the exegesis of this parable in Valentinian and retrospectively orthodox authors. This analysis suggests that early Christians used this parable mainly in two very different ways. On the one hand, a reading of the parable that encourages the hearer to self-identify as the "good soil" is employed in paedagogical contexts that exhort the reader to reflect upon her spiritual growth. This exegetical orientation, I argue, is close to what I find the Synoptic meaning to be. My examples for this category of interpretation are the conclusion of Ptolemy's *Epistle to Flora,* and the introduction to Clement of Alexandria's *Stromata,* in which the parable is used in essentially the same way.

However, like all passages of Scripture, the parable of the Sower is susceptible to being used in contexts in which material from other Scriptures are spliced in like alien DNA. The parable of the Sower is often exegetically recombined with the parable of the

Tares, a parable unique to Matthew and which follows in his Gospel immediately after his dominical interpretation of the parable of the Sower. Narrative elements from the parable of the Tares, including its notion of "good seed" (as compared to the "good soil" of the parable of the Sower), and its binary structure (compared with the quaternary structure of the parable of the Sower), are conjoined in early Christian exegesis with the essential element from the parable of the Sower, that "the seed is the Word," to create a new, hybrid parable with a meaning that I argue is not found in either Synoptic parable in isolation. This meaning, in general terms, has to do with the issue of problematic diversity within the *ekklēsia.*

It is here that we find a significant exegetical difference between Valentinian and retrospectively orthodox exegetes. For having participated in the same Christian culture of reading that has produced a hybrid parable upon whose topic the exegetes all agree, they disagree on an appropriate response to that diversity and, in turn, on the specific meaning of the Sower-Tares hybrid parable. The Valentinian text *The Interpretation of Knowledge* advocates a response to religious diversity that encourages recognition of varied levels of spiritual progress. In contrast, Tertullian locates this hybrid parable at the center of his argument in *The Prescription Against Heretics* about the temporal priority of truth and orthodoxy, and the comparative lateness of falsehood and heresy.

2. The Parable of the Sower: Gospel Contexts

For the convenience of the reader, the parable of the Sower, according to Matthew, is as follows (Mt. 13.3-9):

> 3. Καὶ ἐλάλησεν αὐτοῖς πολλὰ ἐν παραβολαῖς λέγων· ἰδοὺ ἐξῆλθεν ὁ σπείρων τοῦ σπείρειν. 4. καὶ ἐν τῷ σπείρειν αὐτὸν ἃ μὲν ἔπεσεν παρὰ τὴν ὁδόν, καὶ ἐλθόντα τὰ πετεινὰ κατέφαγεν αὐτά. 5. ἄλλα δὲ ἔπεσεν

ἐπὶ τὰ πετρώδη ὅπου οὐκ εἶχεν γῆν πολλήν, καὶ εὐθέως ἐξανέτειλεν διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν βάθος γῆς· 6. ἡλίου δὲ ἀνατείλαντος ἐκαυματίσθη καὶ διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν ῥίζαν ἐξηράνθη. 7. ἄλλα δὲ ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ τὰς ἀκάνθας, καὶ ἀνέβησαν αἱ ἄκανθαι καὶ ἔπνιξαν αὐτά. 8. ἄλλα δὲ ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν τὴν καλὴν καὶ ἐδίδου καρπόν, ὃ μὲν ἑκατόν, ὃ δὲ ἑξήκοντα, ὃ δὲ τριάκοντα. 9. ὁ ἔχων ὦτα ἀκουέτω.

3. And he told them many things in parables, saying, "Listen! A sower went out to sow. 4. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. 5. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. 6. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. 7. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. 8. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth fruit, one a hundredfold, one sixty, and one thirty. 9. Let anyone with ears listen!"[1]

In the previous chapter, I indicated that the parable of the Lost Sheep came embedded within two very different Synoptic contexts, each of which required their own literary and historical-critical analyses in order that we might arrive at likely Synoptic meanings of the parable – and I suggested that Matthew and Luke, owing to the way they framed the parable, clothed it with somewhat different meanings. With the parable of the Sower, we seem – at first glance – to be on much more solid ground as to its Synoptic meaning, despite its appearing in not two but all three Synoptic Gospels. This is because in Mark's Gospel, Jesus himself provides his own, allegorical interpretation of the parable at the disciples' request, and Matthew and Luke have preserved, with only minor changes, both Mark's immediate setting and his dominical interpretation. Despite the concord across the triple tradition, however, this parable produces in the second century two very different exegetical traditions, a divergence that is all the more ironic considering that Jesus himself has already interpreted the parable for the disciples and the reader. Part of the

[1] Here I have followed the NRSV with two exceptions. The key term καρπόν I have translated "fruit" (NRSV: grain) in order to underscore the link to its subsequent dominical interpretation; and the three neuter nominative singular relative pronouns (ὅ) of verse 8 I have kept in the singular, for reasons that will become clear in my discussion, below.

reason for this situation may be that this "interpretation" is less helpful than it at first seems to be.[2]

Again for the reader's convenience, here is Matthew's version of the dominical interpretation (Mt. 13.18-23):

> 18. Ὑμεῖς οὖν ἀκούσατε τὴν παραβολὴν τοῦ σπείραντος. 19. παντὸς ἀκούοντος τὸν λόγον τῆς βασιλείας καὶ μὴ συνιέντος ἔρχεται ὁ πονηρὸς καὶ ἁρπάζει τὸ ἐσπαρμένον ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ, οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ παρὰ τὴν ὁδὸν σπαρείς. 20. ὁ δὲ ἐπὶ τὰ πετρώδη σπαρείς, οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ τὸν λόγον ἀκούων καὶ εὐθὺς μετὰ χαρᾶς λαμβάνων αὐτόν, 21. οὐκ ἔχει δὲ ῥίζαν ἐν ἑαυτῷ ἀλλὰ πρόσκαιρός ἐστιν, γενομένης δὲ θλίψεως ἢ διωγμοῦ διὰ τὸν λόγον εὐθὺς σκανδαλίζεται. 22. ὁ δὲ εἰς τὰς ἀκάνθας σπαρείς, οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ τὸν λόγον ἀκούων, καὶ ἡ μέριμνα τοῦ αἰῶνος καὶ ἡ ἀπάτη τοῦ πλούτου συμπνίγει τὸν λόγον καὶ ἄκαρπος γίνεται. 23. ὁ δὲ ἐπὶ τὴν καλὴν γῆν σπαρείς, οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ τὸν λόγον ἀκούων καὶ συνιείς, ὃς δὴ καρποφορεῖ καὶ ποιεῖ ὃ μὲν ἑκατόν, ὃ δὲ ἑξήκοντα, ὃ δὲ τριάκοντα.
>
> 18. "Hear then the parable of the sower. 19. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in his heart; this is what was sown on the path. 20. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21. yet such a person has no root in himself, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. 22. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. 23. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."[3]

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[2] As I indicated in the introduction to Chapter 3 (q.v.), numerous commentators have observed that the dominical interpretation of the parable of the Sower supplied in the Synoptic tradition does not fit the parable very well, and have therefore concluded that it must be a "secondary redaction" of either Mark or one of his predecessors in the early church. This question, however, does not impact subsequent interpretation of the Synoptic versions of this parable.

[3] Here I have largely followed the NRSV, with three exceptions where I have supplied supplemental phrasing from the RSV. In one case, as in the translation of the parable itself, the NRSV obscures the vocabulary link with the key term καρποφορεῖ ("bears fruit," verse 23) by translating ἄκαρπος γίνεται (verse 22) as "yields nothing"; I have restored the RSV's "proves unfruitful." In two other cases, I have reintroduced gender-specific language in order to enable the close reading that follows in my text. In this passage, the NRSV corrects eight instances of gender-specific language found in the RSV. However, in my view, two of these eight instances better clarify the sense of the passage if they are rendered according to the phrasing of the RSV: "in his heart" rather than "in the heart," and "has no root in himself," which the NRSV translates simply as "has no root." For the purposes that follow, the RSV's phrasing is preferable in these cases.

According to Jesus' interpretation, the seed is the word. Jesus states this explicitly in Mark ("The sower sows the word") and Luke ("The seed is the word of God"), and implies it in Matthew ("When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart..."). Therefore, in general terms, the four kinds of soil represent three types of ways in which the word might not take root and thus remain "unfruitful" (ἄκαρπος),[4] and a fourth, "the good soil" (τὴν καλὴν γῆν),[5] in which the word takes root and "bears fruit" (καρποφορεῖ).[6] As the parable and its interpretation are linked by a short discourse on the reason Jesus teaches in parables, it seems evident that in the Synoptic contexts the sower must represent both God the Father as the ultimate source of the seed or word, and Jesus (and, subsequently, the apostles) as God's agents.

It would seem, then, that the various types of soil represent people hearing or receiving the word (the seed), and the parable is meant to describe four possible outcomes. This interpretation admittedly does not distinguish between whether there might be four *ontologically* different types of persons, or, less radically, four classes of persons according to their mastery of spiritual practice and awareness, or whether there are simply four classes of outcomes, any of which might apply to any person given their more immediate situation. Either of the latter two possibilities might render the parable into a self-critical question for the hearer, challenging the self-assuredness and self-satisfaction that may come as a result of their being a member of the *ekklēsia.*[7]

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[4] Mt. 13.22 || Mk. 4.19; Lk. 8.14 has instead οὐ τελεσφοροῦσιν, "they do not bring [themselves] to perfection."
[5] Mt. 13.23 || Lk. 8.15. Mt. 13.8, Mk. 4.8, and Mk. 4.20 have the equivalent phrase, τὴν γῆν τὴν καλὴν. Lk. 8.8 has τὴν γῆν τὴν ἀγαθὴν, however, with significant contamination in the manuscript tradition owing to scribal harmonization.
[6] Mt. 13.23; Mk. 4.20 and Lk. 8.15 have the same verb in the plural, καρποφοροῦσιν.
[7] Thus Luz, *Matthew,* 2:250-1.

However, even setting aside the question of what types of persons are indicated by the various soils, the "interpretation" becomes less clear upon closer examination. For Jesus simultaneously implies that the people hearing the word might not be the soil, but the seeds themselves. All three Synoptics indicate that the seeds that have fallen into different circumstances represent the people hearing the word and then reacting in various ways. These "ones" are signified only by definite articles, in the masculine singular (ὁ) in Matthew, and masculine plural (οἱ) in Mark and Luke, thus pointing to the persons the seeds symbolize rather than the actual seeds – for which we would expect neuter singular or plural articles for the implied σπέρμα or σπόρος. In fact, Matthew had clearly indicated the fallen seeds by means of neuter plural pronouns in the original telling of the parable at verse 4ff. (ἃ μὲν ἔπεσεν... ἄλλα δὲ ἔπεσεν...). Likewise, the seeds that bore fruit in various measures are again indicated by three neuter singular pronouns in verse 8 (ὃ μὲν ἑκατόν, ὃ δὲ ἑξήκοντα, ὃ δὲ τριάκοντα); Matthew repeats this phrase verbatim when closing the dominical interpretation in verse 23. It is therefore all the more striking that he has shifted to masculine singular pronouns in his interpretation of the various types of seeds, thus suggesting that the seeds in fact are, or become, persons.

In addition to the syntactic evidence for this interpretation, this relationship is also made clear at a semantic level from the immediate (sentence-level) context.

For example, consider "the one" on rocky ground (Mt. 13.20-21):

> 20. ὁ δὲ ἐπὶ τὰ πετρώδη σπαρείς, οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ τὸν λόγον ἀκούων καὶ εὐθὺς μετὰ χαρᾶς λαμβάνων αὐτόν, 21. οὐκ ἔχει δὲ ῥιζαν ἐν ἑαυτῷ ἀλλὰ πρόσκαιρός ἐστιν, γενομένης δὲ θλίψεως ἢ διωγμοῦ διὰ τὸν λόγον εὐθὺς σκανδαλίζεται.

Let us walk through this analogy piece by piece. "As for the one sown on rocky ground" – i.e., the person is the seed – "this is the one who hears the word and immediately

receives it with joy" – i.e., now the person is once again the rocky ground, who received the seed – "yet such a person has no root in himself" – i.e., the person has now reverted to the young plant, which has grown from the seed – "but endures only for a while [lit., "is temporary," like a plant that will not survive], and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away" – i.e., as a dying seedling falls to the earth, this person has failed to reach maturity.

Likewise, the seeds falling among thorns or into good soil represent, respectively, a seedling that is choked by the cares of the world, and one who "hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit." This ambiguity of what signifies the hearer, the seed or the soil, is disrupted only in the first case, that of the seeds that fell on the path; in this case, Matthew tells us that "the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in his heart." Thus in the first case the person (or his heart) is *only* the path (a kind of soil), rather than the seed. In Mark and Luke, the asymmetry created by the first case is further complicated by the introduction of actual human beings into the metaphorical level of the parable, in the form of "the ones on the path," while Matthew smoothes this over by introducing somewhat vaguer language.[8] C. H. Dodd writes that the dominical interpretation "is confused. The seed is the Word: yet the crop which comes up is composed of various classes of people... Two inconsistent lines of interpretation have been mixed up."[9] We should also observe that understanding the hearers of the word as seeds rather than soil leaves unanswered the question I raised earlier, of whether the various

[8] As Luz puts it (*Matthew,* 2:248), "Matthew formulates somewhat more clearly [than Mark] in v. 19 by avoiding an explicit identification of the seed with the proclaimed word, but he does so at the cost of a rather unwieldy participial construction. However, he also does not completely avoid the difficulties. Thus for him the seeds are, as in v.38 [i.e. his interpretation of the parable of the Tares], primarily the people who hear the word."

[9] Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom,* 3-4.

classes of people are distinguished on the basis of ontology, or spiritual training, or are entirely situational.

In summary, then, the parable presents a paradox for the reader: it at first seems easily understandable, and yet within the Synoptic context(s) its symbols are already polyvalent. There is, of course, a wondrous irony in the fact that a parable that purports to be about the difficulty of understanding parables should itself be so hard to isolate to a single meaning – even when Jesus has provided an "interpretation." Although the details are difficult to fix, a generous reading of the Synoptic texts would affirm that this difficulty is, in fact, appropriate, for there can be no doubt that on its basic level, the parable of the Sower is a parable about parables, or a meditation about the various hearers of Jesus' proclamation and their varied responses to it.[10]

Yet the ambiguity inherent to the parable in its Synoptic form is reflected in its exegesis among early Christians. From the second century onward, two traditions of interpretation are distinguishable, according to whether the hearers of the parable are understood to be "the good soil" or "the good seed." Both exegetical traditions are witnessed by both Valentinian and retrospectively orthodox writers.

3. The Hearer As "The Good Soil": Interpretations On Spiritual Reflection

3.1. Ptolemy's *Epistle to Flora*

Among Valentinian sources, one example of the interpretation according to which the hearer of the word is "the good soil" comes at the very conclusion of Ptolemy's *Epistle to Flora.* I will examine this text in detail in the following chapter, but for our current purposes it is sufficient to observe that this text is a philosophical epistle written to instruct

[10] Here I agree with Luz, *Matthew,* 2:244; but see idem, 2:238-251, for other possibilities even at this level.

its recipient, an educated woman and student of the author, on a specific theological issue. Ptolemy brings the *Epistle* to a conclusion with an appeal to the truth of what he has written on two grounds: "the apostolic tradition which I also have received in turn, together with the assessment of all of these statements against the standard of the teaching of our Savior."[11] He then writes:[12]

Ταῦτά σοι, ὦ ἀδελφή μου Φλώρα, δι᾽ ὀλίγων εἰρημένα οὐκ ἠτόνησα· καὶ τὸ τῆς συντομίας προέγραψα ἅμα μὲν τὸ προκείμενον ἀποχρώντως ἐξέφηνα, ἃ καὶ εἰς τὰ ἑξῆς τὰ μέγιστά σοι συμβαλεῖται,	My sister Flora, I have taken great pains to tell you these things in but a few words, and I have written this with brevity, but at the same time I have adequately clarified the above; and in the future they will bring the utmost benefit to you,
ἐάν γε ὡς καλὴ γῆ καὶ ἀγαθὴ γονίμων σπερμάτων τυχοῦσα τὸν δι᾽ αὐτῶν καρπὸν ἀναδείξῃς.	if you, much like good and fair soil, having received fertile seeds, allow to bring forth the fruit that grows from them.

Here the emphases on the recipient as "good and fair soil" which allows the seeds to bear "fruit" are good indications that the parable of the Sower is in mind. Both γῆ and καρπός are the terms used in all three Synoptic Gospels; the γῆ is characterized as καλή in Matthew and Mark, and ἀγαθή in Luke; that Ptolemy describes Flora as ὡς καλὴ γῆ καὶ ἀγαθὴ suggests that he may have harmonized the Synoptic versions, perhaps unintentionally. Owing to the fact that the verbs differ from those of the Synoptic Gospels, it is not possible to determine dependence on any one gospel's version with any more specificity, other than to acknowledge that elsewhere in *Flora* Ptolemy is heavily dependent upon Matthew.[13]

[11] *Flor.* 7.9.
[12] *Flor.* 7.10.
[13] See Massaux, *Influence,* 286-7, and my Chapter 5.

It is also of note that Ptolemy, after having identified himself as standing within the apostolic tradition, implicitly associates himself with the sower. Given the understanding of the succession of apostolic teaching that had arisen in the early church (a source of authority that Ptolemy himself draws upon in his conclusion to the letter), casting himself as the sower could be a natural outgrowth of the more limited association of the sower as Jesus himself. Ptolemy's contemporary and fellow denizen of Rome, Justin Martyr, likewise drew upon this parable in order to characterize his own speech acts as those of a sower. At a moment in the *Dialogue* when his audience remains silent in the face of one of his questions, Justin continues:

> Well, I shall give you what I think is the explanation. For I do not believe it is right not to speak... I do not hesitate for a moment to speak out simply and frankly, as my Lord said, "A sower went out to sow his seed, and some fell by the wayside, some among thorns, some upon rocky ground, and some upon good ground." One must therefore speak in the hope that his words will, somehow, fall upon good ground.[14]

Justin's "quotation" succinctly summarizes the Synoptic parable without being a direct quotation of any particular evangelist, and his application is very similar to the line taken by Ptolemy in the conclusion to his *Epistle.* On the basis of considerations such as these, numerous scholars have likewise identified the closing line of Ptolemy's epistle as an allusion to the parable of the Sower.[15] Certainly Ptolemy is using the analogy consistent with its Synoptic context, and given his knowledge of the Gospel of Matthew, it is fair to say that he is making an allusion to the parable.

However, the use of sowing and its fruits as an analogy for education also had its precedents in Greco-Roman literature. It is this tradition that Justin must certainly have

[14] *Dial.* 125.1-2; trans. Falls.
[15] E.g., Quispel, *Lettre à Flora,* 105; Painchaud, "L'utilisation," 421.

been building upon, and I suggest Ptolemy was as well. For example, a work attributed to the Classical Greek physician Hippocrates of Kos contains the following extended analogy:

> The learning of medicine may be likened to the growth of plants. Our natural ability is the soil. The views of our teachers are, as it were, the seeds. Learning from childhood is analogous to the seeds' falling at the right time upon the prepared ground. The place of instruction is, as it were, the nutriment that comes from the surrounding air to the things sown. Diligence is the working of the soil. Time strengthens all these things, so that their nurture is perfected.[16]

A more recent precedent is found in one of the *Moral Letters to Lucilius* by Seneca (d. 65 C.E.), which in basic genre and function bear a few resemblances to Ptolemy's *Epistle to Flora.* Like the latter, Seneca's *Epistulae* were private letters sent from tutor to pupil; furthermore, each author was faced with a student who currently favored one flavor of teaching, from which the author attempted to lead them in a new direction. In Seneca's case, he wrote his pupil Lucilius, hitherto a devotee of Epicureanism, numerous letters concerning points of Stoic philosophy – or, at least, Seneca's particular eclectic version of it.[17] This example suggests that the simile of seeds, as the words fallen from the mouth of an orator, was widespread in Greco-Roman *paideia:*

> Words should be scattered like seed; no matter how small the seed may be, if it has once found favourable ground, it unfolds its strength and from an insignificant thing spreads to its greatest growth... Few words are spoken; but if the mind has truly caught them, they come into their strength and spring up. Yes, precepts and seeds have the same quality; they produce much, and yet they are slight things. Only, as I said, let a favourable mind receive and assimilate them. Then of itself the mind also will produce bounteously in its turn, giving back more than it has received.[18]

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[16] *Lex* 3, attributed to Hippocrates. Quoted in Collins, *Mark,* 245.
[17] These impressions of Seneca's *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium* taken from Richard M. Gummere's introduction to the LCL edition, vii-xii.
[18] *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium* 38.2. Additional examples of creative adaptations of this *topos* include (a) 1 Cor 3.6-9, in which Paul represents Apollos as a fellow teacher who watered what Paul had planted; and (b) Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.prf.1, as discussed in Chapter 2; in this example Irenaeus draws directly on the Greco-Roman *topos* without alluding to the Synoptic parable.

In the final line of this example, we may hear the specific reference to the multiplication within the soil of the seed's original number or value, a concept that Matthew and Mark represent as the hundredfold, sixtyfold, or thirtyfold yield.

Given these precedents, we should hear Ptolemy's closing simile not only as an allusion to the parable of the Sower but as simultaneously participating in a broader Greco-Roman utilization of an analogy that represented either a public speaker or a private tutor as sowing seed with his words. We may likewise assume, of course, that the Synoptic Gospels themselves are participating in and adapting this widespread analogy.[19] Yet Ptolemy seems to be adapting the specific language of the Synoptic parable to the general analogy, as Justin certainly was. Although Ptolemy quotes verbatim from the Gospel of Matthew several times in his letter (as we shall see in Chapter 5), at the conclusion of his epistle he is content merely to make an allusion to the parable of the Sower, via the use of the phrase ὡς καλὴ γῆ καὶ ἀγαθὴ; that is, a particular description of his student as "good and fair soil" that we do not find in any other contemporary literature. This suggests that in his final argument, Ptolemy uses language taken from "the teaching of our Savior" to supplement a well-known simile that already would have been known to his pupil from the broader Greco-Roman culture, thus doubling the rhetorical force of the analogy.

3.2. CLEMENT'S *STROMATA*

Ptolemy's allusion to the parable of the Sower is not so different from the application by Clement of Alexandria in the introduction to his *Stromata (Miscellanies).* Among the numerous analogies involving seeds and sowing that Clement makes in Book One of this treatise, three in particular, all from the first chapter, will suffice to illustrate the

[19] Thus Collins, *Mark,* 245-6.

common exegetical ground shared by these two thinkers. As the very beginning of the *Stromata* is lost, and as we commence the text in the middle of an argument that extends throughout the entire first chapter, I will not proceed through this chapter in strict order, but rather will use the later examples to shed light on the earlier ones. All of the examples are taken from *Stromata* I.I.[20]

Clement devotes the beginning of his tractate to the rhetorical defense of his decision to commit his thoughts in the form of the written word, against an imagined accuser's charge that it would be far preferable to pass down these teachings orally, as Clement himself had learned them orally from his tutors. He concedes that "the writing of these memoranda of mine, I well know, is weak when compared with that spirit, full of grace, which I was privileged to hear." But this is no reason, he contends, why good men should not also record wisdom, given that the composers of fables and slanders, and even atheists, should be allowed to produce written compositions. Besides, he writes, this written testimony has the advantage of not allowing the instruction that his tutors had bequeathed to him to escape on account of loss of memory. Rather, he says, "my memoranda are stored up against an old age, as a remedy against forgetfulness of those vigorous and animated discourses which I was privileged to hear, and of blessed and truly remarkable men." These tutors, he continues, preserved "the true tradition of the blessed teaching derived directly from the holy apostles, Peter, James, John, and Paul," and they then passed it on to him, and so it then fell to him also, by the will of God, "to deposit those ancestral and apostolic seeds" (τὰ προγονικὰ ἐκεῖνα καὶ ἀποστολικὰ καταθησόμενοι

[20] In this chapter I follow the *ANF* translation with few modifications. In stark contrast to the *ANF* translation of Irenaeus, their translation of Clement is quite good.

σπέρματα). Thus he suggests that his forefathers in the apostolic succession will exult on account of Clement's preservation of the truth within these memoranda.

Thus Clement likens the wisdom that he records within the *Stromata* as seeds that he, the "laborer of the Lord" will sow. We have here so far two points of similarity with Ptolemy's use of the same analogy. However, this is not all. Earlier in the same introduction, Clement performs an exegesis of Proverbs using the hermeneutic lens of the parable of the Sower. He states:

> Solomon says, "My son, if thou receive the saying of my commandment, and hide it with thee, thine ear shall hear wisdom." (Prov. 2.1-2a, LXX) He [Solomon] points out [with this saying] that the word that is sown is hidden in the soul of the learner, as in the earth, and this is spiritual planting. Which is why he also adds, "And thou shalt apply thine heart to understanding, and apply it for the admonition of my son." (Prov. 2.2b, LXX) For soul, I suspect, joined with soul, and spirit with spirit, in the sowing of the word, will make that which is sown grow and germinate.

In fact, in neither the Septuagint nor the Masoretic text of Proverbs does the passage discuss the sowing of wisdom or words like seeds. Rather, Clement's dependency upon the parable of the Sower for his exegesis of these lines from Proverbs is evident both in the immediate context and immediately thereafter, when he invokes this parable to explain that while written compositions are for the many, knowledge does not belong to all:

> "That is why," says the Lord, "I speak to them in parables, because (ὅτι) seeing, they see not; and hearing, they hear not, and do not understand"...

This proof text is a direct quotation of Mt. 13.13, Matthew's version of the Synoptic "theory of parables," the parallels in Mk. 4.12 and Lk. 8.10 being sufficiently distinct in wording to allow the identification of the Matthean version. In all three Synoptics, this reason for speaking in parables is inserted in between the parable of the Sower and its dominical interpretation. Of particular importance to Clement is Matthew's ὅτι ("because"), in contrast to Mark's and Luke's ἵνα ("so that"). Matthew's critical

grammatical adjustment significantly softens Mark's harsh pronouncement that Jesus spoke to the people in parables *in order to* intentionally keep them in darkness, a theological position Albert Schweitzer would characterize as "repellent."[21] Clement would have agreed with Schweitzer, as he selectively ignores Mark's and Luke's versions[22] in order to swiftly continue with an apologetic commentary, "...not as if the Lord caused the ignorance: for it were impious to think so; but he prophetically exposed this ignorance that existed in them, and intimated that they would not understand the things spoken."

Clement's interpretation of Matthew's ὅτι clause is one of the two main interpretive options. As Frank Kermode explains this view,

> It is only because the people lack understanding that the parables will have the effect of keeping them from the secrets of the kingdom. The implication is that the exclusion arises not from the speaker's intention, but from the stupidity of his hearers, so that the blame is theirs. This gives the parables the same effect as they have in Mark's theory, while avoiding his candid avowal that the telling of them was designed to have that effect.[23]

Clement's direct quotation of Mt. 13.13 reinforces the impression that the preceding imagery of the seed as the sown word is an intentional allusion to the parable of the Sower, which Clement has brought in to illuminate the verses from Proverbs. Through the accumulation of these scriptural proof texts, Clement is able to make the case that not only are both the speaker and the writer able to proclaim the Word, but the responsibility to communicate the seeds of truth lies not only with the messenger, but with the recipient –

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[21] Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, trans. W. Montgomery (New York: Macmillan,1968), 263. Observed by Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy,*30.

[22] Clement had a firm knowledge of all the Synoptic Gospels and read them selectively; see especially *Quis dives salvetur (Who is the rich man who will be saved?),* which skillfully weaves together narrative details from all three Synoptic versions of the pericope of the rich man seeking salvation. I am grateful to Bruce Beck for this observation.

[23] Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy,* 31. The other main interpretive option, favored by numerous modern commentators, is that the fact of the hardening of the people's hearts is what leads Jesus to speak in parables in the first place, as a paedagogical solution. Kermode (30) paraphrases this interpretation of Jesus' explanation as follows: "As Isaiah remarked, their stupidity is extremely tiresome; this seems the best way to get through to them."

be she either hearer or reader. The imagery from the parable of the Sower is thus apt for communicating this initial exhortation to the reader – albeit in Clement's elliptical way of expressing himself – to be "good soil."

A third time in *Stromata* 1.1 does Clement return to this imagery, when he again contrasts the labor of the oral teacher with that of the recorder of written wisdom. Clement says that "he that speaks through books" does not have the advantages that come with the face-to-face interaction of teacher with pupil, but must trust that the reaping of what he has sown through his writing will come at a future time. However, "he who addresses those who are present before him," he explains,

> both tests them by time, and judges by his judgment, and from the others distinguishes him who can hear; watching the words, the manners, the habits, the life, the motions, the attitudes, the look, the voice; the road, the rock, the beaten path, the fruitful land, the wooded region, the fertile and fair and cultivated spot, that is able to multiply the seed.

That is, by spending significant periods of time with one's students and getting to know them deeply, the teacher may discern what type of soil they are: whether they are a type which "can hear," and thus able to bear fruit from the seed which was given them. In this short passage we may see a colorful extension of the imagery of the parable of the Sower.

Altogether, Clement weaves these images into a twofold argument in the first book and chapter of the *Stromata.* He ostensibly is offering a defense of his right to compose a written treatise, but in the process he simultaneously exhorts the reader of the tractate, or the hearer of the word, that she must be "good soil" in which the seeds of truth may take root. If an "orthodox" exegesis of Scripture is to be found in an interpretation that does not deviate from its "scriptural" meaning, then we may allow that Clement has achieved this goal with regard to the parable of the Sower – but then so has Ptolemy the Valentinian.

However, this definition of an "orthodox" exegesis is one more likely to be made by modern Protestants than by second-century Christians claiming to be faithful stewards of an apostolic tradition. As I indicated in Chapter 2, by the middle of the second century, a liberal appropriation of creative exegetical methods was well underway that did not hold the interpreter to a straightforward reading of the scriptural passage at hand. As we saw in Chapter 3, by the late second century this liberality of reading styles was being applied not only to the Hebrew Scriptures but to the New Testament texts as well, with examples emerging almost simultaneously in Valentinian and Irenaean allegorical interpretations of the parable of the Lost Sheep. As we continue our study in this chapter of comparative exegesis of the parable of the Sower, we now turn to the other major branch of the parable's reception, in which the hearer is exhorted to understand herself as "the good seed." This trajectory of interpretation deviates significantly from the Synoptic meaning of the parable, being aided in this departure by the cross-pollination of material from the parable of the Tares. As with the exegetical tradition that identified the hearer with the "good soil," the "good seed" trajectory offers us representatives from both Valentinian and retrospectively orthodox authors.

4. The Hearer as "The Good Seed": Interpretations On Religious Diversity

As we have seen, despite the fact that Jesus equates the seed with the Word in the dominical interpretation of the parable of the Sower, both the parable and its interpretation contain language sufficiently ambiguous to allow a reader to draw the conclusion that the hearer of the word is not meant to be the soil of the parable, but the seed. While the identification of the hearer of the parable with the "good soil" supports an interpretation concerning spiritual reflection and growth, both Valentinian and retrospectively orthodox

Christians have identified the hearer as "good seed" in paraenesis aimed at a divided *ekklēsia*.

However, in none of the Synoptic versions (including any significant manuscript variants) does the parable of the Sower contain the concept of different kinds of seeds. For this notion of "good seed," it is necessary to move to the Matthean parable of the Wheat and the Tares, where the phrase appears twice in its telling, and twice in the dominical interpretation supplied by the evangelist. It is therefore necessary to briefly examine this parable in its Matthean context, before turning to its subsequent reception when genetically recombined with the parable of the Sower.

4.1. The Parable of the Tares: Gospel Contexts

Matthew places this parable immediately after his dominical interpretation of the parable of the Sower and, as with the latter, has Jesus interpret it for the disciples. Again, for the convenience of the reader, the parable runs as follows (Mt. 13.24-30):

> 24. Ἄλλην παραβολὴν παρέθηκεν αὐτοῖς λέγων· ὡμοιώθη ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ἀνθρώπῳ σπείραντι καλὸν σπέρμα ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ αὐτοῦ. 25. ἐν δὲ τῷ καθεύδειν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἦλθεν αὐτοῦ ὁ ἐχθρὸς καὶ ἐπέσπειρεν ζιζάνια ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ σίτου καὶ ἀπῆλθεν. 26. ὅτε δὲ ἐβλάστησεν ὁ χόρτος καὶ καρπὸν ἐποίησεν, τότε ἐφάνη καὶ τὰ ζιζάνια. 27. προσελθόντες δὲ οἱ δοῦλοι τοῦ οἰκοδεσπότου εἶπον αὐτῷ· κύριε, οὐχὶ καλὸν σπέρμα ἔσπειρας ἐν τῷ σῷ ἀγρῷ; πόθεν οὖν ἔχει ζιζάνια; 28. ὁ δὲ ἔφη αὐτοῖς· ἐχθρὸς ἄνθρωπος τοῦτο ἐποίησεν. οἱ δὲ δοῦλοι λέγουσιν αὐτῷ· θέλεις οὖν ἀπελθόντες συλλέξωμεν αὐτά; 29. ὁ δέ φησιν· οὔ, μήποτε συλλέγοντες τὰ ζιζάνια ἐκριζώσητε ἅμα αὐτοῖς τὸν σῖτον. 30. ἄφετε συναυξάνεσθαι ἀμφότερα ἕως τοῦ θερισμοῦ, καὶ ἐν καιρῷ τοῦ θερισμοῦ ἐρῶ τοῖς θερισταῖς· συλλέξατε πρῶτον τὰ ζιζάνια καὶ δήσατε αὐτὰ εἰς δέσμας πρὸς τὸ κατακαῦσαι αὐτά, τὸν δὲ σῖτον συναγάγετε εἰς τὴν ἀποθήκην μου.
>
> 24. He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; 25. but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and then went away. 26. So when the plants came up and bore fruit, then

> the tares appeared as well. 27. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these tares come from?' 28. He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' The slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' 29. But he replied, 'No; for in gathering the tares you would uproot the wheat along with them. 30. Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"[24]

The parable of the Wheat and the "Tares" – or the "Weeds" – appears only in Matthew. I prefer the King James' "tares" to the NRSV's "weeds" as a translation of ζιζάνια (Vulgate: *zizania*) of Mt. 13.25 etc. These are no ordinary weeds. *Lolium temulentum,* also called darnel, is a species of weed common to wheat fields that mimics wheat, from which it is difficult to distinguish until it is mature. It is widespread throughout the Middle East, and consuming it may cause the feeling of drunkenness (hence its scientific name) or even death, owing to a poison produced by a fungus that frequently grows within it. Therefore, despite the other unusual actions of the characters in this parable, some scholars have argued that the farmer's instructions to the servants to leave the tares in place until the harvest comes is correct from an agricultural point of view.[25]

However, this botanical fact is about the only thing about this story that is not very peculiar. Structurally, the narrative displays irregularities, as the sower transforms from a worker in the field to a householder with numerous servants, who, although they work in the field, will not reap the crop; this task is reserved for others, the "reapers" (or "harvesters"). Thus the servants' job is apparently only to tend the field until the harvest, when that particular labor is turned over to others. The actions of all of the characters are likewise bizarre. The servants are surprised to find weeds in a wheat field, and go to the

[24] NRSV, except that I translate καρπὸν ἐποίησεν as "bore fruit," (NRSV: "bore grain") for the same reasons as previously discussed; and I translate ζιζάνια using the KJV's "tares" (NRSV: "weeds"), for reasons discussed below.
[25] See Luz, *Matthew,* 2:254-5 for more information and bibliography.

master to ask what should be done about this state of affairs. Likewise the master of the household seems to know that these weeds are not part of the natural course of farming, but the work of an enemy. This enemy, meanwhile, has behaved most strangely; rather than stealing the wheat at night, or burning down the crop, he apparently has enough darnel seed on hand to sow it throughout the entire field, and takes the time to do so. It is therefore all the more surprising that the householder has guessed the source of the seed.[26]

Given the difficulties of the parable itself, the dominical interpretation that follows (Mt. 13.37-43) is necessarily selective.

> 37. Ὁ σπείρων τὸ καλὸν σπέρμα ἐστὶν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, 38. ὁ δὲ ἀγρός ἐστιν ὁ κόσμος, τὸ δὲ καλὸν σπέρμα οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ υἱοὶ τῆς βασιλείας· τὰ δὲ ζιζάνιά εἰσιν οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ πονηροῦ, 39. ὁ δὲ ἐχθρὸς ὁ σπείρας αὐτά ἐστιν ὁ διάβολος, ὁ δὲ θερισμὸς συντέλεια αἰῶνός ἐστιν, οἱ δὲ θερισταὶ ἄγγελοί εἰσιν. 40. ὥσπερ οὖν συλλέγεται τὰ ζιζάνια καὶ πυρὶ καίεται, οὕτως ἔσται ἐν τῇ συντελείᾳ τοῦ αἰῶνος· 41. ἀποστελεῖ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ, καὶ συλλέξουσιν ἐκ τῆς βασιλείας αὐτοῦ πάντα τὰ σκάνδαλα καὶ τοὺς ποιοῦντας τὴν ἀνομίαν, 42. καὶ βαλοῦσιν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν κάμινον τοῦ πυρός· ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων. 43. τότε οἱ δίκαιοι ἐκλάμψουσιν ὡς ὁ ἥλιος ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτῶν. ὁ ἔχων ὦτα ἀκουέτω.
>
> 37. "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; 38. the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, 39. and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. 40. Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. 41. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, 42. and they will throw them into the furnace of fire; where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!"[27]

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[26] See Luz, *Matthew,* 2:252-6 for an exhaustive catalogue of the strange features. Some have suggested that this parable, found only in Matthew, is an elaborate redaction of Mark's parable of the Secretly Growing Seed (Mk. 4.26-29), as it comes at the same point in the block of parables in Mt. 13 || Mk. 4, while preserving several key terms in the same order.

[27] NRSV. Unlike the KJV and RSV, the NRSV preserves a distinction across the parable and its dominical interpretation between the "collecting" (συλλέγω) of the tares and the "gathering" (συνάγω) of the wheat. Moreover, this passage in the NRSV returns to language of the KJV in two other places, rejecting changes

Matthew's Jesus interprets the parable allegorically along strong eschatological lines, assigning a role to some of the characters and details. Specifically, we find the notion of two types of people in the world, whose ultimately divergent fates are determined on the basis of their different origins.

However, not every detail is interpreted: the characters' motives go unexplained, as do the significance of some of the narrative elements, such as sleeping, bearing fruit, the bundles, and the barn.[28] What is especially lacking in the explanation is the significance of the main directive of the householder to his servants, to leave the tares in place until the harvest. We are given an agricultural explanation in the parable ("for in gathering the tares you would uproot the wheat along with them"), but in the dominical interpretation, there is no analogous explanation, and the focal point has shifted from the pre-harvest instructions to the events of the harvest itself and what will follow. Likewise, the identity of the servants is not given. Thus the impact of the future harvest upon the present instructions to the servants has been lost.[29]

This is a critical omission precisely because the correct action of the servants seems to have been the main point of the parable. For the parable to have exhortative capability it is the servants in the story with whom the reader should have identified.[30] If we attempt to derive the logical paraenesis for the reader, it would be a counsel to patience in the face

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that had been introduced by the RSV. The first is the choice to translate οἱ υἱοί as the "children" of the kingdom (KJV, NRSV) rather than the more literal and gender-specific "sons" (RSV); the KJV and NRSV likewise make this choice against the RSV in Mt. 5.9, 5.45, Lk. 6.35, 20.34-36. Secondly, the NRSV and KJV are faithful to the grammar of v. 42's ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων; the RSV unnecessarily converts this to an active clause, "there men will weep and gnash their teeth," meanwhile introducing a gendered subject that was absent in the Greek.

[28] Luz, *Matthew,* 2:267.

[29] Luz, *Matthew,* 2:267.

[30] The dominical interpretation, then, like that of the parable of the Sower, was most likely a secondary development in the transmission of the narrative. It is contested whether all, some, or none of the interpretation originates with Matthew. It is difficult to answer because we have no parallel to the parable itself and thus cannot determine to what extent Matthew may have reshaped the parable to fit the interpretation. See Luz, *Matthew,* 2:267-8.

of the mixed field that is the world in which one finds oneself living. There are both righteous and evil ones in the world, and the parable appeals to the servant of the Lord to restrain from attempting to uproot the evil, lest damage – we may imagine spiritual damage – be done to the good. Therefore it is precisely because of the certainty of the *eschaton* that caution and tolerance of diversity should reign in the current age.

Now, let us imagine some early Christian exegetes who drew upon Matthew as an authoritative text. For them, the Matthean dominical interpretation of the parable of the Tares would have been influential, even as they strained to fill in the critical gap and utilize the parable for paraenetic purposes. Given that the parable of the Tares described two types of persons or "seeds" with different destinies, let us suppose that they chose to hybridize it with the parable of the Sower in which the various "seeds" of that parable found different fates according to their ability to hear the Word. Now the paraenetic impulse of the parable of the Sower is transferred into a binary division of the world into the righteous and not-so-righteous known from the parable of the Tares. Moreover, this binary division is now at least partially explained not by the seeds' diverse origins but by their own spiritual efforts. In the process, the horizon of the hybrid parable has shrunk; we are now in a milieu consisting completely of insiders, and Jesus' plain explanation that "the field is the world" is replaced by an understanding that the field is the community or church.

This seems to have been what happened in the early Christian reception of these parables. The hybrid seed parable thus emerges in response to the issue of problematic diversity within the *ekklēsia.* In what follows, we shall trace Valentinian and retrospectively orthodox applications of this hybrid parable to this situation.

4.2. *THE INTERPRETATION OF KNOWLEDGE*

The *Interpretation of Knowledge* (NHC XI, *1*), a text that is likely either a homily or a philosophical epistle,[31] contains what has long been recognized as a retelling of the parable of the Sower, detectable despite the poor condition of the manuscript at this point (5.16-19). In their 1977 initial publication of the text in English translation, and subsequently in their 1990 critical edition for the *Coptic Gnostic Library,* Elaine Pagels and John Turner identified the parable of the Sower on the basis of the key term ϩⲛ̄ⲧⲉϩⲓⲏ ("on the path"), followed by three appearances of the word ⲕⲁⲩⲉ ("others"), which altogether suggested to these editors the four shares of seed falling upon different kinds of soil.[32] Editors of subsequent critical editions have upheld this view.[33] The text runs as follows, with reconstructions shown as suggested by Funk, Painchaud, and Thomassen in their 2010 critical edition.

[Lines 1-13 are completely lacking; lines 14-15 are extremely fragmentary.]

16 ⲓ̈ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ ϩⲛ̄ⲛⲓⲙⲁ [ϩⲁⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲁⲩϩⲁⲉⲓⲉ]	go out from here. (?) [Some fell]
17 ϩⲛ̄ⲧⲉϩⲓⲏ ϩⲛ̄ⲕⲁⲩⲉ [ⲛ̄ⲇⲉ ⲁⲧⲡⲉⲧⲣⲁ]	in the path. Others, [on the rocks.]
18 ϩⲛ̄ⲕⲉⲕⲁⲩⲉ ⲇⲉ ⲁϥⲭ[ⲁⲩ ϩⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲯⲁⲛⲧⲉ ϩⲛ̄]	Still others he [sowed in the thorns.]
19 ⲕⲁⲩⲉ ⲇⲉ ⲁⲛ [ⲁⲩ†]ⲥⲟ[ⲩⲟ . . .]	And still others [produced wheat.]

[Lines 20-25 are extremely fragmentary.][34]

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[31] See Painchaud, "L'utilisation," and Tite, *Valentinian Ethics,* 185-90, for two surveys of the literature on the question of genre.

[32] Elaine H. Pagels and John D. Turner, "The Interpretation of Knowledge (XI, *1*)," in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English,* 1st ed., ed. James M. Robinson (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977), 425-34; Pagels and Turner, "Notes to Text and Translation," *Coptic Gnostic Library,* vol. 5, 2:78.

[33] Uwe-Karsten Plisch, *Die Auslegung der Erkenntnis* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1996), 90. Wolf-Peter Funk, Louis Painchaud, and Einar Thomassen, *L'Interprétation de la gnose (NH XI,1)* (Quebec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval: 2010), 119-120.

[34] Coptic text according to Funk, Painchaud, and Thomassen, with my translation into English. Plisch's Coptic text is identical except that he reconstructs another ⲁⲩϩⲁⲉⲓⲉ ("[they] fell") in line 17 in place of Funk et al.'s particle ⲛ̄ⲇⲉ, and in parallel with the proposed reconstruction in line 16. The senses of both reconstructions are identical; the difference is only a question of the number of letters that might have fit in the lacuna (which is impossible to adjudicate as it comes at the end of the line and the entire edge of the page

Louis Painchaud has observed that there seems to have been no description of the various effects of the seed having been sown into the different types of soil, which, as we have seen, was a central preoccupation of the interpretation given in the Synoptic Gospels. This is certainly a possibility, although lines 5.20-25 are almost completely lost, so we cannot agree with this proposal with certainty. If he is correct, however, the distinction has been reduced from the fourfold division of the Synoptic parable to a binary one, one between those seeds which fell on good soil and thus bore fruit, and those that did not.

That this may in fact have been the case is supported by Uwe-Karsten Plisch's reconstruction of the words [ⲁⲩ†]ⲥⲟ[ⲩⲟ...] ("produced wheat") in line 5.19.[35] While this reconstruction is reasonable, it deviates from the expected "bore fruit" of the parable of the Sower (ⲁⲩ†ⲕⲁⲣⲡⲟⲥ, Coptic Mt. 13.8). Plisch had explained this deviation on the basis of "simple contamination" from another seed parable, suggesting those of the Tares (Matthew) or of the Secretly Growing Seed (Mark).[36] However, Painchaud suggests that the author deliberately fused the parable of the Sower with that of the Wheat and the Tares. The latter has a binary structure to it, rather than the fourfold structure of the parable of the Sower. The author of *Interp. Know.* would have done this with the goal of evoking the parable of the Tares in the mind of the reader, and of leading her to self-identify with the "good seed" sown therein.[37] Why would he have done this?

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is missing). For that matter, there seems to be no reason why the text could not support a reconstruction of ⲁⲕⲭⲁⲩ ("he sowed") at this point in line 17 and also in place of ⲁⲩⲣⲁⲫⲓⲉ in line 16, for parallelism with line 18. Again, this would not significantly change the sense of the passage.

[35] Plisch, *Die Auslegung der Erkenntnis,* 16-17. Given the likelihood that this line represents the fourth kind of seed in the parable of the Sower, this seems better than [ⲁⲕ†]ⲥⲟ[ⲩ ⲁⲣⲁⲩ], "he gave to drink," the reconstruction suggested by John D. Turner, *Coptic Gnostic Library*.

[36] Plisch, *Die Auslegung der Erkenntnis*, 90. Both parables refer to wheat (ⲥⲟⲩⲟ) in the Sahidic Coptic New Testament; however, neither contains the phrase ⲁⲩ†ⲥⲟⲩⲟ.

[37] Painchaud, "L'utilisation," 420.

In the Synoptic context, the fourfold structure of the parable of the Sower opens up the possibility for its interpretation as one of self-reflection and self-criticism, in which the reader is encouraged to reflect upon the various ways in which the particular circumstances of his life could conspire to keep him from hearing the word and living accordingly.[38] The shift in emphasis to a binary, all-or-nothing division between those who are fruitless and those who bear fruit closes down this interpretive option. Rather, it may signal to the reader that he is to identify with the latter group, those of the good seed.[39] And, in this text, it seems clear that the seeds, rather than the soil, of this parable are being applied to the persons in the inscribed community.

Painchaud, Funk, and Thomassen, in their commentary, acknowledge that due to the fragmentary condition of the manuscript at this point, it is difficult to see how the parable was interpreted. Nevertheless, they assert that "In a Valentinian context, it is plausible that the "seeds" refer to those souls or spirits who have descended into matter, and who suffer from their condition, rather than the words of the Savior."[40] Yet caution is advised here, as the presumption that this parable points to the myth of the "spiritual seed" is one of the reasons scholars have classified it as "Valentinian" in the first place. There is therefore some circularity to this reasoning.[41]

However, Painchaud himself, in his earlier article, briefly indicated another option, building on previous scholars' observations[42] that the author's central concern is to rectify a

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[38] So Luz, *Matthew,* 2:250-1.
[39] Painchaud, "L'utilisation," 418-20; Funk, Painchaud, and Thomassen, *L'Interprétation de la gnose,* 120.
[40] Funk, Painchaud, and Thomassen, *L'Interprétation de la gnose,* 119. "En contexte valentinien, il est vraisemblable que les "semances" désignent les âmes ou les esprits qui sont descendus dans la matière, et qui souffrent de leur condition, plutôt que les paroles du Sauveur." See also idem, 42-9.
[41] See the discussion on this point in Chapter 1.
[42] Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Paul* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1975), 43, 78-9, 138; eadem, "The Interpretation of Knowledge: Introduction," *Coptic Gnostic Library,* vol. 5, 2:21-30 (22-23); Klaus

divisive situation that has arisen within the inscribed community regarding jealousy over spiritual gifts. He suggests that "[T]his parable foreshadows the analogy that will be developed, in the paraenetic section of the homily, between the members of the community and the plants whose roots would form a network, so that the fruit of each one will be the fruit of all (19,31-37)."[43]

Between the parable of the Sower on page 5 of the text, and this analogy of a root network on page 19, lies an extended discussion drawing upon Pauline metaphors of the body of Christ (pages 15-19), which Painchaud does not discuss. Applied to the situation of a divided community, the body of Christ is an apt choice of homiletic material, but it is not immediately apparent how the parable of the Sower would be applicable to this situation. In what follows, I shall flesh out Painchaud's insight, and connect the author's exegeses of the parable of the Sower and of the metaphor of the body of Christ.

This author takes the Pauline metaphor for the *ekklēsia* of a body and its various members (Rom. 12.4-8; 1 Cor. 12.12-31), and combines this with the deutero-Pauline metaphor of Christ as the head of the body (Eph. 4.15-16; Col. 1.18; 2.19), and uses these to exhort the addressees to refrain from jealousy towards one another.[44] The argument is directed primarily at those who consider themselves to be inferior, those who find themselves to be mere "fingers" in the body of Christ, rather than eyes, hands, or feet

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Koschorke, "Eine neugefundene gnostische Gemeindeordnung: Zum Thema Geist und Amt im frühen Christentum," *ZTK* 76 (1979): 34-55.

[43] "Replacée dans l'économie générale de l'écrit, cette parabole anticipe et prépare l'analogie qui sera développée dans la partie parénétique de l'homélie, entre les membres de la communauté et des plantes dont les racines formeraient un réseau, de sorte que le fruit de chacune serait le fruit de toutes (19,31-37). Ce premier matériau parabolique devrait avoir pour fonction d'amener le ou les destinataires de l'écrit à s'identifier à la semence qui produit du fruit, ce qui paraît cohérent avec la partie parénétique de l'écrit, qui cherche à persuader ce même destinataire, apparemment jaloux des fruits produits par les autres membres, que les fruits de chacun sont les fruits de tous." Painchaud, "L'utilisation," 420.

[44] Pagels, "The Interpretation of Knowledge: Introduction," *Coptic Gnostic Library,* vol. 5, 2:21-30 (23); Pagels and Turner, "Notes to Text and Translation," *Coptic Gnostic Library,* vol. 5, 2:86.

(18.28-32). These "fingers" are despising others who "are making progress in the Word" (16.31-2), and they wonder, "Why does he speak, while I do not?" (16.34-5).

The "Word" had been introduced just before the parable of the Sower (at 4.36, immediately before a large lacuna comprising the rest of page 4 and most of page 5, after which the parable of the Sower appears already in progress at line 5.16). If this Word is sown into various "soils," as in the Synoptics, and if these four categories are reduced to two – those who root and bear fruit (produce wheat), and those who do not, as we have discussed – then we can see how these two categories of seeds may stand in for another pair of categories: those "making progress in the Word" in the *ekklēsia* and those who are jealous of the former. After staying with the Pauline body of Christ language for several pages, the author returns to botanical metaphors. A member of the superior kind "puts forth fruit that is like him, since the roots [have] a connection with one another and their fruits are undivided, the best of each." (19.30-4)[45] The author exhorts the addressees, "So let us become like the roots, since we are equal..." (19.36) The text breaks off again here, before we learn in what manner the addressees are equal – the first part of the sentence clearly implying that they are *not* all equal in another significant way; i.e., that they are not all seeds that have rooted (and borne fruit). They are no doubt all equals by virtue of being members of the same body; as earlier the author had argued that "you have the same Head" (18.34-5), and thus the various members "ought to be reconciled with one another" (18.27).

The "Word" is central to this text, which closes with the pronouncement "we are adepts [at] the Word. If we sin against [it], we sin more than Gentiles. But if we surmount every sin, we shall receive the crown of victory, even as our Head was glorified by the

[45] English translation here and below follows Turner.

Father." (21.28-24)[46] Surmounting the sin of jealousy is equated to recognizing that those "superior" members, those who are making progress with the Word, are those who heard the Word and understood, and thenceforth put down roots and bore fruit. The "inferior" members are exhorted to put aside their hatred and rather become like those who have borne fruit.

The parable of the Sower was useful for this purpose because it contains the notion that the word is sown, and yet it needed to be adapted to a binary structure to better fit the Pauline metaphor of the body, because whereas the latter metaphor admits more than two kinds of members, they all are assigned valuable gifts, even if some are more valuable than others. In the Synoptic parable of the Sower, however, while there are three different ways a seed may fail to take root, each of them coming closer to the mark than the last, in the end, only the fourth type succeeds. Therefore, by collapsing into a binary form both the fourfold structure of the parable and the variegated structure of the multi-membered body, the author is able to bring the Synoptic and Pauline passages into alignment with one another and put them to the same paraenetic use within the addressed community.

Thus this text uses a Sower-Tares hybrid parable in order to deal with diversity within the *ekklēsia* by means of asserting and reinforcing a hierarchy of spiritual gifts. We do not know the specifics of what "making progress in the Word" would look like on the ground in this community. Although the inscribed audience of the text are characterized by the author as jealous of those others and exhorted to adopt the habits of those more superior to them in this regard, we do not know how much of this jealousy is merely the author's rhetorical superimposition upon a situation in which the various participants would have perceived themselves to be merely disagreeing about doctrine. Regardless of

[46] See also 17.27-38.

the actual situation, we may characterize this Valentinian author's solution to the problem as one of "epistemic elitism," the rhetorical position that harmony may prevail within the group if only the inferior members with regard to doctrine recognize their inferiority.[47] This posture is one that the apostle Paul had himself taken in numerous letters, and the author of *The Interpretation of Knowledge* is clearly taking a leaf from Paul's book. This ecclesiological outlook is different in tone, but not altogether different in concept, from the discourse of orthodoxy and heresy that would be formulated by authors such as Tertullian on the basis of this same hybrid parable, as we shall see below.

4.3. TERTULLIAN'S *DE PRAESCRIPTIONE HAERETICORUM*

In the hands of Tertullian, the parable of the Wheat and the Tares becomes the *locus classicus* for a model of orthodoxy and heresy that he is the first to clearly articulate, a model that postulates "the priority of truth, and the comparative lateness of falsehood." In his *Prescription Against Heretics,* he claims that he derives support for this argument

> from that parable which puts in the first place the sowing by the Lord of the good seed of the wheat, but introduces at a later stage the adulteration of the crop by its enemy the devil with the useless weed of the wild oats. For herein is figuratively described the difference of doctrines, since in other passages also the word of God is likened unto seed. From the actual order, therefore, it becomes clear that that which was first delivered is of the Lord and is true, whilst that is strange and false which was afterwards introduced.[48]

The "parable" that Tertullian describes is that of the Wheat and the Tares, which he interprets "figuratively" to be about differing doctrines. Tertullian allows that the

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[47] For the term "epistemic elitism," I am grateful to my colleague Alexander Kocar.

[48] *Praescr.* 31.1-3. *Sed ab excessu revertar ad principalitatem veritatis et posteritatem mendacitatis disputandam, ex illius quoque parabolae patrocinio quae bonum semen frumenti a Domino seminatum in primore constituit, avenarum autem sterilis faeni adulterium ab inimico diabolo postea superducit. Proprie enim doctrinarum distinctionem figurat quia et alibi verbum Dei seminis similitudo est. Ita ex ipso ordine manifestatur id esse dominicum et verum quod sit prius traditum, id autem extraneum et falsum quod sit posterius immissum.* Trans. *ANF.*

parable might not be perfectly clear in this regard, and so his key exegetical move is to shed light on it by recourse to "other passages" – apparently clearer ones – that liken the word of God to seed. Which scriptural passages might he have had in mind? There are in fact very few passages in either Testament to which he could be referring other than the Synoptic parable of the Sower.

One possibility is 1 Peter 1.23-25, in which the author, quoting Isaiah 40.6-8, contrasts the permanence of the word of God with the ephemerality of grass and the flowers of the field. The author of 1 Peter expands upon this dissimilarity by likening the inscribed reader to imperishable seed that has been born anew through the word of God. The relationship between "word" and "seed" in 1 Peter seems to be one of agency rather than similitude, although Tertullian might have read it as the latter. Tertullian may also have in mind Colossians 1.5-6, in which the "word of the truth, the gospel... is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, [and] has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God." Here, the similitude between the word and bearing fruit is straightforward, although "seeds" are not mentioned explicitly. The language, nevertheless, recalls the parable of the Sower, upon which Col. 1.5-6 may be dependent.[49] Since no other passages suggest themselves, it seems evident that the main passage Tertullian had in mind was the parable of the Sower itself.

Having thereby elided the parables of the Sower and of the Tares, he is able to argue that the tares represent a crop specifically distinguished by bad doctrine; i.e., heretics, rather than some more general kind of evil that threatens the righteous in the world. The "good seed of the wheat," being sown first, is "of the Lord and is true," while the "useless weed of the wild oats," being introduced at a later time, "is strange and false."

[49] Collins, *Mark,* 246.

The translation "with the useless weed of the wild oats" for *avenarum... sterilis faeni* is reasonable. *Faenum* is usually hay, but *sterilis* stresses its inferior nature, both "unfruitful" and, figuratively, "useless." *Avena* may be any weed, but specifically, wild (and sterile) oats, especially with *sterilis*. (Therefore he might well have written *avenarum... sterilarum sterilis faeni*.) The stress that Tertullian lays upon the unfruitfulness of the weeds underscores his dependence on the parable of the Sower even before he introduces it, for the fruitfulness of the seed was the main point of the Sower parable, and yet it is a detail not found in the Tares parable itself. On the contrary, if the tares had not sprouted their own fruit, they would not have been such a problem. Therefore this is additional evidence that it is the parable of the Sower that Tertullian has in mind when he mentions "other passages" that liken the Word of God to seed, and, likewise, the notion of "fruitfulness" that he takes from the Sower parable becomes an important aspect in the hybrid parable that he creates.

Tertullian continues to allude to the parable of the Tares in the following two chapters of his *Prescription*. He goes on to warn the reader of heresies that "were bold enough to plant themselves in the midst of the apostolic age."[50] Although the antiquity of these doctrines therefore falsely props them up and makes them seem to have been actually passed down by the apostles, they, too, may be refuted by various means, one of which is to show how, even during the apostolic age, the apostles detected these "seeds" of what had by Tertullian's time grown into mature tares.[51]

Tertullian's hybrid exegesis is noteworthy because it overlooks some key features of both the parable of the Tares and its dominical interpretation. First, although Jesus had explained that "the field is the world," Tertullian takes the field to be the more restricted

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[50] *Praescr.* 32.1; *...quae audent interserere se aetati apostolicae...* Trans. *ANF.*

[51] *Praescr.* 33.2. Tertullian succinctly reprises this exegesis at the conclusion of one of his later writings, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh.*

realm of the *ekklēsia,* in order to motivate action regarding problematic diversity within the church rather than between the church and outsiders. He seems to justify this exegetical move by declaring heresy to be just another kind of idolatry,[52] a move that blurs the distinction between dangerous insiders and heathen outsiders.[53]

Second, as I suggested earlier, the focus of the parable had been on the necessity to wait until the harvest to separate the tares from the wheat. Although the paraenesis became obfuscated in its dominical interpretation by the presence of numerous details relating to the *eschaton* and what lay beyond, the exhortation to patience and tolerance during the present age is nevertheless wholly consistent with the eschatology of its interpretation. Therefore this would appear to be a parable that, in its Matthean context, instructs the disciples that there will be "children of the kingdom" and "children of the evil ones" living amongst one another until that time, but that the evil ones must *not* be uprooted prematurely, lest in so doing, damage be done to the entire crop. Tertullian, however, not a man known for radical tolerance, has interpreted the parable of the Tares to have precisely the opposite meaning: that the tares (i.e., the heretics) ought to be uprooted from the church immediately. In the *Prescription* he declares that heresies ultimately derive from the devil,[54] as the parable of the Tares teaches.

Ulrich Luz suggests that in addition to their being sown later, the tares would have been well-suited to represent heresy on account of their being poisonous and therefore causing confusion in those who consumed them. Although Tertullian does not make this connection, it was an exegetical resource waiting to be found once the basic groundwork for

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[52] *Praescr.* 40.8.
[53] Also, the heretic does not labor to convert the nations, but to subvert the faithful *(non ethnicos convertendi sed nostros evertendi); Praescr.* 42.1.
[54] *Praescr.* 40.8.

the interpretation of the parable had been laid by Tertullian and others of his generation.[55] Although Tertullian may be the earliest certain case of a Christian writer who finds in the parable of the Tares a description of the nefarious activity of the heretic, he was probably not the first to do so. An earlier, albeit fragmentary account preserved by Eusebius from one of the epistles of Dionysius of Corinth (*floruit* c. 165-175 C.E.) suggests this interpretation was already under development a few decades earlier.[56] Commenting upon the falsification of some of his previous letters, Dionysius writes,

> [T]he apostles of the devil have filled them with tares (οἱ τοῦ διαβόλου ἀπόστολοι ζιζανιών γεγέμικαν), by leaving out some things and putting in others. But woe awaits them. Therefore it is no wonder that some have gone about to falsify even the scriptures of the Lord when they have plotted against writings so inferior.[57]

Although Dionysius does not use the term "heretics" in this fragment, we know that he wrote several letters against heresies, if we may trust Eusebius' reports of his anti-heretical epistolary activities recorded in *Hist. eccl.* 4.23.1-13. Much of Eusebius' framing may reflect his own heresiological stance, but Eusebius reports one of Dionysius' letters in particular "in which he combats the heresy of Marcion and compares it with the rule of truth" (ἐν ᾗ τὴν Μαρκίωνος αἵρεσιν πολεμῶν τῷ τῆς ἀληθείας παρίσταται κανόνι).[58] If we can trust Eusebius' report, we may assume that Dionysius probably would have used the discourse of heresy to describe the dangerous insider opponents against whom he defends himself in the letter I quoted above, "apostles of the devil" who have sown tares into the doctrines he had originally stated in his letters.

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[55] Luz, *Matthew,* 2:272ff. On their poisonous nature, see above.
[56] The dates of Dionysius are based upon the fact that he corresponded with Bishop Soter of Rome, who was bishop for approximately the period 165-175 C.E.
[57] *Hist. eccl.* 4.23.12; trans. Lake, LCL.
[58] *Hist. eccl.* 4.4.

We further notice that in Dionysius' clear allusion to the parable of the Tares, he does not explicitly hybridize it with the parable of the Sower, a move that Tertullian felt was necessary in order to "clarify" that the parable of the Tares was actually about heresy. Therefore, either the hybridization of these two parables was already well-known in Dionysius' day, and was implicit, or Dionysius' exegesis was felt to be incomplete and in need of clarification by a writer such as Tertullian or someone else.

Tertullian's contemporary, Clement of Alexandria, applies this interpretation of the hybrid Sower-Tares parable, with a unique twist, in *Stromata* 6.8, in the course of a long discussion of the relative truth of Greek philosophy. Having been arguing that philosophy contains many truths, being a special covenant for the Greeks and yet "a stepping stone to the philosophy that is according to Christ," Clement then finds occasion to apply the parable of the Tares to Greek philosophy as well, with the general context implicitly recalling the paedagogical thrust of the parable of the Sower. He claims that just as in the "Barbarian philosophy" (by which Clement means Christianity[59]), so, too, in the Hellenic philosophy, "tares were sown by the proper husbandman of the tares" (ἐπεσπάρη τὰ ζιζάνια πρὸς τοῦ τῶν ζιζανίων οἰκείου γεωργοῦ), who is the same source of those heresies that "grew up among us, the fruitful wheat" – that is, among the true Christians

[59] A running theme of the *Stromata* is that one of the reasons Greek philosophy is deficient is because it was plagiarized from "Barbarian" philosophy – which, according to the Greek division of the world, included all non-Greek cultures. For Clement's purposes, these include especially, on one hand, the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Indians, and on the other hand, the Jews. The former allow the plagiarism argument to point to the defect of Greek philosophy on account of its borrowing from cultures that, from the point of view of his Greek readers, were obviously inferior (e.g. *Strom.* 1.15-16), while, paradoxically, the latter allows him to point out the superiority of Jewish "philosophy" on account of its antiquity (e.g. *Strom.* 1.21-29); he even holds the Jews to be the oldest culture of these by far (*Strom.* 1.15). The latter option also allows him to cast Christianity as a non-Greek, therefore, a "Barbarian philosophy"; i.e., "the Barbarian philosophy, which we follow, is in reality perfect and true" (*Strom.* 2.2). It is the latter meaning that he gives to the phrase here, for just as his readers know that there are heresies within Christianity, so, too, may they understand the same concept to be applied to the philosophy of the Greeks.

(ὅθεν αἵ τε αἱρέσεις παρ᾽ ἡμῖν συνανεφύησαν τῷ γονίμῳ πυρῷ).[60] Therefore, Clement says, it is proper to speak of "heresies" that have grown up amongst Greek philosophy as well – for instance, "the impiety and voluptuousness of Epicurus, and whatever other tenets are disseminated contrary to right reason." This explains why, although there remain some truths in Greek philosophy, it is not all good wheat but, as Christ had taught, was contaminated with "spurious fruit" (νόθοι καρποί).[61]

Clement thus explicitly uses the parable of the Tares in a context that draws upon the well-known Greco-Roman paedagogical simile discussed earlier that associates teaching with planting seed that will bear fruit. Given Tertullian's open hybridization of the Sower and Tares parables, it seems likely that Clement, too, is performing the same hybrid exegesis, contrasting the "fruitful wheat" with the "spurious fruit." However, his application of the parable of the Tares to the varieties of Greek philosophy seems to assume that his audience is already familiar with it as a description of Christian orthodoxy and heresy, so that they may analogously apply the parable to the pagan object. Therefore, his deployment of the parable of the Tares here seems to rest upon a presumed understanding of a Sower-Tares exegesis identical to the one that Tertullian had argued. We do not know of any direct lines of literary influence between Tertullian, Clement, or the previously mentioned Dionysius of Corinth, and so based upon the existence of what is likely the same exegesis in the writings of these three roughly contemporary thinkers, it is reasonable to

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[60] *ANF* translates this phrase as "whence also heresies grew up among us *along with* the productive wheat," which misses the appositional relation between the datives ἡμῖν and τῷ γονίμῳ πυρῷ. For Clement, "we" *are* the wheat.

[61] ὥσπερ δὲ ἐν τῇ βαρβάρῳ φιλοσοφίᾳ, οὕτως καὶ ἐν τῇ Ἑλληνικῇ ἐπεσπάρη τὰ ζιζάνια πρὸς τοῦ τῶν ζιζανίων οἰκείου γεωργοῦ. ὅθεν αἵ τε αἱρέσεις παρ᾽ ἡμῖν συνανεφύησαν τῷ γονίμῳ πυρῷ οἵ τε τὴν Ἐπικούρου ἀθεότητα καὶ τὴν ἡδονὴν καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα παρὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον ἐπέσπαρται τῇ Ἑλληνικῇ φιλοσοφίᾳ κηρύσσοντες νόθοι τῆς θεόθεν δωρηθείσης γεωργίας Ἕλλησιν ὑπάρχουσι καρποί.

assume that the exegesis was fairly common in late-second- and early-third-century Christianity.

5. Conclusion

By the fourth century, Tertullian's model of original unity, purity, and truth contaminated by later human and demonic doctrines "had become foundational to the master story of Christian origins, as, for example, the plot of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*."[62] In addition, several influential figures at the close of the fourth century, such as Epiphanius, John Chrysostom, Jerome, and Augustine, in their own contributions to the discourse of orthodoxy and heresy, would make use of this reading of the parable of the Tares that may be traced back two hundred years earlier.[63] This reading would cast a longer and even more influential shadow, as Thomas Aquinas would use this parable to justify religious wars, and inquisitors would dispute with one another over how many weeds might safely be pulled out without damaging the wheat.[64]

Therefore it is somewhat ironic that all of these figures seem to have missed the main point of the parable: that the servants of the master were specifically instructed not to uproot the tares, lest damage be done to the wheat. Their reading of the parable of the Tares in fact was aided by Tertullian's insight that one must illuminate the "obscure" parable of the Tares by means of the "clear" parable of the Sower, and thereby learn that the "good seed" of the former parable in fact stands for orthodox doctrine. Once the discourse of orthodoxy and heresy was understood as the subject under discussion in this

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[62] Karen King, *What is Gnosticism?,* 36, 285n55
[63] Epiphanius, *Pan.* 33.9.1; for additional sources see Luz, *Matthew,* 2:272-73.
[64] Luz, *Matthew,* 2:273; Roland H. Bainton, "Religious Liberty and the Parable of the Tares," in *The Collected Papers in Church History,* ed. Roland H. Bainton (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), 1:95-121 (106).

parable, the time of the separation of the wheat from the tares was moved forward from the *eschaton* to the present age.

This "cross-pollination" of seed parables is understandable given the hermeneutic milieu we have been examining. However, is not this mixing of seeds from two different parables, each with their own message, precisely the "tesserae rearrangement" that Irenaeus had warned about? In Chapter 2, we observed that he had written of the Valentinians: "By transferring, transforming, and making one thing out of another, they deceive many through their ill-composed sophistry of adapting the sayings of the Lord." May not the exegesis of these two seed parables by these retrospectively orthodox authors be seen as the fulfillment of Irenaeus' dire words?

It is well known to patristics scholars that the "orthodox" church fathers often engaged in this type of "tesserae rearrangement." In her study of patristic exegesis, Frances Young observes:

> This process of assembling collages is characteristic of early Christian *paraenesis...* in ethical exhortation, scripture not only provided the maxims and material for assembling collages of precepts and building up character-sketches, but it could also function as the provider of moral examples for imitation, rather as the classics did in Hellenistic culture.[65]

In other words, the building blocks of Scripture were necessarily recombined by early Christian exegetes to face new challenges.

As the *ekklēsia* expanded throughout the second century, one of the most vital and urgent challenges it faced was the growing amount of diversity in doctrine and practice. In the absence (yet) of a centralized authority, various discourses emerged as ways to talk about and negotiate that diversity. One aspect of the discussion, popular among many of the "church fathers," was the notion of orthodoxy and heresy, and another, observable in

[65] Young, *Biblical Exegesis,* 224, 227.

some Valentinian texts, was the discourse of epistemic elitism. It is noteworthy that both "orthodox" and Valentinian authors used the combined Sower-Tares parable to frame this problematic diversity, even though they did so in slightly different ways. In honoring the dictum to leave the tares in place, the argument might even be made that the Valentinian ecclesiological outlook of epistemic elitism was more faithful to the basic thrust of the parable of the Tares, once that parable had been interpreted through the lens of the Sower parable as being about problematic diversity within the *ekklēsia,* by both "orthodox" and Valentinian alike. Moreover, when a Valentinian exegete such as Ptolemy interprets the "pure" form of the parable of the Sower, uncontaminated by any narrative elements from the parable of the Tares, he does so in exactly the same way as do Clement and Justin Martyr, a way that I have suggested is also faithful to the Matthean thrust of the parable itself.

The examples in this chapter join those of the previous chapter, the various interpretations of the parable of the Lost Sheep, to show that we simply may not take seriously anymore simplistic claims about divergent Valentinian and orthodox exegetical *methods.* Their methods, as seen from the examples in this chapter, are identical, and even their results are surprisingly similar. This will become even more apparent in the next and final chapter, in which we turn from the exegesis of Matthean parables of Jesus to the interpretations of his teachings in the Gospel of Matthew concerning the nature of the Jewish law.

V. The Divisions of the Law in the *Epistle to Flora* and *Haer.* 4.12-15

1. Introduction

In this chapter we turn to a Valentinian treatise that demonstrates a focused engagement with one particular problem that numerous second-century Christians were struggling to articulate: their relationship to, and the nature of, the Jewish law.[1] This question was a growing concern in the second century, for it pointed toward the greater issue of Christian identity vis-à-vis Judaism. Already in texts such as Galatians and Romans, the Gospels of Matthew and John, and the anonymous Epistle to the Hebrews may we see their authors working within a "Jewish matrix" and "at least moving towards an exclusive claim to interpret that tradition, and so to de-legitimate other claims – at the discourse level."[2] As these and other apostolic texts, with their multiple and, at times, competing voices, began to be seen as authoritative reading for Christians, overarching reading strategies and underlying *hypotheses,*[3] in combination with decisions about canonicity, would need to be developed to constrain the cacophonous diversity of theological ideas along internally coherent lines. Earlier attempts at simplistic Christian supersessionism, as

[1] An explanatory note on capitalization is necessary for this chapter. Throughout the dissertation I have followed *The SBL Handbook of Style,* which stipulates that "Law," when standing for the subsection of the Bible by that name (i.e., the Torah), should be capitalized, except for when it is modified; thus "the Law," and "the Law and the Prophets," but "the law of Moses," "the Mosaic law," "the Jewish law," and "the Deuteronomic law." However, this chapter concerns my interpretation of Ptolemy's and Irenaeus' theories of the Jewish law, and, as I will argue, they both incorporate Jewish extra-biblical legislation into their discussion of this law. Thus, were I to attempt to follow the style guide to the letter, the decision of whether to capitalize "law" in each instance of the discussion would become a hermeneutical one, based upon my reading of the evidence, and at times these decisions would exceed the ability of the evidence to make a correct adjudication. Naturally, ancient scribes of Greek and Latin were not bound by modern style guides. Therefore, in this chapter, I shall not capitalize "law" anywhere, unless I am quoting the work of another scholar who has capitalized it. Based on this decision, in this chapter I have also left "prophets" uncapitalized in the phrase "the law and the prophets." Finally, as per *The SBL Handbook of Style,* all names of the lawgiving and creating deity, including Lawgiver, Creator, Maker, Demiurge, and Father, are consistently capitalized – even when the deity so named is not the highest god, a situation the *Handbook* has not foreseen. But "devil" is never capitalized.

[2] Judith Lieu, "Self-definition vis-à-vis the Jewish Matrix," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity* (2006), 1:214-229 (217).

[3] See Chapter 2.

exhibited in the Acts of the Apostles or the *Epistle of Barnabas,* proved unpersuasive, not only internally but to pagan critics such as Celsus, who could mount the charge against Christians that they were "nothing better than apostates from their Jewish heritage – incurring the double stigma of espousing novelty against antiquity, and yet of bearing the genetic imprint of a religious tradition long derided as the antithesis of true 'classical' virtues."[4] By the mid-second century, the question of Christians' relationship to the Jewish law had become acute, and more nuanced solutions were needed. The text that is the focus of this chapter, Ptolemy's *Epistle to Flora,* offered one such solution.

Ptolemy's *Epistle* is one of the Greek Valentinian texts known to us from prior to the Nag Hammadi discovery. However, since Gilles Quispel's 1966 commentary[5] there have been few studies on this important text, and nothing of great length, and so his conclusions remain influential to this day. Yet Quispel labored without the benefit of the decades of research on the Nag Hammadi find that have changed what we thought we knew about "Valentinian Gnosticism."[6] In addition, important new research in the study of the Pseudo-Clementine literature has rendered obsolete Quispel's assumptions about the context in which Ptolemy's ideas originated. Therefore, a fresh look at Ptolemy's *Epistle to Flora* is warranted, especially considering the text's complete reliance upon the Gospel of Matthew for all of its key exegetical moves.

This short treatise, in the form of a philosophical epistle, is a product of the classical Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition. It is remarkable for its highly stylized structure,

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[4] Lieu, "Jewish Matrix," 223.
[5] Gilles Quispel, ed. and trans., *Ptolémée: Lettre à Flora: Analyse, Texte Critique, Traduction, Commentaire et Index Grec,* 2nd ed. (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1966). All citations of Quispel's commentary are to this edition.
[6] Quispel added a brief note in his introduction to the 1966 edition indicating that since the first (1949) edition, the Valentinian texts *Gospel of Truth, Treatise on the Resurrection,* and two *Apocalypses of James* had been published, but that they did not contain anything that would cause him to abandon his previous positions.

consisting of three threefold divisions (διαιρέσεις).[7] The first division establishes two competing views of the Lawgiver deity, each of which Ptolemy deems unsatisfactory, thus opening the way to a third option that will be revealed in the course of the following argument. The second threefold division is that within the law itself, which, according to Ptolemy, contains commandments owing to three distinct origins: those given by the deity to Moses, those that Moses added of his own accord, and those added by the elders of the people to that law that they received from Moses. The third division in Ptolemy's letter is a further subdivision of that part of the law that is of divine origin, some of whose commandments the Savior "fulfilled," some of which he "destroyed," and some whose meaning he "spiritualized," or reinterpreted symbolically. Ptolemy supports each of these divisions of the law with proof texts taken from sources that would later be considered part of the Christian New Testament. For proofs of those parts of the divine law that are "destroyed" and "spiritualized" he turns briefly to the Apostle Paul, but, with these exceptions, the entire set of proof texts derives from the Gospel of Matthew.[8]

On the question of which of the Synoptic Gospels provided the actual source text for Ptolemy here and elsewhere in the *Epistle*, we may rely on the foundational work of Eduard Massaux, who concluded that the influence of the Gospel of Matthew was substantive, while that of Mark and Luke was nonexistent:

> First of all, the gospel of Mt. plays a leading part in this letter; the writings of Mt. are the ones to which Ptolemy turns to find the sayings of Christ; this is from where he draws to demonstrate his statements. Whenever Ptolemy is under the literary influence of Mt., he follows the text very closely, he cites it sometimes literally, and even goes so far as to argue over a point with the help of a detail which is peculiar to the Matthean text. Next, I cannot help

[7] Markschies, "New Research on Ptolemaeus Gnosticus," 228-233. I treat the questions of structure and genre more closely below, in the section "Ptolemy's Exegesis of the Korban Pericope."
[8] He also has one reference to the Gospel of John in the introduction, as well as Hebrew Bible citations or allusions. However, the proof texts for the divisions of the law are from Matthew and Paul.

> but point out the total absence of a reference to Mk. and to Lk., whose influence seems to have been nil.[9]

Massaux's assessment is accurate, and we will return to particular aspects of his analysis when we turn to the various sections of the *Epistle* that draw upon different Matthean proof texts.

Ptolemy's theological system, as revealed by the close of the *Epistle,* is tripartite: a "just" (δίκαιος) Demiurge, who is the Creator and Lawgiver deity, is to be distinguished from both "the perfect God and Father" and the devil. Ptolemy contrasts his solution as a third alternative to the positions of the two groups of people whom he had mentioned in his introduction. Both of these groups have incorrect, yet contrary, positions on the author of the law: some believe the law came from "the perfect God and Father," while others attribute the law to the devil, "as, indeed, they ascribe the creation of the world to him, calling him the Father and Maker of this universe".[10] The first group, who understand the Creator and the Lawgiver as the same, solitary and benevolent deity, are generally assumed to be catholic Christians, although we should observe that this description may also apply to Jews. The second group, while it could include Sethian Christians such as the author of the *Apocryphon of John,*[11] is most often presumed to be a usable caricature of the Marcionite position – a "caricature" because Marcion himself is usually understood, owing to the influence of Adolf von Harnack,[12] to have contrasted a "just" Demiurge with the highest Father God who was revealed by Christ for the first time. According to this view,

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[9] Massaux, *Influence,* 2:289; cf. idem, 2:279-289 on *Flora* in general.
[10] *Flor.* 3.4; 3.2. Trans. Frank Williams, *The* Panarion *of Epiphanius,* 2nd ed., mod.
[11] As pointed out by Tuomas Rasimus, "Ptolemaeus and the Valentinian Exegesis of John's Prologue," 147.
[12] Adolph von Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1921 & 1924). The second edition has been translated into English as *Marcion: The Gospel of the Alien God,* trans. John E. Steely and Lyle D. Bierma (Durham, N.C.: Labyrinth Press, 1990). All citations of Harnack are from the latter publication.

Ptolemy needed to caricature Marcion's representation of the Demiurge as evil so that he could appropriate the view for himself that the Demiurge was "just."[13]

However, Sebastian Moll has recently reinvestigated the evidence for Marcion and his movement and has made a persuasive argument that both the dualistic system of good/just envisioned by Harnack, and the later tripartite Marcionite system of good/just/evil were developments of Marcion's followers.[14] Moll's fresh investigation of the ancient sources reveals that Marcion's own, ditheistic position consisted of an evil Creator (Demiurge) and Lawgiver god contrasted with the good supreme deity. Some of our earliest sources discussing Marcion attribute a ditheism to him, including his contemporary, Justin Martyr (*1 Apol.* 26.5; 58.1), and Irenaeus, who explicitly describes Marcion's own dualism as one of good and evil, rather than good and just (*Haer.* 1.27.2; 3.12.12; 4.33.2).[15]

Although I shall disagree with Moll on some details of his assessment of Ptolemy below, I believe that his conclusion on this point is correct: rather than being a usable caricature of Marcion, Ptolemy's second group would be a fairly accurate description of

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[13] Quispel, *Lettre à Flora,* 13-14, thought that Ptolemy simply grossly misunderstood Marcion, but nevertheless adopted much of the true Marcionite position. Dunderberg rejects the first part of Quispel's theory, but accepts the second, thus characterizing Ptolemy as a "moderate Marcionite" (*Beyond Gnosticism,* 89), a slight adjustment of the terminology Winrich Löhr used to describe Ptolemy's *doctrine* of God, "un marcionitisme modéré" (Löhr, "La doctrine de Dieu," 188). Rasimus adopts Dunderberg's assessment, which for him means that the original Marcionite opponents of Ptolemy must be "radical" Marcionites ("Ptolemaeus," 148, 151). As everyone acknowledges that Ptolemy has some points in common with Marcion (as, he also does with catholic Christians), these labels do not actually clarify anything and are best avoided.

[14] Sebastian Moll, *The Arch-Heretic Marcion* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), esp. 47-76. For previous challenges to Harnack's assessment, see Moll, *Marcion,* 47n1, including and especially Winrich A. Löhr, "Did Marcion Distinguish Between a Just God and a Good God?" in *Marcion und seine kirchengeschichtliche Wirkung,* ed. Gerhard May, Katharina Greschat, and Martin Meiser (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002).

[15] Relevant here is Moll's keen observation: "It is true that Marcion, according to Irenaeus, also describes this God as judicial (*Haer.* 3.25.3). Note Irenaeus' most remarkable phrasing: *alterum bonum et alterum iudicalem* (not iustum!) *dicens.*. However, being a *judge* is not the same as being *just.* It is interesting to note that unlike in most Romance and Germanic languages, in classical Greek, the language Marcion thought and wrote in, the terms judge (κρίτης) and just (δίκαιος) are not related etymologically." Moll, *Marcion,* 50,with notes 12 and 13; emphases in original. Moll usefully supplements and nuances the portrait of Marcion's ditheism by R. Joseph Hoffmann, *Marcion: On the Restitution of Christianity* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1984), 185-208, another post-Harnack portrait of Marcion worthy of study.

Marcion's own position – notwithstanding the exception of the nomenclature, as "devil" does not seem to have been Marcion's own term for this evil god.[16] Therefore the introduction of the Demiurge as neither the highest god (as in catholic Christianity) nor the evil god (as in Marcionite Christianity) but as a "middle deity" would be a true third position for Flora to consider as a legitimate alternative to two other positions with which she was perhaps already familiar due to contact with catholic and Marcionite Christians.[17]

Previous scholars have observed similarities between Ptolemy's tripartite division of the law and those of other near contemporaries, and have sought to establish various correlations. In his commentary on the *Epistle,* Gilles Quispel observed that the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* were preoccupied with two of the themes we find in Ptolemy's letter: the division of the law into variegated levels of meaning, and the attribution of this division to different origins of the various parts.[18] As we shall see below, the most recent scholarship on the Pseudo-Clementines situates them in fourth-century Syria and has seriously undermined the source-critical attempts to isolate reliable second-century strata within them, thus rendering extremely doubtful any potential influence of such proposed source texts upon Ptolemy.

Quispel had further suggested an affinity between Ptolemy's division and that of Justin Martyr that was "pretty much identical," pointing to *Dial.* 44 but without arguing the case.[19] Willis Shotwell also suggested, again briefly, a division of the law in Justin,[20] but the

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[16] Of the ancient sources surveyed by Moll, only Epiphanius reports that Marcion called one of the deities by the name of "devil" (*Pan.* 42.3.1-2); however, this is in the context of the later, tripartite system of good/just/evil that Epiphanius probably incorrectly attributes to Marcion himself.
[17] See also Markschies, "New Research," 233-5, and Rasimus, "Ptolemaeus," 147-151, for overviews of this problem. Clearly Ptolemy constructs two ideal types for rhetorical purposes, and while we should not attempt to define these two groups too rigidly, still we should understand that both catholic and Marcionite Christians were uppermost in his mind
[18] Quispel, *Lettre à Flora,* 20-26.
[19] Quispel, *Lettre à Flora,* 26-28.

case for a tripartite division of the law in Justin's thought has been argued most forcefully by Theodore Stylianopoulos, who found Justin's theory "concealed" but implicit in his *Dialogue,* and finds three separate categories of commandments: the ethical precepts, the commandments intended as types or prophecies, and those given for "hardness of heart." Stylianopoulos finds Ptolemy's *Epistle to Flora* to be a useful *comparandum* in this regard, even as he points out important differences.[21] His case is based heavily on *Dial.* 44.2 (presumably the same passage Quispel had in mind), and is tacitly accepted by Christoph Markschies,[22] but is ultimately unconvincing. Oskar Skarsaune, in an effective refutation of Stylianopoulos' theory,[23] shows that Justin's observations on the Jewish ceremonial law – those commandments given either for typological purposes or for "hardness of heart" – are better read as denoting two "functions" or "aspects" of the same commandments rather than two different "divisions." Therefore, only the Jewish ceremonial law and the ethical precepts are to be distinguished categorically, resulting in not a threefold division of the law in Justin but a twofold one, in line with many contemporaneous Christian supersessionist readings of the Jewish law and therefore not noticeably unique to Justin.

Finally, Francis Fallon has usefully demonstrated that Philo of Alexandria was an earlier witness in Hellenistic Judaism to the notion of various levels of meaning in the law, and has carefully compared Philo to Ptolemy on this point.[24] Other, more distant correlations with Hellenistic or Rabbinic Judaism have been suggested.[25] Altogether, this scholarship has affirmed that neither the notion of a division within the law nor its

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[20] Willis A. Shotwell, *The Biblical Exegesis of Justin Martyr* (London: S.P.C.K., 1965), 8-9.
[21] Theodore Stylianopoulos, *Justin Martyr and the Mosaic Law* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1975), 51-76.
[22] Markschies, "New Research," 237n53.
[23] Oskar Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy: A Study in Justin Martyr's Proof-Text Tradition: Text-Type, Provenance, Theological Profile* (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 323-4.
[24] Francis T. Fallon, "The Law in Philo and Ptolemy: A Note on the Letter to Flora," *VC* 30 (1976), 45-51.
[25] Markschies, "New Research," 235-6.

explanation on account of differing sources for the various parts were ideas unique to Ptolemy. However, the details of the various ancient authors' systems have thus far proven to always be quite different. Christoph Markschies summarizes: "Even if Ptolemy's terminology as well as the elements of his [divisions] originated in the Jewish and Christian discussions of his time, I suggest that the *solution* goes back to Ptolemy himself."[26]

What no one seems to have previously noticed is that the closest parallel to Ptolemy's division of the law may be found in the writings of his most ardent opponent, his near contemporary Irenaeus of Lyons, who, as we have seen previously, wrote his *Adversus Haereses* against Ptolemy's followers, roughly ten to thirty years after Ptolemy penned his *Epistle to Flora*. In *Haer.* 4.12-15, Irenaeus, too, engages in a discussion about the nature of the Jewish law, its various origins, and its relevance to second-century Christians. What is even more striking, Ptolemy and Irenaeus rely upon all of the same Matthean proof texts, interpreting them in largely similar ways. They both turn to Jesus' categorical statement from the Sermon on the Mount, that he has come not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it (Mt. 5.17-20), in combination with the fulfillment sayings, or "antitheses," immediately following this pronouncement (Mt. 5.21-48), selecting the same four of the six, and omitting the same two, from their discussions. Likewise, they both make use of the controversy over divorce found in Mt. 19.3-9. The emerging importance of all of these Matthean passages in disputes with Marcionites suggests a partial explanation for the various and striking similarities in their exegesis. Finally, they also both make use of a controversy concerning the "tradition of the elders" (Mt. 15.1-9), a passage that is otherwise unattested in either prior or subsequent late antique Christian exegesis for this purpose. Finally, a close reading of *Haer.* 4.12-15, combined with his later *Epideixis,* shows that Irenaeus, in the process of

[26] Markschies, "New Research," 237.

using the same proof texts as Ptolemy, arrives at his own tripartite division of the Mosaic law that bears numerous structural similarities to that of Ptolemy, albeit with some key differences.

That Irenaeus should follow Ptolemy so closely on so many points does not shed any further light upon any possible influences on the thought of Ptolemy; so far as we know, he himself was the innovator of this solution, as Markschies has noted. What this finding does draw our attention to are two themes we have encountered previously in this dissertation: the theological and exegetical proximity of "heretical" Valentinian positions to the thought of retrospectively orthodox Christian thinkers such as Irenaeus, and possible Valentinian influence upon Saint Irenaeus himself. This finding also represents a significant contribution to the study of Irenaeus' theology that has been previously unrecognized. In this chapter, after demonstrating the numerous similarities between Ptolemy's and Irenaeus' exegetical argument about the Mosaic law, I will then suggest some possible explanations for this convergence of proof texts in the hands of these two authors.

I will proceed through the divisions of the law, and their corresponding proof texts, not in the order in which either Ptolemy or Irenaeus present them (for their orders are different), but rather in the "chronological order" assumed by their shared theory; that is, first the law that was given by the deity, then that stratum that was added subsequently by Moses of his own accord, and finally that added even later by the elders. As each of the Matthean pericopes have their own interpretive difficulties, I will briefly discuss these on their own terms before turning to the exegetical solutions proposed by Ptolemy and Irenaeus. Throughout the chapter, I will stick to a reading of Ptolemy's position that may be derived only from the text of the *Epistle to Flora,* without obfuscating his argument or his exegesis via the introduction of other cosmologies attributed by Irenaeus to Ptolemy or

to his followers, which information Irenaeus derived from other sources.[27] For a summary of the conclusions of this chapter in tabular form, readers are referred to this chapter's Appendix.

2. THE DIVINE LAW

Jesus' categorical statement of Matthew 5.17, "Think not that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets; I have come not to destroy but to fulfill," has become a *locus classicus* for the orthodox Christian relationship to Judaism, interpreted as indicating continuity yet supersessionism. This was not always the case. Standing as preface to the antitheses and as introduction to the main part of the Sermon on the Mount,[28] Mt. 5.17-20 as a whole is generally considered to be one of the most Jewish passages of the canonical gospels. Jesus' claims that not a jot or tittle of the law will pass away until heaven and earth do so (5.18), that whoever breaks one of the least of the commandments of the Torah will be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven (5.19), and that entry to the Kingdom is barred to those whose righteousness does not exceed those of the scribes and the Pharisees (5.20) all underscore the fact that Jesus' message, according to Matthew, is one fully consistent with Jewish teaching and scriptural interpretation; indeed, vv. 18-20 may sound like rabbinic orthodoxy.[29] The six so-called "antitheses" following (vv. 21-48) are understood by virtually all commentators as examples of the kind of thing Matthew's Jesus meant by "fulfilling" the law in v.17; they all, in one way or another, promote a stricter code of ethics than what is stipulated in "the letter of the law." Together, Mt. 5.17-48 represents a line of Jewish scriptural interpretation with a great deal in common with Pharisaical tradition, and

[27] For a discussion of this problem, see Chapter 3.
[28] Luz, *Matthew 1-7* [1989], 255.
[29] Luz, *Matthew 1-7* [1989], 259.

fully consistent within what many Matthew scholars have recognized as Matthew's "Christian-Jewish Community."[30]

That Gentile Christianity should adopt – indeed, lean upon – such teachings as foundational to their understanding of the Jewish law is, in this view, surprising. It did not always look upon these verses favorably, as a review of both the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* and Biblia Patristica lists of scriptural citations and allusions will reveal. The verses Mt. 5.17-20 are not quoted by any of the so-called apostolic fathers.[31] Even Justin Martyr, who repeatedly describes Christ as "fulfilling" the prophets, never relies upon Mt. 5.17 as a proof text. Matthew 5.17 does not, in fact, appear quoted in any Christian source prior to Ptolemy.[32] His *Epistle to Flora* is our first extant use of it in any context, and he uses it as one of his sources for the proof of that part of the law that was of divine origin.

Matthew 5.17 emerged as a decisive proof text to counter Marcion.[33] Marcion, who had so forcefully argued for the separation of law and gospel, needed to be met on grounds that wedded the two. Mt. 5.17-20 in like manner forcefully stressed the opposite conclusion, that Christ had come in full continuity with the old law even while introducing something new.

In fact, Marcion himself had explicitly rejected this sentiment from Matthew. Tertullian tells us, regarding Mt. 5.17, that Marcion had erased that passage as an interpolation, and he defends the catholics from the Marcionite charge that the catholics

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[30] E.g., Anthony J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). More specifically, the Matthean Jewish community knew the Gospel of Mark, which Matthew reworked along more Jewish lines. This general situation, on which there is broad agreement, results in a host of historical critical interpretations of vv. 5.17-20; see Luz, *Matthew 1-7* [1989], 259-260 for bibliography.
[31] The one instance of Mt. 5.19 in Ignatius' *Epistle to the Ephesians* is in the longer recension, which is generally held to be a fourth-century text.
[32] *Flora* is also the only Valentinian source to cite these verses.
[33] Luz, *Matthew 1-7* [1989], 261.

had spuriously inserted it;[34] finally, feigning exasperation with his interlocutor, he writes, "What is the use of our contending any longer whether Christ did or did not say 'I have not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it'? Pontus has labored in vain to deny that sentence."[35] The Matthean antitheses themselves, without the hermeneutical preface of Mt. 5.17-20, could easily be (and likely were) incorporated into Marcion's *Antitheses,* and may even have suggested to Marcion the format of that work.[36] By contrast, the Matthean preamble of 5.17-20 sought to control the interpretation of the following six antitheses, safeguarding them for Matthew's Jewish community against antinomian hermeneutical lines.[37] In an ironic twist of fate, they were taken up by Gentile Christians as useful anti-Marcionite scriptural resources.

Yet there are some exegetical problems in utilizing Mt. 5.17-48 against Marcion, both internally, with regard to simply interpreting the Matthean text on its own terms, and externally, when this text was read alongside other, potentially conflicting Christian writings.

Externally, how was this Matthean Jewish attitude toward the law to be wedded to the already widespread Pauline idea that the vast part of the Jewish law was no longer valid for Christians?[38] Ptolemy and Irenaeus would solve this problem in the same way: by finding that the law may be divided into at least two parts. The first part, the ethical precepts, are those commandments that Christ "fulfilled"; while the second, the Jewish ceremonial law, are those that are now to be reinterpreted symbolically (*Flor.* 5.8-15;

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[34] *Hoc enim Marcion ut additum erasit. Adv.Marc.* 4.7.4; cf. 4.9.15, 4.12.14, 4.36.6.
[35] *Dixerit Christus an non, Ego non veni legem dissolvere sed implere, frustra de ista sententia neganda Pontus laboravit. Adv.Marc.* 5.14.14. Trans. *ANF.*
[36] Harnack, *Marcion: The Gospel of the Alien God,* 154n29. On Marcion's use of Matthew, in addition to Luke, see below in the section on "The Law Added By Moses."
[37] Luz, *Matthew 1-7* [1989], 271.
[38] That is, Paul as he was interpreted by second-century Gentile Christians, who were not yet cognizant of the "new perspective" in Pauline studies.

Haer. 4.14.3). Ptolemy and Irenaeus both quote Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians as proof that this is so (Ptolemy: 1 Cor. 5.7; Irenaeus: 1 Cor. 10.4,11). Furthermore, both Ptolemy and Irenaeus reject a more severe anti-Jewish position, known to us from, e.g., the *Epistle of Barnabas,* that the Jews were forever cut off from the covenant after their rebellion at Sinai and henceforth have always fundamentally misunderstood their own law as physical rather than typological.[39] Rather, while admitting a typological function to a part of the law, Ptolemy and Irenaeus nevertheless agree that the Jews correctly observed the law in the past, even though the coming of Christ has transformed the way it now ought to be followed. Irenaeus says that God instructed the people, "calling them to the things of primary importance by means of those which were secondary; that is, to things that are real by means of those that are typical; and by things temporal, to eternal; and by the carnal to the spiritual; and by the earthly to the heavenly."[40] Likewise, Ptolemy says that "since the images and allegories were indicative of other things, they were rightly performed as long as the truth was not here. But once the truth is here we must do what is proper to the truth, not the image."[41] Yet they both apply this kind of "spiritual" exegesis to the Jewish ceremonial law, not the Decalogue. This basic division of the law into two categories was, as I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, recognized by Justin Martyr, and Ptolemy and Irenaeus in this respect are in continuity with this exegetical trend. However, they each will develop the basic idea in different ways, that will result in, for each of them, a tripartite division of the law.

As for the internal exegetical problems with Mt. 5.17-48, there are two in particular that bear on the present discussion. The first is that the third antithesis, concerning divorce

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[39] *Barnabas* 14.1-9.
[40] *Haer.* 4.14.3. Trans. *ANF.*
[41] *Flor.* 6.5; trans. Frank Williams, 2nd ed.

(Matthew 5.31-2), bears some structural similarity to what is nevertheless an entirely different saying on divorce in Matthew 19.9. In both instances, Jesus rejects divorce as a legal option, overturning the permission implied in Deut. 24.1. In Mt. 19.3-9, however, a different justification is given: instead of this being a "fulfillment" of the law, Jesus is returning to a natural law present from the creation, which Moses had loosened because of the people's hardness of heart. Matthew thus presents Jesus' forbidding of divorce in two pericopes with two different justifications. This is not a problem for those readers of the Gospel of Matthew looking for advice on the practical matter of divorce, but for those early Christian exegetes seeking to work out a systematic legislative theory, the conflicting justifications introduce potential exegetical complexities. Both Ptolemy and Irenaeus resolve this potential inconsistency between Mt. 5.32 and Mt. 19.9 by ignoring the divorce antithesis of Mt. 5.32 entirely, and considering the permission to divorce as a separate part of the law, that added by Moses of his own accord. I will take up their consideration of the divorce controversy narrative of Mt. 19.3-9 in the next section of this chapter.

The second internal exegetical issue is a greater one, and is one that has occupied centuries of commentators: in what sense, exactly, does Christ "fulfill" (πληρόω) the law? While Matthew has highlighted the foundational quality of these words by situating them at the beginning of the Sermon of the Mount, the statement is formulated so generally that it is one of the most difficult to interpret in his entire gospel.[42] Likewise, how do these six antitheses constitute "fulfillment" of that law? Ptolemy's and Irenaeus' solutions to these questions will concern us for the remainder of this section of the chapter.

While all six of them represent a shift to a more rigorous ethic, we may distinguish a difference in kind between them on the level of the Matthean text. Three of them may

[42] Luz, *Matthew 1-7* [1989], 259.

arguably be seen as akin to the concept of a "fence around the Torah," a notion promulgated by the rabbis to prevent the people from accidentally violating a Torah mitzvah.[43] This category would include the condemnations of anger (which might lead to killing), lust (which might lead to adultery), and swearing oaths (which might lead to swearing falsely). A fourth antithesis, the encouragement to love one's enemies (which would make it easier to love one's neighbors), although framed positively rather than negatively, could also fall into the same category; however, Ptolemy does not mention it at all, and Irenaeus treats this one differently; we shall return to it below.

Both Ptolemy and Irenaeus treat the first three of these antitheses together, as a group. For each exegete, this group of three commandments serve as sufficient examples of the Savior's "fulfilling" of the law (in *Flor.* 6.1 and *Haer.* 4.13.1, respectively). For Ptolemy, that part of the law that required "fulfilling" was the Decalogue, "those ten sayings engraved upon the two tablets for the forbidding of those things which we must avoid and the enjoining of things which we must do"; furthermore, this law is "pure and unmixed with evil" (*Flor.* 5.3). For Irenaeus, likewise, those commandments of the law that "the Lord did not dissolve... but extended and fulfilled" are constrained to "the natural [precepts] of the law by which humanity is justified" (*Haer.* 4.13.1); i.e., the Decalogue: "For God at the first, indeed, having warned [the Jews] by means of natural precepts, which from the beginning he had implanted in humankind, that is, by means of the Decalogue (which, if anyone does not observe, he has no salvation), did then demand nothing more of them" (*Haer.* 4.15.1). Thus both Ptolemy and Irenaeus interpret the "fulfilling" of the law to apply to only part of it, the Decalogue, and both do so by appealing to the same three antitheses. Incidentally, both Ptolemy and Irenaeus pass over

[43] See *m. Avot* 1.1.

the fact that the commandment not to swear falsely is not a part of the Decalogue, but is found in Lev. 19.12, Num. 30.2, and Deut. 23.21.

Ptolemy and Irenaeus likewise interpret "fulfilling" in a similar manner. Although Ptolemy emphasizes the fact that the Decalogue was "imperfect" (ἀτελής, 3.4; μὴ ἔχοντες δὲ τὸ τέλειον, 5.3) and "required fulfillment" (ἐδέοντο τῆς πληρώσεως, 5.3) by the Savior, he nevertheless stresses that the former ten commandments are "encompassed" (περιλαμβάνω) by the stricter ones brought by the Savior, thus implying that the law brought by the Savior includes, and yet is an extension of, the former. Likewise, Irenaeus sees "fulfilling" the law as synonymous with "extending" *(extendo)* and "widening" *(dilato)* it.[44] Ptolemy and Irenaeus are thus far in agreement on the following points regarding the divine law: both select the same three antitheses (on anger, lust, and swearing) to be indicative of what is meant by the Savior "fulfilling" the law; they take the law that was fulfilled to be the Decalogue, and they take "fulfilling" to mean something very similar.

To return to the Matthean text, it is more difficult to see how the two remaining antitheses might be considered "fulfillment" of the law. I have already mentioned the divorce antithesis, which some commentators have characterized as a traditional logion of Jesus that Matthew has reformulated as an antithesis.[45] As such, the fit is imperfect. The permission to divorce assumed in the Torah seems to be completely overturned by this saying of Jesus. Ptolemy and Irenaeus, perhaps aware of the exegetical difficulty, avoid mentioning the divorce antithesis as an example of fulfillment of the law, and instead treat the divorce controversy narrative of Mt. 19.3-9 separately, as I have indicated.

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[44] *Haer.* 4.13.1: *non dissolvit sed extendit et implevit... neque solventis Legem sed adimplentis et extendentis et dilatantis.* The ancient Latin translation of Ireneaus here uses the same verbs as does the Vulgate at Mt. 5.17: *non veni solvere, sed adimplere*. Irenaeus repeats the cluster of verbs *adimplentis et extendentis et dilatantis* shortly thereafter, at *Haer.* 4.13.3; and he introduces an additional synonym, *augeo* (increase, grow) at *Haer.* 4.13.2, 4.

[45] Luz, *Matthew 1-7* [1989], 301-2.

This brings us to the antithesis of Mt. 5.38-42: "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth', But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer, but if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also, etc." Once again, this seems to be an outright negation of the law, not a fulfillment. Ulrich Luz writes, "In distinction from the first two antitheses [those concerning killing/anger and adultery/lust], which intensify but do not abolish its basic commandments, Matthew introduces here redactionally an Old Testament principle which can be understood only as a contrast to the words of Jesus."[46] The injunctions in vv. 39-42 to suffer injustice and even exert effort to exacerbate the consequences – by turning the other cheek, giving your cloak as well, and going the extra mile – would seem to be a direct contradiction of the *lex talionis* stipulated in Lev. 24.17-21. The contrast between "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" and "if someone strikes you on one cheek, turn the other also" was certainly felt to be a contradiction by Marcion, who included this, Matthean form of the saying in his *Antitheses.*[47]

Irenaeus may be aware of the exegetical difficulty, and perhaps it is not a coincidence that this antithesis is missing from his list of the three that he used to summarize the Lord's "fulfilling" of the law in *Haer.* 4.13.1. After a brief excursus on the necessity of "extending" the law in *Haer.* 4.13.2, he returns to a restatement of the first two antitheses (on anger and lust) in *Haer.* 4.13.3, then shifts to a loose quotation of Luke 6.27-30, which parallel many of the dominical commandments (i.e., the sayings following "but I say to you") of Matthew's antitheses. Luke has not framed these sayings as antitheses; thus he does not quote the Pentateuch at all here; rather, his frame for this section of dominical sayings is the commandment to love one's enemies (i.e., what for Matthew was the final

[46] Luz, *Matthew 1-7* [1989], 330.
[47] Harnack, *Marcion: The Gospel of the Alien God,* 61; Moll, *Marcion,* 111. The evidence is in Tertullian, *Adv.Marc.* 4.16.

antithesis). Thus when Irenaeus follows Luke here, he includes a number of dominical sayings found in Luke 6.27-30, including the injunction to offer a second garment when the first one is taken from you – but Irenaeus, in quoting Luke, omits both any mention of the *lex talionis* (which Luke does not cite), as well as the accompanying dominical commandment to turn the other cheek – which, of the injunctions listed in Mt. 5.39-42, is the one most concerned with physical violence. By avoiding any reference to the *lex talionis,* Irenaeus passes over the exegetical problem inherent to the Matthean text, and likewise does not refute Marcion on this point.

Ptolemy, however, sees the exegetical difficulty as proof that there is a division of the divine law that is "interwoven with injustice" and that it was "entirely destroyed" by the Savior, even while admitting that it was of divine origin. Ptolemy, too, is aware that this solution is difficult, and he defends the explanation at length, quoting both the *lex talionis* and the example that directly addresses the case of physical violence, the commandment to turn the other cheek (Mt. 5.39). Having defined that law that the Savior came to fulfill and not destroy as the Decalogue, Ptolemy is then free to interpret this antithesis as, in fact, evidence that the Savior did "destroy" some other parts of the law – for the *lex talionis* is not in the Decalogue.

Incidentally, this exegetical solution of Ptolemy's simultaneously solves a problem that would come to occupy modern Pauline scholars: that of Paul's apparent "schizophrenia" with regard to the law.[48] After proving each of these divisions by means of the "words of the Savior," he adds additional proof from the Pauline corpus. For Ptolemy, Paul's varying assessments of the law (*Flor.* 6.6) are clearly aimed at its different divisions! When Paul says "The law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good"

[48] See John G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1-15.

(Rom. 7.12), he is referring to that part of the law "with no admixture of inferior matter"; i.e., the Decalogue. On the other hand, when "Paul" writes that "The law of commandments [contained] in ordinances is abolished" (Eph. 2.15), he points to that part that is "mixed with injustice" and which the Savior came to destroy.[49]

This concludes the discussion on the four antitheses that appear in Ptolemy's *Epistle to Flora* and Irenaeus' *Haer.* 4.12-15. To be sure, their opinions diverge on the matter of the *lex talionis* antithesis and its relationship to Matthew 5.17. Yet they have numerous exegetical decisions in common. They group three of the six antitheses together as examples of "fulfillment." They treat the *lex talionis* antithesis in separate sections of each of their discussions. They likewise both choose to resolve any potential contradictions between the two Matthean pericopes on divorce by ignoring the divorce antithesis altogether; instead, they both treat the divorce controversy narrative of Mt. 19,3-9 separately, and both find that it is evidence for an additional stratum of legislation that Moses added of his own accord – a discussion to which we turn in the next section.

I suggest that it is highly unlikely that these thinkers independently arrived at this cluster of shared exegetical decisions. Rather, this collection of coincidences suggests some sort of relationship between the two texts – either because they both derived their exegesis from a common source, or because Ptolemy, via his followers, was able to influence the theology and exegetical practice of Irenaeus – the latter's rhetorical charges of *tesserae* rearrangement notwithstanding.

[49] «τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασι κατηργῆσθαι.» Ptolemy closely follows Eph. 2.15, only changing the verb from active to passive; this follows no known variant, so presumably he has consciously adapted it to fit the rest of his own sentence.

3. The Law Added By Moses

3.1. Ptolemy's Use of Matthew 19.8

We turn now to the stratum in the Mosaic law to which Ptolemy first introduces his readers: that layer that Ptolemy alleges that Moses had introduced of his own accord, contrary to the will of God – in Ptolemy's words, "not in the sense that God gives laws through him, but in the sense that Moses, starting from his own ideas, gave some laws."[50] The one proof of this stratum "from the words of the Savior" that Ptolemy relies upon is the controversy narrative between Jesus and the Pharisees in Mt. 19.3-9 over the legality of divorce. Ptolemy opens this discussion as follows (*Flor.* 4.4-5, with my translation):

διαλεγόμενός που ὁ σωτὴρ πρὸς τοὺς περὶ τοῦ ἀποστασίου συζητοῦντας αὐτῷ, ὃ δὴ ἀποστάσιον ἐξεῖναι νενομοθέτητο, ἔφη αὐτοῖς ὅτι,

Once when the Savior was discussing with those who were debating with him concerning the bill of divorce – the bill which had been sanctioned by the law – he told them,

Μωυσῆς πρὸς τὴν σκληροκαρδίαν ὑμῶν ἐπέτρεψεν τὸ ἀπολύειν τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ. ἀπ᾽ ἀρχῆς γὰρ οὐ γέγονεν οὕτως. θεὸς γάρ, φησί, συνέζευξε ταύτην τὴν συζυγίαν, καὶ ὃ συνέζευξεν ὁ κύριος, ἄνθρωπος, ἔφη, μὴ χωριζέτω.

"Moses, for your hardness of heart, allowed the divorce of one's wife. For from the beginning it was not so. [Mt. 19.8] For God," he said, "has joined this pair together, and what the Lord has joined," he said, "let no one separate." [Mt. 19.6]

ἐνταῦθα ἕτερον μὲν <τὸν> τοῦ θεοῦ δείκνυσι νόμον, τὸν κωλύοντα χωρίζεσθαι γυναῖκα ἀπὸ ἀνδρὸς αὐτῆς, ἕτερον δὲ τὸν τοῦ Μωσέως, τὸν διὰ τὴν σκληροκαρδίαν ἐπιτρέποντα χωρίζεσθαι τοῦτο τὸ ζεῦγος. καὶ δὴ κατὰ τοῦτο ἐναντία τῷ θεῷ νομοθεταῖ ὁ Μωσῆς· ἐναντίον γάρ ἐστι <τὸ διαζευγνύναι> τῷ μὴ διαζευγνύναι.[51]

Here he points out there is one law, the law of God, which forbids the separation of a woman from her husband, but another, the law of Moses, which permits this couple's separation because of hardness of heart. So then Moses is legislating contrary to God, for separating is contrary to not separating.

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[50] *Flor.* 4.2; trans. Foerster/Wilson. οὐ καθὰ δι᾽ αὐτοῦ νομοθετεῖ ὁ θεός, ἀλλὰ καθὰ ἀπὸ τῆς ἰδίας ἐννοίας ὁρμώμενος καὶ ὁ Μωσῆς ἐνομοθέτησέ τινα.

[51] The two emendations to the text of Epiphanius indicated by <> are suggested in Holl's apparatus and adopted by Völker, Quispel, the *TLG,* and both Foerster/Wilson's and Williams' translations.

As Massaux has shown, Ptolemy is reliant upon Matthew here. There is nothing here that is unique to Mark, and the main proof text upon which Ptolemy's argument stands matches almost word for word Mt. 19.8. The latter has ἐπέτρεψεν ὑμῖν ἀπολῦσαι τὰς γυναῖκας ὑμῶν ("allowed you to divorce your wives"); Ptolemy has ἐπέτρεψεν τὸ ἀπολύειν τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ ("allowed the divorce of one's wife").[52] The parallel in Mk. 10.4-6 is quite different, with the Pharisees providing some of the information, Jesus providing the rest, and all of it occurring in a different order and with significant differences in vocabulary.[53]

Ptolemy's interpretation of this pericope, above, is succinct. He then begins a defense of Moses' motives, arguing that he gave this permission "not on the basis of his own decision (οὐ κατὰ προαίρεσιν ποιήσας τὴν ἑαυτοῦ), but of necessity (ἀλλὰ κατὰ ἀνάγκην), on account of the weakness (ἀσθένειαν) of those for whom the law was given." Ptolemy seems almost to exonerate Moses here, as he had good intentions and was dealing with a difficult situation: the men "were in danger of being turned even more to wickedness (or injustice; ἀδικίαν), and consequently to destruction (ἀπώλειαν)" (*Flor.* 4.7). Therefore Moses prevented even greater evils, Ptolemy argues, by instituting a lesser one, the institution of divorce. Ptolemy leaves unstated what these greater evils might be. As we shall see, Irenaeus (and Jerome!) would justify Moses' actions on the same grounds, while outlining in greater detail the consequences that Moses had allegedly avoided. However, despite Ptolemy's defense of Moses' motives, he nevertheless returns at the conclusion of this section to the unequivocal verdict that "it is undeniable that the law of Moses is here

[52] Foerster/Wilson "fix" the latter in their translation in order to harmonize with Matthew. Mt. 19.8 also has δὲ instead of γὰρ, which is here an insignificant difference. Mt. 19.8 shows no significant manuscript variations.
[53] See Massaux, *Influence,* 2:280 for a complete synoptic table.

shown to be different from the law of God, even if we have demonstrated it now from only one case." (*Flor.* 4.6-10)

Some scholars have taken Ptolemy at his word: that there were numerous other examples from which he might have chosen, but that the divorce controversy was perfectly adequate for the occasion – and perhaps even to be preferred to other, alleged examples on the grounds that Ptolemy was attempting to engage Flora on a theoretical topic by means of introducing a topic of practical concern to her: divorce.[54] These claims are made on the basis of the assumption that Flora is to be identified with a woman named in Justin's *2 Apology* 2 who was known to have divorced her husband. However, I argue in what follows that not only was the divorce controversy of Mt. 19.3-9 the best example Ptolemy might have chosen for his actual topic at this point in the letter – the claim that Moses added legislation to the divine law – it was arguably the only instance among the sayings of the Lord known to him that seemed to present Jesus directly contradicting the law of Moses – and was taken this way by second-century exegetes. In particular, this pericope was an important battleground for second-century Marcionite and anti-Marcionite exegesis, a battle that Ptolemy joined and to which he contributed.

In order to appreciate Ptolemy's selection of this particular pericope, it will be useful to briefly review the diversity of sayings concerning divorce attributed to Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels (and one letter of Paul), as we will have cause to refer back to them in the subsequent analysis of their exegesis in the hands of Ptolemy, Marcion, and Irenaeus. After this review, I shall show that the passage Ptolemy selected was ill-suited for his alleged interest in Flora's personal marital problems, but a perfect choice with which to combat Marcion.

[54] E.g., Moll, *Marcion,* 16. See also below.

3.2. The Divorce Sayings in their Gospel and Historical Contexts

The blanket permission to divorce is never explicit in the Torah, but is implied by restrictions on priests from marrying divorced women (Lev. 21.7, 14; 22.13) as well as one commandment that upholds a divorced woman's right to make vows that cannot be overruled by any man (Num. 30.9). The general permission to divorce is further evident in three passages in Deuteronomy that prohibit divorce or remarriage in certain exceptional circumstances. A husband is punitively prevented from divorcing his wife should he inflict either of two injustices upon her: slander regarding her virginity (Deut. 22.13-19), for which the penalty would be death if the charges were upheld;[55] or rape resulting in their forced marriage (Deut. 22.28-29). A third passage prevents a husband from remarrying a woman he has previously divorced who then subsequently became married to another man, who has either died or divorced her a second time (Deut. 24.1-4). Here the reason given for the prohibition on the first husband's remarrying the woman is one of purity, but may also reflect a punishment on the first husband for hastily divorcing his wife. In all of these legal cases, the general permission of a husband to divorce his wife is implicit; a woman had no such rights under biblical law. The Torah nowhere specifies acceptable legal grounds for divorce, but the third case implies that there were none whatsoever, placing the burden solely upon the husband to think carefully before acting. This passage, Deut. 24.1-4, states only that the husband may divorce his wife because "she does not please him because he finds something objectionable about her," and so he may write her "a bill of divorce."[56] Given this systemic gender inequality, the first two cases, and possibly the third, are to be read as minor legal protections of the weaker party against only the grossest of violations.

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[55] Deut. 22.20-21; cf. Deut. 22.22-29 for related cases.
[56] Additional references to the "bill of divorce" or *get* may be found at Is. 50.1 and Jer. 3.8.

The lack of specificity regarding just cause for divorce inevitably led to exegetical debate on the matter in Second Temple Judaism. The controversy narrative in Mt. 19.3-9 between Jesus and the Pharisees – regardless of whether we are able to reconstruct the position of the historical Pharisees – reflects intra-Jewish debate on the circumstances under which a man might rightfully divorce his wife: the Pharisees ask, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife *for any cause?"* (Mt. 19.3) Echoes of this debate are also preserved in the Mishnah tractate *Gittin* (i.e., "Bills of Divorce"):

> The school of Shammai say: A man may not divorce his wife unless he has found unchastity in her, for it is written, "Because he hath found in her *indecency* in anything." And the School of Hillel say: [he may divorce her] even if she spoiled a dish for him, for it is written, "Because he hath found in her indecency in *anything*." R. Akiba says: [he may divorce her] even if he found another fairer than she, for it is written, "And it shall be if she find no favor in his eyes."[57]

In this debate, all the Rabbis appeal to Deut. 24.1, emphasizing different parts of the verse or different words.[58]

The position attributed to Rabbi Akiba is of particular significance as we turn to the Synoptic Gospel sayings, as it suggests that one extant reason for initiating a divorce was for the sole purpose of marrying another woman already in mind. Thus, like all of the Synoptic Gospels, the Mishnah interprets the problem of divorce mindful of the potentially proximate cause of the intention to remarry.

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[57] *m. Gittin* 9.10. Trans. Danby; emphasis in original. Tractate *m. Gittin* also preserves debates about the conditions under which a man may *remarry* a woman he had previously divorced, such as: if a man divorced his wife because of her evil reputation; if the divorce was performed in order to fulfill a vow to do so, even if there were no other legitimate causes; and if a woman, divorced on the grounds that she was barren, remarried another and had children by him (*m. Gittin* 4.7-8). The entire tractate is concerned with conditions under which *gittin* may be produced, formulated, written, delivered, and considered valid, but the above passage is the only one that discusses the just grounds for the divorce itself.

[58] This is easier to see in the KJV's more literal translation of the Hebrew: "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house."

The Synoptic Gospels preserve four dominical sayings on divorce that bear an obvious resemblance to one another, yet contain significant distinctions. It is therefore important to differentiate between them in order to more clearly see just why this particular pericope from Matthew 19.3-9 was the one Ptolemy selected as his one example for his claim that Moses introduced his own innovations into God's law. They are presented here in a synoptic table so that they may be more easily compared (Table 3); discussion follows the table. As the literature on these sayings is immense, the brief commentary that follows is intended only to highlight the most basic exegetical problems with these verses taken as a whole.

In Table 3, each of the four canonical sayings are given their own column. All of these sayings contain either one or two subcomponents, each of which are listed in separate rows. Each row thus represents a different form of the subcomponents contained in the canonical sayings.[59]

[59] These translations are based upon the NA[27] texts and David Parker's translations of them and other manuscripts found in his chapter on text criticism of these sayings in his *The Living Text of the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), ch. 5, "The Sayings on Marriage and Divorce," 75-94. The following overview of the sources is my own assessment, although I am indebted to both Parker and the quite different approach, grounded in source criticism, of Dale Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), ch. 9, "The Hermeneutics of Divorce," 125-137. Where applicable, I have indicated in the following footnotes the limits of these approaches.

Mk. 10.11-12	Mt. 19.9	Mt. 5.32	Lk. 16.18
11) Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her,	Whoever divorces his wife, except for *porneia*, and marries another commits adultery.		**a)** Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery,
12) and if she, having divorced her husband, marries another man, she commits adultery.			
		a) Everyone who divorces his wife, except for the cause of *porneia*, makes her an adulteress,	
		b) and whoever should marry a divorced woman commits adultery.[60]	**b)** and whoever marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.

Table 4. The Divorce Sayings in the Synoptic Gospels

The first row represents the basic case: what is at stake is a husband's combined action of divorce and remarriage, an act that would be permissible according to biblical law assuming none of the Deuteronomic exceptions discussed above applied. In the form represented in the first row, Jesus interprets a man's divorce plus remarriage as adultery, and we might read this as a strengthening of the woman's protections over those provided her by Deuteronomy: any divorce initiated for the purpose of remarrying is here

[60] Mt. 5.32b and its parallel in Lk. 16.18b (i.e., the fourth row of the table) are the only instances where a comment on the translation is necessary. This form of a divorce saying contains the word ἀπολελυμένην, which might be rendered "a divorced woman," leaving the agency undetermined (e.g., Parker, RSV, NRSV, NIV, REB) or "a woman who has been divorced [i.e., by her husband]" (e.g., Martin). Likewise, the NA27 text of Lk. 16.18 expands this to ἀπολελυμένην ἀπὸ ἀνδρὸς; again, the choices are "a woman divorced from her husband" or "a woman who has been divorced by her husband" (with the same distribution of translations as before). In the latter translation in each case, the husband initiated the divorce; in the former, it is unclear. As neither Matthew nor Luke say anything elsewhere about a woman's ability to initiate a divorce, perhaps both gospels rhetorically construct a universe in which both translations amount to the same thing: a divorced woman is divorced on account of her husband's doing. Alternately, if the verse with which this one is paired in each gospel (Mt. 5.32a; Lk. 16.18a) provides important hermeneutic context for this verse in each gospel, then a case is to be made in Luke, but not Matthew, that this verse grants women implicit permission to initiate divorce even as it debars them from remarrying, an interpretation in line with the interpretation of the saying in the greater Lukan context, discussed below. My translation intentionally preserves the ambiguity inherent to the Greek.

casuistically related to the remarriage and is thus itself discouraged. However, in the isolated logion (all instances in the first row), without any further narrative context, it is not clear that divorce per se is prohibited; rather, a man's remarriage after a divorce that he initiated is interpreted as adultery.

To this basic saying, Mark has added a complimentary one concerning divorce initiated by the woman (second row). This may reflect the fact that Mark was written for a Gentile audience operating under Roman law, under which, in contrast to the biblical law that Jesus was interpreting, women as well as men had the right to divorce their spouse.[61] Therefore Mark's prohibition of divorce followed by remarriage cannot be understood any longer as one motivated by a hermeneutic of social justice designed to protect the rights of the weaker party. Rather, Mark inflects the saying with sexual morality, as is evident by the context in which he situates the saying; i.e., the controversy narrative with the Pharisees over divorce and Jesus' exegesis of Deuteronomy through the lens of the creation narratives in Genesis.[62] Mark thus provides a biblical justification for a Roman moral attitude antagonistic to what might be seen as capricious divorce that Roman law nevertheless allowed.[63]

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[61] David Parker, *Living Text,* 79; William Loader, *The New Testament on Sexuality* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2012), 80.

[62] Jesus uses one verse from each creation account in Genesis (1.27 & 2.24), neither of which are about divorce and only one of which might be said to be about marriage, to overturn a legal passage that unambiguously condones divorce under some circumstances. A gadfly might say that Jesus takes passages of Scripture out of context and interprets a clear passage by means of ambiguous ones, and is thus guilty of two of Irenaeus' main claims about heretical exegetical methods (cf. Chapter 2). In any case, Jesus' exegesis is obscure, and the literature on this issue is vast. For the proposition that the Synoptic Jesus is alluding to a pre-Synoptic Jewish homily on the conflicting creation accounts of man as either "two" or "one," with which the Pharisees would have been familiar and to which further allusions are preserved in Rabbinic literature, see Herbert W. Basser, *Studies in Exegesis: Christian Critiques of Jewish Law and Rabbinic Responses 70-300 C.E.* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 110-115.

[63] Although both biblical and tannaitic law attempts to deprive women of the right to initiate divorce, there is nonetheless evidence that some Second Temple Jewish women, in both Palestine and the Diaspora, divorced their husbands. Much of the evidence, however, involves upper class elites. It is therefore difficult to determine whether Mk. 10.11-12 and 1 Cor. 7.10-11 reflect typical Jewish practice, Roman influence, or

Matthew (column 2) takes over this pericope from Mark, preserving the basic form of the saying (row 1) while eliminating Mark's addition concerning women initiating divorces (row 2). Presumably, as Matthew was adapting Mark for a Jewish audience, Mark's concession to Roman law was less attractive to Matthew. In both gospels, the controversy narrative in Mark 10 || Matthew 19 provides a context that alters the meaning of this saying, changing it from one that only prohibits remarriage into a dual prohibition on divorce and remarriage.[64]

Both of the sayings in Matthew, and only those in Matthew, contain the "*porneia* exception clause."[65] The translation of *porneia* here is a separate problem. It refers to some sort of sexual immorality, and its usual use of the word in a general sense is efficiently conveyed by modern Bible translations that render it as "unchastity," an equally vague term. Its ambiguity will prove to be an exegetical resource, so I leave it untranslated for now.[66]

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both. For a recent summary of the literature on this question, which is beyond the scope of this project, see William Loader, *The New Testament on Sexuality,* 54-62.

[64] Here I agree with Dale Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior,* 134, 137-8. David Parker, however, concludes that what is prohibited in Mark is divorce, but not remarriage *per se* (80).

[65] Put more forcefully, the *porneia* exception clause occurs in every *manuscript* of Mt. 5.32 and 19.9, and in *no manuscript* of Mark or Luke. Parker, *Living Text,* 89.

[66] *Porneia* is often taken to mean "adultery," but this raises the question of why Matthew would have used a vaguer word here when he used the more precise word for committing adultery, μοιχεύω, in both of the divorce sayings as well as in the third Matthean antithesis (about adultery), Mt. 5.27-28. See Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior,* 231n16, for commentary and extensive bibliography on this question. See also James R. Mueller, "The Temple Scroll and the Gospel Divorce Texts," *Revue de Qumran,* 10:2 (1980): 247-256, who argues that the correct translation of πορνεία in the exception clauses of Mt. 5.32 and 19.9 is "incest" (i.e., an illicit marital arrangement that might freely be nullified) rather than "adultery". Parker (90) suggests that Matthew's redefinition of adultery in the third antithesis (5.27-8) implies that just about everyone is really guilty of adultery, and so the "exception clause" constitutes no exception at all. This explanation is not persuasive on its own grounds (Jesus should have mentioned *porneia* in 5.27-8 then) and also is contradicted by Parker's other conclusions about these verses. Yet if πορνεία here does *not* mean something more specific for Matthew than its usual meaning of general sexual immorality, then in order for Mt. 5.31-32 to represent a tightening of the principle expressed in Deut. 24.1 (that an "unseemly deed" (LXX: ἄσχημον πρᾶγμα) of the woman would be sufficient grounds for the man to divorce her), we must read Deuteronomy as granting broad grounds for divorce that exceed sexual misconduct – which, as evident from the position of the school of Hillel (quoted earlier), was a live option! On the other hand, Tertullian will interpret the exception clause to be precisely synonymous with the language of Deuteronomy, thus allowing him to preserve a harmony between law and gospel *contra* Marcion (see below).

In the antitheses section of the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew preserves an additional saying concerning divorce (Mt. 5.32, column 3). However, its form is quite different from the first saying, and so in the table it is given its own rows (3 and 4). Neither verses 32a nor 32b are found in Mark, so Matthew has incorporated them from another source (or sources). Both halves of this form focus on a woman who has been divorced by her husband. Yet interpretation is difficult.

One interpretive option is that v. 32a predicts that a woman set aside by her husband will be forced to turn to another man for protection, and that it is this potential union that is being categorized as adultery. According to this reading, the *porneia* exception clause would be an important clarifier, stipulating that the force of the conditional only holds if the woman has not already committed adultery within her marriage. This sense of the verse would mean, "Every man who divorces his wife makes her an adulteress when she inevitably seeks another man, unless the divorce was for the cause of *porneia,* in which case she was already an adulteress." With this reading, the saying is not concerned to distinguish between cases where the foreshadowed, new union will result in remarriage or not, and thus interprets a subsequent union of any kind, even a remarriage, as adulterous, preserving the moral attitude found in the first form of the saying (row 1). Thus, the interpretation of serial monogamy as sexually immoral behavior is what would constitute the tightening of the divorce legislation of Deut. 24.1 that was quoted in v. 31. However, v. 32a builds upon this moralistic assumption to argue that therefore the husband should not divorce his wife, as he will be a partner to his wife's subsequent moral decline, a situation that the saying implies is not completely within her control should she be divorced by him, due to her presumed social inequality that would cause her to seek the

protection of another man. Verse 32a, with this reading, is therefore motivated by social justice as well, given its moralistic assumptions.

On the other hand, we might equally read v. 32a to mean that a man divorcing his wife when she is innocent of *porneia* within the marriage is a man who unjustly treats her as if she were guilty – i.e., as if she were an adulteress. By this reading, the divorce itself, not her potential subsequent partnership, is what "makes" her an adulteress. As this is not literally the case, this reading is concerned not at all with sexual morality but solely with social justice. A man should not divorce his wife idly. This reading is also supported by Matthew's citation of Deut. 24.1 immediately beforehand, to which this teaching is contrasted.

In both possible readings of v. 32a, the verse prohibits divorce when the wife is innocent of *porneia,* on grounds of justice, thus representing a tightening of the general permission to divorce a woman found in Deut. 24.1. Note that regardless of our interpretation of Mt. 5.32a, the *porneia* exception clause is not a parenthetical addition, but is bound to the verse's meaning. This suggests that the clause originated with this form of the saying. Its presence in Mt. 19.9, then, may be explained by Matthew taking it from the form of the saying he preserved in Mt. 5.32a, and inserting it into the saying he took in 19.9 from Mark.[67]

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[67] David Parker has shown that scribal harmonization caused the phrase "except for the cause of *porneia*" of Mt. 5.32 to supplant the phrase "except for *porneia*" in Mt. 19.9 in some manuscripts (Parker, *Living Text,* 87). This is a different issue from the insertion of the *porneia* exception clause into Mark's text at Mt. 19.9 in the first place. Although I have attributed this insertion to "Matthew," this, too, might have had text critical rather than source critical reasons. If that were the case, however, we would expect "except for the cause of *porneia*" to be the earliest attainable text of Mt. 19.9, which, according to Nestle-Aland, it is not. However, Parker advances an argument that Nestle-Aland may be wrong in this case. In fact the manuscript tradition of Mt. 19.9 is more complex than that of any other divorce saying. His alternate suggestion is that Mt. 5.32a was the oldest form of the saying at both places in Matthew, and was harmonized by scribes in both places: Mt. 19.9 was changed based on the parallel narrative in Mark, while Mt. 5.32b was added from Luke 16.18b. Ultimately Parker does not push too hard for this reversal of Nestle-Aland, but the thought experiment is

Interpretation of v. 32b is likewise difficult. If we assume that a divorced woman would typically suffer a loss of power and status, this saying seems to exacerbate the situation of a woman set aside by her husband by making it socially stigmatic for another man to marry her and thus stripping her of the minimal protections which the law still provided.[68] The saying thus seemingly favors sexual purity over social justice. The two motives may be reconciled if we assume the injunction on the man in 32a to not divorce his innocent wife (according to either reading) is in v. 32b given an additional justification, as he may be reasonably assured by the milieu imagined in v. 32b that the woman would not be able to remarry. This explanation would also suggest a link between v. 32b and Deut. 24.1 via v. 32a, a relation that is not otherwise apparent, but is seemingly required by this verse's location within the block of Matthean antitheses. On the other hand, perhaps the saying aims to protect an ejected wife by asserting her right to remain single and operate independently of any man.[69] If so, it is concerned with another topic and bears only a loose connection with v. 32a.[70] A third option is that it is simply a harsh saying that stands in irresolvable tension with v. 32a.

As the above table indicates, Lk. 16.18 combines two forms of sayings into one. However, this does not mean that there is not an internal logic at work. We have seen that although Matthew and Mark both clothe the form of the saying known in Lk. 16.18a (first row) in contexts that imply an independent ban on divorce, the logion itself only says that remarriage after divorce constitutes adultery. In Luke there is no interpretive context; it is

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valuable. Here and elsewhere in his book, he challenges the assumption that text criticism operates prior to and in service of source criticism.

[68] Luz, *Matthew 1-7* [1989], 302.

[69] Parker, *Living Text,* 84.

[70] This explanation gains some support from the manuscript evidence for Mt. 5.32 compared with that of Lk. 16.18. The latter is quite stable, whereas the former contains numerous manuscripts with v. 32b missing. To Parker this suggests contamination of Mt. 5.32 from Lk. 16.18, over against NA[27] which includes Mt. 5.32b.

an isolated logion. Luke combines this saying with another (fourth row) that also stipulates that to marry a divorced woman is to likewise commit adultery, thus joining the first saying in privileging singledom over remarriage. Therefore the case may be made that Luke's Jesus allows men to initiate divorce, but prohibits remarriage after divorce.[71]

Tertullian argues against Marcion along these lines, as we shall see below. In a recent piece of modern historical criticism, Dale Martin also makes this case and goes further, arguing that Luke's Jesus actually encourages divorce. We find in Luke-Acts an intensified idealization of the eschatological family that, Martin argues, will and should disrupt and displace the traditional family. As Luke has provided no immediate interpretive context for his divorce logion, it is these other familial attitudes, Martin argues, that provides the most reasonable hermeneutic lens for understanding Luke's position on divorce. Whereas Matthew's Jesus says that "whoever loves his [family members] more than me is not worthy of me," Luke's Jesus says "whoever does not *hate* his [family members] cannot be my disciple." (Mt. 10.37-38 || Lk. 14.25-26) Luke also specifically includes "wives" in the list of family members who must be hated, whereas Matthew omits "wives" even as he, like Luke, includes fathers, mothers, and children. Acts 2.41-7 and 4.32 – 5.11 likewise romanticize the eschatological communal family over the traditional one.[72]

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[71] Depending upon the translation of Lk. 16.18b, this implicit permission to initiate divorce may be extended to women; see previous note on the translation of this verse.

[72] See Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior,* 125-147. Martin's additional argument is based on the assumption that the form of the saying in rows 3 and 4 (Mt. 5.32 || Lk. 16.18b) derives from Q. He observes that despite the fact that Luke apparently had access to *both* a Markan and a Q version of a saying of Jesus that prohibited divorce, Luke combines these two sources in such a way as to eliminate those parts of them that are clearly anti-divorce; i.e., he omits both the controversy narrative from Mark, and the form of the saying found in Matthew 5.32a. Martin's argument is sound so long as we accept, as numerous New Testament scholars do, the two premises that (1) text criticism has yielded an adequate New Testament text upon which to base a search for a solution to the Synoptic Problem, and (2) that solution is some form of the Two Source Hypothesis. Both of these premises are challenged by David Parker's analysis of the divorce sayings (*Living Text,* 75-94). These problems notwithstanding (and many scholars would not acknowledge them to be problems), Martin's other argument for finding that Luke encouraged divorce but prohibited remarriage, as outlined above, is plausible.

The final canonical source for a saying attributed to Jesus concerning divorce is 1 Cor. 7.10-11. The form of the saying is quite different than those in the Synoptics, and its full context, 1 Cor. 7.1-40, is an extended discussion of marriage, divorce, and remarriage in a variety of situations. In this discussion, Paul expressly indicates that some of these teachings are his own opinions (vv. 6, 12, 25, 40), while, with the exception of vv. 10-11, which comes from "the Lord," the source of the others remains unspecified. Verses 10-11 prohibit either spouse from initiating a divorce, and further stipulate that the divorcing party may not remarry except for reconciliation to the former spouse (thus contradicting the prohibition, in Deut. 24.1-4, against remarriage to the same spouse).

Ptolemy thus had a wide selection of divorce material to choose from. Why did he choose the controversy narrative of Matthew 19.3-9 in order to highlight the stratum of the law deriving from Moses' own opinion?

3.3. Flora and the Woman of *2 Apology* 2

In order to see more clearly that Ptolemy selected the example of Mt. 19.3-9 because of its potential cosmological implications, it will be useful to first dispense with the more pedestrian explanation, sometimes offered, that Ptolemy was particularly motivated to include this example as a topic of interest to Flora because she herself was anxious about whether she should divorce her own husband. This suggestion is related to the longstanding question of whether the Ptolemy and Flora of the *Epistle* are the same as two Christians discussed by Justin in his *2 Apology* 2: a tutor named Ptolemy, martyred in Rome c. 152 C.E., and an unnamed Roman noblewoman, who was the latter's pupil, and who was spared.

It is not my purpose here to settle this latter question definitively. I concur with Christoph Markschies that the state of the evidence is insufficient to answer this question in either direction.[73] I would further mention the sometimes forgotten fact that the question of the identification of the two Ptolemies is an independent one from the identification of the two women, and the case for the former is stronger than that of the latter.[74] In addition, regardless of the historical facts of the case, it is certainly true that pondering the question has helped us to envision numerous possibilities for social history in second-century Rome, possibilities disentangled from unwarranted assumptions and hidden discourses, whether these be about duplicitous Gnostics not saying what they mean, or the gullibility of women that makes them especially susceptible to heretical influences.[75] On the contrary, the possibility sketched out by Peter Lampe, that Flora was a wealthy and powerful patron of her tutor Ptolemy, whose social position allowed her to escape torture and execution even if she could not protect her teacher from the same fate, must be kept open as a live option.[76] Lampe's reconstruction of the relative social positions of the woman of *2 Apol.* 2 and her Christian tutor along these lines are persuasive, however, even if the woman is not Flora and/or the Ptolemy is not our Ptolemy, as Lampe himself realizes.[77]

My more limited claim here is simply that the appeal, made by some scholars, to the personal marital problems of the noblewoman of *2 Apol.* 2 as an explanation for our

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[73] Markschies, "New Research," 247-9.
[74] This distinction is acknowledged by Markschies, "New Research," 247 and Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism,* 92.
[75] Although I shall disagree with some aspects of Dunderberg's analysis, on this point he has sharply critiqued this position as a "simplistic and chauvinistic reading of Ptolemaeus's treatise as an attempt by a deceitful Gnostic teacher to seduce into heresy an orthodox – but perhaps a bit bored or dissatisfied? – female Christian of little learning." (92) The reading of Ptolemy's *Epistle* that Dunderberg critiques here thus perpetrates the ancient heresiological discourse associating women with heresy that I discussed in Chapter 2, and is ultimately based on a somewhat unimaginative reading of Epiphanius, who quotes 2 Timothy 3.6 in his refutation of Ptolemy (*Pan.* 33.9.1).
[76] Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus,* 237-240.
[77] Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus,* 240; Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism,* 92, also acknowledges this possibility.

Ptolemy's selection of proof texts from Matthew in his construction of his threefold division of the Mosaic law is ultimately implausible. In what follows, my argument is to remove this alleged motivation of Ptolemy's from the equation, by showing both that it doesn't work on its own terms, and that there are better, more significant exegetical reasons for his including the passage on divorce from Matthew in a treatise on the nature of the Mosaic law. I am concerned here only with Ptolemy's motivation for including the passage, and so will refrain from rehashing every detail of the identity debate, and stick to the elements that are relevant for this limited consideration, which will remain true regardless of the identities of the two Ptolemies and the two women.[78]

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[78] As I see it, the reason the identities of the two Ptolemies emerges as a recurring question is because, if answered in the affirmative, it would allow us to positively date the death of Ptolemaeus Gnosticus (i.e., the author of *Flora*) to c. 152 C.E. in Rome. This one fact would bear several fruit. The most obvious of these is that it would prevent us from allowing a maturation in the theological thought of a Ptolemy who, as was universally accepted prior to Harnack and as Barbara Aland has argued, might otherwise have lived another three decades (Barbara Aland, "Die Rezeption des neutestamentlichen Textes in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten," in *The New Testament in Early Christianity,* ed. Jean-Marie Sevrin (Leuven: Peeters, 1989), 1-38). Winrich Löhr ("La Doctrine de Dieu," 191) raised the possibility of the development of Ptolemy's thought over time as a way to resolve the discrepancies between the cosmology of *Flora* with that of Irenaeus' *grand notice* (*Haer.* 1.1-8), which is allegedly ascribed to Ptolemy on the basis of the problematic sentence "Such are the views of Ptolemy" at the close of *Haer.* 1.8.5, that appears only in the Latin (for discussion, see Chapter 3). Preventing Ptolemy's thought from evolving, by killing him off early, closes off one avenue of harmonizing *Flora* with the *grand notice,* thus allowing us to more firmly attribute these speculations to Ptolemy's followers, as Markschies concludes ("New Research," 249-52; Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed,* 129, considers both options). Moreover, while Gilles Quispel's influential assumption (articulated in his commentary) – that Ptolemy's *Epistle* is an exoteric text, designed to lead Flora to more esoteric doctrines such as those of the *grand notice* – need not stand on a maturation in Ptolemy's thought, if the two documents are by the same author then their discrepancies must be otherwise explained; e.g., by duplicity on Ptolemy's part (as Quispel himself also suggests). Another important implication of an early death date for Ptolemy would be that we could then use Ptolemy's *Epistle* as our earliest source for Marcionite doctrine, upon which to anchor the development of doctrine within the Marcionite church, as has now been recently argued by Sebastian Moll, *Marcion.* Fixing the identities of the two Ptolemies places our Ptolemy firmly in mid-second-century Rome, where he presumably would have known Marcion personally. Finally, as Tuomas Rasimus has recently argued, locating Ptolemy's *Epistle* in Rome prior to 152 C.E. provides support to the claim that the Gospel of John was accepted as apostolic in Rome as early as that date ("Ptolemaeus," 154-6). On the other hand, not much historiographical ground appears to be gained by arguing that the two Ptolemies are different. The certainty that they were different men would relieve any apparent tension between Justin's positive assessment of the Ptolemy mentioned in *2 Apol.* 2 and his negative assessment of the Valentinians in *Dial.* 35.6; however, this alleged contradiction may be nonetheless explained in several other possible ways (e.g., when he wrote the earlier *2 Apology* he may not have yet known exactly what Ptolemy or Valentinus taught or even that Ptolemy was a follower of Valentinus; or he may have known but revised his opinion of the Valentinians over time; or the two texts were written for different audiences, one outsider, the other insider; or the brief note in *Dial.* 35.6 may be a scribal interpolation). There is little payoff for the negative certainty,

The idea that the two Ptolemies are the same is an old one, first suggested by Adolf von Harnack in 1905.[79] It was more recently revived and argued for extensively by Gerd Lüdemann.[80] However, it was Peter Lampe[81] who first added to Lüdemann's reasons in favor of the identification the suggestion that Ptolemy's selection of the divorce controversy of Mt. 19.3-9, and his situating this pericope as his first example in his *Epistle,* is significant given that the Christian woman in *2 Apol.* 2 is reported to have been undecided as to whether to divorce her pagan husband. Lampe goes further. Although he correctly admits that "in [Ptolemy's] theoretical treatment of the biblical divorce laws, no direct conclusion for the behavior of the Christians [regarding divorce] is drawn,"[82] he nevertheless goes on to suggest that Ptolemy's role in the case (presumably in private conversations) was to advise Flora to proceed with the divorce, with the result that her husband retaliated, arresting both of them and causing Ptolemy to be tortured and executed.

Dunderberg agrees with Lampe and pushes the evidence further. Whereas Lampe acknowledges that Ptolemy's treatment of the divorce legislation in the *Epistle* is theoretical only, and contains no practical advice for Christians contemplating divorce, Dunderberg concludes that for Ptolemy, Moses' wise provisions for divorce in certain circumstances still pertain in the present, and thus implies that even the evidence of the letter suggests that Ptolemy encouraged Flora to divorce her husband.[83]

Moll, on the other hand, arrives at the opposite conclusion regarding Ptolemy's exegesis and advice, asking "how could anyone interpret Ptolemy's statement that the law of

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which perhaps goes far to explain the perennial interest in a positive identification. None of these issues, however, hinge upon the identification of the two women, only the two Ptolemies.

[79] See Markschies, "New Research," for a more detailed review of the history of scholarship on this question.

[80] Gerd Lüdemann, "Zur Geschichte des ältesten Christentums in Rom," *ZNW* 70 (1979): 86-114. See Lüdemann for the literature on the question since Harnack.

[81] Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus,* 237-240.

[82] Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus,* 240.

[83] Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism,* 91.

Moses (which allows divorce) was contrary to the law of God (which forbids divorce) other than in the way that divorce was against the divine law and thus forbidden for Christians?"[84] Moll then concludes that given this understanding of Ptolemy's exegesis, the case for the identification of the two women is nevertheless strengthened: Ptolemy's position on the legality of divorce for Christians (according to Moll) accords with the evidence from the *2 Apology* that tells us that the woman's friends ("among whom we may count Ptolemy," Moll adds) encouraged her to stay with her husband. Thus Moll and Dunderberg come to opposite conclusions about Ptolemy's advice to Flora regarding her own alleged divorce proceedings, yet both of them find that their positions support Lampe's suggestion that Flora was in fact the woman of *2 Apol.* 2 seeking a divorce!

Regarding this line of argument, we must disagree with both Moll and Dunderberg and recall Lampe's assessment that Ptolemy is not concerned in the *Epistle* with the practical matter of Christian divorce. Ptolemy's exegesis, as Lampe observes, is ambiguous in this regard, although he certainly had the ability to express himself clearly on the matter if he desired to, or if this was his point. It was not. Ptolemy was concerned with grave cosmological matters to which the divorce controversy in the Gospel of Matthew only pointed, and it is in service of his actual argument that he refrains from speculating on the mundane question of whether individual Christians should seek to separate from their spouses.

In fact it is not even accurate to say, as do Lampe and Moll, that Ptolemy "puts the question of divorce at the beginning of the presentation" on the supposition that this would have been of immediate interest to his recipient and thus would have drawn her into the

[84] Moll, *Marcion,* 14-15.

more weighty cosmological matters.[85] Rather, as Dunderberg has shown, he begins the *Epistle,* following classic rhetorical forms, with a statement of his topic, the nature of the law and Lawgiver (*exordium*), an overview of the status of the question in current debate (*narratio*), and a foreshadowing of how he will prove his own case and the kinds of arguments he will use (*divisio*). By the time the reader reaches the first example in the argument (*argumentatio*), the example of divorce legislation taken from Mt. 19.3-9, the intended topic of discussion is well underway. If Dunderberg leaves out the particular claim that Ptolemy *begins* the letter with the topic of divorce, perhaps it is because his own analysis of the genre of the letter renders this argument especially unpersuasive.[86]

Finally, Ptolemy's precise language in his use of this example also reveals nothing definitive about the personal circumstances of his addressee.[87] Almut Rütten had raised the possibility that perhaps Ptolemy provides a hint of the situation of the addressee, for, unlike 1 Cor. 7.10 and Mk. 10.12, both of which forbid a woman from divorcing her husband, the text that Ptolemy uses, Mt. 19.1-9, assumes that it is the man initiating the divorce, and yet Ptolemy, Rütten suggests, applies the text to the situation of a woman consenting to divorce her husband.[88] The line of *Flora* that Rütten cites here is 4.5. Moll, citing Rütten approvingly, adds a clarifying footnote indicating that the grammatical construction she must be referring to is "γυναῖκα ἀπὸ ἀνδρὸς". However, we must observe that Rütten only alludes to this as a possibility without making the case, and Moll ignores the main thrust of her argument, which is that there are more pressing reasons for Ptolemy's

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[85] Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus,* 239. Cf. Moll, *Marcion,* 15, for similar reasoning.
[86] Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism,* 79-81. For more detail on the genre, see below.
[87] Almut Rütten, "Der Brief des Ptolemäus an Flora: Ein Beispiel altkirchlicher Gesetzesauslegung in Auseinandersetzung mit Marcion," in *Christlicher Glaube und religiöse Bildung,* eds. Hermann Deuser and Gerhard Schmalenberg (Giessen: Giessener Schriften zur Theologie und Religionspädegogik, 1995), 53-74 (59n33). Cf. Moll, *Marcion,* 15.
[88] Rütten, "Der Brief," 59n33.

selection of this proof text from Matthew. Nevertheless, let us pursue the possibility at which Rütten had hinted.

The Greek of *Flor.* 4.5, τὸν τοῦ θεοῦ νόμον τὸν κωλύοντα χωρίζεσθαι γυναῖκα ἀπὸ ἀνδρὸς αὐτῆς, "the law of God, which forbids the separating of a woman from her husband," does not grammatically indicate whether it is the woman or the man who is initiating the separation; the only thing specified is the forbidding of the separation of one thing from another, τι ἀπὸ τινος. Furthermore, if Ptolemy meant to imply that it was the woman initiating the separation, he could have been much more explicit. As Rütten herself points out, this would have been an ideal point for him to resort to either Mark 10.12 or 1 Cor. 7.10, both of which concern the case of the woman initiating the divorce, but he did not.[89] Rütten further draws our attention to the fact that Ptolemy does not directly mention the problem that, according to Justin, actually interests the woman; namely, the question of divorce as it applies to her mixed marriage with her pagan husband.[90] As Markschies has observed, another Pauline text lay close at hand, 1 Cor. 7.12-16, that speaks directly to this exact question.[91] Yet Ptolemy chose not to utilize it, although he relies upon the Apostle Paul as a source at a subsequent point in the letter. However, Paul explicitly states that his teachings on divorce as applied to mixed marriages are his own commandments, not the Lord's (1 Cor. 7.12), and so while they may have been quite pertinent to the situation of the woman in *2 Apology,* they do not speak to the actual matter Ptolemy is addressing at this point in the *Epistle to Flora,* which is the existence of contradictions between the law of Moses and the law of God. This further indicates that

[89] Rütten, "Der Brief," 59n33.
[90] Rütten, "Der Brief," 59n33.
[91] Markshies, "New Research," 248.

Flora's alleged divorce proceedings were not conditioning Ptolemy's selection of proof texts for the more weighty matter he had taken as the subject for his paedagogical letter.

As for Ptolemy's actual quotation of Mt. 19.8 in *Flor.* 4.4, his alterations are minor. Matthew (all manuscripts) has Μωϋσῆς πρὸς τὴν σκληροκαρδίαν ὑμῶν ἐπέτρεψεν ὑμῖν ἀπολῦσαι τὰς γυναῖκας ὑμῶν ("Moses, for your hardness of heart, allowed you to divorce your wives"); whereas Ptolemy has Μωϋσῆς πρὸς τὴν σκληροκαρδίαν ὑμῶν ἐπέτρεψεν τὸ ἀπολύειν τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ (literally, "Moses, for your hardness of heart, allowed the divorce of one's wife"). This alteration does not change the sense, and no one to my knowledge has suggested otherwise.[92]

A final point regarding Ptolemy's selection of the divorce controversy narrative from Matthew is that although he quotes from the controversy narrative, he does not quote Matthew's Jesus' logion that links divorce to adultery, the saying that has parallels in Mt. 5.32, Mk. 10.11-12, and Lk. 16.18, as discussed above. This is significant because it is in the Matthean version of this logion that the *porneia* exception clause appears. We learned from Justin that the woman of *2 Apol.* 2 sought a divorce largely because of her husband's infidelity. If Ptolemy were applying the androcentric language of Matthew's treatment of divorce to the case of this particular woman, surely the *porneia* exception clause would be precisely relevant, for here would be exegetical grounds for advocating her

[92] Quispel and Foerster/Wilson, in fact, both translate this quotation as if it had not been altered. Frank Williams translates as "Moses for the hardness of your hearts permitted a man to divorce his wife," which again does not change the sense. Moll, *Marcion,* 15, commenting on Rütten's terse note (Rütten, "Der Brief," 59n33), understands her to mean that Ptolemy "*adapted* [not: applied] it [i.e., the proof text of Mt. 19.8] to the wife's position." It is unclear to me whether he means to imply that Rütten alleged that Ptolemy *altered* the text of Matthew to fit the facts of the case better, or if he simply means that she claims Ptolemy *applied* it to a situation where a woman may be initiating a divorce, a situation that the Mt. 19.8 does not address. The latter seems to more accurately reflect what Rütten has actually written ("Möglicherweise gibt Ptolemäus dennoch einen Hinweis auf die Situation der Adressatin: Während Mt 19,1-9 (im Gegensatz zu 1 Kor 7,10; Mk 10,12, die bereits die Perspektive der Frau berücksichtigen) aus der Sicht des Mannes argumentiert, *wendet* Ptolemäus den Text auf die Situation der scheidungswilligen Frau an (4,5).").

to initiate divorce proceedings against him; yet he does not refer to this aspect of the pericope at all. From this we may minimally conclude, *pace* Dunderberg, that Ptolemy was not advising Flora to seek a divorce. More generally, it is evident that Ptolemy omitted quoting the exception clause because it would have complicated the presentation of his actual argument, which is that Moses legislated contrary to the law of God in this area.

In summary, there is no substantive evidence, grammatical or otherwise, to indicate that the practical matter of divorce for Christians in general, or his recipient in particular, was weighing on Ptolemy's mind when he introduced the example of Mt. 19.3-9. Consequently, we must turn to the very good cosmological reasons he had for doing so.

3.4. The Divorce Controversy in Second-Century Cosmological Debate

Joachim Jeremias has observed that although Moses appears in the New Testament more than any other Old Testament figure – roughly 80 times – only once is he presented in a way in which he might be construed as ordaining legislation contrary to the original will of God.[93] The sole pericope where this occurs is the controversy narrative between Jesus and the Pharisees over the legality of divorce (Mt. 19.3-9 || Mk. 10.3-12), the Matthean version of which Ptolemy cites.[94] In this pericope Jesus gives the reason for Moses' permission as already indicated above: "for your hardness of heart." Mark's version is the more problematic: "for your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment" (Mk. 10.5), thus leaving the door open to the interpretation that this commandment was Moses' own innovation. Matthew, as he so often does, smoothes over some of Mark's

[93] Joachim Jeremias, "Μωυσῆς," *TDNT* 4:864.

[94] This observation of Jeremias' is further evidence against Moll's claim that "Ptolemy may have used this as an anti-Marcionite argument, but he could just as well have used dozens of other examples, so the fact that he deliberately chose the topic of divorce seems to be no coincidence" (*Marcion,* 16). There would seem to be no other example "from the words of the Savior" that challenges Moses' legislating prerogative, let alone dozens.

troubling theological implications in his redaction: "for your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives." Matthew also rearranges the Genesis material that Jesus cites in the pericope, moving it before the justification of σκληροκαρδία in order to fit the chronological order of events from Genesis to Exodus. But even after this redaction, the problem remains, and even as Matthew's Gospel superseded Mark's in popularity in the second century, some Christian exegetes returned to this particular passage in the Gospel according to Matthew in their debates with one another over two intertwined questions: the role of the Jewish law for Christians, and the theological relationship between the Lawgiver deity and Christ.

In fact, the evidence from Tertullian's *Against Marcion* 4.34 suggests that Marcion pointed to this passage in Matthew, combined with the commandment concerning divorce in Luke, as confirmation of one of his "antitheses" between law and gospel. Although Marcion is typically remembered as having accepted only the letters of Paul and the Gospel of Luke, and altered versions of these at that, Theodor Zahn had argued, on the basis of patristic testimony, that in a few instances in his *Antitheses,* Marcion must have referred to other gospels, especially Matthew's.[95] Harnack, in his monumental study of Marcion, acknowledges Zahn's insights on this matter, and Zahn's influence here may be seen in Harnack's reconstruction of Marcion's *Antitheses.*[96] Matthew 19.3-9 was one of Zahn's primary examples. Zahn suggested that, although Marcion did not incorporate the dialogue from Mt. 19.3-9 into his Gospel, he had recognized in it further evidence for the

[95] Zahn, Theodor von, *Geschichte des Neutestamentlichen Kanons,* (Erlangen: Andreas Deichert, 1888), 666ff.
[96] Harnack, *Marcion: The Gospel of the Alien God,* 54-63.

irreconcilable contradiction between law and gospel that he argued for in his *Antitheses.*[97] According to Harnack, "the antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 provide the nearest parallel to [those of Marcion]" and may have influenced the structure of the latter's treatise.[98]

With regard to the divorce commandment, Mt. 19.3-9 would have been particularly useful to Marcion, as the Lukan commandment concerning divorce, as we have seen, is an isolated logion completely removed from any narrative or exegetical context, and as such, it is not even clear that Luke's Jesus forbids divorce at all. Rather, this saying can be read as permitting divorce, but forbidding remarriage. As we have seen, some modern historical critics have argued that this is precisely what Luke intended it to mean. More importantly for our purposes, Tertullian was certainly capable of arguing for this meaning as well, in *Against Marcion* 4.34.[99]

Tertullian states repeatedly at the beginning of *Against Marcion* Book Four that in this book he will confront Marcion's own Gospel and *Antitheses* on their own terms (*Adv. Marc.* 4.1-6), and at the close of his introduction to Book Four he further claims that he will examine all of Marcion's statements that he has retained in his Gospel (*Adv. Marc.* 4.6). He then proceeds to work through Marcion's Gospel and *Antitheses,* a copy of each

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[97] "Ohne sie in sein Ev. aufzunehmen, hat er im Anschluss an sie dem Verbot der Ehescheidung durch Christus die Gestattung derselben durch Moses als unversöhnlichen Gegensatz gegenübergestellt." Zahn, 670.

[98] Harnack, *Marcion: The Gospel of the Alien God,* 154n29. See also Harnack's Antithesis no. 8 (p. 61), which is a parallel of Mt. 5.38-9. Subsequent studies of Marcion's Gospel have not resolved the question of its contents, but it cannot have been as simple as an abbreviated version of the text known to us today as the Gospel of Luke. See Harry Y. Gamble, "Marcion and the 'Canon'," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity* (2006), 1:195-213 (205-7), with additional bibliography.

[99] On the dating of *Adversus Marcionem:* Tertullian completed the third edition of *Adv.Marc.* during the fifteenth year of Severus (April 207 – April 208), as evident from his comments at 1.1 & 1.15. Ernest Evans contends that the third edition is the one we have, comprising all five books. Evans, ed. and trans., *Tertullian: Adversus Marcionem* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 1:xviii. Some scholars, however, have argued that Books 4 and 5 were added to the third edition at a later point; e.g., Gilles Quispel, *De Bronnen van Tertullianus' Adversus Marcionem* (Leiden: Burgersdijk & Niermans, 1943), 16-20. Timothy Barnes (*Tertullian,* 37, 255-56) argues for the literary unity of the five-book whole, endorsing Evans' view.

of which Tertullian had.[100] When he reaches Lk. 16.18, he quotes this verse as well as Deut. 24.1, and even acknowledges the contradiction:

> "You notice the contrast between law and gospel, between Moses and Christ?" To be sure I do. For you have not accepted that other gospel, of equal truth, and of the same Christ, in which while forbidding divorce he answers a particular question concerning it: "Moses, because of the hardness of your heart commanded to give a bill of divorce, but from the beginning it was not so, etc." [Mt. 19.8][101]

Thus Tertullian diverges from his overall plan for Book Four in order to refute Marcion's use of the divorce commandment by introducing Mt. 19.8. This suggested to Zahn and others that here Tertullian was in fact addressing a Marcionite argument based upon the controversy narrative in Mt. 19.3-9, and probably mentioned by Marcion in his *Antitheses.* Tertullian's defense is merely a reframing of the pericope: Christ has done two things with this answer: he has "set a guard upon Moses' regulation, as his own" – i.e., Christ has certified Moses' lawmaking activity as valid, although without providing a deeper justification – and he has "set in its proper context the Creator's ordinance, being the Creator's Christ" – i.e., he has reasserted the primacy of the original "commandment." Both Ptolemy and Tertullian, then, in different ways, are reacting to a more radical reading by Marcion that incorporates into his *Antitheses* this Matthean pericope as additional proof of the discrepancy between law and gospel.

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[100] See *Adv. Marc.* 1.1. This conclusion of Harnack's is upheld by Moll. Harnack had proposed that the *Antitheses* contained much more than merely the antitheses that gave the work its name, and might have included citations of the gospel verses themselves; if true, then Tertullian need have only been working from the *Antitheses* alone. Moll finds that the *Antitheses* would have been a much slimmer volume, in which case Tertullian would have had both texts before him, as well as perhaps an *Epistle* written by Marcion, known to his followers, and also mentioned by Tertullian. See Harnack, *Marcion: The Gospel of the Alien God,* 53-63, and Moll, *Marcion,* 107-114. Other scholars have argued that Tertullian only uses Marcion's *Antitheses* systematically beginning in Book Four, indicating that when he wrote the first three books, he had not yet read the *Antitheses.* In this case, he must have had the *Epistle* as well, on which he relied for his information for Books One to Three. For this point of view, see Quispel, *Bronnen,* 19; and Barnes, *Tertullian,* 326-7. There is broad agreement, however, that Tertullian used at least the *Antitheses* for Book Four, a fact that is relevant to the present discussion.

[101] *Adv.Marc.* 4.34. All translations of *Adv.Marc.* in this chapter are by Evans unless otherwise indicated.

Tertullian then returns to his program, remembering that he has undertaken to confute Marcion solely out of the documents that the latter had accepted as authoritative.

> I maintain that [Christ] has here issued his prohibition of divorce under a certain condition – if any man sends away his wife with the intention of taking another... [Tertullian then quotes Lk. 16.18 again]... So the marriage not properly dissolved remains a marriage, and for her to marry while the marriage remains, is adultery. Thus if it was under these conditions [only] that he prohibited sending away a wife, this was not a total prohibition: and this that he has not totally prohibited he has permitted under other conditions, where the reason for the prohibition is absent. Thus his teaching is not in opposition to Moses, for he in some form retains his regulation...

Thus Tertullian argues that Christ did not forbid all divorces, only those contracted for the purpose of remarrying. If the divorce was initiated with no intention (and no actual occurrence) of remarriage, then adultery has not been committed and the divorce is permitted. Here Tertullian's reading of Luke is in agreement with Dale Martin's, above. However, by reading Lk. 16.18 in harmony with the divorce controversy in Mt. 19.3-9, Tertullian is able to argue against Marcion's stark contrast between an acceptance of divorce under biblical law and a straightforward condemnation under the gospel. The lack of context surrounding Luke's isolated logion makes possible Tertullian's interpretation of the Lukan version of the divorce commandment: it softens the contrast of the Matthean controversy narrative, treating the case where remarriage is not the consequence of divorce as a case that is an exception to the general rule.

In like manner, he argues that the Matthean *porneia* exception clause is actually harmonious with the Mosaic ruling on divorce, Deut. 24.1, as he finds that both contain sexual misconduct on the part of the wife as just cause for divorce.[102] By finding these two

[102] Tertullian is able to make this argument with his translation of Deuteronomy: Tertullian has *impudicum negotium*, "some shameful matter," but with overtones of *impudicitia*, "unchastity," while the Vulgate, which diverges radically from Tertullian's quotation, has only *aliquam foeditatem*, "some foulness" (cf. LXX:

exceptions to Christ's general prohibition, Tertullian can argue that "[Christ's] teaching is not in opposition to Moses, for he in some form retains his regulation... It appears then that divorce, when justified, has Christ's authority." However, he then concludes that Christ's general prohibition on divorce is a logical extension of the case outlined in Deut. 22.28-9 (discussed above), whereby a man who rapes an unmarried woman is forced to marry her and is denied the right of divorce. What is one of the few exceptional cases in Mosaic law Tertullian takes as grounds for arguing, "But if a marriage enforced in consequence of violence is to be permanent, how much more shall one contracted willingly and by agreement?... Thus you will find Christ by himself treading at every point in the Creator's footsteps, whether in permitting divorce or in forbidding it." This conclusion, however, does violence to the meaning of the biblical law. Tertullian thus accomplishes the illusion of harmony between law and gospel through a series of complex reading strategies, both of the Old and New Testament texts. In his circuitous reasoning, there is no reflection on the question Ptolemy had raised – whether Moses had innovated legislation on his own or not – probably because this was not a question that Marcion had concerned himself with. For Marcion, it was a straightforward matter that the entire Mosaic law had originated from the Demiurge; therefore, Tertullian felt that his refutation of Marcion could only come to the opposite conclusion, that "you find Christ himself treading at every point in the Creator's footsteps, whether in permitting divorce or forbidding it."[103]

On the one hand, Ptolemy's answer is more nuanced, introducing Moses as an independent agent. On the other hand, Ptolemy preserves the stark contrast between law

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ἄσχημον πρᾶγμα, "a shameful deed," with sexual misconduct not necessarily implied). Tertullian possibly made his own translations of the Septuagint into Latin as needed (Evans, *Adversus Marcionem,* 1:xx). See also the diverse Mishnaic interpretations of Deut. 24.1, above.

[103] *Adv.Marc.* 4.34. Tertullian's route is so circuitous that this argument could scarcely be used as practical advice for Christians on the personal matter of divorce. On that question, Tertullian argues these texts quite differently in *De monogamia,* strictly forbidding both divorce and remarriage.

and gospel that Marcion had identified in this pericope. Ptolemy does not admit any exceptions exist, and although he makes use of some elements from Mt. 19.3-9 as evidence for a stratum of legislation that Moses had introduced of his own accord, he avoids quoting the actual divorce saying in this pericope, Mt. 19.9, which contains the *porneia* exception clause. And Ptolemy avoids any use of Luke's Gospel, perhaps because the argument that would be made by Tertullian based upon the Lukan version was already known to Ptolemy's contemporaries.

Yet a tension remains in Tertullian's exegesis: was the Lawgiver deity responsible for any remaining differences between law and gospel, as Marcion had maintained, or was the innovation entirely Moses', as Ptolemy had proposed? To put it more pointedly: was God adapting God's plan for the history of salvation on the fly? Tertullian sidesteps this question, but two centuries later, when writing his *Commentary on Matthew,* Jerome would see this problem clearly. He puts the question sharply in his commentary on Mt. 19.8:

> What he [i.e. Jesus] means to say is this: Is God able to contradict himself? Does he first command one thing and then break his own judgment by a new command? One must not understand things in this way.[104]

Jerome then goes on to take a position on the origins of the divorce legislation that is virtually identical to Ptolemy's, with the exception that he imagines in graphic detail the "greater destruction" that would ensue were divorce not permitted:

> Rather, when Moses saw that, on account of the desire for second marriages to women who were richer, younger, or prettier, the first wives were either killed or were leading an evil life, he preferred to grant the discord than to allow hatred and murder to continue. At the same time, consider what he did not say: "On account of hardness of your heart, *God* permitted you."

[104] *Jerome: Commentary on Matthew* 19.), trans. Thomas P. Scheck. This work is dated to 398 C.E. on the basis of dedicatory information Jerome provides in the preface.

> Rather, he says: "Moses." This is in agreement with the apostle, [who says] that it is a counsel of man, not a command of God.[105]

By placing the responsibility for the permission to divorce solely on the shoulders of Moses, Jerome lets God off the hook. But, perhaps because he is writing a line-by-line commentary on Matthew, Jerome then moves on to other matters, and does not deal with the question systematically. For this kind of treatment, we must return to the second century, and consider the ambitious attempt of one of our main characters, Irenaeus of Lyons, to incorporate these various exegetical strains into his defense of monotheism.

According to Irenaeus (*Haer.* 4.15.1-2), at first God had given the Jews only the Decalogue. Irenaeus maintains that "if anyone does not observe [the Decalogue], he has no salvation." Like Ptolemy, Irenaeus gives the Decalogue privilege of place within his theory of legislation: for Ptolemy the Decalogue is "the law of God which is pure and unmixed with evil" (*Flor.* 5.3). According to Irenaeus, God originally demanded nothing more of the Jewish people (citing Deut. 5.22), but then discovered them to be a "stiff-necked" or "hardhearted" people – a recurring trope in the Hebrew Scriptures that Christians had begun to develop into anti-Jewish polemic.[106] Therefore God decided that additional legislation, "adapted to their hard nature," was needed. What is significant in Irenaeus' theory of the law is his interpretation of the golden calf incident (Ex. 32), to which he links two concepts: the ancient Israelites' expressed desire to be slaves again (Ex. 16.2-3;

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[105] *Jerome: Commentary on Matthew* 19.8, trans. Scheck. It is unclear what Jerome means in his allusion to the apostle, as Paul says the exact opposite in 1 Cor. 7.10. Scheck's note says "cf. 1 Cor 7.6," which is dubious.

[106] "This group of words, which come from different stems, has to do with the so-called hardening of unbelievers, of enemies of the chosen people Israel, then of Israel itself, also of Jews as opposed to Christians, and finally of Christians themselves." K. L. Schmidt and M. A. Schmidt, "παχύνω, etc.," *TDNT* 5:1022; see also J. Behm, "σκληροκαρδία," *TDNT* 3:613-14. The trope is directed against Jews in distinction from Christians as early as Acts 7.51. See also Rom. 2.5, where Paul uses the trope against Jewish Jesus followers in distinction from Gentile Jesus followers. Mark 3.5 & 16.14 are probably not anti-Jewish at all, but simply reflect the older, in-group Jewish tradition.

17.2-3) and Moses' smashing of the tablets, resulting in his second trip up Mount Sinai to acquire another set (Ex. 34). According to Irenaeus' theory, God introduced additional legislation for the Jewish people at this time:

> But when they turned themselves to make a calf, and had gone back in their minds to Egypt, desiring to be slaves instead of freemen, they were placed for the future in a state of servitude suited to their wish, which did not indeed cut them off from God, but subjected them to the yoke of bondage.[107]

This interpretation of the golden calf incident may be seen in embryonic form in Stephen's speech in Acts, in which he interprets this action as a sign that the people "in their hearts turned back to Egypt" (Acts 7.39, a text that Irenaeus quotes here). Irenaeus combines this theory from Acts with a different form of this theory, which we may find sketched out by Justin in his *Dialogue with Trypho.* Justin, too, identifies the golden calf incident as the moment at which God adapted God's laws to "a weak people" (*Dial.* 19.5-6), although for Justin this event signified not a desire for servitude, but a need to worship idols; for this reason, Justin argues, God instituted the Jewish ritual law based upon temple worship and animal sacrifice.[108] Irenaeus incorporates this divine justification for giving the Jews the ritual law – that they were prone to idol-worship – into his discussion at *Haer.* 4.14.3, further arguing that when God directs Moses to "make all things [i.e. the tabernacle, the temple, etc.] according to the pattern of those things which you saw on the mountain" (Ex. 25.40), God also meant these earthly and temporal things to be types for heavenly and eternal ones. Irenaeus also selects one of the same proof texts that Justin had used, Ez. 20.24: "I gave them statutes that were not good, and judgments by which they

[107] *Haer.* 4.15.1, trans. *ANF.* See also *Haer.* 4.13.2-4; 4.14.2.
[108] *Dial.* 19-22.

shall not live."[109] But whereas Justin quotes from the prophets at such great length as to obscure his argument at times, Irenaeus weaves this same proof text into his theory of legislation at this point in a much more rhetorically sophisticated manner.

It is this context into which Irenaeus introduces his exegesis of Mt. 19.3-9. Irenaeus is the first retrospectively orthodox writer on record to refer to the divorce controversy narrative in Matthew (or its parallel in Mark), and he does so only here:

> And not only so, but the Lord showed that certain precepts were also enacted for them by Moses, on account of their hardness [of heart], and because of their unwillingness to be obedient. (*Haer.* 4.15.2)[110]

Irenaeus then briefly relates the controversy narrative.

The above translation of Irenaeus' introductory words follows that of *ANF* but for one exception: I have restored the correct location of the "also" *(et)*. *ANF* translate "...but the Lord also showed that certain precepts were enacted...," potentially implying that the divorce controversy is yet another example of the same kind of thing Irenaeus has been discussing, only this time the example will come from the words of the Lord. Yet the correct placement of the "also" indicates that for Irenaeus, the addition of certain precepts by Moses was an additional step, after the giving of the second set of tablets at Sinai, and, therefore, points toward an additional stratum of legislation that was added later by Moses, just like Ptolemy had said explicitly. Some additional clues in Irenaeus' discussion point further in this direction.

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[109] I am not claiming that Irenaeus was reliant upon Justin's *Dialogue* here, only that the form of the argument based upon particular proof texts was transmitted as part of a Christian tradition that grappled with the role of the Jewish law. An additional text, Amos 5.25-7 seems to have a more complex transmission history in this regard. It is quoted by Stephen in Acts 7.42-3, and Irenaeus includes it in his quotation of Stephen's speech. Justin, *Dial.* 22.1-5, uses a large block of text from Amos 5.18 – 6.7, but without reference to Stephen. See Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy,* for a brief discussion of the apparent parallels between Justin's and Luke's use of the prophets (esp. 6, 104-5, 250-2) as well as a more detailed consideration of Justin's possible influence upon Irenaeus and Tertullian in this regard (435-53).

[110] *Et non solum hoc, sed et praecepta quaedam a Moyse posita eis propter duritiam illorum, et quod nollent esse subjecti, manifestavit Dominus.*

In his reading of the divorce controversy, Irenaeus claims that Christ "in fact exculpated Moses as a faithful servant,"[111] thus implying that the permission to divorce originated with the deity. However, Irenaeus further argues that "even in the New Testament we come across the apostles granting certain precepts as concessions, owing to the incontinence of some,"[112] citing as evidence four passages from 1 Cor. 7: "lest Satan tempt you for your incontinence" (v. 7), plus all three of Paul's claims that he is granting concessions, and not giving commandments of the Lord (v. 6, 12, & 25). For Irenaeus, a more lenient legislation that allows divorce encourages the people to more easily observe the Decalogue. Whereas Ptolemy had referred only obliquely to the greater "destruction" that would have occurred had Moses not given this concession, and Jerome would speculate that passion, without the option to divorce, could lead to uxoricide, Irenaeus specifically connects these potential outcomes to violation of the Decalogue, which for him amounts to apostasy. Yet in Irenaeus' view, both Paul and Moses are operating as instruments of God, who is ultimately the agent responsible for permitting these more liberal codes of conduct. Irenaeus exonerates Moses, not, as do Ptolemy and Jerome, with mere sympathy, but by systematically incorporating him into God's adaptive plan for salvation history. Irenaeus disagrees with the position held by both Ptolemy and Jerome on this point. According to Irenaeus, God *does* adapt God's plan based upon human contingency, adapting that plan through human agents such as Paul and Moses when necessary.

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[111] *Moysen quidem excusans quasi fidelem servum.*

[112] *Si igitur et in novo testamento quaedam praecepta secundum ignoscentiam Apostoli concedentes inveniuntur, propter quorundam incontinentiam, ut non obdurati tales in totum desperantes salutem suam apostatae fiant a Deo...*

In order for Moses to function analogously to Paul on the issue of divorce, however, he must have had some time to realize that in this case the people needed legislation that was not *more strict* (as was the ritual law), but *more lenient.* This suggests that according to Irenaeus, the permission to divorce was not added to the Torah at Sinai on the second set of tablets, but some time later, after Moses had had experience living among the people, who, "having grown obdurate, and completely despairing of their salvation, [became] apostates from God."[113] This interpretation of Irenaeus gains support given his theory of the golden calf incident that he has just related. If God had given the Jews the rest of the law on the second set of tablets in response to their idol worship at Sinai, as Stephen and Justin had proposed, then there would have been no time at that moment for Moses to add additional legislation on his own based upon his observations of the people's difficulty with the heretofore absent permission to divorce.

On the contrary, although Irenaeus does not say so explicitly in *Adversus Haereses*, there is support in the Pentateuch for the idea that the divorce concession was made at a later time: the proof text for the "commandment to give her a certificate of divorce" was held to be Deut. 24.1 (following Mt. 19.7), and Moses is said to have related the entire Deuteronomic law orally forty years after Sinai (Deut. 1.1-3). These verses may have informed this particular strand of exegesis for Ptolemy, Jerome, and Irenaeus, all of whom attribute Moses with some degree of independent authorship of the law.

If this theory of an additional stratum of legislation, added by Moses, may only be deduced from *Adversus Haereses* by these various clues, Irenaeus nevertheless makes his thought on this point explicit in his retelling of his scriptural *hypothesis* in the *Epideixis (Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching).* There, alluding to Deut. 1.1-3, he writes,

[113] Latin in previous note.

> When the forty years were completed, the people came near to the Jordan and were drawn up against Jericho. Here, having assembled the people, Moses recapitulated everything, recounting the great deeds of God up to that day, preparing and forming [those who] had grown up in the desert, to fear God and to keep His commandments, *and laying down for them, as it were, a new legislation, adding to what was before* – and this was called Deuteronomy... [114]

Thus we may say minimally that, by the time he wrote the *Epideixis,* Irenaeus had incorporated into his salvation history the idea of a stratum of legislation added by Moses as part of the giving of the Deuteronomic law; however, as I have argued, we may also find this idea implicitly in *Haer.* 4.15.1-2, where he discusses the divorce controversy of Mt. 19.3-9. I am not aware of any other scholars who have seen in the thought of Irenaeus an explicit stratification of the Mosaic law into three parts: the Decalogue, that additional legislation given by the deity at Sinai in response to the golden calf incident, and that added by Moses forty years later out of concession for the people's weakness. On this point, Irenaeus' theory of the law closely parallels Ptolemy's, even if Irenaeus is at greater pains to exonerate Moses as an instrument of God.

Furthermore, it is important to notice the structural similarities in the way this exegesis is introduced. After the proofs of Jewish hard-heartedness that Irenaeus gives in this section, Irenaeus prefaces his introduction of the divorce controversy by stating explicitly that these proofs show that the law "was not given to them by another God." Likewise, at the conclusion of his discussion, he again returns to this theme, alluding to "certain persons, [who] because of the disobedient and ruined Israelites, assert that the giver of the law was limited in power."[115] These statements in *Adversus Haereses* are

[114] *Epid.* 28; trans. John Behr. Emphasis added.
[115] See also *Haer.* 4.13.1, where he discusses the Decalogue in the context of the Matthean antitheses.

clearly targeted at both Marcionites and his Valentinian opponents; i.e., the disciples of Ptolemy.

To summarize the argument of this section, we have seen that Marcion, Ptolemy, Irenaeus, and Tertullian all found the divorce controversy of Mt. 19.3-9 a key proof text for theological debate, not so much for its practical implications on the ethics of divorce for Christians, but for its potentially far-reaching cosmological implications about the nature of the Mosaic law and the deity who gave that law. For Marcion, it was yet another example of an antithesis between law and gospel, and Tertullian, in his refutation of Marcion, bends over backwards to attempt to show that there is no contradiction. Ptolemy and Irenaeus offer more nuanced responses to Marcion (and Irenaeus to his Ptolemaean opponents as well). Ptolemy explicitly claims that the words of Jesus clearly show that Moses, of his own accord, in some cases added additional legislation contrary to that given by the deity, owing to the weakness and hardheartedness of the people. I have argued that Irenaeus has taken virtually the same position with regard to this Matthean pericope, and that his theory of the Mosaic law makes allowance for this additional stratum of legislation, implicitly in *Adversus Haereses* and explicitly in the *Epideixis*. This conclusion alone strikingly sets Irenaeus' "orthodox" views on the Mosaic law much closer to Ptolemy's than scholars have previously realized. When these arguments are added to those of the preceding section of this chapter, the force of this argument is doubled. We now turn to Ptolemy's and Irenaeus' theory of a final stratum of the law for even more evidence for this claim.

4. The Tradition of the Elders

Ptolemy's demonstration of his claim that "there are also some traditions of the elders woven into the law" is even more perfunctory than his proof of that division that Moses added: the entire "proof" is a quotation from Mt. 15.4-9 with no additional commentary other than a concluding statement indicating that the case has been adequately demonstrated. However, in neither Matthew nor Mark (the two gospels in which Jesus' dispute with the Pharisees over the question of the "tradition of the elders" is found) is it obvious to the reader what the dispute was about. By the time Origen was writing his *Commentary on Matthew* in the early third century, he was forced to admit that the controversy between Jesus and the Pharisees over the tradition upheld by the latter was narrated rather obscurely in Matthew's Gospel, and its explanation was one "that we ourselves would not have thought of, unless one of the Hebrews had given to us the following facts relating to the passage."[116] He then relates an explanation that captures the jist of the dilemma these first-century exegetes of the law would have faced, but still reflects an incomplete understanding. If such an erudite biblical scholar as Origen, much closer in time than ourselves to the events described, fails to comprehend the essence of the controversy, how much more so, then, will the average modern reader find this passage obscure. Therefore, before examining Ptolemy's use of this pericope, it will be useful to unpack the sense of the passage as it appears in both gospels. We may better understand his quotation from Matthew by looking at both the Matthean and Markan versions together, while situating them in their historical context.

[116] Origen, *Commentary on Matthew* 11.9, trans. *ANF.*

4.1. The Korban Pericope In Its Gospel and Historical Contexts

For the convenience of the reader, Mt. 15.1-9 is presented here, formatted to indicate the nested quotations in this passage (NRSV, modified as indicated):

1. Τότε προσέρχονται τῷ Ἰησοῦ ἀπὸ Ἱεροσολύμων Φαρισαῖοι καὶ γραμματεῖς λέγοντες·	1. Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said,
2. «Διὰ τί οἱ μαθηταί σου παραβαίνουσιν τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων; οὐ γὰρ νίπτονται τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῶν ὅταν ἄρτον ἐσθίωσιν.»	2. "Why do your disciples transgress[117] the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands before they eat."
3. ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· «Διὰ τί καὶ ὑμεῖς παραβαίνετε τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ διὰ τὴν παράδοσιν ὑμῶν; 4. ὁ γὰρ θεὸς εἶπεν·	3. He answered them, "And why do you transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? 4. For God said,
«Τίμα τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὴν μητέρα» καί·	"Honor your father and mother," and,
«Ὁ κακολογῶν πατέρα ἢ μητέρα θανάτῳ τελευτάτω·»	"Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die."
5. ὑμεῖς δὲ λέγετε·	5. But you say,
«Ὃς ἂν εἴπῃ τῷ πατρὶ ἢ τῇ μητρί·	"Anyone who says to his father or mother,
«Δῶρον ὃ ἐὰν ἐξ ἐμοῦ ὠφεληθῇς»,	"Let anything of mine which is used for your benefit be an offering to God,"[118]
6. οὐ μὴ τιμήσει τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ·» καὶ ἠκυρώσατε τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ διὰ τὴν παράδοσιν ὑμῶν. 7. ὑποκριταί, καλῶς ἐπροφήτευσεν περὶ ὑμῶν Ἡσαΐας λέγων·	6. shall not honor his father."[119] And so you nullify the word[120] of God for the sake of your tradition. 7. Hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied rightly about you when he said:
8. «Ὁ λαὸς οὗτος τοῖς χείλεσίν με τιμᾷ, ἡ δὲ καρδία αὐτῶν πόρρω ἀπέχει ἀπ᾽ ἐμοῦ·	8. "This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me;
9. μάτην δὲ σέβονταί με, διδάσκοντες διδασκαλίας ἐντάλματα ἀνθρώπων.» »	9. In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." "

[117] Here and in v. 3 I prefer the KJV's more literal rendering of παραβαίνω as "transgress" (lit., overstep) to the RSV's and NRSV's more metaphorical "break."

[118] On the translation of this vow, see below.

[119] On this harsh translation of τιμήσει, see below.

[120] "Law" (τὸν νόμον) in some manuscripts, including Ptolemy's citation; "commandment" (τὴν ἐντολὴν) in some others.

The pericope continues in verses 10-20, although the second half is not relevant for the present purposes. Matthew's main source for the entire pericope, 15.1-20, seems to have been Mk. 7.1-23,[121] although he has extensively reworked the Markan version, introducing a number of differences in order and vocabulary. Some of these differences allowed Massaux to identify Matthew, rather than Mark, as Ptolemy's source, as we shall see below. For now, the differences are significant only in so far as they allow the passages to mutually illuminate one another as to the historical basis for the conflict, and thus the logic behind why the pericope would be pertinent to a second-century Christian polemic about the Jewish law. Three of these differences are noteworthy.

The first is the state of the manuscript tradition of Mt. 15.6 and its parallel, Mk. 7.13. The NA[27] text of Mt. 15.6 parallels Mk. 7.13, τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ (as above), although a few important manuscripts of Mt. 15.6, including the attestation in Ptolemy's *Flora,* instead read τὸν νόμον τοῦ θεοῦ, while some other manuscripts read τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ. There is no such variation in Mark. Secondly, in verse 4, Matthew has slightly but significantly altered the author of the commandments to honor one's parents from Mark's "Moses" to "God." The Matthean version thus might be read as more vividly contrasting the tradition of the elders to the word or law of God. Finally, whereas Mark includes the Hebrew and Aramaic term *qrbn,* "temple offering, sacrifice," which he transliterates as κορβᾶν and translates, following LXX precedent, as δῶρον, Matthew here follows his usual practice of omitting Mark's Aramaicisms, preserving only the Greek term δῶρον.[122] Despite Matthew's omission of the Aramaic term, it will nevertheless be

[121] Luz, *Matthew,* 2:326.

[122] Matthew preserves actual loan words such as "Hosanna," "Rabbi," and "Amen" that had become incorporated into Greek, but tends to omit Mark's "Aramaicisms," i.e., Aramaic words for which Mark provides a Greek translation as he assumes his audience will not know the word otherwise. For other

useful to refer to the two parallel passages collectively as the "Korban pericope," following scholarly convention.

At the heart of the controversy is the formulaic vow that Jesus quotes in Mk. 7.11, and which Matthew copies from Mark exactly with the sole exception noted above: Κορβᾶν ὃ ἐὰν ἐξ ἐμοῦ ὠφεληθῇς, literally, "Korban [be] anything by which you get benefit from me." In an authoritative presentation of the development of oaths and vows in biblical, Second Temple, and rabbinic literature, Moshe Benovitz has shown that the formula of Mk. 7.11 follows the syntactic structure of one of the standard Late Antique Jewish formulae of vows.[123] Benovitz writes, "The biblical *vow* in effect transfers the ownership of the devoted property from the votary to the Temple. Non-fulfillment engenders liability for trespass against Temple property."[124] A post-biblical variation on the *dedicatory vow* was the *prohibitive vow*, which "bars the votary or another person named in the vow from deriving benefit from a given possession, [even though] the property itself remains the possession of the votary, and is not transferred to the Temple treasury."[125] The prohibitive vow evolved as a type of dedicatory vow in which the conditions for the dedication would never be met; therefore, the only practical outcome of such a vow was a personal prohibition on its use without a change in ownership.[126] Although later accepted (and reinterpreted) by the rabbis, the prohibitive vow was controversial during the Second

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examples, see Mt. 10.2 = Mk. 3.17; Mt. 9.25 = Mk. 5.41; Mt. 26.39 = Mk. 14.36. But cf. Mt. 27.33 = Mk. 15.22; Mt. 27.46 = Mk. 15.34, two instances where Matthew preserves the terms he finds in Mark.

[123] Moshe Benovitz, *Kol Nidre: Studies in the Development of Rabbinic Votive Institutions* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998). See *m. Nedarim* for numerous examples of particular vows; esp. *m. Ned.* 7.9 offers an exact parallel to Mk. 7.11, with *Konam* replacing *Korban*; see also *m. Ned.* 1.2: "If a man said to his fellow, *Konam* or *Konah* or *Konas*, these are substitutes for *Korban*, an Offering." (Trans. Danby.) Danby (*Mishnah,* 264n6) qualifies *Korban*, 'Offering,' thus: "A thing as forbidden to him for common use as a Temple offering."

[124] Benovitz, *Kol Nidre,* 10.

[125] Benovitz, *Kol Nidre,* 11.

[126] Benovitz, *Kol Nidre,* 11-16.

Temple period. Mk. 7.11 is such a vow. Its meaning is, "Let anything of mine you use become dedicated to the Temple."[127]

According to Mark's Jesus, the Pharisees say that if anyone should make such a vow, the Pharisees *no longer permit him to do anything* (οὐκέτι ἀφίετε αὐτὸν οὐδὲν ποιῆσαι) for his father or mother (Mk. 7.12). Matthew's parallel wording, in Mt. 15.6, οὐ μὴ τιμήσει τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ, has alternately been translated as "he *need not* honor his father"[128] and "he *shall not* [i.e., he *must not*] honor his father."[129] The latter meaning agrees with Mark and is probably correct, for reasons that will become clear shortly.[130] Jesus then argues that therefore, on account of their tradition, the Pharisees have "nullified" the commandment, word, or law of God (depending on the manuscript variant). This claim is made on the basis of a hermeneutic of the fifth commandment, a hermeneutic presumably shared by the characters of Jesus and the Pharisees within the logic of the pericope, that the commandment to "honor" one's father and mother includes the obligation to support them financially.[131]

Although the evangelists have caricatured the Pharisees' position, the problem raised by Jesus in Mk. 7:11-13 || Mt. 15:5-6 was a genuine point of dispute within first-century Judaism. Vows were considered inviolable by the Torah (Deut. 23.21) save for exceptional cases (e.g., Num. 30.1-16). A cynical son, then, might make use of dedicatory

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[127] See Benovitz, *Kol Nidre,* 16-27, on why the literal meaning of the vow in Mk. 7.11 = Mt. 15.5 is to be preferred to other interpretations, including that based upon the rabbinic interpretation of the prohibitive vow, in which the son's property is merely *likened* to a Temple offering; this interpretation seems to have been developed in response to the destruction of the Temple (Benovitz, 40). Collins, *Mark,* 351-3, although understandably characterizing the literal interpretation as "absurd," follows Benovitz closely and is persuaded that the literal meaning is, in fact, the correct one.

[128] E.g., RSV, NRSV.

[129] E.g., NASB ("he is not to").

[130] For linguistic reasons see Luz, *Matthew,* 2:325n1, with bibliography. To this I may add that it would be highly uncharacteristic of Matthew to intentionally soften Mark's polemic against the Pharisees.

[131] This interpretation had its dissenters; see the discussion in, e.g., *b. Qiddushin* 31b-32a.

vows in order to deny his parents the use of any of his property, thus evading the obligation to "honor one's father and mother," *while still retaining all of his property*. The son does not dedicate any of his property to the temple unconditionally; rather, a given possession only becomes so dedicated at the moment the person named in the vow makes use of it. Since the parents would not, then, be capable of using it lest they trespass against temple property, in theory the property would never be used by the parents and thus never dedicated to the temple.[132]

We may agree with Adela Yarbro Collins that a vow formulated like this seems "absurd" and could only be made by an extreme cynic, a "pious dissembler."[133] Yet, as Benovitz points out, two other Second Temple texts express anxiety about this sort of vow, and thus substantiate this reading of the Korban pericope in the gospels. The *Damascus Document,* like Mark and Matthew, objects to the use of a dedicatory vow in order to create personal prohibitions for oneself or one's dependents,[134] and we know from Philo's *Hypothetica* that the temple priests were in the habit of circumventing this sort of "pious dissembling" by refusing the offering, thereby releasing it to the parents or other benefactors whose access to the property had been blocked by the vow.[135] The rabbis, eventually, would also exert the right to dissolve unjust vows, by working out various types of vows that they considered not binding.[136]

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[132] Benovitz, *Kol Nidre,* 22-24; Collins, *Mark,* 352.
[133] Collins, *Mark,* 352.
[134] *Damascus Document* 16.13-15; see Benovitz, *Kol Nidre,* 30-33 for discussion. Benovitz argues that the moral position of the Cairo *Damascus Document* is identical to that of the gospels, whereas the legal position is opposite: i.e., whereas Jesus considers such vows invalid, the CD recognizes the validity of such vows once made, and so prohibits their use.
[135] Eusebius *Praeparatio Evangelica* 8.7.5 = Philo *Hypothetica* 7.5. See Benovitz, *Kol Nidre,* 33-35; Collins, *Mark,* 352-3.
[136] See *m. Nedarim*. Cf. Collins, *Mark,* 353; Luz, *Matthew,* 2:331.

However, the Pharisees – at least as presented in Mark and Matthew – apparently did not consider themselves vested with the authority to nullify vows of any kind so long as they were properly formulated. In Mt. 15.1-9, the Pharisees initially accuse Jesus of "transgressing" the tradition of the elders; i.e., of not agreeing with their hermeneutic that says that failure to wash one's hands before eating (a "tradition") will lead to a violation of the law (the rules dealing with ritual impurity). Jesus rejects this hermeneutic by way of engaging the Pharisees' "tradition" on the more difficult matter of the Korban vows and offering a hermeneutic that privileges the Decalogue over the inviolability of vows. It is an example of Markan irony (which is repeated by Matthew) that Jesus then expands the charge from *transgressing* the Torah to *nullifying* it – all because the Pharisees *refuse to nullify* certain vows. Although we may not be able to reconstruct the position of the historical Pharisees on this point, we may see the Korban pericope in the gospels as preserving an intra-Jewish debate over the legitimacy of the prohibitive vow.[137]

4.2. Ptolemy's Citation of the Korban Pericope

We now turn to Ptolemy's reworking and interpretation of the passage. As I said earlier, Massaux recognized that Ptolemy had relied upon Matthew rather than Mark.[138] This verdict may be rendered on the basis of two features: First, Ptolemy preserves the order of Mt. 15.4-9, in which Jesus follows up his direct challenge to the Pharisees (vv. 4-6) with a quotation from Isaiah (vv. 7-9); in Mark, the prophecy from Isaiah precedes the

[137] Benovitz's reconstruction of the historical Pharisees' position (*Kol Nidre,* 36) would seem to exceed the evidence he has nonetheless carefully assembled for the development of the institution of the prohibitive vow in the Second Temple period (idem, 9-40). Jesus, as portrayed in Mark and Matthew, denounces this institution, which may be shown to have been historical, regardless of whether it was upheld by the Pharisees or not. "In [the view of the Jesus as presented in the Korban pericopes], if a dedicatory vow is formulated in such a way that the property will never actually be transferred to the Temple, it *does not take effect*, even if it is technically flawless." (idem, 23.)

[138] See Massaux, *Influence,* 2:281-2, for details.

material parallel to Mt. 15.4-6. Second, Ptolemy follows the first part, Mt. 15.4-6, quite closely against the parallel Mk. 7.10-13, preferring Matthew's vocabulary over Mark's in four places where they diverge. Three of these, noted earlier, are (1) Matthew's omission of the Aramaic term "Korban," (2) Matthew's attribution of the commandment to honor one's parents to "God" rather than "Moses," and (3) the phrase "law of God" rather than "word of God," following a known manuscript variant of Mt. 15.6.[139] It is also noteworthy that Ptolemy exactly follows Matthew's (and Mark's) quotation of Isaiah 29.13 against LXX Isaiah, in which the word order differs from its Synoptic citation.

A closer examination of Ptolemy's "citation" of Matthew shows that it differs in small but significant ways from any known texts of the passage from Matthew. A brief note on the text of *Flora* is in order here. Although there is agreement among the critical texts of Epiphanius' *Panarion* for *Flor.* 4.11-13 with regard to the words, the following considerations conspire to make the translation of this passage a thorny matter: (1) Quotation marks do not appear in ancient texts, and so to reconstruct the sense of Ptolemy's quotation, we must adjudicate the positions of all the quotation marks in our translation. (2) As we saw above, the Matthean passage in question, Mt. 15.1-9, contains a triply-nested quotation at verse 5: Matthew quotes the words of Jesus, who quotes the Pharisees, who have quoted an imaginary or inscribed votary. The passage also contains three doubly-nested quotations, as Matthew has Jesus quote from the Pentateuch twice in verse 4, and from Isaiah in verses 8-9. (3) If we assume Ptolemy is quoting a Gospel of

[139] There is a difference between the NA[27] texts of Mark and Matthew, the latter omitting "or your mother" in most, although not all, manuscripts. Ptolemy omits from his quotation the part of the verse corresponding to "he must not honor his father;" that is, he leaves the apodosis implied and lets the protasis stand in for the entire clause (hence my "and so on" in the translation). Presumably he assumed his audience would be familiar with the saying. Because Ptolemy omits from his quotation the part of the verse which would have included this phrase, we may not use this difference to adjudicate between his use of Matthew vs. Mark. Even if he had included this part of the verse, numerous witnesses contain ἢ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ and variants at Mt. 15.6.

Matthew – including some framing words of Matthew's that appear outside of his quotations of the sayings of Jesus – then the two doubly-nested quotations that Ptolemy cites (he omits the quotation of Exod. 21.17) become triply-nested, and the triply-nested one becomes quadruply-nested. (4) However, Ptolemy's authority is not a "Gospel according to Matthew," but οἱ τοῦ σωτῆρος λόγοι (*Flor.* 4.3), and so he gives himself free reign to paraphrase Matthew's narrative connecting tissue. (5) Ptolemy alters even the words of Jesus he is quoting; or, perhaps, he uses a text of Matthew that is elsewhere unattested on some points; or, both.

These complexities have produced problems with the various critical texts of Holl,[140] Völker,[141] Quispel,[142] and the *TLG*.[143]

Here I present my own reconstruction of the critical text of *Flor.* 4.11-13, plus my resulting translation. Both texts are formatted to indicate the nested quotations at the proper places.

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[140] In his critical text, Holl preserves only one level of quotations, that of Jesus', leaving the other two up to interpretation; in so doing he mistakenly omits a closed and open quote around the second φυσίν ("[the Savior] says"), which are minimally necessary to keep the sense. In addition he omits closed and open quotes around τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις λέγων; this means that Jesus says that the Pharisees are addressing the elders (parents?) when saying what they have said; although possible, it is more difficult and less likely.

[141] Völker supplies the missing quotes around the second φυσίν but otherwise leaves Holl's punctuation intact.

[142] Quispel follows Holl with a few exceptions: he provides the missing quotes around the second φυσίν, and also around τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις λέγων (as I have in both cases, thus fixing those two problems). However, Quispel also inserts a closing quote between διὰ τὴν παράδοσιν ὑμῶν and τῶν πρεσβυτέρων, presumably to indicate where the accurate quotation from Matthew ends (assuming Ptolemy is following the Matthean text), and where Ptolemy's paraphrase of the quotation begins (τῶν πρεσβυτέρων is unattested in any manuscript of Mt. 15.6). But this creates a dangling τῶν πρεσβυτέρων; in his translation, Quispel interprets this as a vocative, which is wrong. He then mistakenly omits the now-required opening quote for the quotation from Isaiah (an unpaired closing quote follows the passage), but we may determine from his translation that it was meant to go before ὁ λαὸς (as I have done), thus interpreting the Τοῦτο δὲ Ἡσαΐας ἐξεφώνησεν εἰπών as Ptolemy's paraphrase of Jesus' words (which it is) rather than a direct quotation (the latter being the implication in Holl's and Völker's punctuation). Quispel's intention is to distinguish the "real" quotation from the paraphrase; however, Ptolemy is for all practical purposes quoting (Matthew's) Jesus here even as he paraphrases him, for Ptolemy follows the text of Jesus' citation of Isaiah at Mt. 15.8-9 against the LXX text of Isa. 29.13, yet paraphrases the words of Jesus that frame this quotation of Isaiah at Mt.15.7. Therefore it seems more consistent to leave these words of "Jesus" *inside* quotation marks simply to clarify who is being quoted, whether accurately or not.

[143] The *TLG* text follows Quispel, adding only the missing open quote before ὁ λαὸς.

Ὅτι δὲ καὶ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων εἰσιν τινες συμπεπλεγμέναι παραδόσεις ἐν τῷ νόμῳ, δηλοῖ καὶ τοῦτο ὁ σωτήρ.
«Ὁ γὰρ θεός»
φησίν
«εἶπεν·
«τίμα τὸν πατέρα σου καὶ τὴν μητέρα σου, ἵνα εὖ σοι γένηται·»
Ὑμεῖς δέ»,
φησίν,
«εἰρήκατε»,
τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις λέγων·
« «Δῶρον τῷ θεῷ ὃ ἐὰν ὠφεληθῇς ἐξ ἐμοῦ,» »

καὶ ἠκυρώσατε τὸν νόμον τοῦ θεοῦ διὰ τὴν παράδοσιν ὑμῶν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων. Τοῦτο δὲ Ἠσαΐας ἐξεφώνησεν εἰπών·
«ὁ λαὸς οὗτος τοῖς χείλεσί με τιμᾷ, ἡ δὲ καρδία αὐτῶν πόρρω ἀπέχει ἀπ᾽ ἐμοῦ,
μάτην δὲ σέβονταί με,
διδάσκοντες διδασκαλίας
ἐντάλματα ἀνθρώπων.» »

That there are even some traditions of the elders woven into the law, the Savior also makes clear.[144]
"For God,"
he [the Savior] says,
"has said,
'Honor your father and your mother, so that it may be well with you.'[145]
But you,"
he says, speaking to the elders,
"you have said,

' "Let anything of mine which is used for your benefit be an offering to God,"[146]
and so on,'[147]
and you nullify the law of God on account of the tradition of your elders. Isaiah also proclaimed this, saying,
"This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

In vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines
the commandments of men."[148] "[149]

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[144] Foerster/Wilson have "interwoven with the law" for συμπεπλεγμέναι... ἐν τῷ νόμῳ, but it is better to say "woven into the law," for the traditions are *part of* the law, as Ptolemy has already said, and as will become important, below.

[145] The additional words ἵνα εὖ σοι γένηται, "so that it may be well with you," do not appear in Jesus' quotation of the commandment in Matthew or Mark, but do appear in the LXX texts of both Deut 5.16 and Exod. 20.12 (in the Masoretic text the equivalent appears only in Deut 5.16). Ptolemy therefore understands these additional words as part of the commandment, not as clarifying words in the mouth of Jesus, and I have punctuated accordingly.

[146] As per my previous discussion on the Synoptic Gospel pericopes, I follow Benovitz's translation of the vow formula. The situation is not contrary-to-fact, as implied by translations such as "would have gained from me" (RSV) or "might have had from me" (NRSV), etc. For a discussion of the grammatical issues, see Benovitz, *Kol Nidre,* 17-20; see also Smyth, § 2297.

[147] The "and so on" does not correspond to anything in the Greek, but I have added it to remind the reader that the apodosis of the quotation from the Pharisees is intentionally omitted by Ptolemy.

[148] Ptolemy follows the text of Matthew's citation of Isaiah (which agrees exactly with the Markan parallel) against the LXX text of Isa. 29.13.

[149] The Foerster/Wilson and Williams English translations, with respect to punctuation, follow no existing critical text. The Foerster/Wilson translation renders the δῶρον τῷ θεῷ ὃ ἐὰν ὠφεληθῇς ἐξ ἐμοῦ as indirect discourse while still translating ἐμοῦ as "me," which makes this pronoun refer to Jesus, rather than his imaginary or inscribed votary as in Mt. 15.5 || Mk. 7.11. Williams' translation (both 1st and 2nd eds.) leaves out both pairs of quotation marks around the inscribed votary's δῶρον vow, although indicating its beginning only via capitalization, thus potentially implying that the vow originated with the Pharisees.

Two initial points emerge from my repunctuation and translation of the text. (1) After the Matthean text of διὰ τὴν παράδοσιν ὑμῶν, Ptolemy adds τῶν πρεσβυτέρων, which transfers the modification of ὑμῶν; "*your* tradition" becomes "the tradition of *your* elders."[150] This interpolation, by giving the elders over to the Pharisees (who have come to stand for all Jews), intensifies the distance between Jesus and his interlocutors, suggesting a vaster chasm between Jesus and Judaism than is evident in Matthew. (2) Ptolemy, unlike either Matthew or Mark, has Jesus refer to his interlocutors themselves not as Pharisees, but as elders. These two observations should be considered along with an additional modification to the gospel text that Quispel had drawn our attention to: Ptolemy replaces λέγετε ("you say") with εἰρήκατε ("you have said"), thus implying that the tradition condemned by Jesus was more ancient than is warranted by a reading of the gospel pericopes.[151] Together all of these moves serve to conflate the "elders" with the Pharisees, representing the latter as spokesmen for the entirety of the Jews, Jewish leaders who *faithfully* transmitted a Jewish regulatory tradition that is more ancient than that indicated by the gospel pericopes.[152] Thus, these interpretive moves provide support for Ptolemy's position that the Jewish elders had, perhaps long ago, contaminated the very law of God by adding their own additional commandments to it.

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[150] See Smyth, § 1185. "Your tradition of the elders" would be, e.g., τὴν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων παράδοσιν ὑμῶν. The reading "the tradition of your elders" is also affirmed by Frank Williams' translation in the 1st ed. of *The* Panarion *of Epiphanius of Salamis.* In the 2nd ed., however, the translation is "the tradition of you [sic] elders," and it is uncertain whether this is an intended revision to the translation, or a typographical error.
[151] Quispel, *Lettre à Flora,* 25.
[152] As Luz, *Matthew,* 2:329, points out, this "tradition" was, after all, rejected by the Sadducees as well as by Jesus. See Josephus, *Ant.* 13.297, and the discussion on the evidence from Josephus below.

4.3. PTOLEMY'S EXEGESIS OF THE KORBAN PERICOPE

Ptolemy's exegesis of the Korban pericope poses a problem for the close reader of the *Epistle to Flora*. After introducing the subject of the *Epistle* in the opening words as Τὸν διὰ Μωσέως τεθέντα νόμον, "the law ordained through Moses" (3.1), and indicating that he would be providing "an accurate and clear account of the nature of both the law (τὸν νόμον) and the law-giver (τὸν νομοθέτην) by whom it was ordained" (3.8), Ptolemy further defines this νόμος as something which is written and recorded within the Pentateuch of Moses:

> Πρῶτον οὖν μαθητέον ὅτι ὁ σύμπας ἐκεῖνος νόμος ὁ ἐμπεριεχόμενος τῇ Μωσέως πεντατεύχῳ οὐ πρὸς ἑνός τινος νενομοθέτηται, λέγω δὴ οὐχ ὑπὸ μόνου θεοῦ, ἀλλ᾽ εἰσί τινες αὐτοῦ προστάξεις καὶ ὑπ᾽ ἀνθρώπων τεθεῖσαι... καὶ εἰς τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους τοῦ λαοῦ διαιρεῖται, <οἳ> καὶ αὐτοὶ εὑρίσκονται ἐντολάς τινας ἐνθέντες ἰδίας.
>
> First of all one must learn that the entire law – the one contained in [lit. encompassed by] the Pentateuch of Moses – was not decreed by one being, I mean, not by God alone, but there are some commandments in it which were even decreed by men… and the [third] division [being that of] the elders of the people, who are responsible for having introduced some commandments of their own. (*Flor.* 4.1-2)[153]

However, whereas divorce – the issue Ptolemy discusses as an example of the part of the law introduced by Moses – was permitted under biblical law, the tradition Jesus accuses the Pharisees of teaching in the Korban pericopes has no parallel in the Pentateuch. Therefore, his "example" of his claim of the elders' interference with the written law seems off the mark. Epiphanius' refutation of Ptolemy on this issue (*Pan.* 33.9.2-6) makes exactly this point. Epiphanius asks Ptolemy,

> [W]here can you show that the words the Savior mentions, "He who shall say to his father Korban, that is, a gift, he shall profit nothing from him," were spoken in the five books of the Pentateuch and God's legislation? You

[153] Trans. Foerster/Wilson, mod.

> cannot show that. Your argument fails, then, since the saying is nowhere in the Pentateuch. (*Pan.* 33.9.5-6)[154]

Thus, according to Epiphanius, Ptolemy reads "the sayings of the Lord" wrongly by falsely claiming that Jesus says that these "traditions" are part of the (written) law. Jesus says no such thing, Epiphanius argues, and one of his proofs of this is the Pentateuch itself: the particular "tradition" that Jesus cites in Matthew/Mark is absent from the Pentateuch. A better reading of Matthew, Epiphanius argues, is simply to see Jesus as criticizing the Pharisees for inappropriately introducing traditions which compete with the original Divine law. That they did this in no way compromises the sanctity of the original law, which is preserved in the Pentateuch for all to read. In support of Epiphanius' critique we may observe that not only is the Korban tradition absent from the Pentateuch, but so is the other "tradition of the elders" mentioned in Mt. 15.2; i.e., the practice of hand washing before meals with which the Pharisees initiate the discussion.

Epiphanius further explains what he believes these "traditions of the elders" to be. He says "The Jews call the traditions of the elders "repetitions" (δευτερώσεις), and there are four of them," passed on in the names of four different leaders: Moses; Rabbi Akiva; Adda or Judah; and the sons of Hasmonaeus (*Pan.* 33.9.4). It is evident that Epiphanius, writing the *Panarion* in Salamis in 375-378 and with frequent contact with Palestine,[155] must have known something of the Palestinian rabbinic exegetical tradition that was by that point well developed. By the fourth century, δευτέρωσις and δευτέρωσεις were Christian terms for rabbinic exegesis, and specifically the Mishnah, a term which is etymologically similar.[156] Epiphanius identifies this exegetical tradition with the παράδοσις τῶν πρεσβυτέρων of

[154] Trans. Frank Williams, 1st ed.
[155] Frank Williams, 1st ed., xii-xvi.
[156] R. Hugh Connolly, *Didascalia Apostolorum,* lvii-lix; Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire (135-425),* trans. H. McKeating (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 88-89.

the gospels. Whether this is a historically accurate identification is a question well beyond the scope of this paper.[157] We certainly should not assume, as does Quispel, that Epiphanius, "with a perspicacity of which one would not believe him capable," concluded that *Ptolemy himself* knew of the Mishnah and identified it with these traditions.[158] What is significant for our purposes is that Epiphanius' readings of both the gospels and the *Epistle to Flora* on this point appear to be fair and straightforward: by the "traditions of the elders," Jesus is referring to a Jewish extra-biblical regulatory tradition, but Ptolemy has, seemingly unjustifiably, read this logion as alluding to something that is part of the law "contained in the [written] Pentateuch of Moses." How may we account for this problematic exegetical move of his?

It seems highly probable that at least one reason is purely stylistic. At this point in his *Epistle,* Ptolemy has already constructed a threefold division (διαίρεσις) of the possible solutions to the question of the origin of the law (viz., God the Father, the devil, or a third, 'Middle' deity). He is about to move on to another threefold division, for that part of the law that comes from 'God' he is about to show to be further divisible into three parts, as we have already seen.[159] Therefore, Ptolemy may have eschewed a twofold division of the law at this point, a division that distinguished only between the (tripartite) law of God and that of Moses, in favor of a third threefold division that could be attained by the introduction of

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[157] For discussion and bibliography, see Günter Sternberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash,* 2nd ed., ed. and trans. Markus Bockmuehl (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 1-5, 31-44.

[158] "Or, déjà Épiphane, avec une perspicacité dont on ne le croirait pas capable, a aperçu que Ptolémée entendait par ces traditions les δευτερώσεις, c'est-à-dire la Mischna." Quispel, *Lettre à Flora,* 25. A similar error is made by Connolly, who is surprised that the author of the *Didascalia Apostolorum* (which he dates to the third century) should use the term δευτέρωσις to refer to anything other than the "tradition of the elders," which Connolly assumes to be the Mishnah. Connolly, *Didascalia Apostolorum,* lix. In fact, Epiphanius seems to have been the first author to make the association between the "tradition of the elders," the word δευτέρωσις, and some notion of the rabbinic exegetical tradition. I am grateful to David Grossberg for numerous conversations that have helped to clarify this last point.

[159] I remind the reader that I am working through the three strata of the law not in the order Ptolemy considers them, but in "chronological order," as I said at the outset.

a third source for the law, the tradition of the elders. He may have wanted only to demonstrate his compositional skill, by creating three correlated tripartite διαιρέσεις. This position would be supported by the extensive analysis of the genre of the text by Christoph Markschies, who concluded that "the form of the epistle exactly meets the demands of the genre as regards style and content," that genre being the subcategory of philosophical epistle called the διαιρετικαὶ ἐισαγωγαί, which is marked by "descending in subdivisions from the most common to the most detailed term of the respective subject or technical problem of a subject, while the specific differences between all the terms of the respective 'dihaeresis' are made explicit."[160] Therefore the stylistic necessity of a third threefold διαίρεσις is itself a strong justification for Ptolemy's inclusion of a third part of the law originating with the elders. However, this stylistic necessity does not meet Epiphanius' challenge that the argument founders.

Now it is possible that the inclusion of the "tradition of the elders" as part of the law "contained in the Pentateuch of Moses" is an instance of a logical misstep that would support Markschies' characterization of the *Epistle* as "an original – but not yet completely matured – solution" to the problem Ptolemy sets out to solve.[161] In other words, perhaps Ptolemy does not see the implications of what he has written, and Epiphanius has caught him out. If Markschies attributes this misstep to carelessness on Ptolemy's part, Stylianopoulos suggests that Ptolemy may not have been sufficiently familiar with the Pentateuch to know otherwise.[162] We may not completely rule out this possibility; after all, something similar may occur in a few instances in the *Dialogue with Trypho*, where Justin

[160] Markschies, "New Research," 228-233. I see Markschies' analysis as supplementing, rather than contradicting, that of Dunderberg's comparison of *Flora* to "the classical Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition of the composition of public speech" (*Beyond Gnosticism,* 79ff.). Markschies identifies the subgenre more precisely and provides specific epistolary examples.
[161] Markschies, "New Research," 238.
[162] Stylianopoulos, *Justin Martyr and the Mosaic Law,* 50n17.

has inadvertently incorporated into his description of the Jewish law a few regulations that are not found in the Hebrew Bible but do appear in the Mishnah.[163] Quispel, on the other hand, seems to have been of the opinion that, rather than making a mistake, Ptolemy was being deliberately deceptive on this point: "the words "δῶρον τῷ θεῷ" do not appear in the Old Testament, as the heretic would like to make us believe."[164]

But since Ptolemy was at pains to utilize his rhetorical skill to make his treatise as persuasive as possible, I suspect he would not have made use of an argument that could have been so easily refuted by anyone with a knowledge of Scripture. Therefore, setting aside his alleged ineptitude, ignorance, and duplicity as solutions only to be returned to if we cannot find another, we should seek an additional explanation for the apparent contradiction between Ptolemy's use of the "tradition of the elders" (παράδοσις τῶν πρεσβυτέρων) and "Pentateuch" (πεντάτευχος), by pressing upon first one, then the other, of these problematic terms.

Let us first consider the possibility that by the term παράδοσις τῶν πρεσβυτέρων, Ptolemy was literally referring to something in the written Pentateuch, even if his chosen example could not be found there. No other first- or second-century Jewish or Christian authors, however, give this term this semantic range. The apparently plain sense of the παράδοσις τῶν πρεσβυτέρων in Matthew and Mark – as a Jewish extra-biblical

[163] One example is that of the two goats of the Day of Atonement (*Dial.* 40.4; *m. Yoma* 6.1); see Stylianopoulos, *Justin Martyr and the Mosaic Law,* 49. For the further argument that Justin has also, again accidentally, incorporated "Samaritanisms," post-biblical Jewish practices of the Samaritans whom Justin knew as a young man, into his understanding of the written Jewish law, see P. R. Weis, "Some Samaritanisms of Justin Martyr," *JTS* 45 (1944), 199-205. Stylianopoulos, 48-50, summarizes the problem (in Justin) and Wies' arguments. The examples Weis gives are *Dial.* 14.3, 29.3, & 46.5, as well as the chronology of the prophets in *1 Apol.* 31.

[164] "[L]es mots: "δῶρον τῷ θεῷ" ne se trouvent pas dans l'Ancien Testament, comme veut nous le faire croire l'hérétique." Quispel, *Lettre à Flora,* 25.

regulatory tradition[165] connected with the Pharisees – receives confirmation in Josephus. He reports that "The Pharisees had handed down to the people, from a succession of fathers, certain regulations, which were not recorded in the laws of Moses."[166] This depiction of the extra-biblical tradition of the Pharisees in the Synoptics, however accurate it may have been for the first century, is then reproduced and deployed by Christian apologists as an anti-Jewish literary trope typical of all Jews, despite the fact that Jewish conceptions of this "tradition" continued to evolve. Justin implores Trypho throughout the *Dialogue* to despise the παράδοσις of his Jewish teachers (διδάσκαλοι – no longer "Pharisees") who prefer to teach their own doctrines to the truths taught by God (e.g. *Dial.* 38.2). Although Justin never quotes the Jesus logion against the tradition of the elders, he does, like Jesus in that pericope, quote Isa. 29.13 against the Jewish teachers (*Dial.* 78.11; 140.2). As indicated earlier by the few mistakes Justin has made in his choice of examples from the written law, it is unclear to what extent Justin is aware of an actual Jewish extra-biblical regulatory tradition that espouses the antiquity and authority of a "tradition of the elders," but what is certain is that he completely repudiates such a tradition, making plain

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[165] I prefer this lengthy phrase to the problematic terms "oral tradition" or "oral law" (*torah she-be-'al peh*). As Martin Jaffee has shown in his comprehensive analysis of historical sources that might shed light on the media of the Pharisaic text-interpretive tradition (namely, the Qumran literature, Paul, the Gospels, Josephus, and rabbinic material), while "oral communication was the primary medium of textual knowledge" for the Pharisees as for seemingly every other scribal community of Second Temple Judaism in Palestine, there is nevertheless no evidence for a Pharisaic ideology of orality as such; that is, the Pharisees did not perceive their own text-interpretive tradition as essentially or normatively oral; they did not "hesitate to write down the results of such instruction or otherwise insist that the results had always been transmitted orally since Mosaic times and must so remain". Likewise there is no evidence that they were perceived by any of their contemporaries as holding such an ideology. The concept of "oral law," a term that does not even appear as late as the Mishnah, seems to have been a later rabbinic development. See Martin Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism 200 BCE – 400 CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 39-61. For further discussion on particular cases of mistaken identity of Oral Torah in Second Temple literature (*Jubilees* and Philo), see Hindy Najman, *Seconding Sinai: The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 108-137.

[166] νόμιμά τινα παρέδοσαν τῷ δήμῳ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι ἐκ πατέρων διαδοχῆς, ἅπερ οὐκ ἀναγέγραπται ἐν τοῖς Μωυσέος νόμοις. Josephus, *Ant.* 13.297. See also *Ant.* 13.408, where he says that Alexandra restored whatever regulations that Hyrcanus had abolished that the Pharisees had previously introduced in accordance with the tradition of the fathers (ὧν εἰσήνεγκαν οἱ Φαρισαῖοι κατα τὴν πατρώαν παράδοσιν)."

his understanding that these teachings are not contained in Scripture itself, but are later and derivative.[167]

In our attempt to shed light on Ptolemy's understanding of the "traditions of the elders," it will be even more useful to return to Irenaeus of Lyons. His understanding comes much closer to Ptolemy's, yet still stops short of viewing them as biblical. Much like Justin, Irenaeus exonerates Moses, while repudiating the "traditions of the elders," in *Haer.* 4.12.[168] However, unlike Justin, in order to make this argument he employs the same passage from Mt. 15 as does Ptolemy. Irenaeus, while understanding Moses as God's faithful Lawgiver, makes it clear that he believes the "tradition of the elders" to be a Jewish *law*, and a spurious law at that:

> For the tradition of the elders themselves, which they pretended to observe from the law, was contrary to the law given by Moses. Wherefore also Isaiah declares: "Thy dealers mix the wine with water" (Isa. 1.22), showing that the elders were in the habit of mingling a watered tradition with the simple command of God; that is, they set up a spurious law, and one contrary to the [true] law *(aggredientes legem adulteram et contrariam legi);* as also the Lord made plain, when he said to them, "Why do ye transgress the commandment of God, for the sake of your tradition?" (Mt. 15.3[169]) For not only by actual transgression did they set the law of God at nought, mingling the wine with water; but they also set up their own law in opposition to it, which is termed, even to the present day, the Pharisaical. In this [law] they suppress certain things, add others, and interpret others, again, as they think proper, which their teachers use, each one in particular; and desiring to uphold these traditions, they were unwilling to be subject to the law of God, which prepares them for the coming of Christ. (*Haer.* 4.12.1)

It is unclear why Irenaeus believes this law, or exegetical tradition, to be called "Pharisaical" by Jews of his day; he may simply be under the literary influence of the gospel

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[167] Stylianopoulos, *Justin Martyr and the Mosaic Law,* 47-49.
[168] Irenaeus first introduces Mt.15.3-4 as a proof text in *Haer.* 4.9.3. There he only asserts that Christ confesses the author of the law to be the true God by calling him God, therefore it must be so. But this is exactly the point that is in dispute. After a digression, he returns to the proof of this in *Haer.* 4.12.1.
[169] This question of Jesus' does not appear in the Markan parallel, so even though Irenaeus knows Mark, he is reliant upon Matthew here.

pericope. But it is significant that he moves beyond the gospels and Justin to associate this "tradition of the elders" with a "law," just as Ptolemy has done.

Although Irenaeus calls this tradition a "law," he nevertheless agrees with Justin that it is also extra-biblical. As we have seen,[170] Irenaeus claims that at first there was only the Decalogue, but when God saw that the people "turned themselves to make a calf, and had gone back in their minds to Egypt, desiring to be slaves instead of freemen, they were placed for the future in a state of servitude suited to their wish."[171] That is, most of the so-called ritual legislation was given by God to Moses on his second journey up Mount Sinai as a secondary layer of the law, a specific dispensation to the Jews, "adapted to their condition of servitude." Irenaeus further distinguishes between the original Decalogue, this additional legislation given by God to Moses, and yet a third stratum: those additional commandments that Moses himself enacted on account of the continuing hardheartedness of the people. The permission to divorce is Irenaeus' prime example of this layer, as we have already seen. But the traditions of the elders are excluded from this discussion, being as they are "contrary to the law of Moses" and, as such, extra-biblical. Ptolemy, however, claims that these traditions were woven into the Pentateuch.

It was Ptolemy's apparent identification of these traditions with something incorporated into the written law that led Quispel to search elsewhere for an explanation. In his commentary he suggests that Ptolemy had direct or indirect knowledge of conceptions within "Jewish-Christian circles" of "false pericopes" having been introduced into the Old Testament by the devil at the time it was set down into writing. Quispel maintains Ptolemy drew upon these for his third layer of the law, associating these with the

[170] See above, my section on Ptolemy's first division, "The Law Added By Moses."
[171] *Haer.* 4.15, trans. *ANF.*

παράδοσις τῶν πρεσβύτερων of the gospels. For his evidence Quispel pointed toward the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies,* in which the theory is articulated that the seventy elders of the people chosen by Moses (Num. 11.16-25) were responsible, through the activity of the devil, for introducing into the Hebrew Scriptures some falsehoods contrary to the law of God, where they remain to this day.[172] In the *Homilies,* "Peter" instructs "Clement" about the nature of these false biblical passages and how to detect them, while admonishing him not to reveal this state of affairs in public, lest the unlearned multitudes be thrown into confusion and the work of the devil be accomplished.[173]

Quispel's hypothesis of the influence of an extant Jewish-Christian doctrine of false pericopes upon Ptolemy's thought has probably been the most influential. Markschies cites Quispel's hypothesis approvingly, noting only the partial nature of its explanatory power without acknowledging any fundamental problems.[174] Dunderberg is more emphatic, and assumes that Quispel has settled the matter: "The fact that there were early Christians who wanted to remove ambiguous passages from the Hebrew Bible explains why Ptolemaeus felt it necessary to devote more attention to the issue of human additions than his own argument would have required."[175] Dunderberg points out numerous parallels between *Flora* and the *Homilies,* and argues that the "Jewish-Christian" position found in the *Homilies* provides a "background" against which Ptolemy's discussion of the tradition of the elders makes sense. According to Dunderberg, Ptolemy did not agree with the solution proposed by the *Homilies* to the inconsistent and offensive features in the Hebrew

[172] Quispel, *Lettre à Flora,* 23-26, citing *Homily* II, 38 (his text erroneously reads 'III, 38') and *Homily* III, 54. To these examples we might add III, 42; and III, 47-52.
[173] *Homily* II.38-40.
[174] Markschies, "New Research," 236.
[175] Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism,* 87.

Scriptures (i.e., that all of them could be explained by human interpolation), and because of the prevalence of that theory, Ptolemy

> needed to counter [it] to make his own case more compelling. Ptolemaeus admits that the theory of human additions does indeed explain some incongruities in the law but claims that this theory does not solve the whole problem.[176]

Thus Dunderberg, Markschies, and others, have assumed that Quispel's hypothesis was correct and that the matter was closed.

Yet Quispel's hypothesis is deeply problematic for a couple of reasons. To begin with, although innovative, it still does not address the basic problem that Epiphanius had identified: Ptolemy's example "tradition" is not to be found within the written Pentateuch. Thus Quispel's theory may only be accepted along with the admission that Ptolemy's argument contains an egregious logical error (which Dunderberg does not acknowledge). For all its creativity, Quispel's theory does not move us a single step from Markschies' characterization of Ptolemy's solution as "not yet completely matured."

Moreover, the connection between the two texts is not immediately apparent, as the Pseudo-Clementines do not refer to these false pericopes as παράδοσεις. For Ptolemy to have drawn on the notion of "false pericopes" being introduced into the written law, we would have to assume that Ptolemy innovated a new interpretation of the "tradition of the elders." But Ptolemy, likewise, does not refer to the παράδοσεις as false pericopes, so the suggestion that Ptolemy was creatively engaging with an already extant theory of false pericopes is missing a key piece of evidence.

Finally and most importantly, Quispel's argument rests upon what are now considered to be outdated assumptions about the Pseudo-Clementine literature, which are

[176] Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism,* 86-7.

now widely understood as products of fourth-century Syria.[177] Behind the two main extant Pseudo-Clementine texts, the *Homilies* and the *Recognitions*, may lie a third-century "Basic Writing" or *Grundschrift,* an idea first proposed by Henry Dodwell in 1689, revived one hundred and eighty years later by R. A. Lipsius in 1869 and vigorously defended in 1904 by Hans Waitz, through whose work the existence of a *Grundschrift* has become axiomatic for much of twentieth- and twenty-first-century Pseudo-Clementine scholarship as an explanation of the literary relationship between the *Homilies* and the *Recognitions*. The exact contours of the proposed *Grundschrift,* however, have been vigorously debated ever since its proposal, and behind this (hypothetical) text have been postulated several additional sources, one of which, the one to which Quispel alludes, was supposed to have been the late second-century text known as *Kerygma Petrou,* known mostly from quotations by Clement of Alexandria. This text is not extant, its putative connection to the fourth-century Pseudo-Clementine literature has been severely undermined, and any hypothesis based upon this text must be considered to be extremely fragile. As early as the mid-nineteenth century, several scholars, such as Ernst Mayeroff (1835), Adolph Schliemann (1844), and Adolf Hilgenfeld (1848) rejected any connection between the aforementioned *Kerygma Petrou* and the Pseudo-Clementines, although Hilgenfeld nevertheless asserted the existence of some other, hitherto unknown "KP" source, which Lipsius renamed *Kerygmata Petrou* in order to prevent confusion with the known late second-century *Kerygma Petrou,* although the distinction was not always observed by subsequent scholarship. Summarizing the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries' obsession with

[177] For the following overview of the history of Pseudo-Clementine scholarship, I am reliant upon the astonishingly thorough two-part 1982 article by F. Stanley Jones, "The Pseudo-Clementines: A History of Research," reprinted in his *Pseudoclementina Elchasaiticaque Inter Judaeochristiana: Collected Studies* (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 50-113. I also am indebted to Annette Yoshiko Reed for several conversations about the Pseudo-Clementines and for her comments after generously reading a previous draft of this part of the chapter.

source criticism, F. Stanley Jones writes in 2012 that although the fourth-century Syrian author of the Pseudo-Clementines "has preserved traditions that evidently extend back to apostolic times and that have survived elsewhere only fragmentarily," nevertheless the *Kerygmata Petrou* "quite possibly never existed and thus is perhaps only a fiction that has riddled recent scholarship."[178]

What is more, although a bewildering array of Pseudo-Clementine source-critical scholarship existed in the mid-twentieth century, Quispel was reliant upon one scholar in particular, Oscar Cullman (1930), whose own peculiar view was that the Pseudo-Clementine KP source (which Cullman calls *Kerygma Petrou* rather than *Kerygmata Petrou*) must be seen as a primary witness to a "Jewish Gnosticism" that influenced the beginnings of Christianity and the writings of the New Testament. This particular premise is generally seen as antiquated among scholars of the Pseudo-Clementines and "Gnosticism" alike, but Cullman is Quispel's primary inspiration for his claim that, "the concept of false pericopes, far from being the whimsical and fleeting invention of some gnostic, go back to the Jewish milieux that saw the birth of Christianity."[179] By contrast, recent scholarship has affirmed that the theory of false pericopes in the Pseudo-Clementine literature is confined to the *Homilies* and, as such, rather than being found in the hypothetical third-century *Grundschrift* (let alone any proposed second-century KP source alleged to be underlying the *Grundschrift*) is most likely the innovation of the author/editor

[178] F. Stanley Jones, *Pseudoclementina,* 4-5. See also Annette Yoshiko Reed, "'Jewish Christianity' as Counter-history? The Apostolic Past in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* and the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*," in *Antiquity in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Pasts in the Greco-Roman World,* eds. Gregg Gardner and Kevin Osterloh (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 173-216, esp. 178-81.
[179] "Ce résultat ne laisse pas de surprendre: la conception des péricopes faussées, loin d'être l'invention fantasque et éphémère de quelque gnostique, remonte jusqu'aux milieux juifs qui ont vu naître le christianisme." Quispel, *Lettre à Flora,* 26.

of the *Homilies;* i.e., the fourth-century Homilist.[180] As such, it could not have had any influence upon Ptolemy in second-century Rome.

This, then, concludes the attempt to explain Ptolemy's inclusion of the "tradition of the elders" as part of the Pentateuch on the grounds that he either innovated or was aware of the notion of post-Mosaic traditions being incorporated into the written law. As this seems unlikely, we then turn to the second possibility: that by ὁ πεντάτευχος, Ptolemy meant something broader than the five written books of Moses.

The very etymology of the word makes this option almost impossible to fathom, a τεῦχος being a case for papyrus scrolls, or the scroll (book) itself. Hence, the Torah of Moses comes to be referred to not merely as "the five books" (which should be οἱ πεντά τεῦχοι), but ὁ πεντάτευχος, "the five-book collection," or, perhaps, "the container for the five." This word emerges in the early Christian era as a later supplement to the existing word for the Jewish law, νόμος, which had been the preferred translation of *torah* in the LXX as well as numerous other significant Hellenistic Jewish authors and texts.[181] In these sources, νόμος often has a dual meaning, signifying either the divine will or the five books of Moses in which that will was recorded. The latter meaning is attested especially in the formula ὁ νόμος καὶ οἱ προφῆται.[182] The Synoptic Gospels also use the term νόμος in both ways. By this point, the connection between the two meanings is very tight, as the law is found only in (what would be called) the Pentateuch, and (what would be called) the Pentateuch consists mostly of law.[183] However, once Christians began to distinguish that part of the Jewish law they considered no longer valid from the remainder of the five-book

[180] F. Stanley Jones, *Pseudoclementina,* 167-169.
[181] E.g., 1 & 2 Maccabees, Josephus, Philo, etc. See Gutbrod, "νόμος, etc.," *TDNT* 4:1046-59.
[182] E.g., 2 Macc. 15.9, and, already in substance, Zech. 7.12. Gutbrod, "νόμος, etc.," *TDNT* 4:1047.
[183] Gutbrod, "νόμος, etc.," *TDNT* 4:1059.

torah (i.e., the moral precepts and narrative), νόμος came increasingly to mean the former, that subset of the five-book *torah* preoccupied with the so-called "ritual law." Already Paul uses νόμος in this way, and for Justin νόμος signifies the ritual law exclusively.[184] Meanwhile, a new word, πεντάτευχος, was apparently coined at some point thereafter (Justin does not know the word) to serve as a new translation for the other primary meaning of *torah;* i.e., the five books of Moses. In short, it seems virtually impossible, if the term πεντάτευχος was known to Ptolemy, that it could mean anything for him than what it has always meant. This is readily evident in the entire phrase in which it appears, ὁ σύμπας ἐκεῖνος νόμος ὁ ἐμπεριεχόμενος τῇ Μωσέως πεντατεύχῳ ("the entire law – the one contained in the Pentateuch of Moses"). The νόμος is a subset of the πεντάτευχος, being encompassed by it and existing wholly within it.

But can we be sure that Ptolemy *did* know the word πεντάτευχος? It may be essential at this juncture to observe that Ptolemy's second-century *Epistle to Flora* contains *the first attestation of the word* πεντάτευχος,[185] – if, that is, we take Epiphanius' fourth-century *Panarion* as a vessel that has faithfully preserved an attestation this early. After Ptolemy, except for a few appearances in the third-century writings of Hippolytus and Origen, the Greek term does not become frequently attested until the fourth century. In the writings of Epiphanius it is pervasive.[186]

As we know *Flora* only from Epiphanius, the possibility therefore exists that either Epiphanius or an intermediate source added the reference to the πεντάτευχος at *Flor.* 4.1. It is this single word here (it does not occur elsewhere in the *Epistle*) that raises the difficulty we have been addressing, and makes possible Epiphanius' entire critique of

[184] Stylianopoulos, *Justin Martyr and the Mosaic Law,* 50-1.
[185] "Pentateuch," *LTK* 259a; "πεντάτευχος," *PGL* 1059b; confirmed by a *TLG* search.
[186] As confirmed by a *TLG* search.

Ptolemy's section on the traditions of the elders. Might this word in Ptolemy's text have been interpolated at some point in the two centuries of copying between Ptolemy's autograph and Epiphanius' rebuttal in his *Panarion?*

It would not be completely out of character for Epiphanius to have modified Ptolemy's theory by just a few words for polemical purposes, in order to fabricate an easy argument against him. However, were we to start down this road, we would soon lose access to Ptolemy's thought altogether. Furthermore, if the introduction of the word πεντάτευχος into *Flora* does not date back to Ptolemy's autograph, we need not necessarily account for this interpolation by assuming malicious intent on the part of Epiphanius. In fact, there would have been a very good reason for an earlier scribe to have innocently appended the entire phrase ὁ ἐμπεριεχόμενος τῇ Μωσέως πεντατεύχῳ to Ptolemy's ὁ σύμπας ἐκεῖνος νόμος, in order to "clarify" what Ptolemy meant for a Christian audience to whom νόμος had become uncomfortably ambiguous but to whom the πεντάτευχος was a familiar and precise concept. It is even more likely to have been a marginal gloss that became accidentally incorporated into this point in the text in the course of two centuries of successive copying.[187]

If my hypothesis is correct, then when the *Epistle* came down to Epiphanius in this form, he instantly pounced upon the problem this phrase presented to Ptolemy's theory, and duly excoriated him for a problem that Ptolemy himself had not introduced. Rather, my proposed scribe has unknowingly done violence to the sense of Ptolemy's theory of the law. For under this hypothesis, Ptolemy's νόμος would have referred to both biblical and

[187] This suggestion is compatible with the grammatical structure of the phrase ὁ σύμπας ἐκεῖνος νόμος ὁ ἐμπεριεχόμενος τῇ Μωσέως πεντατεύχῳ, in which the two nominative phrases are linked via simple apposition, rather than through the use of ὅτι, or subordinately with a relative pronoun, or via a complex 'sandwich construction' via appositive genitives. Although the phrase as it stands is not, strictly speaking, ungrammatical, of these options it is the most likely form to have occurred as the result of a marginal gloss being accidentally incorporated into the main text.

extra-biblical "law," taking into account not only what was written by Moses but those Jewish "traditions" known to Christians from the gospels and supplemented by vague knowledge of second-century Jewish exegetical traditions. A Christian such as Ptolemy might well have considered a Jewish extra-biblical regulatory tradition something needing coverage under a systematic treatment of the "law of Moses," as we can see from Irenaeus' application of the term *legem adulteram* to the "Pharisaic tradition" that he opposed.

Therefore, I suggest that the most reasonable explanation for the presence of the "traditions of the elders" in *Flora* is as an extra-biblical layer of tradition, a layer that Ptolemy had no intention of including in the written "Pentateuch." As I have suggested, the word πεντάτευχος had perhaps not even been invented by the time of Ptolemy. One possible objection to this last hypothesis, however, is that the Latinized form (*pentateuchus*) first appears in Tertullian,[188] and it is multiply attested within his corpus.[189] Although Tertullian is active some 30 to 50 years after Ptolemy, the appearance of the term in Latin points to an earlier first appearance in Greek than any of our extant Greek witnesses after Ptolemy would otherwise indicate. This objection is easily met, however, for as Tertullian shows no knowledge of Ptolemy's *Epistle,* we already must explain the word's passage into Latin on the basis of other writers and speakers besides Ptolemy. Furthermore, even if the Greek neologism does date all the way back to the time of Ptolemy, he need not have used it in his *Epistle*, and so I nevertheless suggest that the hypothesis of a later interpolation of the phrase ὁ ἐμπεριεχόμενος τῇ Μωσέως πεντατεύχῳ best explains the available evidence. Although my analysis of the appearance of πεντάτευχος in *Flora* may provide circumstantial evidence for the coining of the word at a later date than generally imagined,

[188] "Pentateuch," *LTK* 259a.
[189] E.g., *Adv. Marc.* 1.10.

this latter possibility is one upon which the hypothesis of a later interpolation of this word at its one appearance in the *Epistle* need not rest.

The argument I have advanced is a form of what is called by text critics conjectural emendation. No extant manuscript of the *Epistle to Flora* supports my proposed restoration, as all of them are found embedded within manuscripts of Epiphanius' *Panarion,* and the emendation to Ptolemy's text must have entered into the manuscript tradition by the time Epiphanius gained access to the *Epistle,* for he responds to it in his criticism of Ptolemy. New Testament text critic David Parker reminds us that "the pursuit of conjectural emendation is viewed by contemporary scholars in much the same way as liberal opinion looks upon fox hunting."[190] Yet he defends the right of the scholar to utilize this weapon in one set of circumstances: "when all of the manuscripts present texts which do not make sense. Of course, we shall have to be very careful to be sure that what is nonsense to us must have been nonsense to the author. But the requirement that the writer be allowed to make sense is paramount."[191] I have dared to propose this conjectural emendation to the text of *Flora* on the grounds that without it, Ptolemy's tripartite division of the law does not make sense, and my argument must be evaluated against this claim. If, however, it is accepted, then a great deal of sense may be made of both Ptolemy's legislative theory and his position in the social history of Christianity.

If Ptolemy's concept of the "tradition of the elders" was, as I have argued, a Jewish extra-biblical regulatory tradition, then he is of one accord with both Justin and, especially, Irenaeus, sharing with both of them the idea that it was an incorrect exegetical tradition, and sharing Irenaeus' view that, although extra-biblical, it is nevertheless a kind of "law."

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[190] Parker, *Living Text,* 114.
[191] Parker, *Living Text,* 115-116.

That it needed mentioning at all may indicate an awareness on the part of second-century Christians that Jews claimed possession of a second "law," albeit one they imbued with ancient authority, and if so, this "law" had to be at least mentioned, even if summarily and dismissively, by writers such as Ptolemy and Irenaeus.

This would have been particularly important in an anti-Marcionite context. Marcion himself seems not to have used the Korban controversy as one of his antitheses; nor, perhaps, did his disciples. Harnack did not include this pericope in his list of Marcion's antitheses, nor do we find use of it in Tertullian's *Against Marcion.* But this does not mean that the Korban controversy was not deployed in anti-Marcionite polemic. On the contrary, this is exactly what occurs in Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.12, a text to which we now return in order to conduct a closer examination.

4.4. Irenaeus' Citation and Exegesis of the Korban Pericope

In the preceding section, we saw the beginning of Irenaeus' exegesis of the Korban pericope, a more or less straightforward clarification of the episode in Matthew. Jesus accuses the Pharisees of introducing their own commands counter to the will of God, and Irenaeus merely repeats this. Like Ptolemy, Irenaeus elides the Pharisees as represented in the gospels with both the Jewish authorities of his own day and a succession of elders that reaches back into the archaic past. However, Irenaeus says further,

> But that this [the love of God] is the first and greatest commandment, and that the next [that of love] towards our neighbour, the Lord has taught when he says that the entire law and the prophets hang upon these two commandments.[192] Moreover, he did not himself bring down [from heaven] any other commandment greater than this one, but renewed this very same one to his disciples, when he enjoined them to love God with all their heart,

[192] Mt. 22.36-40 = Mk 12.28-31 = Lk. 10.25-28. The wording of Irenaeus' quotation is Matthew's. The two commandments Jesus quotes may be found in Deut. 6.5 and Lev. 19.18.

> and others as themselves. *But if he had descended from another Father,* he never would have made use of the first and greatest commandment of the law, but he would undoubtedly have endeavoured by all means to bring down a greater one than this from the perfect Father, *so as not to make use of that which had been given by the God of the law...* The Lord, too, *does not do away with this [law],*[193] *when he shows that the law was not derived from another God... He therefore did not throw blame upon that law which was given by Moses,* when he exhorted it to be observed, *...but he did throw blame upon those persons,* because they repeated indeed the words of the law, yet were without love. And for this reason were they held as being unrighteous as respects God, and as respects their neighbours. As also Isaiah says, "This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching the doctrines and the commandments of men." (Mt. 15.8-9) [194] *He does not call the law given by Moses commandments of men, but the traditions of the elders themselves which they had invented, and in upholding which they made the law of God of none effect* (Mt. 15.3,6) and were on this account also not subject to his word.[195]

Irenaeus thus uses an exegesis of this same pericope from Mt. 15 to clarify his position vis-à-vis not only Jews, but those who would argue for the distinction between a lower law-giving deity and God the perfect Father. He thus relates this pericope to the broader concern of Book Four, that there is only one God. What Irenaeus finds significant here is that, while Jesus criticizes the Pharisees, he does not contradict Moses or the law itself. Irenaeus thus turns Mt. 15 back upon an argument, such as Marcion's, that would use the divorce controversy of Mt. 19 to show that Moses was working against the will of God. If that were true, says Irenaeus, then Jesus would surely have condemned Moses here, but he did not. Thus, Irenaeus' repudiation of the Pharisees and their "tradition of the elders," and by extension all of the Jews, is used polemically to uphold Moses, along with the God from whom he received the law.

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[193] The Latin text here reads *Quem autem non confundat Dominus...* The *ANF* translators insert "[God]" here, but I believe we would better understand *quem* to be referring forward to the *legem* in the same sentence. Irenaeus seems to be alluding to Mt. 5.17 here.

[194] As did Ptolemy, Irenaeus quotes not LXX Is. 29.13 directly, but the verse preserved as such in Mt. 15.8-9 = Mk. 7.6-7.

[195] *Haer.* 4.12.2-4; trans. *ANF,* mod.

Ptolemy's exegesis of Mt. 15 works similarly, even though he places a more negative spin on Moses' activity than does Irenaeus. Exegetically both of them seek to find a core of the law that may be preserved; for both of them, this is the Decalogue. For both there are multiple layers of outer accretions, the last one being the "tradition of the elders" handed down by the Pharisees to contemporaneous Jews. For Irenaeus, this "tradition" is clearly extra-biblical, and I have argued above that the evidence of Ptolemy's *Epistle to Flora* is best explained by understanding Ptolemy's view of this "tradition" in the same light. Both men, therefore, espouse a comprehensive view of the Jewish law in which even the extra-biblical exegetical tradition needs to be addressed.

This use of the Korban pericope by Ptolemy and Irenaeus is unparalleled in early Christian exegesis.[196] Its primary specific use by late antique Christians was as a resource to relativize Jesus' troubling commandment to hate one's own family members (Lk. 14.26; with the softer parallel in Mt. 10.37 already offering an obvious resource for this purpose). Several other interpreters made use of the Korban passage more generally, finding the Pharisees "useful prototypes of all who distort or override Scriptures in bad faith for their own purposes,"[197] while ignoring the specific conflict in the pericope between the law and the tradition of the elders. As with the Matthean saying that Jesus has not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it, Ptolemy and Irenaeus are the first Christian exegetes to use the Korban passage. Only Ptolemy and Irenaeus take up this passage in arguments about the nature of the law and its Lawgiver, a point that indicates a great deal of commonality between these two thinkers and their respective texts, *Epistle to Flora* and *Haer.* 4.12-15.

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[196] The passage is otherwise unknown in any other "Gnostic" or Nag Hammadi text, and Michael Slusser has comprehensively surveyed the patristic material. Michael Schlusser, "The Corban Passages in Patristic Exegesis," in *Diakonia (Studies in Honor of Robert T. Meyer)*, eds. Thomas Halton and Joseph P. Williman (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1986), 101-107.
[197] Slusser, "The Corban Passages," 103.

Once we add this observation to the evidence from the preceding sections, we must come to the conclusion that this similarity in both theology and exegesis must be explained on grounds other than independent innovation.

6. Conclusion

Let us review all of the evidence I have outlined in this chapter for that claim, keeping in mind that Irenaeus composed *Adversus Haereses* ten to thirty years after Ptolemy wrote his *Epistle to Flora,* and that Irenaeus was in direct contact with some of Ptolemy's followers and had read some of their tractates. I also present this evidence in tabular form in the appendix to the chapter.

Ptolemy's *Epistle* is the first citation in the historical record of Mt. 5.17, Jesus' saying that he came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. This saying next appears in the historical record when cited by Irenaeus. These two exegetes are the first we know of to attempt to combine this Matthean principle with the Pauline attitude towards the law for Gentiles that had been widely adopted by Gentile Christians. They combine these opposing attitudes in the same way, by arguing that these sentiments apply to different parts of the Torah: that part that Jesus "fulfilled" was the Decalogue, but that part that Paul rejected for Christians was the Jewish ritual law, which both men argue should now be reinterpreted symbolically. Although this twofold division within the law existed in prior exegesis, it had never been argued for before on the basis of Mt. 5.17. In making this argument, Ptolemy and Irenaeus both rely upon the same three of the six Matthean antitheses, those on killing/anger, adultery/lust, and swearing oaths. In addition, when they quote Paul, of the numerous texts from the Pauline corpus they could have chosen, they both quote from 1 Corinthians, albeit different verses.

Ptolemy and Irenaeus both treat an additional Matthean antithesis, the one concerning revenge, differently from the previous three. Ptolemy takes this saying as proof that the Savior did come to destroy some laws, for example the *lex talionis,* and adds this division of the law to the previous two, making a threefold division of the divine law. Irenaeus also treats this saying differently from the previous three. He is in earnest to deny the sentiment that Christ destroyed any part of the law, and so he does not quote this saying in full. He only quotes the dominical, second half, which he takes from Luke in combination with other Lukan parallels to some of the Matthean antitheses. Furthermore, he does this in *Haer.* 4.13.3, whereas he had treated the previous three antitheses together as a group in *Haer.* 4.13.1.

These two thinkers also both omit any reference to the divorce antithesis, even though they both treat a saying by Jesus on divorce from Matthew. Instead, they both choose to focus on the divorce controversy narrative from Mt. 19.3-9. However, they do not attempt to elide this narrative with the divorce antithesis by interpreting Jesus' teaching in Mt. 19.3-9 as "fulfillment" of the law. Rather, they each find that Moses added the permission to divorce of his own accord, because of human weakness. While this position is only implicit in *Adversus Haereses,* we can be sure to attribute it to Irenaeus, as he makes it explicit in his later *Epideixis.* For Irenaeus, this stratum of legislation constitutes the third division of the law – although he does not speak of it in these terms – when combined with that which Christ fulfilled and that which is to be reinterpreted symbolically. Therefore Irenaeus, like Ptolemy, also has a threefold division of the law, which has been previously unrecognized. Of course, Ptolemy numbers his divisions differently, having a threefold divine law that together counts as one division, and the law added by Moses being his second division.

The proof texts Mt. 5.17, the antitheses, and the divorce controversy narrative of Mt. 19 all directly confront Marcion, who made use of these sayings from Matthew. Both Ptolemy and Irenaeus make it clear in their texts that they are speaking against a Marcionite position (for Irenaeus, this includes the specific section under discussion: *Haer.* 4.12-15).

Ptolemy and Irenaeus both make use of the controversy narrative over a "tradition of the elders" from Mt. 15 that is unrepresented in any prior Christian exegesis, and not extant in any subsequent late antique Christian exegesis for the purpose to which they apply it. They both take it as proof that there is a Jewish, extra-biblical "law" of human invention that contradicts the Pentateuch (i.e., with all of its divisions elucidated thus far) and stands outside of it. Ptolemy discusses it under his legislative theory, albeit briefly, and Irenaeus calls it a "spurious law" (*legem adulteram*), but nevertheless discusses it in this same section of his treatise.

Finally, whereas Ptolemy's *Epistle* is quite short, Irenaeus' treatise is massive, yet these discussions and proof texts cluster in the same relatively short section, comprising four chapters of *Adversus Haereses* Book Four. This suggests that, as Irenaeus relied upon numerous source texts for his treatise, at this particular point he was reliant upon either the *Epistle to Flora* or some other source, which, in turn, bears some relationship to Ptolemy's treatise.

In summary, I claim that the multiple similarities, in selection of exegetical proof texts, as well as in conclusions, is overwhelmingly against the possibility that these two thinkers could have independently innovated these legislative theories. What, then, is the relationship between the two?

We may not rule out the possibility that Irenaeus knew of the *Epistle to Flora,* and even had a copy of it, but I consider both of these unlikely. He never quotes from it, nor

does he name it (although he does mention by name "their comparatively recent writing *The Gospel of Truth*")[198] nor does Irenaeus present his divisions of the law in the same order as does Ptolemy. Indeed, *Flora* and *Haer.* 4.12-15 do not show any signs of a literary connection other than the shared proof texts themselves and the arguments they support; this does not seem to be a case of direct textual influence of the one upon the other. Perhaps the strongest argument in favor of his knowing the *Epistle* is that, given how similar his exegesis and conclusions to it are, he would not want to draw attention to that Valentinian text to which his legislative theory was so indebted! However, the absence of any quotations from the *Epistle,* I feel, is better explained by Irenaeus' being familiar with the argument that appears in that text but not the text itself: he must have come to be influenced by the argument due to contact with it either in another literary form or from an oral tradition, or perhaps both, although, given the available evidence, I do not believe it is possible to distinguish between the two media in this case.[199] In other words, either there is an underlying source used by both Ptolemy and Irenaeus, or there is influence from Ptolemy, via his followers, to Irenaeus' thought and, henceforth, his pen.

The case for an earlier, anti-Marcionite text, utilized by both Ptolemy and Irenaeus, has been made recently by Tuomas Rasimus.[200] Rasimus has argued that Irenaeus (*Haer.* 3.11.1-2) and Ptolemy (*Flor.* 3.6) both use an exegesis of John 1.3 and 1.10-11 in a remarkably similar combination and manner; furthermore, both Ptolemy and Irenaeus explicitly direct their combined exegesis of these verses against Marcion, although they

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[198] *Haer.* 3.11.9.
[199] I do not wish to distinguish too sharply between the oral and written media, as studies of orality and literacy in antiquity have indicated that oral and written media were symbiotic, not mutually exclusive. On this point see Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 28-32.
[200] Rasimus, "Ptolemaeus and the Valentinian Exegesis of John's Prologue."

utilize the verses to buttress Valentinian and catholic cosmologies, respectively.[201] As I have suggested regarding the collection of Matthean proof texts, Rasimus argues that this precise combination of Johannine verses was unlikely to have been innovated independently by two separate thinkers, but indicates a connection of some sort. After considering and rejecting some alternatives (including Irenaeus' direct knowledge of the *Epistle to Flora*), Rasimus suggests that a shared source solution seems the most likely, speculating that it is one of the "older Roman traditions" preserved by Irenaeus.[202] Certainly, as Rasimus points out, Irenaeus relies upon other written texts that likely originate from Rome; such as the heresiological catalogue of *Haer.* 1.27.2-4, or an anti-Marcionite treatise by Justin, now lost, that Irenaeus quotes at *Haer.* 4.6.2. Perhaps, then, Irenaeus also used a Roman source known to Ptolemy, and it is this shared source that would account for their similar exegeses of Matthean pericopes on the Mosaic law as well. We might further speculate that this "older Roman tradition" need not be one held by (only) retrospectively orthodox thinkers – after all, we do not find this complex a theory in Justin, as previously discussed. Perhaps, if we adopt the solution of a shared source, we might speculate that Ptolemy and Irenaeus both received it from Valentinian thinkers during the time that each of them spent in Rome. In any case, Rasimus' general proposal of an older, shared source is one viable solution to the question of how to account for the similarities between Ptolemy's and Irenaeus' theories of the Jewish law. However, a closer analysis of Rasimus' argument suggests another, perhaps even more likely solution.

Rasimus suggests that "it is perhaps likelier to assume" that Irenaeus derived his exegesis of John 1.3,10-11 from a Roman source also used by Ptolemy, than an alternative

[201] Rasimus, "Ptolemaeus," 151-4.
[202] Rasimus, "Ptolemaeus," 153.

that Rasimus rejects: that Ptolemy innovated the exegesis, communicated it to Roman catholic thinkers, who then adapted his Valentinian usage of it in a catholic direction before transmitting it via some source to Irenaeus. I assume Rasimus finds this option less likely because of the principle of Occam's razor, which dictates that given a choice between two hypothetical solutions, the one with the fewest assumptions is to be preferred. However, he does not consider a third alternative, that in fact requires the fewest assumptions to be made: that Ptolemy innovated the exegesis and that it was communicated, via his own followers, directly to Irenaeus, which contact we already know to have taken place. This latter solution is also to be favored over the shared source theory because, as Rasimus himself points out, Irenaeus attempts to disprove not only a Marcionite but also a Valentinian interpretation of the combined verses in his treatment of the exegesis. Since Irenaeus knew of a Valentinian interpretation of the combined verses Jn. 1.3,10-11, then rather than assuming he learned of a catholic exegesis of these verses from hitherto unidentified catholic Roman exegetes, on the one hand, and on the other hand, a Valentinian exegesis of the same two verses from other, Valentinian exegetes, it is much more economical to assume that it was from the Valentinians with whom he had contact that he learned the Valentinian interpretation, which he then refutes via his own exegesis that he innovates in response to theirs.

This seems to me to be the most likely relationship as well between Ptolemy and Irenaeus concerning the exegesis of the numerous Matthean pericopes concerning the law of Moses. Ptolemy's argument became popular among his students, was conveyed to Irenaeus through his direct contact with them, after which Irenaeus adapted it for his own use. If this hypothesis is correct, then Ptolemy's *Epistle to Flora* would represent direct

influence over Irenaeus' theology and, therefore, upon the theology of emergent orthodox Christianity.

7. APPENDIX

For some readers, the structural similarities in Ptolemy's and Irenaeus' legislative theories, combined with their exegetical similarities, may be more readily grasped in tabular form, and so I also present these conclusions in Table 5, below. As in the preceding text of this chapter, in this table I list the legislative layers in chronological order, from top to bottom.

Proof Text	Ptolemy's Interpretation	Irenaeus' Interpretation
Mt. 5.21-26 antithesis #1, on killing and anger (Cf. Ex. 20.13 et al.) Mt. 5.27-30 antithesis #2, on adultery and lust (Cf. Ex. 20.14 et al.) Mt. 5.33-37 antithesis #4, on swearing oaths (Cf. Lev. 19.12, Num. 30.2, Deut. 23.21)	<u>Division 1.a:</u> Divine; fulfilled *Flor.* 5.3; 6.1	<u>Division 1:</u> Divine; fulfilled *Haer.* 4.13.1
Mt. 5.38-42 antithesis #5, on revenge (Cf. Lev. 24.17-21; *lex talionis*)	<u>Division 1.b:</u> Divine; destroyed *Flor.* 5.4-7; 6.2-3	<u>Division 1 (cont'd):</u> Divine; fulfilled *Haer.* 4.13.3
Pauline Epistles (On Jewish ritual law)	<u>Division 1.c:</u> Divine; spiritualized *Flor.* 5.8-14; 6.4-6	<u>Division 2:</u> Divine; spiritualized *Haer.* 4.14.3
Mt. 19.3-9 (On divorce; cf. Deut. 24.1)	<u>Division 2:</u> Moses added his own laws voluntarily, contrary to God, but understandably so given the circumstances. *Flor.* 4.3-10	<u>Division 3:</u> Moses added his own laws voluntarily, acting under a general permission granted by God to innovate new legislation should circumstances dictate. *Haer.* 4.15.2
Mt. 15.1-9 (On a "tradition of the elders")	<u>Division 3:</u> Tradition of the Elders contradicts the Mosaic law (i.e., Divisions 1 & 2), stands outside of it, but is still part of the "law." *Flor.* 4.11-14	<u>n/a</u> Tradition of the Elders contradicts the Mosaic law (i.e., Divisions 1, 2, & 3), stands outside of it, and is a "spurious law." *Haer.* 4.12.1-4

Table 5. Ptolemy's and Irenaeus' Tripartite Divisions of the Law

VI. Conclusion

This dissertation is an integrated reception history of one of the early church's foundational documents, the Gospel according to Matthew. The project eschews traditional constructions of the boundaries of the church along retrospectively orthodox and heretical lines, in favor of a model that imagines the second- and third-century *ekklēsia* engaged in a struggle for the right to assert the label of orthodoxy. Viewed in this light, the boundaries of the church of this period become more porous, and it becomes evident that what would eventually become the center cannot be adequately understood without attending to groups and individuals that were later depicted by the ecclesiastical authorities as always having been on the margins. Therefore, this study shows how in the second and third centuries, Valentinus, Ptolemy, and their followers were important contributors to a shared culture of early Christian exegesis of shared foundational documents, especially the letters of Paul, the Gospel of John, and the text that has been the focus of this study, the Gospel of Matthew.

Irenaeus of Lyons is a significant figure for this study. He emerges near the end of the second century as the first Christian in the historical record to provide a comprehensive narrative and salvation history that stitches together numerous disparate elements from a variety of apostolic texts – i.e., texts that would eventually be canonized in a Christian New Testament – into an overarching story that modern Christians would find familiar. He also is the first to give us an extensive report of Valentinian counternarratives that they likewise justify on the basis of their readings of many of the same apostolic texts. As he perceives their mutual differences to depend heavily on correct exegesis, he portrays them as nefarious eisegetes, and expends great polemical effort to persuade his readers of the

speciousness of their exegetical method. I have argued that in doing so, he relies heavily upon *topoi* drawn from Greco-Roman rhetoric, and have indicated that he was a more gifted student of rhetorical forms than he has usually been given credit for. This analysis of Irenaeus' argument in *Against the Heresies* prepared the ground for a more sober evaluation of potential similarities and differences between Valentinian and patristic exegesis.

That evaluation revealed some key similarities that have generally been overlooked. For example, Irenaeus lambasts the Valentinians for reading scriptural passages alongside others from different contexts, a reading practice that he says perverts the meaning of Scripture. While it is well known in patristic studies that the church fathers engage in just this kind of reading strategy, it is noteworthy that we may see Valentinian and patristic authors mutually contextualizing the same passages with remarkably similar results. As I have shown, the Valentinian text *Interpretation of Knowledge* employs a hybrid Sower-Tares parable that also appears in the *Stromata* of Clement of Alexandria, and in Tertullian's *Prescription Against Heretics*. All of these exegetes have taken the same two Matthean parables and combined them exegetically to create a new parable, whose meaning is not present in either of the component parables. They all find that the topic the hybrid parable addresses is problematic diversity within the *ekklēsia.* Despite this agreement on its general theme, they find that the hybrid parable offers different solutions to the ecclesiological challenge: the Valentinian solution is one of epistemic elitism, while the patristic solution is a discourse of orthodoxy and heresy. This example shows that Valentinian and patristic readers of Matthew all employ the exegetical method that Irenaeus claims to have rejected as heretical, while producing quite similar results as well.

Another practice that Irenaeus criticized the Valentinians for was reading New Testament texts parabolically or allegorically. Here, too, I have shown that both Valentinian and patristic authors engaged in this practice. In this case my patristic exemplar was Irenaeus himself, to whom I compared the Ptolemaeans and Marcosians whose cosmogonies he describes, as well as the Valentinian *Gospel of Truth,* a text of which Irenaeus was aware. I have argued that all of these exegetes read the parable of the Lost Sheep in a way that radically departs from its meaning in the Synoptic Gospels. They all read it allegorically in order to identify the shepherd as a soteriological figure who performs a unique and inimitable salvific act, either in the historical past, the eternal present, or both.

Both of these examples of early Christian exegesis – the parable of the Lost Sheep, and the parable of the Sower combined with the parable of the Tares – show Valentinian and patristic readers of Scripture collectively reinventing shared meanings of their shared foundational texts. Moreover, the exegesis of the parable of the Lost Sheep in the *Gospel of Truth* preserves the paraenetic thrust of the Matthean parable, while Irenaeus and the other Valentinian readers do not. This observation demonstrates that at times a "heretical" exegete may be more faithful to Scripture than a contemporaneous "orthodox" one. Altogether, these analyses complicate the traditional and false dichotomy between "orthodox" and "heretical" exegesis, and allow us to more easily see Valentinian authors as full participants in the burgeoning Christian culture of reading and writing of this period.

However, it has not been the purpose of this study merely to show that Valentinians were doing the same things as their patristic contemporaries. On the contrary, I have argued that Valentinian exegetes made their own, unique contributions to what would become Christian orthodoxy. I have indicated that it is most likely that Irenaeus adapted a Valentinian allegorical interpretation of the parable of the Lost Sheep to fit his own

salvation history narrative. More significantly, I have argued that the very practice of applying allegorical interpretation to what would become New Testament texts is one that Irenaeus appropriates from the Valentinians with whom he was in contact, even as he critiques them for what he would see as more extreme versions of this same exegetical method. As we know that the Valentinians were the first in the historical record to apply allegorical reading strategies to apostolic texts, that Irenaeus is likewise the first patristic author to do so, that Irenaeus' influence on subsequent catholic exegesis and theology was substantial, and that immediately after Irenaeus' period we see a flowering of allegorical interpretation of the New Testament, if my argument is correct, then it would seem that it was the Valentinians who were the first to introduce an exegetical method that was swiftly adopted by the catholic church and became a pillar on which patristic authors could base an orthodox metanarrative of salvation history.

I have further argued for additional Valentinian influence upon Irenaeus' exegetical method and theology in another area, that of the historical and theological relationship between Christians and Jews, and in particular the question of the authority of the Jewish law for Christians. Ptolemy, in his *Epistle to Flora,* and Irenaeus both engage in a complex exegesis of the same Matthean proof texts in order to argue for multiple layers within the Mosaic law that ultimately are explained in terms of their different origins. I adjudicated among previous scholarship on *Flora* and determined that Ptolemy is most likely to have been the one to have innovated the particular solution we encounter in that text. I then showed the numerous and striking parallels between his solution and Irenaeus' as described in *Against the Heresies* Book Four and the *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, a state of affairs that has previously gone unobserved in scholarship. Finally, I argued that the accumulation of similarities is so great as to require a source critical relationship

between Ptolemy's *Epistle to Flora* and Irenaeus, and I have suggested that, of the live options, the most likely is a direct influence from Ptolemy to Irenaeus via Ptolemy's followers with whom Irenaeus was in close contact.

Although I have only indicated a few examples of Valentinian influence upon Irenaeus of Lyons and subsequent Christian orthodoxy, I suspect that further research in this area will unearth additional points of influence, hitherto unrecognized. If these conclusions are correct, then it would follow that, as catholic thinkers adopted these Valentinian contributions to emerging Christian thought, any alleged differences on the basis of exegesis between Valentinian and catholic Christians would become even less detectable than they already were. The catholic church had already demonstrated, and would continue to demonstrate, its catholicity by tolerating diversity within limits in a number of areas. By way of example, two such areas that Irenaeus supported were allowing the various churches two different ways to calculate the date of Easter, and admitting into the canon not one gospel, but four. Both of these concessions to diversity headed off schism, and contributed to the stability, growth, and prominence of a greater, catholic church. In like manner, the admission into the catholic church of Valentinian exegetical practices and results would have deprived the Valentinian movement of some of its means for differentiating itself as an alternate or parallel church. Thus, I suggest a partial explanation for the dwindling of evidence for Valentinianism in the third and early fourth centuries; namely, that they were slowly absorbed into the catholic church and ceased to be a discernible political force within intra-Christian debate.

This dissertation is the first monograph-length study on Valentinian exegesis of the Gospel of Matthew. Much of previous scholarship has focused on Valentinian cosmogonic speculation, which the Valentinians had often derived from concepts and vocabulary in the

Gospel of John. However, my close readings of the Ptolemaean and Marcosian applications of the Matthean parable of the Lost Sheep to their cosmogonies have indicated places where either Irenaeus' descriptions, or scholarly reconstructions of these systems, have proven inadequate, and are in need of revision by follow-up studies. Moreover, this project has also supported more recent scholarly efforts that have begun to examine Valentinian ethics and ecclesiology. These are topics with which the Gospel of Matthew is especially concerned, and so it should come as no surprise that, like other contemporaneous Christians, the Valentinians should have mined Matthew's Gospel for dominical sayings and parables that they could usefully apply to these matters. Although these Valentinian texts do contain mythological metanarratives quite different from those of the patristic writers, they nevertheless resist easy categorization as examples of alleged "gnostic" predeterminism, and reveal their authors to be concerned with practical ethical and ecclesiological matters, such as forgiveness, humility, and communal harmony. Further study of these themes, and of Valentinian social history more generally, is needed.

By recognizing Valentinian claims to the Gospel of Matthew as legitimately Christian claims, this project makes a contribution to one final area of scholarship, that of the reception history of the Gospel of Matthew itself. The ability of early Christians to apply allegorical reading strategies to the words and deeds of Jesus as recorded in Matthew's Gospel implies something about the latter's status. I have not directly addressed the precise status of the Gospel of Matthew among second-century readers, in terms of when and how it became thought of as "Scripture," not to mention the stability of the text itself in the second century, a topic that is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Nevertheless, from what we know of Greco-Roman, Jewish, and Christian approaches to sacred texts, it seems safe to conclude that, by the time the Valentinians with whom

Irenaeus had direct contact were using texts containing allegorized readings of the parable of the Lost Sheep and other passages, the text that they were allegorizing – i.e., the Gospel of Matthew – must have existed not only as a more or less stable written document but as one that enjoyed a special status, equal to or exceeding the cultural value of Homer or the Law and the Prophets. If this were not the case, it could not have been allegorized. Thus we may modestly push back the *terminus ante quem* for the perceived sanctity of the Gospel of Matthew, on the basis of its being deemed allegorizable, from the publication of Irenaeus' *Against the Heresies,* c. 180 C.E., to a few decades prior, c. 150-170 C.E.

This study offers an example of a broader approach to the study of pre-Nicene Christianity. By integrating Valentinian and patristic exegesis of a shared foundational document into a single project, it illuminates a number of aspects of the history of the early church that would otherwise be obscured by retrospectively reified borders that may not accurately reflect the social realities on the ground at the time. Further research along lines indicated by this dissertation should continue to paint a fuller, richer portrait of the origins of the Christian movement, both in its unity and its diversity.

VII. Bibliography

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